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THE RELUCTANT CRUSADE:

American Foreign Policy in Korea 1941-1950

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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This dissertation is an investigation of American foreign policy in Korea from the beginning of World War II until the outbreak of the Korean War. It focuses particularly on evaluating the wisdom of American leaders in recognizing the limitations on the power of the United States in formulating policy objectives in Korea. In addition, the study analyzes America's Korea policy in the larger context of the postwar international struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union. Previously, most scholars have agreed that the Truman Doctrine marked the crucial turning point in postwar American foreign policy. In reality, the Korean War witnessed the emergence of America's unlimited commitment to defend the world from the threat of Soviet domination.

Prior to 1941, the United States had been indifferent to Korea's fate. During World War II, however, Franklin D. Roosevelt developed the realistic policy of pursuing a four-power trusteeship for Korea, to include the United States, Britain, China, and the Soviet Union. When Harry S. Truman

became President in 1945, Soviet expansionism in Eastern Europe had begun to alarm American leaders. As a result, Truman attempted to liberate Korea unilaterally and thus reconstruct this nation without Soviet interference.

Stalin's decision to send the Red Army into Korea before the United States had an opportunity to land troops in the peninsula forced Truman to settle for a line dividing Korea at the 38th parallel into zones of occupation. The Soviet-American partition of Korea meant that a civil war was likely unless the major powers could agree to peaceful reunification.

After 1945, Truman sought to reunify Korea under a government that reflected the American, rather than the Soviet, model of political and economic development. At the Moscow Conference in December, 1945, the United States and the Soviet Union appeared to agree on trusteeship as a solution to the Korean problem. When Stalin refused to accept the American interpretation of the Moscow Decision, Truman rejected further negotiations and turned to the containment policy to break the Korean deadlock. Containment sought to build a strong, democratic, Western-oriented government in South Korea capable of self-defense, thus permitting American withdrawal. At the same time containment would act as a liberating force. When the North Koreans recognized the benefits involved in accepting American economic aid and diplomatic support, they would oust the Communists and seek reunification under the South Korean regime.

By the fall of 1948, South Korea emerged as Truman's

test case of containment in Asia. Success in Korea would resolve two difficult problems. First, Truman could utilize limited amounts of economic aid and technical advice to halt the Soviet advance without having to resort to American military power. Second, the Administration sought to atone for America's failure in China and thus eliminate Republican criticism of Truman's foreign policy. Containment promised to achieve a great deal at home and abroad, but at a relatively limited cost in terms of men and material.

Unfortunately, the North Koreans decided to invade South Korea in June, 1950. This attempt at forcible reunification shattered the foundation of Truman's postwar foreign policy. American prestige and credibility demanded that the United States act to defend the South Koreans. Tragically, the Administration adopted an overly emotional and simplistic justification for intervention. Far from being a local civil war, Truman viewed the Korean conflict as nothing less than the initial phase in a Soviet campaign for world conquest. Previously, the United States was uncertain regarding the nature and magnitude of the Soviet threat. After 1950, Moscow's aims appeared global and aimed ultimately at the United States. In the wake of the Korean War, the United States embarked again on a global crusade for the achievement of universal principles of law and justice.

The activities of the U.N. in Korea have been described as "the reluctant crusade." . . .

Korea's significance is not the final crusade. It is not finally making valid the idea of collective security. . . .

Collective security is not something which is established once and for all by some dramatic gesture. Collective security is like a bank account. It is kept alive by the resources which are put into it. In Korea the Russians presented a check which was drawn on the bank account of collective security. The Russians thought the check would bounce. They thought it was a bad check. But to their great surprise, the teller paid it. The important thing was that the check was paid. The importance will be nothing if the next check is not paid and if the bank account is not kept strong and sufficient to cover all checks which are drawn upon it.

..... Dean Acheson

June 29, 1951

American diplomatic historians have devoted considerable attention in recent years to an analysis of Soviet-American relations after World War II. Initially, scholars praised the United States for abandoning prewar isolationism and adopting a posture of determined opposition to the perceived threat of Soviet ideology and power. During recent years, however, some historians have questioned the motives and objectives of postwar American foreign policy. "New Left" historians have attempted to portray the United States as an imperialist nation determined to establish global hegemony for the benefit of an American business elite. Others have questioned the techniques and scholarship of the "New Left," arguing that these writers intentionally distort reality. Yet, few scholars have successfully formulated a realistic and accurate appraisal of the Soviet-American confrontation.

Scholars have concentrated primarily on assigning blame to Moscow or Washington for the emergence of the Cold War. For some, particular issues such as Poland or the Atomic Bomb were prime movers in producing the postwar confrontation. Still other historians argue that the United States and the Soviet Union could have resolved

their differences had it not been for misunderstanding and misconception. These evaluations dismiss the more obvious conclusion that Soviet-American disagreements after World War II were inevitable. Diplomacy could never completely eliminate the problems of postwar Soviet-American relations, because the principal cause of the dispute was a basic divergence in national interests. Yet, if the two nations had been able to accept their differences as the normal outgrowth of changing conditions in international affairs, then negotiations might have reduced resultant animosity and tension. Unfortunately, neither the United States nor the Soviet Union respected the right of its adversary to possess complete freedom of action in areas of paramount concern. In fact, neither Washington nor Moscow remained uninvolved in areas where its adversary possessed a greater historic national interest or a superior strategic position. This mutual failure was responsible for the transformation of a major conflict of interest into a "cold war."

Events in Korea from 1941 to 1950 illustrate clearly the nature of the Soviet-American confrontation. After dividing Korea at the 38th parallel in 1945, Washington and Moscow pursued unilateral policies of zonal reconstruction that totally disregarded the other's interests. Each nation's approach was a reflection of its own political, economic, and social system. Both American and Soviet leaders wanted Korea to emulate its model for national

development. Tragically, the result was the emergence of two incompatible Koreas. The price of liberation was dis-  
 memberment and permanent partition.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps worse, for as one American official wrote, "In both north and south Korea the drive for national unification was to be a primary political force: neither area could be expected to be  
 satisfied with the status quo."<sup>2</sup>

Soviet-American relations in Korea thus represent in microcosm the nature of the Cold War confrontation. Korea unwillingly accepted two utterly opposed systems of political and economic development. The two Koreas thus emerged as an excellent example of the "absorption of external forces into a political vacuum."<sup>3</sup> Both the United States and the Soviet Union were dissatisfied with the situation not only in Korea but in other areas of the world as well. Yet, the major powers averted an open military conflict with one another because both realized that any attempt to alter the status quo would be far too expensive in men and material. In Korea, however, the logic of the Cold War was unrestrained and led inexorably to the outbreak of civil war. In the

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<sup>1</sup> George M. McCune and Arthur L. Grey, Jr., Korea Today (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 271.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of State, North Korea: A Case Study in the Techniques of Takeover, Far Eastern Series #103 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, January 1961), 11.

<sup>3</sup> Jounghwon A. Kim, Divided Korea: The Politics of Development 1945-1972 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 3.

spring of 1950, George McCune observed, "The fact that the 'cold war' has reached an advanced form in Korea with the establishment of separate fully recognized governments does lend some logic to looking toward Korea for signs of a turning point in international relations." <sup>4</sup> Thus, the logic of the Cold War meant that, in Korea, civil war was both predictable and probably unavoidable.

Previous studies of the Korean War have, as a rule, either disregarded entirely or dealt only superficially with the events prior to 1950. A proper understanding of American foreign policy during the Korean War is impossible without first grasping the nature of United States aims in the peninsula prior to the attack. Similarly, it hampers a proper perception of the impact of the Korean War on the fundamental aspects of American postwar policy outside of Western Europe. Many scholars have subsequently lauded "limited war" in Korea, arguing that it is an example of realism and represents the only answer to Soviet "salami tactics." <sup>5</sup> In the words of the British writer David Rees, the Korean intervention was "the greatest and noblest act of recent American history." <sup>6</sup> Hopefully, a closer

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<sup>4</sup> McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 271.

<sup>5</sup> John W. Spanier, The Truman-MacArthur Controversy and the Korean War (New York: W.W. Norton, 1965), 3; Robert Osgood, The Limited War: The Challenge to American Strategy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 163.

<sup>6</sup> David Rees, Korea: The Limited War (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964), 446.

examination of American foreign policy in Korea from 1941 to 1950 will reduce such hyperbolic evaluations to more manageable proportions.

At this point, I would like to acknowledge several individuals whose assistance was indispensable in the research and writing of this dissertation. Regardless of where I traveled to engage in research, the staffs of these institutions were uniformly pleasant and exceedingly helpful. In particular, John Taylor, William Cunliffe, and Edward Reese of the Modern Military Branch at the National Archives devoted considerable time and energy to removing unnecessary barriers in my investigations. At the Princeton University Library, Nancy Bressler permitted my access to the Dulles Papers despite the fact that she was then engaged in the arduous task of reclassifying these manuscripts. While visiting the MacArthur Library, Larry Redford's efficiency in locating and providing documents ensured that none of my limited time was wasted. I would also like to express my thanks to the Diplomatic Branch at the National Archives, the Library of Congress, the University of Virginia Library, and the Clemson University Library for their assistance.

I am particularly grateful to the Harry S. Truman Library Institute for awarding me a research grant during 1975. During both of my visits to Independence, Dennis Bilger spent many hours uncovering and bringing to my

attention new and significant information. His friendly attitude and professional competence is characteristic of the entire archival staff thus making the Truman Library an outstanding institution for research.

I am deeply indebted to Norman A. Graebner for his guidance and assistance not only on this project, but throughout my graduate career. His sincere concern for my intellectual and professional progress continue to provide a source of personal inspiration. His stylistic criticisms and comments on content were indispensable for the completion of the dissertation in its final form. Edward E. Younger read parts of the manuscript in its initial form and reminded me of the importance of objectivity and balance in historical writing.

While engaged in research in Washington, D.C., I was invited to stay at the home of Tony Lerner and his family, who reside in Vienna, Virginia. I owe the Lerner's a deep debt of gratitude for making my frequent visits both comfortable and inexpensive. Finally, I wish to dedicate this study to Karin in appreciation for her willingness to sacrifice personal interests so that I could pursue my career ambitions. Without Karin's moral support during the past years, I could never have pursued or obtained a doctoral degree. Clearly, the credit for my success belongs largely to her.

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List of Abbreviations

AMG:	American Military Government
CUL:	Clemson University Library
DMML:	Douglas MacArthur Memorial Library
DPRK:	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
DSB:	Department of State Bulletin
ECA:	Economic Cooperation Administration
FRUS:	Foreign Relations of the United States
HSTL:	Harry S. Truman Library
KMAG:	Korean Military Advisory Group
KPG:	Korean Provisional Government
LOC:	Library of Congress
OPD:	Operations Planning Division
OSS:	Office of Strategic Services
P&O:	Planning and Operations
PUL:	Princeton University Library
ROK:	Republic of Korea
SANACC:	State-Army-Navy-Air Force Coordinating Committee
SKIG:	South Korean Interim Government
SKILA:	South Korean Interim Legislative Assembly
SWNCC:	State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee
UNCOK:	United Nations Commission on Korea
UNTCOK:	United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea
USAFIK:	United States Armed Forces in Korea
UVAL:	University of Virginia Library

## Introduction

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Under the leadership of Harry S. Truman, the United States committed its power and prestige in a worldwide struggle to preserve peace and security. As a result, American foreign policy experienced a fundamental transformation during the Truman years as the nation abandoned isolationism and embraced globalism as the central feature in its approach to international affairs. The crucial turning point in postwar American diplomacy arrived in June, 1950, when the United States intervened in the Korean War. In his memoirs, Truman himself indicates the significance of the event: The United States had learned the principal lesson of the interwar period and now recognized that, far from halting aggression, appeasement only guaranteed a future war and reduced the chances for successful resistance.<sup>1</sup> Truman enthusiastically stressed that American intervention in Korea symbolized the determination of the United States to use force to resist Communist imperialism and Soviet inspired military aggression. Thus, in his farewell address in 1953, Truman pointed to the Korean decision as "the most

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<sup>1</sup>  
Harry S. Truman, Memoirs, Vol. II: Years of Trial and Hope (Garden City: Doubleday, 1956), 463.

important in my time as President."<sup>2</sup>

World War II convinced American leaders that the United States could no longer avoid active political involvement in international affairs without seriously endangering national security. Policy-makers remained in doubt, however, regarding the nature and extent of the new American commitment to act positively for the creation and maintenance of world stability. Soviet expansion into Eastern Europe alarmed American leaders and added urgency to the task of defining specific postwar objectives and formulating realistic policies that would achieve success at reasonable cost. When Franklin D. Roosevelt died in April, 1945, however, the United States had done little to reorient its foreign policy to correspond with its new role as world leader. Aside from a commitment to support an international security organization, American leaders had not prepared the nation to meet adequately the multiple challenges of postwar foreign affairs.<sup>3</sup>

Harry S. Truman thus assumed the direction of American foreign policy at a crucial point in the nation's history. The new president faced the difficult task of resolving two basic problems. First, American leaders, even before

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<sup>2</sup> Truman, "The Challenge of the Cold War," Department of State Bulletin, XXVIII, 709 (January 26, 1953), 127.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen E. Ambrose, Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy 1938-1970 (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1972), 111.

Roosevelt's death, perceived the challenge of Soviet ideology and power, but remained uncertain as to the magnitude of the resultant threat to national security. Once Truman defined his perception of Soviet intentions, he would face, secondly, the more difficult matter of devising an appropriate response. In essence, the postwar foreign policy debate revolved around these two fundamental issues, but Truman benefited from a bipartisan consensus that supported an American posture of opposition to any perceived danger to world stability. The significant aspect of the initial American reaction to the Cold War, however, was the determination of policy-makers, domestic politicians, and journalists to secure American objectives through limited international involvement. American leaders thus focused attention on a choice between several strategic and tactical alternatives in confronting the Soviet challenge all of which emphasized restraint.

Inexperience alone was sufficient to dictate caution, since the United States faced unprecedented problems. Sweeping and complex change characterized the postwar period and the world experienced extreme difficulties in readjustment and transition.<sup>4</sup> Defeat of the Axis required the destruction of the prewar international system in

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<sup>4</sup> William Reitzel, Morton A. Kaplan, and Constance G. Coblenz, United States Foreign Policy 1945-1955 (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1956), 74.

Europe and Asia. As a result, a rapid restoration of peace and stability was an urgent necessity.<sup>5</sup> Korea was then only one facet of a much larger problem, but, in many respects, the American response to the challenge of instability in Korea typified postwar policy throughout Asia. Toward the end of World War II, the United States faced the dilemma in Korea and elsewhere in Asia of "how simultaneously to drive out the Japanese, to prevent the resurgence of European colonialism, and to foster the growth of democratic, capitalistic local governments, all without actually making the effort necessary to put the man with the gun on the spot."<sup>6</sup>

After years of colonial domination, Koreans in particular lacked sufficient political experience to solve the manifold social and economic problems confronting their nation. Nevertheless, they demanded immediate independence and self-government. Thus, as the United States commenced occupation of Korea in September, 1945, American leaders faced not only enormously complex problems, but also the likelihood of local opposition to American advice and assistance. Perhaps worse, uncertainty over Soviet aims in Korea prevented an accurate perception of the problem and

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<sup>5</sup> David S. McLellan, Commentary, in The Truman Period as a Research Field: A Reappraisal, 1972, edited by Richard S. Kirkendall (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1974), 159.

<sup>6</sup> Ambrose, Rise to Globalism, 83.

the formulation of effective solutions.

Truman responded to postwar international instability in a thoroughly predictable fashion that reflected a deep devotion to the American tradition of political liberalism.<sup>7</sup> Convinced of America's altruism and the superiority of its political system, Truman hoped to utilize the nation's power and influence to guarantee to liberated peoples freedom of choice in the political, economic, and social reconstruction of their nations. Truman was convinced that the realization of the Wilsonian dream of national self-determination throughout the world would produce an international system of maximum stability.<sup>8</sup> In addition, if nations shared American values and institutions, they would be less likely to threaten the security of the United States.

Such an evaluation found substantiation in Korea. In March, 1946, occupation commander Lieutenant General John Reed Hodge stressed that the United States was determined to see that "a government that corresponds to the views of the majority is established." Only national self-determination, Hodge argued, could produce "the political, economic, and social progress of the Korean people, the development of democratic self-government, and the establishment of national independence of Korea." The success of this

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<sup>7</sup> Alonzo L. Hamby, Beyond the New Deal: Harry S. Truman and American Liberalism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), 115.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.; Ambrose, Rise to Globalism, 15.

approach in Korea would foster internal prosperity and international stability, thus serving well the economic and security interests of the United States.<sup>9</sup>

For the Soviet Union, on the other hand, Korea was perhaps second only to Eastern Europe in strategic importance for Russian national security. Korea played a prominent role in precipitating the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 which had been so completely disastrous for Tsarist Russia. As a result, it was improbable that the Soviet Union would entrust its security interests in Korea to the principle of national self-determination. Colonel General Terenty F. Shtikov illustrates quite clearly the validity of this conclusion in his response to General Hodge's statement of American objectives. Shtikov pointed out that the Soviet Union sought the realization of "a true democratic and independent country, friendly to the Soviet Union, so that in the future it will not become a base for an attack on the Soviet Union."<sup>10</sup>

Soviet-American negotiations during 1946 and 1947 failed to reunify Korea and revealed with striking clarity the incompatibility of the two nation's objectives in that country. Thus, Korea emerged from World War II as not a liberated nation, but "a hostage to the strategies and

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<sup>9</sup> Hodge's statement is printed in full in McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 276-278.

<sup>10</sup> Shtikov's statement is printed in full in McCune and Grey, 279-281.

ambitions of the cold war . . ."<sup>11</sup> Truman refused to accept Soviet intransigence in Korea much as he had in Eastern Europe, but lacked the power to force Soviet compliance with American policy objectives in Korea. Lacking an overall plan to counter the challenge of Soviet expansion,<sup>12</sup> American foreign policy manifested considerable irresolution during the early years of the Cold War. George F. Kennan's formulation of the containment policy and its subsequent application in Europe during 1947 ended a great deal of the uncertainty and vacillation.

Kennan's containment strategy had a powerful impact on Truman and his advisors because it answered the most vital questions confronting the Administration since its assumption of power. Containment not only defined the nature of the Soviet challenge, it also outlined an appropriate response. Kennan's policy promised to halt the Soviet advance and preserve American security at the relatively low cost of economic, technical, and military assistance.<sup>13</sup> Initially, the nature of containment was limited regarding the extent to which the United States would have to commit its power to ensure success. Thus,

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<sup>11</sup> Frank Baldwin, Introduction, in Without Parallel: American Korean Relationship Since 1945, edited by Frank Baldwin (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 3.

<sup>12</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, "Was the Truman Doctrine a Real Turning Point?," Foreign Affairs, LII, 2 (January 1974), 391.

<sup>13</sup> George F. Kennan, Memoirs 1925-1950 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967), 354-367.

Harry J. Middleton distorts the meaning of Kennan's policy recommendations, when he refers to them as "containment-by-force-if-necessary."<sup>14</sup> In reality, Truman and his advisors hoped that containment would remove the necessity for using American troops to counter Soviet expansionism.

Ironically, although containment diverged sharply from traditional tenets of non-involvement, the policy sought to maintain some degree of continuity with previous principles of American diplomacy. For example, Americans had long viewed war as an aberration and an unpleasant interruption in domestic pursuits. Once forced to engage in conflict, the nation had always applied maximum force for quick and total victory.<sup>15</sup> An American attempt to defeat the Soviet Union militarily after World War II would not only have been costly, but exceedingly unpopular with the general public. Containment provided an attractive alternative, since it promised the avoidance of war and ultimate victory in the Cold War. Although success would not emerge quickly, Moscow's defeat would eventually occur in "either the breakup or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power."<sup>16</sup>

Containment would also facilitate the realization

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<sup>14</sup> Harry J. Middleton, The Compact History of the Korean War (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1965), 28-29.

<sup>15</sup> Osgood, Limited War, 32-34.

<sup>16</sup> George F. Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," in The Cold War: Ideological Conflict or Power Struggle, edited by Norman A. Graebner (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1963), 38.

of Truman's goal of national self-determination. The Soviet Union, Truman believed, exploited postwar economic distress to foster civil strife that allowed Communist minorities to seize power and prevent freedom of choice. Application of containment was then perfectly designed to "aid the nations in the creation of such stability as makes free choice possible."<sup>17</sup> Ignoring the crucial importance of the Red Army to Communist expansion, Kennan's formula sought to deny the Soviet Union an environment conducive to expansion, while promising success at a relatively limited cost to the United States. As Truman explains in his memoirs, the purpose of containment was much broader than it appeared after a superficial examination, since it aimed at "a united, free, and prosperous world."<sup>18</sup> Few American leaders could foresee that, as Walter Lippman explained at the time, the implementation of containment would be neither easy nor inexpensive.<sup>19</sup>

Containment appeared especially successful in Europe, largely because the Soviet Union never seriously challenged the American security system. The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan both contributed mightily to European economic and political stability because of a series of fortuitous

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<sup>17</sup> Jonathan Daniels, The Man of Independence (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1950), 368.

<sup>18</sup> Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, 290.

<sup>19</sup> Walter Lippman, The Cold War: A Study in U.S. Foreign Policy (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

circumstances. The United States was, after all, operating in an area of historic national interest and was applying the proper remedy to easily defined problems. Most important, the containment policy had the support of those people it sought to help and protect.<sup>20</sup> In Asia, however, containment would not benefit from these advantages and its ultimate objective was much broader. Truman and his advisors hoped to utilize economic aid and technical advice to foster the emergence of prosperous, democratic states. Although Asia did not share Western traditions, the Truman Administration anticipated the adoption of the American model for economic and political development once Asians recognized the superiority and benefits of the system.

Despite America's failure in China after World War II, Truman maintained confidence in the ultimate promise of containment in Asia. By 1948, Korea had emerged as the test case for the policy. In April, Truman approved NSC-8 which provided for a three-year economic assistance program and a military advisory group.<sup>21</sup> In a revealing letter to State Department official James K. Penfield, Arthur C. Bunce, as Hodge's economic advisor, clarified the ultimate objective of containment in Korea. Bunce stated his hope

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Ronald Steel, Pax Americana (New York: Viking Press, 1972), 11.

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NSC-8, April 2, 1948, U.S. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948, Vol. VIII: The Far East and Australasia (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1974), 1163-1168.

that the new South Korean leaders "will institute a whole series of necessary reforms which will so appeal to the North Koreans that their army will revolt, kill all the nasty Communists, and create a lovely liberal democracy to the everlasting credit of the U.S.A.!"<sup>22</sup> Containment in Korea was intended to defeat Soviet expansion and register a victory for national self-determination. In fact, the Truman Administration viewed containment as a liberating force throughout Asia. At least that was the hope.

Containment in Korea never reached the level of success that Truman and his advisors had anticipated. The nation remained politically divided and economically weak at the outset of 1950 and the future of containment as a liberating force in Korea remained in doubt. At this juncture, as Kennan later explained, the North Korean attack on South Korea in June "stirred us up like a stone thrown into a beehive."<sup>23</sup>

For Truman and his advisors, the North Korean aggression was Soviet inspired and represented "nothing less than the beginning of a general assault on the free world."<sup>24</sup> The Soviet threat now appeared global in scope and

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<sup>22</sup> Bunce to Penfield, January 20, 1948, U.S. Department of State Archives, Record Group 59, 895.00/1-2048, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>23</sup> Kennan, Memoirs 1925-1950, 500.

<sup>24</sup> Norman A. Graebner, Cold War Diplomacy 1945-1960 (Princeton: D. Van Norstand, 1962), 54.

determined ultimately to conquer the entire world through armed invasion. On June 26, Truman indicated to his special advisor George M. Elsey the magnitude of the challenge:

Korea is the Greece of the Far East. If we are tough enough now, if we stand up to them like we did in Greece three years ago, they won't take any next steps. But if we just stand by, they'll take over the whole Middle East. There's no telling what they'll do, if we don't put up a fight now. <sup>25</sup>

For Truman and his advisors, the Korean attack indicated a Soviet threat of dire proportions and demanded a comparable American response. Containment revealed its inadequacy, for the challenge of Soviet ideology and power was not only economic, but also military in nature. In the wake of the outbreak of civil war in Korea, the United States overreacted and embarked upon a global crusade that committed the nation's power and prestige in areas that frequently bore no relationship to historically established national interests. <sup>26</sup>

American intervention in Korea produced a fundamental alteration in postwar foreign policy assumptions. The United States now perceived the Soviet threat as global. To ensure American security, Truman inaugurated a trend toward large defense spending, increased presidential power,

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George M. Elsey Notes, June 26, 1950, George M. Elsey Papers, File 71, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

<sup>26</sup>

Norman A. Graebner, Ideas and Diplomacy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 720; Steel, Pax Americana, 23; See also, Lippman, The Cold War.

and intense suspicion of revolutionary nationalist movements.<sup>27</sup> Tragically, this transformation was not based on a calculated estimate of means and ends in diplomacy, but rather on an axiom rooted in the lessons of history.<sup>28</sup> As Truman indicates in his memoirs, the Soviet Union, in ordering the attack, "was acting in Korea just as Hitler, Mussolini, and the Japanese had acted ten, fifteen and twenty years earlier."<sup>29</sup> Such assumptions confirmed the American suspicion that Communism was a monolithic movement, but failed to reflect the reality of the situation. It was improbable that Stalin could have ordered an attack on South Korea unless the North Koreans themselves were dedicated to forcible reunification. In addition, while purportedly fighting the Soviet Union, the United States never engaged Soviet combat forces.

Several scholars have pointed to the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan as the crucial turning point in

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Lloyd C. Gardner, Introduction, in The Korean War, edited by Lloyd C. Gardner (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1970), 24; See also, Richard J. Barnet, Intervention and Revolution: The United States in the Third World (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1968).

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Ernest R. May, "The Nature of Foreign Policy: The Calculated Versus the Axiomatic," Daedalus, XCI, 4 (Fall 1962), 666-667.

29

Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, 333; The lessons of history also shaped the outlook of Secretary of State Dean Acheson. Gaddis Smith argues that he was obsessed with the memory of Hitler, Dean Acheson, Vol. XVI: American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy, edited by Samuel Flagg Bemis and Robert H. Ferrell (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1972), 423.

postwar American foreign policy.<sup>30</sup> In a recent article, John Lewis Gaddis disputes the accuracy of such a judgment, when he observes:

. . . despite its sweeping language the Truman Administration, between 1947 and 1950, had neither the intention nor the capability of policing the rest of the world; . . . the real commitment to contain communism everywhere originated in the events surrounding the Korean War, not the crisis in Greece and Turkey.<sup>31</sup>

Prior to 1950, the United States remained uncertain as to the nature of the Soviet threat, but the Korean War removed such doubts. Unfortunately, the Korean War also lodged a series of erroneous assumption into the American approach to international affairs. Suddenly, American leaders attributed any evidence of political instability in the international system to the manipulations of "World Communism." As a result of the Korean War, the United States became incapable of formulating a realistic assessment of the Soviet challenge and the requirements of an effective American response.

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Joseph M. Jones, The Fifteen Weeks (February 21-June 5, 1947) (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1955); Charles E. Bohlen, The Transformation of American Foreign Policy (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969); Selig Adler, The Isolationist Impulse (New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1958).

31

Gaddis, "Was the Truman Doctrine a Real Turning Point?," Foreign Affairs, 386.

Chapter I:

An End to Indifference

Korea had long been the object of American indifference until World War II destroyed that tradition. Until then, however, American disinterest was completely justified. The United States possessed no vital national interests in Korea and thus was never compelled to formulate policy objectives regarding that nation. Instead, Korean affairs were the exclusive concern of closer and more powerful neighbors—China, Russia, and Japan. Korea was, in fact, the strategic focal point of northeast Asia and, as a result, the Korean people became the long suffering victims of great power rivalry throughout most of their history.<sup>1</sup> In the wake of World War II, Korean affairs again centered around a struggle for influence among external powers. The only difference was that in 1945 the United States emerged as a principal contestant in the competition to determine Korea's destiny.

Early Korean-American relations centered around the attempts of the United States to expand trade in the Pacific. During their tenures as Secretary of State, both William H. Seward and Hamilton Fish endeavored to negotiate treaties of

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Glenn Paige, The Korean People's Democratic Republic, Hoover Institution Studies #11 (Stanford: Hoover Institution, 1966), 18; See also, W.D. Reeve, The Republic of Korea: A Political and Economic Study (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 4-6.

commerce, but the Koreans resisted with force.<sup>2</sup> American and Korean leaders finally established relations on a regular basis largely as the result of Sino-Japanese rivalry over control in the peninsula. In 1876, Japan negotiated a commercial convention with Korea that fostered economic penetration at the expense of the traditional Chinese influence in the area. In response, China encouraged American economic involvement in Korea as a counterweight to Japan and contributed to the successful signing of a Korean-American treaty of friendship and commerce in 1881.<sup>3</sup>

One provision of the treaty carried particular importance for the future of Korean-American relations. The United States promised that in the event "other powers deal unjustly or oppressively with either government, the other will exert their good offices on being informed of the case, to bring about an amicable arrangement . . . ." Despite this pledge, Washington instructed its representatives

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of State, A Historical Summary of United States-Korean Relations 1834-1962, Far Eastern Series #115 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1962), 3; Gregory Henderson, Korea: Politics of the Vortex (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 121; Robert T. Oliver, Syngman Rhee: The Man Behind the Myth (New York: Dodd Mead and Company, 1955), 30-31.

<sup>3</sup> Robert K. Sawyer and Walter G. Hermes, Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War, U.S. Department of the Army (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1962), 4; James F. Schnabel, Policy and Direction: The First Year, U.S. Department of the Army (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1972), 3-4; Oliver, Syngman Rhee, 33; State Department, A Historical Summary, 4-5.

in Seoul to maintain impartiality in the Sino-Japanese tug of war and concentrate on improving commercial activities alone. In 1894, a political coup d'etat in Seoul brought Chinese military intervention and Japan quickly declared war. After the American minister made a feeble attempt to limit the conflict, the Japanese systematically defeated<sup>4</sup> the militarily inferior Chinese.

After the Sino-Japanese War, American officials in Korea were under strict instructions to avoid involvement in Korean internal affairs. While attempting to maintain an equal opportunity for American commercial ventures, the United States endeavored to remain uninvolved in the emerging Russo-Japanese competition for control of Korea. Despite the efforts of American minister Horace N. Allen, the United States refused to increase American commitments and persisted in its policy of indifference toward Korea.<sup>5</sup> This policy reflected a clear recognition of American interests, since the United States possessed no vital political or economic concerns in the peninsula. In February, 1904, Japan staged

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of State, The Record on Korean Unification 1943-1960, Far Eastern Series #101 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, October 1960), 2-3; State Department, A Historical Summary, 5-6; Robert R. Simmons, The Strained Alliance: Peking, Pyongyang, Moscow and the Politics of the Korean Civil War (New York: The Free Press, 1975), 4-10.

<sup>5</sup> Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 121; Oliver, Syngman Rhee, 21-22; See also, Fred H. Harrington, God, Mammon, and the Japanese (Madison, 1944).

a surprise attack on the Russian fleet at Port Arthur and thus initiated the long-expected Russo-Japanese War.

Japan's quick military victory confirmed its unchallenged control over Korea. Despite the Korean Ambassador's appeals, Washington remained indifferent to Korea's fate. President Theodore Roosevelt accepted Japanese control over Korea, realizing that he could do little to alter the situation. Instead, Roosevelt attempted to limit Japanese expansion in other areas. In July, 1905, the United States, in the Taft-Kutsuru Memorandum, formally recognized Japan's control of Korea in return for similar considerations with regard to the Philippines.<sup>6</sup> Korean leaders who left their homeland to escape Japanese repression never forgave Roosevelt for his betrayal of their country. Yet, Japan's protectorate over Korea was not within the power of the United States to prevent. Verbal protests would not gain Korean independence and would only create Japanese hostility regarding other matters of greater importance to the national interests of the United States.

## II

Korean opposition to Japanese imperialism centered around the attempts of exiled leaders to enlist foreign support for liberation. As Korean exiles scattered to

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<sup>6</sup>

Graebner, Ideas and Diplomacy, 344.

China, Russia, and the United States, however, they developed different beliefs, values, and ways of thinking that were a reflection of the nations in which each lived. The resultant diversity in the exile movement profoundly effected disagreements over tactics and strategies for achieving Korean

independence.<sup>7</sup> From the outset, the exile movement lacked unity in outlook and objectives and this situation rendered common purpose under one leader impossible.

Factionalism was, in fact, a hallmark of Korean society and politics. At the same time, the competition for political power focused on individual ambition, rather than on the achievement of social or ideological objectives.<sup>8</sup> These conditions produced an atomized society that gravitated toward centralized power rather than the formation of cohesive, professional institutions for the accomplishment of political, economic, and social change. As Gregory Henderson explains, political incohesiveness and factionalism have been "a theme of Korean history, chronic, endemic, extreme."<sup>9</sup> These uniquely Korean characteristics have virtually precluded the development of democracy, let

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<sup>7</sup> Chong-sik Lee, The Politics of Korean Nationalism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 154; David J. Dallin, Soviet Russia and the Far East (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 256-257.

<sup>8</sup> McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 16; Simmons, The Strained Alliance, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 7 and 361; See also, Lee, The Politics of Korean Nationalism, 270.

alone the maintenance of national sovereignty. Without understanding the nature of domestic Korean politics and society, no one can explain the traditional tendency of the nation's leaders to seek personal power and prestige through dependence on Korea's powerful neighbors.

Japanese control over Korea was initially confined to the direction of external affairs. But in August, 1910, Japan formally annexed Korea and began to systematically integrate the peninsula into its imperial structure. Japan gradually achieved complete dominance over the political, social, and economic life of the nation.<sup>10</sup> Koreans played no major role in the governing and judicial system of their country. Although Japan created an "Advisory Council" composed of Koreans, the body dealt with a limited range of issues and the Japanese Governor retained veto power. This denial of self-government meant that by 1945 Korea possessed<sup>11</sup> few leaders experienced in governmental affairs.

Japan also attempted to destroy Korea's culture. "Japanization" characterized the educational and judicial systems, as the Japanese eliminated the Korean language, customs, and traditions from all official functions. In addition, Japan established control over the best farms

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McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 24-26; Department of State, A Historical Summary, 8.

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Paige, The Korean People's Democratic Republic, 18-19; See also, Henderson's illuminating chapter on the Korean use of "council politics" for personal advancement in Politics of the Vortex.

and major factories, while enjoying unhampered exploitation of Korean mineral resources.<sup>12</sup> George McCune effectively summarizes the impact of Japanese imperialism on Korea when he concludes that the "net effect . . . was a thirty-five-year intermission in political responsibility and administrative experience at a time when the Korean people needed education, training, and practice in modern techniques of democratic government if they were ever to become self-governing in a modern world."<sup>13</sup>

Opposition to Japanese imperialism reached an early climax. Using the death of the erstwhile Korean emperor as a catalyst, religious leaders and foreign missionaries entered into a conspiracy to stage a peaceful demonstration to publicize Japanese exploitation. On March 1, 1919, the conspirators issued a Declaration of Independence in the name of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points and demanded Korean self-determination.<sup>14</sup> The Manifesto's eloquent and moving words sparked nationwide demonstrations, as students and religious leaders marched through the streets of major cities chanting and carrying banners protesting Japanese

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U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Conditions in South Korea, 1947, International Reference Service, V, 131 (December 1948), 1; Kim, Divided Korea, 23-24.

<sup>13</sup>

McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 26.

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Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 80-82; Lee, The Politics of Korean Nationalism, 111; Oliver, Syngman Rhee, 136-138.

control. The peaceful outburst completely surprised the Japanese, who delayed retaliation for fear of igniting a more violent reaction. Shortly thereafter, Japan embarked on a systematic program of arrest, torture, and village-burning in an attempt to wipe out all vestiges of Korean nationalist opposition.<sup>15</sup>

Though poorly timed, the "March First Movement" successfully publicized Korean aspirations for independence and provided a symbol to inspire Koreans in their quest for freedom. Following the rebellion, Korean leaders secretly met in Seoul and formed the Korean Provisional Government (KPG). Few of these men had ever met and the group reflected diverse social, economic, and regional backgrounds. Although the gathering formulated a constitution and a bill of rights, these nationalistic leaders could actually agree on little beyond opposition to Japan. They did manage to elect a cabinet, which included Syngman Rhee as president and Kimm Kui-sik as foreign minister.<sup>16</sup> Many of the KPG officials were in exile in 1919 and did not even attend the government's first meeting.

Many scholars have argued that the United States

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Richard C. Allen, Korea's Syngman Rhee: An Unauthorized Portrait (Tokyo: Charles E Tuttle Company, 1960), 49-50; Lee, The Politics of Korean Nationalism, 124; McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 29.

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Rhee had been one of Wilson's students at Princeton University, while Kimm had lobbied at the Versailles Peace Conference for Korean independence. Kim, Divided Korea, 36; Oliver, Syngman Rhee, 142-143.

should have recognized the KPG as the legitimate heir of political authority in Korea.<sup>17</sup> In reality, the KPG never possessed strong organizational support within Korea and the motley group of exiles engaged in bitter factional disputes from the outset. By 1921, the KPG was defunct and its claim to legitimacy during World War II bore no relationship to the reality of the Korean independence movement.<sup>18</sup>

Korean radicals were particularly dissatisfied with the KPG's emphasis on propaganda and diplomacy as tactics in the fight for independence. The Russian Revolution and Bolshevik ideology convinced many Koreans that a more violent and extremist strategy was necessary. Thus, in 1921, radicals formed the Korean Communist Party, which quickly established close ties with the Soviet Union. Moscow not only provided considerable amounts of financial assistance to the Korean Communists, but also trained many

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Leland M. Goodrich, Korea: A Study of U.S. Policy in the U.N. (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1956). 9; Dae-sook Suh, "A Preconceived Formula for Sovietization: The Communist Takeover of North Korea," in The Anatomy of Communist Takeovers, edited by Thomas T. Hammond (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 476; Cliver calls the KPG "the longest-lived government-in-exile in modern history," Syngman Rhee, 143.

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"Korean Independence Movement," Research and Analysis Report 629A, April 25, 1943, U.S. Office of Strategic Services Archives, NA; William L. Langer, R&A Report 41, May 14, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/60-21-26, NA; The KPG supplied Clarence Gauss, American Ambassador in China, with an account of its own history in Gauss to Hull, February 12, 1942, Enclosure 1, RG 59, 895.01/78, NA; Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 86; Lee, The Politics of Korean Nationalism, 164.

of the party's leaders in Soviet schools.<sup>19</sup>

Communism was particularly appealing for young Koreans seeking a clear program for the defeat of imperialism. In addition, many individuals hoped to rise quickly in the party's hierarchical structure to a position of power and influence in Korean society. Gregory Henderson suggests another reason for the popularity of Communism in Korea during the interwar period:

A jail sentence, especially for political crimes, was a badge of distinction . . . . Among a people long famous for good manners and conduct, crime, stealing, smuggling, opium dealing, illegality as a way of life made gradually increasing inroads. Like the child disciplined by an unloved parent, Korean society struck back at its tamers with unruliness.

Nationalism, the appeal of secrecy and adventure, and a sense of participation all combined to foster the steady increase of the Communist Party's power and influence in Korea after 1921. In comparison to Communist emphasis on direct action, the KPG's reliance on verbal protests<sup>20</sup> inspired the support of few Koreans.

### III

American contacts with Korea during the interwar

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<sup>19</sup> John N. Washburn, "Soviet Russia and the Korean Communist Party," Pacific Affairs, XXIII, 1 (March 1950), 60; Dallin, Soviet Russia and the Far East, 255-256; Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 313-314.

<sup>20</sup> Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 79; Lee,

period were largely confined to missionary activities and a limited amount of trade. Korean attempts to enlist American support for the liberation of their nation intensified after the outbreak of World War II. Almost immediately, several exile groups appealed to the State Department for recognition and assistance. Invariably, they stressed Korea's readiness for independence, Theodore Roosevelt's betrayal of Korea, and the need for vigorous action to resist Japanese imperialism. Dr. Edward Lim appealed to the United States "not to discourage us again." One particularly active Korean exile was Kilsoo Haan, representative of the "Sino-Korean People's League." In May, 1941, Haan urged the United States to tighten its economic restrictions against Japan. He also pledged that the Korean guerilla army fighting in North China would continue to actively oppose Japanese expansion. Haan requested in return that the United States issue a public statement advocating Korean<sup>21</sup> independence and commending Korean guerilla actions.

Kim Koo, the president of the KPG, strongly opposed the attempts of Kilsoo Haan and other exiles to gain American support. While in exile in Chungking, the KPG conducted an organized campaign to gain Chinese and American recognition. Foreign Minister Tjo Sowang

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The Politics of Korean Nationalism, 270; Washburn, "Soviet Russia and the Korean Communist Party," 61.

<sup>21</sup> Lim to Hull, November 7, 1941, RG 59, 895.00/730, NA; Haan to Hull, May 13, 1941, RG 59, 895.00/727, NA.

appealed to Secretary of State Cordell Hull on several occasions for Lend Lease assistance to help the KPG fight for Korean independence. In June, 1941, Tjo sent papers of accreditation for Syngman Rhee, now the KPG's official representative in Washington.<sup>22</sup> The United States rejected this and all other Korean requests for recognition and assistance, maintaining a position of impartiality toward all rival exile factions. Franklin D. Roosevelt and his advisors realistically recognized that aid to the Korean exiles would not halt Japanese expansion and might even increase Japan's aggressive tendencies. Perhaps more important, President Roosevelt still hoped to avoid war.

Pearl Harbor forced the United States to alter its Asian policy and formulate a course of action that would foster peace and security in the Pacific. The KPG was determined to play a significant role in Washington's formulation of a policy toward Korea. Almost immediately, Syngman Rhee began to apply political pressure of the Administration to gain recognition. On December 9, 1941, Kim Koo formally requested that the United States recognize the KPG and extend Lend Lease assistance.<sup>23</sup>

Kim Koo's request was hardly unique. Countless exile

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<sup>22</sup>  
Tjo Sowang to Hull, June 6, 1941, RG 59, 895.00/729, NA.

<sup>23</sup>  
Kim Koo to Roosevelt, December 9, 1941, RG 59, 895.01/48, NA; Hornbeck Memorandum, April 20, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/102, NA; Oliver, Syngman Rhee, 181-182.

groups representing other countries inundated the State Department with requests for recognition. As a result, the Roosevelt Administration publicly announced a policy regarding all "free movements." The United States stressed that it would not tolerate any efforts to divide the American people and urged its citizens not to participate directly in any efforts to gain recognition for any particular exile group. The Administration also announced that it had not extended recognition to any particular group and would require<sup>24</sup> all exile leaders to register as foreign representatives.

State Department officials did, however, conduct investigations into each individual exile claim to legitimacy in anticipation of adopting a more definitive policy at some future date. For example, on December 18, Stanley K. Hornbeck and Alger Hiss conferred with Syngman Rhee regarding Korea. Rhee urged that the United States join China in recognizing the KPG. He discounted Haan's political influence in the Korean exile movement and criticized his rival for lack of judgment. Hiss responded that the United States could not alter its policy of impartiality until Washington had consulted not only China, but also the Soviet Union. He emphasized that Moscow possessed a major interest in the fate of Korea, but could not engage in consultations until it was

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"Policy Regarding 'Free Movements' in the United States," December 10, 1941, Department of State Bulletin, V, 129 (December 13, 1941), 519-520.

at war with Japan.<sup>25</sup> Thus, Rhee was disappointed in his early attempts to influence American policy.

Rhee was able to enlist the support of some American political leaders, among them Pennsylvania Congressman Charles I. Faddis. Faddis wrote to Hull urging recognition of the KPG and arguing that such action would "assist in bringing wholly [sic] war of all the down trod oriental peoples against the Japanese . . . ." Hull's response was cordial, but non-committal.<sup>26</sup> Several private American citizens were also active in seeking American support for Kim Koo's regime. John W. Staggers and Jay Jerome Williams were particularly prominent in pressing the Administration, but remained unable to alter the American stance. The State Department dismissed recognition as an impossibility at that time, but approved continued contacts with Rhee. American officials urged Staggers and Williams to keep the government informed on the KPG's activities.<sup>27</sup>

Roosevelt's advisors refused to commit themselves for good reason. As Hornbeck explained, recognition of the KPG "might involve responsibilities which in the light of later events it might have been better for this Government not to

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<sup>25</sup> Hiss Memorandum, December 18, 1941, RG 59, 895.01/60-5/26, NA; Oliver argues that Hiss was acting under orders from Moscow in opposing Rhee, Syngman Rhee, 178.

<sup>26</sup> Faddis to Hull and Hull to Faddis, December 8, 1941, RG 59, 895.01/49, NA.

<sup>27</sup> Salisbury Memorandum, December 23, 1941, RG 59, 895.01/52½, NA.

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 have assumed." As a result, the State Department returned Rhee's credentials to Tjo Sowang without comment. In a letter to Iowa Senator Guy Gillette, Secretary Hull elaborated upon the reasons for non-recognition. Hull pointed out that precipitate action regarding Korea might endanger the lives of American citizens still located inside the Japanese Empire. In addition, the United States did not intend to formulate a specific policy on Korea until it consulted the other Allies. Such explanations never satisfied Kim Koo and Rhee. The KPG continued to stress the moral obligations of the United States under the treaty of 1882 and the military contribution that Koreans in China could make to the war effort with Lend Lease aid.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the appearance of inaction, the State Department was formulating a more definite approach toward Korea. In a crucial memorandum written in February, 1942, William R. Langdon of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs provided the foundation for American wartime policy. Langdon noted that the vast majority of Koreans were poor and illiterate, politically inexperienced, and economically backward. After forty years of domination, only the older Koreans could even remember freedom. One can pinpoint the origins of American

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Hornbeck Memorandum, December 20, 1941, RG 59, 895.01/54, NA.

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Hull to Gillette, January 6, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/59, NA; Gillette had written Hull after Rhee had requested his support for recognition of the KPG. Oliver, Syngman Rhee, 176.

support for a Korean trusteeship in Langdon's observation that "for a generation at least Korea would have to be protected, guided, and aided to modern statehood by the great powers." Langdon went on to suggest that the United States should focus attention on supporting those Korean exiles with proven ties inside Korea and avoid being "stampeded" into recognition of any "shadow organization." Even an American promise of postwar independence would be ill-advised, since such action "would only do the Korean cause harm, give the Japanese and their allies a good laugh, and irritate our own friends if we promised independence to one Asiatic people as we were being pushed out of our own possessions in Asia by the Japanese."

Roosevelt's awareness of the events surrounding Korea during the early stages of the war remains in doubt. Yet, the President did refer to the Korea "experience of enslavement" under Japan in his radio address of February 23, 1942. Roosevelt then guaranteed that the promise of national self-determination enunciated in the Atlantic Charter applied "to the whole world . . . ." Significantly, the statement corresponded precisely with Langdon's recommendation that the United States, "until the situation becomes clearer, not go beyond referring . . . to the third principle for a better world proclaimed in the joint Anglo-American declaration of

August 14, 1941, namely our 'respect of the right of all people's to choose the form of government under which they will live' and our 'wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly<sup>31</sup> deprived of them.'"

## IV

Roosevelt and his advisors thus decided at an early date not to support the immediate independence of Korea, because of Korean factionalism and political inexperience. Instead, American policy would seek to foster Korean unity in making positive contributions to the defeat of Japan. Nevertheless, factionalism within the Korean exile movement remained intense. In January, 1942, Staggers demanded that Haan direct all his activities through the "Korean Commission" of Syngman Rhee, alleging that the United States had recognized Rhee as the legitimate representative of the Korean government in exile. Haan immediately sought verification. Hornbeck and Under-Secretary of State Sumner Welles quickly disavowed Staggers' allegations and reaffirmed American impartiality.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.; Roosevelt, Radio Address, February 23, 1942, DSB, VI, 140 (February 28, 1942), 183-188.

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<sup>32</sup> Salisbury Memorandum, March 14 and 31, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/86, NA; Staggers to Haan, January 30, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/60-10/26, NA; Hornbeck and Welles to Haan, February 9, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/92, NA.

After Staggers' scheme failed, Rhee decided to approach Hull again with a formal request for recognition. In response, Assistant Secretary of State Adolph A. Berle referred Rhee to the stated American policy of non-recognition of all "free movements." Rhee's consternation was apparent, as he denied that the policy bore any relationship to the KPG and demanded consideration under the terms of the treaty of 1882.<sup>33</sup> Korean leaders now turned to the American public in an effort to stimulate support for the KPG. On February 28, 1942, a three day "Liberty Conference" opened in Washington, D.C., which publicized the KPG's demand for recognition. Welles perceived the need for some clarification and, during a March press conference, stated his sympathy for all free movements. He noted, however, that the Korean case involved complex problems that required delay. The United States had Korea under consideration and would announce any policy change.<sup>34</sup>

Rhee's strategy focused on enlisting the support of private American citizens who possessed influence in the

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Rhee to Hull, February 7, 1942, Berle to Rhee, February 19, 1942, and Rhee to Berle, March 24, 1942, FRUS, 1942, Vol. I: General, The British Commonwealth, the Far East (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960), 859-863.

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Hornbeck and Langdon attended the Conference and commented later that it "impressed one as a publicity stunt." Memorandum on Korean Liberty Conference, March 3, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/84, NA; New York Times, March 1, 1942, 10:1-3 and March 2, 1942, 7:7; Washington Post, March 1, 1942, 11:4; Welles Press Conference Remarks, March 2, 1942, FRUS, 1942, Vol. I, 864; New York Times, March 3, 1942, 7:6.

Roosevelt Administration. One such individual was James H. R. Cromwell, former ambassador to Canada, who became particularly outspoken in his advocacy of the KPG. Cromwell, in a letter to Hull, insisted that the United States was refusing to honor its treaty commitments to Korea and thus discrediting itself in Asia. After insisting that the services of Korean patriots were not for sale, he proceeded to contradict himself and level a thinly disguised threat:

The young Koreans are straining at the leash but Dr. Rhee will not release them. Not until the State Department, by recognizing the defacto government of the Republic of Korea, fulfills the pledge of the President . . . to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.

Hull responded that the United States would not engage in any action that deprived captive peoples of the freedom of choice. After noting Cromwell's attempt at blackmail, Hull observed that the KPG could support the Atlantic Charter regardless of American action on recognition.<sup>35</sup>

Cromwell continued, however, to press the United States for recognition of the Kim Koo regime. Unable to gain Hull's support, he turned to his old friend Adolph Berle and pleaded for Berle to propose a program for positive support to the KPG. Cromwell termed American inaction "criminal

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<sup>35</sup> Cromwell to Hull, May 5, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/123, NA; Hull to Cromwell, July 3, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/137, NA; Haan immediately exploited the situation, assuring the State Department that "true Korean patriots" would fight Japan to the death and did not expect independence on a "silver platter," July 3, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/137, NA.

negligence," since it would be inexpensive to organize and inaugurate a disciplined and systematic campaign of sabotage and subversion inside Korea. As Cromwell pointed out, "Adolph, you are about the only firecracker I know in the State Department—why don't you do it?" Cromwell insisted that implementation of his plan would create a "bonfire" in Japan's "backyard."<sup>36</sup>

Berle referred Cromwell's proposal to the Joint Intelligence Committee for consideration on July 31, 1942. The Committee report reaffirmed opposition to recognition, but did support the maintenance of contacts with various Korean nationalist groups. At the appropriate time, the United States might consider a plan for espionage and sabotage. The report thus recommended contacting General Joseph Stilwell in China for comments on the plan's feasibility.<sup>37</sup>

In response, Stilwell completely rejected Cromwell's scheme, arguing that it would be a waste of money, provide no tangible benefits, and entail serious political consequences. Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall also opposed recognition of the KPG, observing that it would be "doubtful policy to blindly pick some one group . . . , thus antagonizing the other groups . . . which might emerge

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Cromwell to Berle, July 17, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/153, NA; Cromwell to Berle, July 27, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/165, NA.

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Berle to Cromwell, July 31, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/165, NA; JIC Report 71, August 9, 1942, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Archives, Record Group 218, CCS 092 Korea (8-5-42), National Archives, Washington, D.C.

later." Thus, the Combined Chiefs of Staff joined in rejecting Cromwell's proposal and informed Berle of the decision on September 24, 1942. These American military leaders urged Berle to explain to the KPG's supporters that recognition alone could not produce a rebellion in Korea. Even if such an uprising did occur, they reasoned, Japan<sup>38</sup> would easily quell such a poorly prepared operation.

Hornbeck completely agreed with the appraisal of the American military leaders, emphasizing that at such a difficult stage in the war the United States could spare little material for any free movements. As a result, he expressed admiration for the Korean guerillas operating in Siberia and Manchuria. Although these Korean exiles demonstrated an affection for Communist ideology, Hornbeck admired their willingness to fight for freedom without American assistance. In contrast, the old conservatives in Chungking appeared<sup>39</sup> self-seeking and ambitious. Such conclusions found substantiation in the observations of American diplomats and missionaries fleeing Korea aboard the Gripsholm during the summer of 1942. These individuals stressed the totality of Japanese control and the virtual incapacity of Koreans for self-government, let alone hostile action against the

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<sup>38</sup> Stilwell to War, August 15, 1942, Marshall Memorandum, August 11, 1942, and CCS to Berle, September 24, 1942, RG 218, CCS 092 Korea (8-5-42), NA.

<sup>39</sup> Hornbeck Memorandum, August 13, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/98, NA; Haan to Hornbeck, July 24, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/156, NA.

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Japanese.

Arthur B. Emmons III, prewar Vice Consul in Seoul, played a significant role in confirming America's determination to negotiate a trusteeship for Korea. Upon his return on the Gripsholm, Emmons submitted a memorandum emphasizing that the isolation and economic backwardness of the average Korean produced incredible political apathy. At the same time, Korea suffered from a precarious geographic position among China, Japan, and Russia. One-power dominance or prolonged international intrigue, Emmons argued, would probably mark Korea's future "unless such pressure could be neutralized by some effective form of international agreement to which Far Eastern Countries concerned would give their sincere effective support."<sup>41</sup> Once again, available information and expert analysis dictated non-recognition of the KPG and impartiality toward all Korean exile groups.

## V

Information originating in Chungking regarding the Korean exile movement was particularly important in the formulation of American policy. Throughout 1942, Ambassador Clarence Gauss noted in his cables to Hull the extreme

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Hamilton to Berle, July 23, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/156A, NA; Oliver insists that all Americans in Seoul supported Rhee's claim of popularity, Syngman Rhee, 183.

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Emmons Memorandum, August 14, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/157, NA.

factionalism in the KPG. At the same time, he suspected that Chiang Kai-shek possessed undue influence over Kim Koo and his supporters, because of Tjo Sowang's evasive and secretive responses to questions pertaining to the KPG's financial resources. Gauss stressed that the KPG suffered from a lack of organization and a concrete plan of action for achieving independence. Hull informed Gauss in March, 1942, that the United States and Great Britain had agreed to defer action on Korea until the onset of Allied military victory in the Pacific.<sup>42</sup>

Evidently, the Administration had not consulted Chiang on Korean policy. Rumors began to emerge that the Chinese intended to recognize the KPG and extend a promise of post-war independence. Welles thus cabled Gauss requesting information. The American Ambassador's response confirmed the rumors as accurate, but stressed the unlikelihood of precipitate action.<sup>43</sup> Gauss had already forwarded a memorandum in which John Stewart Service emphasized the increasing factionalism in the KPG, as well as its lack of significant support inside Korea. In view of the circumstances, Gauss completely supported the American policy of delay, but did stress the need for consultation with China prior to any

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<sup>42</sup> Gauss to Hull, January 3, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/56, NA; Gauss to Hull, March 17, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/81, NA; Hull to Gauss, March 20, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/56, NA.

<sup>43</sup> Welles to Gauss, March 25, 1942, Gauss to Welles, March 28, 1942, FRUS, 1942, China (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1956), 730-732.

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reversal in policy.

Chiang applied heavy pressure on the United States to force the abandonment of an impartial posture. On April 8, Chinese foreign minister T.V. Soong proposed to Roosevelt that the Allies create and equip a "Korean People's Army" to engage in sabotage and espionage inside Korea. At the same time, the Allies would publicly recognize the KPG as Korea's legitimate government and promise Korean independence at the end of the war. Roosevelt referred the proposal to Welles for comment and the subsequent response conformed to Langdon's recommendations. While Welles admitted that support for an irregular Korean army possessed some merit, he stressed the lack of realism in a promise of independence and the extreme factionalism in the Korean exile movement.<sup>45</sup>

Welles relied upon Hornbeck's judgment in opposing Soong's plan. Hornbeck drew up a memorandum stressing that Koreans were incapable of immediate postwar self-government. In all probability, considerable political chaos would prevail in Korea at the end of the war. He thus recommended some form of "dominion status" prior to complete independence. For the present, the proper course of action was delay, since "the work of the peacemakers [should] be not impeded by

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<sup>44</sup>  
Gauss to Hull, March 25, 1942, Enclosure 1, Service Memorandum, RG 59, 895.01/104, NA; Gauss to Welles, FRUS, 1942, Vol. I, 866-867.

<sup>45</sup>  
Soong to Roosevelt, April 8, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/96<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>, NA; FRUS, 1942, Vol. I, 868-869; Welles to Roosevelt, April 13, 1942, FRUS, 1942, Vol. I, 870-871.

hampering antecedent commitments to a greater extent than  
<sup>46</sup>  
 is necessary."

The Pacific War Council considered the matter of Korean recognition on April 15, 1942. Although the State Department had drafted a statement promising independence, the Administration decided to postpone action until Korean exiles gained more unity and the military situation improved. In apprising Roosevelt of the decision, Hull emphasized the dubious nature of the KPG's support inside Korea and the need to avoid any action depriving the Koreans of freedom of  
<sup>47</sup>  
 choice. Hull had already cabled to Gauss instructions to urge Chiang to delay action on Korea, since "parallel and cooperative action . . . would be desirable so far as practical." China agreed to wait, but continued to urge  
<sup>48</sup>  
 recognition of the KPG as soon as possible.

China's position on Korea was a reflection of Chiang's fears of Soviet intentions. He was well aware of Soviet and Chinese Communist support, both moral and financial, to the Korean guerillas fighting in northern China. Chinese leaders recognized that when Moscow entered the war against

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<sup>46</sup>  
 Hornbeck Memorandum, April 11, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/96<sup>2</sup>/3. NA; Hamilton Memorandum, April 25, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/118<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>, NA.

<sup>47</sup>  
 Elsey Memorandum, August 6, 1948, RG 59, 895.01/8-648, NA; Hull to Roosevelt, April 29, 1942, FRUS, 1942, Vol. I, 873.

<sup>48</sup>  
 Hull to Gauss, April 11, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/96, NA; Gauss to Hull, April 18, 1942, FRUS, 1942, Vol. I, 873.

Japan, Stalin would utilize the Korean exiles in Siberia and Manchuria as a vehicle for exerting influence inside Korea after the war ended. At a very early date, China and the KFG stressed Soviet designs on Korea in urging an end to American impartiality.<sup>49</sup> Yet, petty political intrigues and personal differences continued to plague Kim Koo's regime. In the absence of unity, the United States wisely refused to support recognition or material aid to any Korean exile group.<sup>50</sup>

Interestingly enough, the United States was far more concerned about Chinese rather than Soviet aspirations in Korea during the early years of World War II. Chiang and T.V. Soong never ceased emphasizing China's determination that Korea would be free and independent. Chinese leaders insisted that they sought international responsibility, not domination, in the postwar world.<sup>51</sup> Yet, the United States found ample reason for doubting China's motives. In 1942, Kim Koo granted Chiang control over his military forces in return for financial assistance. Rumors spread that the

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Gauss to Welles, April 10, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/96, NA; Hornbeck Conversation with Staggers, March 27, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/101, NA; Reverend Donald Grey Barnhouse to Berle, April 10, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/103½, NA.

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Hull to Gauss, May 8, 1942, Gauss to Hull, May 13, 1942, FRUS, 1942, Vol. I, 876-877; Hull to Gauss, May 6, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/102, NA; Gauss to Hull, May 16, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/130, NA; Vincent Memorandum, May 1942, 895.01/148, NA.

51

U. Alexis Johnson Comments, in E.W. Koons to H.B. Quarton, August 13, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/157, NA; Gauss to Hull, November 5, 1942, FRUS, China, 1942, 740; New York Times, October 12, 1942, 9:6.

agreement also bound "Korea to China in any postwar scheme  
<sup>52</sup>  
 in the Orient."

American diplomats in Chungking immediately requested information from the KPG regarding the terms of their arrangement with Chiang. Tjo Sowang explained to Vice Consul O. Edmund Clubb that the KPG's financial limitations necessitated Korean dependence on China. He then suggested that Kim Koo could terminate the relationship if the United States agreed to extend Lend Lease assistance. Tjo also insisted that factionalism in the exile movement had ended and all Koreans now supported the KPG. He expressed regret over the "misunderstanding" which had resulted from the "alleged" threat that the KPG would not participate in the war unless it received recognition. Korean exiles were determined to destroy Japan and placed no price tag on support for the Allied cause.  
<sup>53</sup>

Tjo Sowang's argument failed to convince American representatives in Chungking. All available evidence indicated that Kim Koo's political support was tenuous at best.

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<sup>52</sup>  
 Gauss to Hull, June 19, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/148, NA; Gauss to Hull, December 11, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/228, NA contains the complete text of the Sino-Korean military agreement; Gauss to Hull, November 25, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/199, NA; Gauss to Hull, January 15, 1943, RG 59, 895.01/213, NA; Lee, The Politics of Korean Nationalism, 222-224.

<sup>53</sup>  
 Gauss to Hull, November 25, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/199, NA; Gauss to Hull, December 9, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/197, NA; New York Times, October 26, 1942, 2:6; Tjo Sowang to Hull, October 1, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/183, NA; Roy P. McNair, Jr., October 28, 1942, "Analysis of Political Parties," RG 226, OSS Report 24638, NA.

In addition, Chinese influence in the KPG continued to grow. Late in 1942, Chiang created a "Sino-Korean Cultural Association" which Gauss suspected was intended to foster Chinese control over postwar development of Korea. The Roosevelt Administration agreed that Chiang was qualified to assist in the formation of Allied policy on Korea. In fact, John Carter Vincent suggested that the United States urge Chiang to press the KPG to broaden its support. China's historic national interest in the Korean peninsula did not, however, justify undue influence in the exile movement, let alone outright control.<sup>54</sup>

## VI

Korea's future depended more upon Allied cooperation during and after World War II than on the intrigues of Korean exiles in China and the United States. If Korea was to obtain self-government, the Allies would have to negotiate an agreement that protected the interests of all nations directly involved in the peninsula. Roosevelt believed that China's role would be crucial to the success of American policy in Korea and elsewhere in Asia. Chiang had to develop sufficient power to participate in an active and meaningful manner for the preservation of peace in Asia.

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Gauss to Hull, December 19, 1942, FRUS, 1942, China, 748; Dae-sook Suh, "A Preconceived Formula for Sovietization," in Hammond, 476; Vincent Memorandum, May 1942, 895.01/148, NA.

Wartime policy toward Korea effectively illustrates Roosevelt's approach toward the achievement of American security interests in Asia. In a letter written to Chiang (which Roosevelt revised and approved), Owen Lattimore stressed the importance of China as a "policeman" in Asia. He warned Chiang, however, that the views of the Soviet Union were extremely important. As a result, "it would be undesirable to exclude Russia from such problems as the independence of Korea," since such action would only create fresh tensions.<sup>55</sup>

American leaders began to devote attention to the development of specific plans for postwar reconstruction of Asia during the fall of 1942. The Division of Far Eastern Affairs proposed that China, New Zealand, and the United States appoint representatives to a committee that would formulate a united Allied policy on Korea. This committee would seek "to cooperate with the Korean people in setting up and establishing a national government of Korea and . . . to assist in forming a temporary trusteeship under which there would be given advice and technical assistance." State Department officials also proposed measures for policy coordination with the Soviet Union.<sup>56</sup>

Trusteeship thus emerged at an early date as the central

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<sup>55</sup>  
Draft Letter, Lattimore to Chiang, December 18, 1942, FRUS, 1942, China, 186-187.

<sup>56</sup>  
Far Eastern Affairs Memorandum, October 10, 1942, RG 59, 895.00/840, NA.

feature of Roosevelt's approach to the Korean issue. The President even issued a public statement indicating that the Philippine experience would provide the model for the future development of small nations in Asia. He observed that American policy toward the Philippines was

based on two important factors. The first is that there be a period of preparation, through the dissemination of education and the recognition and fulfillment of physical and social and economic needs. The second is that there be a period of training for ultimate independent sovereignty, through the practice of more and more self-government, beginning with local government and passing on through various steps to complete statehood.

Roosevelt argued that the stability of independence depended upon training and experience in self-government.<sup>57</sup> Clearly, the Administration intended to rely on the Philippine model in formulating a plan on trusteeship for Korea.

Significantly, the Institute of World Affairs provided something of a trial balloon for Roosevelt's Korea policy. In December, 1942, the organization recommended trusteeship for Korea, producing an exile reaction that was immediate and hostile. The KPG denounced the proposal as "Japanese-inspired" and promised to resist any postwar mandatory status. Kim Koo insisted that Korea "must secure her . . . absolute independence." Tjo Sowang protested that the decision "does not accord with the Atlantic Charter, is

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Franklin D. Roosevelt, Radio Address, in The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, edited by Samuel I. Rosenman, Vol. XIV, 1942 (New York: Random House, 1950), 475.

against the will of 30,000,000 Koreans and ever endangers peace in Eastern Asia." Both Syngman Rhee and Kilssoo Haan argued that Koreans had earned immediate postwar independence through resisting Japanese imperialism. Roosevelt definitely read these protests and was aware at an early date that the most vocal Korean exiles opposed the heart of his Korean policy. Yet, Korean exiles failed to alter the President's commitment to trusteeship.<sup>58</sup>

Roosevelt's policy in Asia also alarmed Great Britain, but for different reasons. Winston Churchill had made it clear that the British Empire would remain intact after the war ended. As a result, Lord Halifax submitted a proposal on Allied policy in colonial areas to the United States in February, 1943. Halifax recommended that the Allies issue a declaration promising the destruction of the Axis aggressors and the creation of postwar international peace. He then noted that, while some colonial peoples were sufficiently advanced to ensure their own security and prosperity, others required experience in self-government and international guidance prior to independence.<sup>59</sup>

Britain's plan provided for Allied designation of

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<sup>58</sup>  
New York Times, December 23, 1942; Gauss to Hull, December 29, 1942, RG 59, 895.01/207; Vincent to Hull, May 11, 1943, RG 59, 895.01/251, NA; Gauss to Hull, June 11, 1943, RG 59, 895.01/269, NA; Rhee to Roosevelt, May 15, 1943, RG 59, 895.01/257, NA; Roosevelt to Rhee, May 12, 1943, RG 59, 895.01/256, NA.

<sup>59</sup>  
 Halifax to Hull, February 4, 1943, Cordell Hull Papers, Reel 30, Box 59, Folder 216, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

"trustee" nations to develop social, economic, and political institutions in the more backward colonial areas in the interests of world peace and commercial activity. The trustee nation and other interested countries would comprise a "Regional Commission" under an international organization that would provide for consultation and collaboration in the furtherance of the interests of the colonial people involved and the international community. Colonial policy was an important item on the agenda for Anglo-American discussion in March, 1943, when British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden visited Washington.

Eden conferred primarily with Roosevelt, Welles, and Harry Hopkins while in the United States. Secretary Hull was determined, however, to discuss the Halifax proposal and met with Eden privately on March 22. After Eden summarized the British position, Hull stressed that any colonial policy had to focus on the development of sufficient experience in self-government to guarantee complete independence without external interference of any kind. Thus, Hull believed that Britain's proposal did not go far enough.<sup>60</sup>

Hull then presented an alternate plan which emphasized maximum local participation in self-government and rapid

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Herbert Feis, Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin: The War They Waged and the Peace They Sought (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 120; Hull Memorandum, March 22, 1943, FRUS, 1943, Vol. III: The British Commonwealth, Eastern Europe, the Far East (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1963), 28-34; Cordell Hull, The Memoirs of Cordell Hull, Vol. II (New York: Macmillan, 1948), 1236.

realization of independence. The trusteeship machinery largely followed the British proposal, but increased the supervisory powers of the international organization.<sup>61</sup> During his discussions with Roosevelt that same day, Eden expressed concern over too broad an application of trusteeship and overreliance on China's role in postwar affairs. Hopkins noted later the divergence of opinion between the United States and Britain, when he observed that "it becomes clearer all the time that Eden thinks very little of trusteeship and would rather have the full responsibility in the hands of one country."<sup>62</sup>

On March 27, Roosevelt expressed to Eden his general approval of Hull's proposal. The President stressed that the Allied policy toward dependent peoples had to possess universal applicability. Roosevelt favored international control over Indochina and the Japanese mandated islands. In addition, "Korea might be placed under an international trusteeship with China, the United States, and one or two other countries participating."<sup>63</sup> Although Eden reacted favorably to Roosevelt's comments, he insisted that Hull's

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U.S. Draft Declaration, March 9, 1943, FRUS, 1943, Vol. I: General (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1963), 747-749; Hull, Memoirs, 1235-1236.

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Hopkins Memorandum, March 22, 1943, FRUS, 1943, Vol. III, 34-36.

63

Hull, Memoirs, 1234 and 1595-1596; Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, On Active Service in Peace and War (New York: Harper and Bros., 1947), 599-600; Hull Memorandum, March 27, 1943, FRUS, 1943, Vol. III, 37; Feis, Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, 124.

proposal was not the final word. Both Hopkins and Hull expressed optimism, believing that Britain would not demand a restoration of colonial rule in all areas.<sup>64</sup>

In reality, the American proposal deeply disturbed Eden, who feared its wider implications for the British Empire. Eden decided nevertheless to hold his criticism in reserve until a later date. Roosevelt, in his public evaluation of the conference, noted the inconclusive nature of the results. Yet, the ambiguity of the outcome permitted the United States to develop comprehensive plans for a Korean trusteeship.<sup>65</sup> In April, the State Department produced a specific plan providing for machinery to implement, supervise, and finance a program of international control in dependent areas. The memorandum stated that Korea was one of several areas suitable for trusteeship and thus would "be temporarily administered by the Council, anticipating independence probably with close economic ties with China."<sup>66</sup>

Obviously, the State Department plan required that the United States fully inform China of the results of the Roosevelt-Eden discussions. On March 29, Welles informed

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<sup>64</sup>

Hopkins Memorandum, March 27, 1943 and Hull Memorandum, March 29, 1943, FRUS, 1943, Vol. III, 39-40.

<sup>65</sup>

Anthony Eden, The Reckoning (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), 595; Roosevelt Press Conference Remarks, March 30, 1943, in Rosenman, Vol. XV, 1943, 132-143.

<sup>66</sup>

Memorandum on International Trusteeship, April 15, 1943, FRUS, The Conferences at Washington and Quebec 1943 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1970), 720-726.

T.V. Soong that the United States and Britain had agreed to treat China as a major power after the war and support the return of Formosa to China. He then explained that Roosevelt and Eden were in agreement that Korea would become independent only after a period of international trusteeship. Berle later informed Soong that the Allies could not recognize the KPG because it lacked popular support inside Korea. Thus,<sup>67</sup> Berle reaffirmed the American policy of impartial delay.

## VII

Roosevelt and his advisors had firmly tied American policy in Korea to trusteeship early in 1943, but Washington never clearly vocalized the decision. The State Department would only issue a public promise that the Allies intended to strip Korea from Japan and accord it national self-determination at the end of the war.<sup>68</sup> Such a policy offered little to the KPG, but Kim Koo had some reason for optimism. Late in 1942, Rhee had been able to enlist the support of Colonel Preston Goodfellow of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Together Rhee and Goodfellow formulated a plan to recruit, train, and equip one hundred Koreans for

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<sup>67</sup>

Welles Memorandum, March 29, 1943, FRUS, 1943, China (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1957), 845; Hamilton Memorandum, April 22, 1943 and Berle Memorandum, April 22, 1943, FRUS, 1943, Vol. III, 1090-1092.

<sup>68</sup>

Welles, Press Conference Remarks, New York Times, April 8, 1943, 11:1; Territorial Committee, Minutes, July 16, 1943, Hull Papers, Reel 49, Box 85-86, Folder 366, LOC.

espionage and sabotage activities inside Korea. Goodfellow then urged the State Department to adopt the program and recognize the KPG, warning that any delay "might be of benefit to the Soviet Union in any plans the latter might have in respect to Korea."<sup>69</sup>

State Department officials quickly rejected Goodfellow's plan, doubting the unity and ability of the Kim Koo regime. More important, the United States feared that "to try to steal a march on the Soviet Union might create fresh difficulties." Hull was determined to maintain impartiality and even urged Congress not to pass resolutions supporting recognition of the KPG. Such action, he argued, would serve "no useful purpose . . . but create confusion, misunderstanding, and embarrassment . . ."<sup>70</sup> Yet, Allied military victories against Japan during 1943 forced the United States to consider more seriously the impact of Soviet entry into the Pacific war.

In August, 1943, Hornbeck prepared a memorandum outlining Soviet objectives in Asia. He argued that Stalin placed paramount importance on Russian national security and sought "the creation of well disposed and ideologically

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Rhee to Goodfellow, October 10, 1942, and Goodfellow to War, February 17, 1943, RG 59, 895.01/231, NA; Oliver, Syngman Rhee, 185.

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Hamilton Memorandum, February 26, 1943, RG 59, 895.01/218, NA; Hull to Sol Bloom, April 1, 1943, RG 59, 895.01/232, NA; Hull to Tom Connally, June 18, 1943, RG 59, 895.01/263, NA.

sympathetic governments in nearby areas." Hornbeck noted that Moscow maintained close ties with Korean guerillas in Siberia and thus possessed an excellent vehicle for exerting influence in Korea. In a letter to Hull, Hornbeck indicated the danger inherent in the Korean situation:

The future of Korea, . . . , will, it is believed, be of paramount importance to Soviet Russia and to China. The Soviet Union may be expected to exert efforts to assure that the future government of Korea is favorably disposed and ideologically sympathetic to the Government of the U.S.S.R. Such a policy, if vigorously pursued by the U.S.S.R., would almost certainly conflict with Chinese policy in regard to Korea.

Thus, Soviet agreement to trusteeship, not to mention that of China and Britain, took on added importance.<sup>71</sup>

While the Roosevelt Administration favored trusteeship in some areas for moral reasons, strategic considerations dominated American thinking in regard to Korea. Only an international agreement to neutralize Korea would prevent the resumption of postwar conflict in that area and ensure peace. Chiang certainly recognized the Soviet challenge and instructed Soong during the fall of 1943 to support a Korean trusteeship. Thus, the Roosevelt Administration embarked on a determined attempt to obtain an agreement among the major powers in support of trusteeship.<sup>72</sup>

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Hornbeck Memorandum, August 19, 1943, Hull Papers, Reel 23, Box 51-52, Folder 159, LOC; Hornbeck to Hull, September 30, 1943, Hull Papers, Reel 24, Box 52-53, Folder 160, LOC.

<sup>72</sup>

Hornbeck to Hull, October 1, 1943, Hull Papers,

Hull immediately experienced difficulties with the British at the First Quebec Conference in August, 1943. After twice refusing to discuss the trusteeship issue, Eden finally stated his opposition to the emphasis on "independence" in the American proposal. Despite the liberty to request independence at any time, he argued, several British Dominions preferred continued imperial ties. Hull assured Eden that the United States did not favor immediate independence, but believed it necessary to emphasize freedom as the ultimate objective. Eden remained unmoved and Britain<sup>73</sup> opposed Hull's plan for the duration of the war.

In October, 1943, Hull traveled to Moscow for a meeting of the Allied foreign ministers. Prior to his departure, Roosevelt instructed his Secretary of State to gain support<sup>74</sup> for wide application of the trusteeship principle. The President hoped that through publicizing the plan, popular support would force British, Chinese, and Russian compliance.

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Reel 24, Box 52-53, Folder 160, LOC; In a recent dissertation, William G. Morris overemphasizes moralism and ethnocentrism in explaining American support for a Korean trusteeship, "The Korean Trusteeship 1941-1947," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Texas, 1975; Atcheson to Hull, August 20, 1943, RG 59, 895.01/286, NA; Hornbeck Memorandum, September 28, 1943, FRUS, 1943, China, 133-136.

73

Hull Memorandum, August 20, 1943, Pasvolsky Memorandum, August 18, 1943, and Hull Memorandum August 21, 1943; Conference Notes, August 21, 1943, FRUS, Conferences at Washington and Quebec, 914, 919, 717, and 926-927; Hull, Memoirs, 1237-1238.

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Pasvolsky Memorandum, October 3, 1943, FRUS, 1943, Vol. I, 542-543; Hull, Memoirs, 1304-1305 and 1596.

Thus, on October 29, Hull raised the issue of dependent peoples and distributed his proposal. He expressed regret that there would not be enough time to discuss colonial policy in depth. Eden then reminded Hull that Britain had expressed opposition to his plan just three days earlier. Molotov, on the other hand, agreed that the issue was of vital importance and deserved study and discussion.<sup>75</sup> As a result, the other Allies could expect the United States to raise the issue of trusteeship during the upcoming meetings at Cairo and Teheran in November, 1943.

Roosevelt arrived at Cairo determined to obtain British and Chinese support for a three-power trusteeship for Korea and was confident of Chiang's support.<sup>76</sup> On November 23, however, Chiang strongly supported the issuance of an immediate statement promising Korean independence. This apparently revived Roosevelt's apprehensions, since he expressed concern over China's "wide aspirations" to Winston Churchill the following day. Roosevelt suspected that Chiang sought military occupation of Korea at the end of

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<sup>75</sup> Feis, Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, 214-215; Admiral William D. Leahy never accepted the wisdom of universal application of trusteeship, particularly for Japanese mandated islands, I Was There (New York: McGraw Hill, 1950), 210 and 258. Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson and Marshall agreed; Conference Notes, October 29, 1943, FRUS, 1943, General, 666-667; Hull, Memoirs, 1305.

<sup>76</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, November 11, 1943, FRUS, The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran 1943 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), 257; Hopkins stated in a separate memorandum of November 23 that it was consistent with Soviet policy to expect Stalin's support, 376.

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the war.

Despite such suspicions, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Chiang agreed to issue the famous "Cairo Declaration" which promised the liquidation of the Japanese Empire and the restoration of China's control over Manchuria and Formosa. With respect to Korea, the Cairo Declaration stated that the Allies, "mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent."<sup>78</sup> While the Allies may have drawn the other sections of the Declaration in haste, the provision regarding Korea was the product of considerable American preparation. Allied policy avoided any reference specifically to trusteeship, since the United States expected a hostile Korean reaction. In addition, the United States had not formulated a complete and detailed proposal.

Many scholars have criticized Roosevelt for including the phrase "in due course" in the Cairo Declaration, arguing that the United States should have satisfied Korean demands for immediate postwar independence. Even Hull criticized Roosevelt for not consulting the Soviet Union and appearing to justify Korean fears of Chinese intentions.<sup>79</sup> In reality,

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<sup>77</sup> Conference Notes, November 23, 1943, and Roosevelt-Churchill Meeting, November 24, 1943, FRUS, The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 334 and 389.

<sup>78</sup> DSB, IX, No. 232 (January 4, 1944), 393; Hopkins composed the Korean section and Roosevelt substituted "in due course" for "at the proper moment," FRUS, The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 403.

<sup>79</sup> Soon-sung Cho, Korea in World Politics: An

the President recognized that only an Allied agreement would guarantee postwar peace and security in Asia. Realizing that Chiang's aspirations in Korea would alarm Stalin, Roosevelt pursued an international trusteeship to reassure<sup>80</sup> both nations and preserve Korean independence.

Thus, Roosevelt left Cairo for Teheran with the intention of gaining Stalin's assent for the Cairo Declaration and a Korean trusteeship. On November 30, Stalin indicated that, although he could make no commitments, he approved of the Far Eastern Communiqué. Roosevelt later suggested that Stalin had specifically agreed that "the Koreans are not yet capable of exercising and maintaining independent government and that they should be placed under<sup>81</sup> a 40 year tutelage." Roosevelt must have been pleased about Korean policy when he left Teheran; the Allies now appeared united in support for trusteeship.

Upon his return to Washington, Roosevelt explained that the Cairo Declaration involved "the restoration of

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Evaluation of American Responsibility (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 23; Cho is clearly in error when he argues that Roosevelt did not consult his advisors about Korea. Langdon, Hornbeck, and even Hull supported the trusteeship policy as the best means for ensuring Korean independence; Hull, Memoirs, 1584.

<sup>80</sup>

Herbert Feis, The China Tangle (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 106.

<sup>81</sup>

Conference Notes, November 30, 1943 and Pacific Council Notes, January 12, 1944, FRUS, The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 566 and 869; Cho speculates that Roosevelt equated Korea with the Philippines and thus revealed his "lack of insight," Korea in World Politics, 23.

stolen property to its rightful owners and the recognition of the rights of millions of people in the Far East to build up their own forms of self-government without molestation." Despite Roosevelt's promise of eventual independence, the Korean exile movement was extremely dissatisfied with the phrase "in due course" and demanded a clarification. Kim Koo denounced the Cairo Declaration as disgraceful and insulting, since it meant a continuation of outside control. Kilsoo Haan joined the leaders of the KPG in demanding immediate independence and self-government for Korea after liberation. Korean exiles were unable to accept the American argument that a unified and viable civil government would probably not emerge immediately after the defeat of Japan.<sup>82</sup>

Obviously, the emergence of a new balance of power in Asia was vital to Roosevelt's strategy. Success depended to a large extent upon China's development into a great power.<sup>83</sup> If the President was gambling with American security in the Pacific, one can hardly argue that American policy lacked realism and wisdom in regard to Korea. All indications pointed to Korean unpreparedness for independence and the

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Roosevelt, Fireside Chat, December 24, 1943, in Rosenman, Vol. XV, 555-556; New York Times, December 6, 1943, 6:7, December 15, 1943, 22:6, and March 2, 1944, 8:7. Gauss to Hull, December 7, 1943, FRUS, 1943, Vol. III, 1096; Haan to Roosevelt, December 14, 1943, RG 59, 895.01/315, NA; Gauss to Hull, May 19, 1944, RG 59, 895.01/338, NA.

83

Feis, The China Tangle, 106; Feis, Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, 254.

probability of Sino-Soviet disagreement over how best to reconstruct the Korean nation. Trusteeship provided the dual benefit of ensuring that the Koreans could protect their own sovereignty and security, while reducing the likelihood of great power conflict in a strategic area. To argue that Korea's long history of self-government negated<sup>84</sup> forty years of Japanese domination was patently absurd.

## VIII

Americans generally recognized that Cairo marked the end of American indifference toward Korea and the beginning of attempts to realize Korean independence. It was quite clear that "in due course" meant some form of guardianship for Korea to prepare it for self-government. Some observers hoped that this qualified promise of independence would<sup>85</sup> spark open resistance to Japanese imperialism inside Korea. Thus, by the end of 1943, Americans began to focus greater attention on the fate of the Korean nation.

Arthur C. Bunce, who would later become an economic advisor to the American occupation commander in Korea, wrote two articles during 1944 discussing Korea's future. He warned that, in the absence of internationally guaranteed

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Chc relies on this argument, as did the KPG, to portray the American trusteeship policy as "ill-considered," Korea in World Politics, 23.

<sup>85</sup>

New York Times, December 2, 1943, 26:3; Washington Post, December 3, 1943, 10:3.

peace and security, Korea would again become the victim of great power competition for control. Korea deserved independence, but it would be meaningless unless tied to some postwar security system in Asia. Bunce recommended that the United States recruit Korean exiles and train them in government administration, economics, and education, thus providing for the rapid assumption of governmental responsibilities after the war. Korea's economic problems would be serious. Thus, Bunce also urged American support for land redistribution, confiscation of Japanese holdings, technological improvements in agriculture, and the development of new industries.<sup>86</sup>

Early in 1944, the State Department also began to formulate more concrete plans for the occupation and administration of Korea. In March, the Inter-Divisional Committee on the Far East produced three papers dealing with American policy aims in Korea. Hiss and Clubb were principally responsible for the proposals dealing with occupation and administration.<sup>87</sup> The first paper stressed that Korea had been subject to Japanese rule for decades and exiles possessed doubtful local support and negligible

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Arthur C. Bunce, "The Future of Korea: Part I," Far Eastern Survey, 23, 8 (April 19, 1944), 67-70; Arthur C. Bunce, "The Future of Korea: Part II," Far Eastern Survey, 23, 10 (May 17, 1944), 85-88.

87

Memorandum, March 19, 1944, FRUS, 1944, Vol. V: The Near East, South Asia, and Africa-The Far East (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1965), 1225-1242.

administrative experience. It also noted that the largest group of exiles were Soviet-trained and imbued with Communist ideology, numbering approximately 35,000 as compared to 1,000<sup>88</sup> located at Chungking.

The second paper emphasized that the United States, Britain, China, and the Soviet Union all possessed legitimate interests in the peninsula and should all participate in the occupation and administration of the country. The Allies had to avoid one-power control at all costs. If zonal division proved unavoidable, the occupying nations should fashion a unified administration as quickly as possible. The United States would play a major role in the civil administration of Korea and strive to maximize Korean participation in self-government. The paper provided for military responsibility in civil affairs at the outset and postponed<sup>89</sup> outlining the final details of trusteeship.

The third paper dealt with the utilization of Japanese technical personnel; it would have considerable importance at a later date. It stressed that the Allies might not be able to keep industrial activity in operation with Korean and military personnel alone. Thus, the United States

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"Korean Political Problems," PWC-124a, May 4, 1944, Edward R. Stettinius Papers, Box 380, Postwar Committee Documents, 120-140, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

89

"Composition of Korean Occupation Forces," PWC-125, March 29, 1944, Stettinius Papers, Box 380, Postwar Committee Documents, 120-140, UVAL.

intended to permit Japanese technicians to continue to function where security allowed and when qualified Koreans were not available. Events soon demonstrated that the paper grossly miscalculated when it argued that "politically undesirable results of the use . . . of Japanese technical (including administrative) personnel can to a great extent be controlled and will be more than offset by the practical need for the use of such personnel."

On May 3, 1944, the State Department Postwar Programs Committee discussed and approved the three papers with minor alterations. The Committee members generally agreed that an international trusteeship was "absolutely necessary" for Korea because of past competition among the great powers over the strategic area. Interestingly enough, the only change provided that the United States should, under no circumstances, accept an exclusive mandate in Korea.

While the United States formulated more definite plans for Korea, the KPG continued its efforts to gain sufficient unity to warrant recognition. Reports from Chungking indicated that Kim Koo had finally agreed to broaden the representation of the KPG in hopes of ending disunity in the

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"Japanese Technical Personnel," PWC-126, March 29, 1944, Stettinius Papers, Box 380, Postwar Committee Documents, 120-140, UVAL.

91

Minutes, 27th Meeting, May 3, 1944, Stettinius Papers, Box 382, Postwar Programs Committee, February 1-May 31, 1944, UVAL; The final position paper was numbered PWC-105, April 4, 1944, Stettinius Papers, Box 380, Postwar Committee Documents, 100-120, UVAL.

92  
 exile movement. Evidently, Chiang was responsible for the decision, since he had threatened to terminate Kim Koo's subsidy unless the KPG eliminated its factional disputes. Such highhanded treatment drew criticism from not only the Koreans, but also the American diplomats in Chungking. Clubb warned Chiang that the United States would not tolerate any interference in the rights of China's neighbors to determine their own destiny. Perhaps more important, Service observed that Chiang's obsession with Soviet expansion was producing divisions in the Kuomintang. Political weakness would only contribute to economic deterioration and force China's neighbors to reach an accommodation with the Soviet Union. Clubb and Service stressed that only cooperation, not unilateral action, would guarantee Chinese security.<sup>93</sup>

American leaders not only attempted to limit Chinese influence in the Korean exile movement, but also exercised indirect pressure on the Koreans in hopes of fostering unity. Syngman Rhee had requested American assistance in transporting five representatives of the KPG to Washington, but the United States rejected the proposal because the KPG did not represent all exile factions.<sup>94</sup> For similar

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92  
 Gauss to Hull, May 15, 1944, RG 59, 895.01/337, NA; Gauss to Hull, June 1, 1944, RG 59, 895.01/343, NA.

93  
 Clubb Memorandum, May 19, 1944, Service Memorandum, April 7, 1944, FRUS, 1944, Vol. VI: China, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1967), 780-790.

94  
 Gauss to Hull, April 18, 1944, RG 59, 895.01/335, NA; Gauss to Hull, April 26, 1944, RG 59, 895.01/333.

reasons, the Administration refused to grant Korean representation on UNRAA. If the KPG obtained such status, it would exploit the act for political gain. American leaders believed that "the efforts of each faction are directed toward obtaining political capital, prestige and monetary assistance for that faction and not for the benefit of a concerted effort directed toward liberation of Korea." Until the Koreans attained unity, the United States would<sup>95</sup> refuse to recognize any single claimant.

## IX

Soviet agreement to a specific trusteeship agreement became even more important during the summer of 1944. In July, Roosevelt approved General Douglas MacArthur's plans for the invasion of the Philippines and the final assault on Japan. American military leaders had already convinced the President that Soviet participation in the Pacific War would<sup>96</sup> render the defeat of Japan infinitely easier. Yet, it was clear that Stalin would not enter the Pacific War until victory in Europe was certain. The OSS speculated that if,

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NA; Sprouse Memorandum, March 27, 1944, RG 226, OSS Report 71682, NA; Lee, The Politics of Korean Nationalism, 225.

<sup>95</sup>

Minutes, Policy Committee, July 17, 1944, 72nd Meeting, Stettinius Papers, Box 378, UVAL; Stettinius to Roosevelt, July 27, 1944, Stettinius Papers, Box 219, Under-Secretary File, UVAL; Stettinius to Roosevelt, October 27, 1944, Stettinius Papers, Box 216, UVAL.

<sup>96</sup>

Leahy, I Was There, 250-259.

at the moment of Soviet entry, "the trend in Europe is toward competition among the powers, a corresponding competition can hardly fail to arise in the Far East." Stalin would not, for example, accept a Korean government more favorable toward China than the Soviet Union. In view of Chiang's determination to reestablish predominant Chinese influence in Asia, the report predicted that Sino-Soviet conflict in Korea was highly probable.<sup>97</sup>

America's dilemma was clear. The United States desired Soviet entry into the war against Japan, but feared that China would be unable to cooperate with Moscow for the preservation of peace and security in the area. Hull believed that trusteeship would prevent any undesirable political ramifications stemming from Soviet participation in the Pacific War, while at the same time reassure China. Hull thus intended to finalize Allied policy on dependent peoples at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference in August, 1944. American military leaders forced Hull to postpone action on colonial policy, fearing that disagreements among the Allies would delay Soviet entry into the Pacific War. The War Department offered the pessimistic observation that the entire trusteeship issue was academic, since "the fall of Japan will leave Russia in a dominant position on continental Northeast Asia, and, . . . able to impose her will in all that area."<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> "Russia, China, and the Far Eastern Settlement," June 5, 1944, RG 226, OSS Report, R&A 2211, NA.

<sup>98</sup> Hull, Memoirs, 1599; E.F. Cress Memorandum, July

State Department officials manifested less pessimism relative to Korea, but did recognize the delicate nature of the situation. Berle, for example, now urged that the United States implement Rhee's plan for the creation of a Korean espionage force. Emphasizing the previous successful cooperation between Rhee and Goodfellow, Berle argued that utilization of the KPG would constitute a positive contribution to the defeat of Japan. Hornbeck, on the other hand, urged the adoption of a plan to provide Chiang with enough military aid and support for the creation of a strong China that could act as a barrier to Stalinist expansion. Since the United States and Britain would be concentrating on the defeat of Japan, only China could deter Soviet occupation of Manchuria, Mongolia, and Korea at the end of the war.<sup>99</sup>

Unfortunately, Chiang's expansionist tendencies continued to alarm American leaders and thus undermine the logic of Hornbeck's strategy. Langdon, now Consul General at Kunming, reported that the Chinese were far more concerned with establishing predominant influence in Tibet, Mongolia, and Korea than with fighting Japan.<sup>100</sup> Roosevelt himself

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27, 1944, RG 319, Operations Planning Division, 336 Korea, Top Secret, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>99</sup> Berle to Grew, July 21, 1944, RG 59, 895.01/7-2144, NA; New York Times, August 30, 1944, 11:1; Hornbeck to Hull, July 18, 1944, Hull Papers, Reel 49, Box 85-86, Folder 371, LOC; Feis, The China Tangle, 211-212.

<sup>100</sup> Langdon to Hull, August 1, 1944, FRUS, 1944, Vol. VI, 495.

was beginning to express concern over China's future. At a cabinet meeting in May, 1944, the President suggested that Chiang's regime would not survive for the duration of the war. Allied agreement still appeared the only logical course for the preservation of peace. During the summer of 1944, Roosevelt dispatched Vice President Henry A. Wallace on a mission to China and the Soviet Union. Among other things, Wallace was to urge unity among Korean exiles and obtain Stalin's views toward the KPG. By August, 1944, the United States was considering an Allied conference to reach agreement on military government in Korea and other areas recaptured from Japan.

Moscow satisfied American desires for a Soviet commitment to enter the Pacific War in October, 1944. Stalin informed American Ambassador W. Averell Harriman that the Soviet Union would declare war on Japan within three months after the defeat of Germany. He then inquired as to the concessions that the Soviet Union could expect in return for participation in the war. Harriman warned Roosevelt that China's future would be in jeopardy unless the Allies reached agreement on postwar reconstruction of Asia. Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson agreed, pointing out that only

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Minutes, 47th Meeting, May 19, 1944, Stettinius Papers, Box 370, Policy Committee, UVAL; Stettinius to Grew, May 5, 1944, Stettinius Papers, Box 216, Division of Far Eastern Affairs, UVAL; Hull to Gauss, June 12, 1944, FRUS, 1944, Vol. VI, 1295; Gauss to Hull, June 29, 1944, RG 59, 895.01/6-2944, NA; Stettinius to Gauss, August 3, 1944, Stettinius Papers, Box 730, Memos to Hull, UVAL.

firm agreements would guarantee support for the postwar peace settlement and ensure American security in the Pacific.<sup>102</sup>

American military strategy continued to play a crucial role in the formulation of a specific proposal on Korea during the first month of 1945. The Chiefs of Staff even recommended that the Soviet Union occupy the entire peninsula at an early date to prevent Japanese reinforcement of the home islands prior to American invasion. Despite the opposition of Admiral William D. Leahy, Roosevelt supported Soviet participation in the Pacific War at the earliest possible moment to ensure a quicker and less costly

victory.<sup>103</sup> The Administration also rejected any action that might rouse Soviet suspicion of American intentions. Any effort to limit Soviet participation in the postwar reconstruction of Asia would jeopardize China's position and place Korean independence in doubt.<sup>104</sup>

As Roosevelt left for Yalta, his main objective was

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<sup>102</sup> Feis, The China Tangle, 228-233; See also, FRUS, 1945, The Conferences at Malta and Yalta (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1955).

<sup>103</sup> Stimson and Bundy, On Active Service in Peace and War, 600-603; Feis, The China Tangle, 232-233.

<sup>104</sup> The United States refused to implement a Korean proposal to land forces at Vladivostok and occupy Korea prior to invading Japan, December 7, 1944, RG 226, OSS Report 105310, NA; It also rejected Rhee's espionage plan, because of China's proven desire to control the Kim Koo regime, Grew to Berle, July 31, 1944, RG 59, 895.01/7-3144, NA; The State Department even rejected a British proposal to quickly restore trade with Japan at the end of the war, Grew to Stettinius, January 22, 1945, Stettinius Papers, Box 721, Japan, UVAL.

to finalize plans for Soviet entry into the Pacific War, while gaining Stalin's support for an agreement that would produce a strong China and an independent Korea. The State Department had drawn specific plans for Korea which followed the recommendations of the Pacific War Council reports formulated during the spring of 1944. The Briefing Book Paper stressed the necessity for inter-Allied participation in the occupation and civil administration of Korea, suggesting a four-power trusteeship if the Soviet Union entered the Pacific War. The paper pointed out, however, that it "would seem advisable to have Soviet representation on an interim administration regardless of whether or not the Soviet Union enters the war . . . ." <sup>105</sup>

On February 8, 1945, Roosevelt raised the issue of Korea during his discussions with Stalin and recommended a three-power trusteeship. The President pointed to the American experience in the Philippines and observed that the Korean trusteeship would probably last twenty or thirty years. Stalin replied that the shorter the duration the better and then inquired as to the stationing of foreign troops in the peninsula. After agreeing that there should be no foreign military forces in permanent occupation, Roosevelt raised the "delicate" matter of excluding the British from participation in the arrangement. The President believed that

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Briefing Book Paper, "Inter-Allied Consultation-Korea," Undated, FRUS, 1945, The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 358-361.

British inclusion in the trusteeship was unnecessary. Stalin disagreed, pointing out that Churchill would be offended and might "kill us." Thus, Roosevelt and Stalin agreed to support a four-power trusteeship for Korea.<sup>106</sup> Roosevelt must have left Yalta confident that Soviet-American cooperation had increased the likelihood that Korea would emerge after the war as an independent and sovereign nation.

Scholars have debated at length the wisdom of the Yalta Agreement on the Far East. With the benefit of hindsight, many have argued that Soviet participation in the Pacific War was unnecessary. Some observers have termed Roosevelt's failure to consult China as "unpleasant and immoral" while others insist that he "gave away" more than was required.<sup>107</sup> Regardless of the larger aspects of the Yalta Agreements, one can hardly find fault with the Korean arrangement. All Korean experts in Washington agreed that Korea was not prepared for self-government and American experiences with the exile movement added credence to such conclusions. Roosevelt speculated that with international guidance and assistance

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Bohlen Minutes, February 8, 1945, FRUS, 1945, The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 770; James F. Byrnes, who was present at Yalta, later argued erroneously that Stalin and Roosevelt agreed to a Korean trusteeship only "if a transition period were necessary," Speaking Frankly, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 221.

107

Joseph C. Grew and Walter Johnson, Turbulent Era: A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years 1904-1945, Vol. II (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952), 1444; Charles E. Bohlen, The Transformation of American Foreign Policy (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969), 36; Cho, Korea in World Politics, 33.

Korea could develop sufficient political skill and experience for the maintenance of independence.

Strategic considerations underlined the realism of the trusteeship policy. In view of past Sino-Soviet competition for control in Korea, it was clear that only an Allied agreement could ensure an atmosphere of stability in that area. Success would depend upon mutual trust, harmony, and cooperation, which would be impossible if Korea obtained sovereignty and independence prematurely.<sup>108</sup> Trusteeship, however, would foster Allied cooperation and coordination, thus ensuring Korean protection until it was capable of self-direction.

In pursuing Allied support for trusteeship, Roosevelt had clearly followed the advice of his Korean experts. In the absence of such an agreement, the United States could guarantee Korea's independence only through the application of considerable military power. Such an alternative was not feasible in view of the priority given to the defeat of Japan. Thus, after forty years of Japanese domination, Korea became "the test case in international cooperation and international good faith." American indifference toward Korea was at an end.<sup>109</sup>

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Tyler Dennett, "In Due Course," Far Eastern Survey, XIV, 1 (January 17, 1945), 1-3.

109

Ibid., 4; American support for trusteeship began early in 1942. Thus, U-Gene Lee clearly errs when he argues that Roosevelt turned to trusteeship only after the British rejected immediate independence, "American Policy Toward Korea 1942-1947: Formulation and Execution," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Georgetown University, 1973, 8-11.

Chapter II:

Captive of the Cold War

Soviet-American objectives in Korea at the end of World War II were not entirely incompatible. Both nations sought Korean independence and self-government through the creation of political and economic stability. Stalin was, however, more determined to preserve Soviet security interests in the Korean area. He would not permit the emergence of a Korean government hostile to the Soviet Union if at all possible. Roosevelt, it would appear, recognized the strategic nature of the Korean peninsula, but was also devoted to the principle of national self-determination. After all, if the Koreans chose a government hostile to the United States, it would present only a remote threat to American security interests. Yet, despite the difference in emphasis, Roosevelt and Stalin had agreed at Yalta that trusteeship would satisfy their objectives in Korea. Both leaders seemed to believe that through cooperation and coordination the Allies could eliminate Korea from the arena of great power rivalry and conflict.

Realism thus characterized Roosevelt's approach to the problems surrounding postwar reconstruction of Korea. Two factors emerged, however, to frustrate the American

attempt to balance divergent interests and arrive at a new balance of power underwriting Korean independence. First, Soviet actions in Eastern Europe greatly alarmed Roosevelt and his advisors. Harry S. Truman, Roosevelt's successor, was even more suspicious of Soviet intentions and easily concluded that the United States could expect "sovietization" in the Far East as well. Second, Korea itself experienced a period of rapid and sweeping change in the wake of Japan's defeat. The Truman Administration neither understood nor reacted well in the face of such revolutionary turmoil.<sup>1</sup> As a result, Korea did not emerge as a free and independent nation in 1945, but as a captive of the emerging Soviet-American Cold War.

Few observers anticipated that the Pacific War would end so quickly after the defeat of Germany. Thus, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin had not engaged in a detailed discussion of trusteeship at Yalta. Instead, the Allied leaders decided that a five-member committee, composed of representatives from those nations on the proposed Security Council of the United Nations, would meet prior to the San Francisco Conference to finalize the terms of an international trusteeship system.<sup>2</sup> Significantly, the meeting would involve only preliminary discussions, since the committee would not determine

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<sup>1</sup>

Baldwin, Introduction, in Without Parallel, 5.

<sup>2</sup>

Yalta Communique, International Trusteeship, FRUS, The Conferences of Berlin (Potsdam) 1945, Vol. II (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960), 1568.

which particular nations would fall under the arrangement and what specific provisions would apply in each case.

China was clearly dissatisfied with such delay and urged its allies to adopt a more definite program, particularly for Korea. Chiang still harbored fears of Stalin's intentions. He continued to press Kim Koo for the creation of a more representative and unified KPG, which would warrant American recognition. At the same time, China favored an Allied agreement for a three-power military administration of Korea, with Soviet participation if Moscow entered the Pacific War.<sup>3</sup> Joseph Ballantine of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs agreed to exchange proposals on Korea in preparation for future action, but reminded T.V. Soong that the United States opposed any bilateral discussions except on a "purely exploratory" basis. Prior to the simultaneous consultation of all concerned Allied nations, a final policy determination on Korea was simply not possible.<sup>4</sup>

Syngman Rhee recognized that American victory over Japan was now certain and thus began to lobby more vigorously for American support. Shortly after Yalta, Rhee warned the

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<sup>3</sup>  
Ballantine Memorandum, February 5, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI: The British Commonwealth, The Far East (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1969), 1018.

<sup>4</sup>  
Ballantine Memorandum, February 17, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1021; Vincent to Stettinius, February 8, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VII: The Far East: China (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1969), 854.

State Department that Moscow had created a "Korean Liberation Committee" in Siberia. His attempt to compare Korea with Poland was unmistakable. Rhee demanded an immediate investigation and reiterated the wisdom of recognition of the KPG. He also demanded Korean representation on any body considering the formulation and administration of occupation policy for Japan.<sup>5</sup>

Rhee's reports of Korean Communist activity were far from unique. Sources indicated that Moscow had trained over 100,000 Korean guerillas for participation in the liberation of Korea. Reports also revealed that the Chinese Communists had created a "Korean Revolutionary Military-Political School" at Yen-an to train Korean leaders for participation in the postwar administration of Korea.<sup>6</sup> While the KPG argued that it was the strongest and best organized resistance group, such evidence provided abundant information to the contrary. Kim Koo's regime still manifested factionalism in the extreme, while its principal leaders appeared constantly preoccupied with personal ambitions and financial gain.<sup>7</sup> American leaders thus confronted the fundamental problem of

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<sup>5</sup> Stettinius to Hurley, February 20, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1022-1023.

<sup>6</sup> Major General H.A. Craig Summary, February 13, 1945, RG 319, OPD 381, China Theater of Operations, NA; Intelligence Report, February 27, 1945, RG 226, OSS 120760, NA; Intelligence Report, March 1, 1945, RG 226, OSS 116077, NA.

<sup>7</sup> Acheson to Stettinius, March 1, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1024.

being unable to find a capable and popular exile group that warranted American aid and support.

Trusteeship and impartiality thus remained the hallmarks of Roosevelt's Korea policy. Yet, Stimson and Secretary of the Navy James V. Forrestal expressed concern that American responsibility and power in colonial areas lacked specificity. Both men feared that the United States would surrender strategically important areas in the Pacific, while other nations would not follow suit. Roosevelt refused to abandon Hull's policy toward dependent peoples and, in March, 1945, reaffirmed his support for one nation acting as a "trustee" and deriving its power from the United Nations<sup>8</sup> as a whole. Korea remained part of this larger trusteeship arrangement. As a result, the State Department rejected the requests of both Rhee and Haan for Korean representation at the San Francisco Conference. Only those nations that the Allies recognized as of March 1, 1945, the Administration explained, would participate in the formation of the new<sup>9</sup> international security organization.

In the meantime, American planning progressed on a specific program for the occupation and interim administration of Korea. In March, the State-War-Navy Coordinating

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<sup>8</sup> Walter Millis, ed., The Forrestal Diaries (New York: Viking Press, 1951), 33 and 37-38.

<sup>9</sup> Rhee to Stettinius, March 8, 1945, RG 59, 500.CC/3-845, NA; Haan to Stettinius, March 9, 1945, RG 59, 500.CC/3-945, NA; New York Times, March 1, 1945, 3:7.

Committee (SWNCC) completed a series of papers dealing with the treatment of the Korean population during occupation, the utilization of Koreans and Japanese in the military government, and the deportation of Japanese to the home islands. In addition, the SWNCC devoted attention to the composition of the occupation force and the relationship between the temporary military administration and the future international supervisory authority.<sup>10</sup> Roosevelt had already decided that the War Department would control civil affairs in liberated areas. The President apparently accepted Stimson's argument that "the State Department by its nature was unequipped for major administrative chores" and "could not hope to equal the Army in the task of carrying them out."<sup>11</sup> In May, 1942, the War Department created a school in Charlottesville, Virginia to train military officers for civil administration. Thus, by April, 1945, American plans for a temporary military government in Korea prior to the establishment of an international trusteeship were virtually complete.

## II

Roosevelt's hope for postwar peace and security in Korea and elsewhere rested upon the success of Allied

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SWNCC Papers 76, 77, 78, 99, and 101, March 19, 1945, RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45), Section I, NA.

<sup>11</sup>

Stimson and Bundy, On Active Service in Peace and War, 561 and 533.

cooperation and mutual trust. Soviet actions in Eastern Europe immediately following the Yalta Conference alarmed the United States, causing Roosevelt to question Stalin's willingness to fulfill Allied agreements. When Roosevelt died on April 12, however, he remained optimistic over the chances for continued Soviet-American cooperation, despite clear differences regarding such issues as the fate of Poland.<sup>12</sup> While the future of Soviet-American relations in Eastern Europe appeared uncertain, American policy toward Korea remained intact.

Whether the United States would have become alarmed about Soviet aspirations in Asia had Roosevelt lived remains a matter of speculation. Harry S. Truman's assumption of the presidency, however, clearly marks a turning point in America's Korea policy. After 1945, the United States anticipated that Soviet actions in Asia would parallel those policies followed in Eastern Europe. Although there existed no clear relationship between the two areas, Truman preferred to view Soviet expansionism as a basically unchanging force in postwar international affairs. Less than a week after assuming office, Truman reversed Roosevelt's stand on territorial trusteeship and

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John Lewis Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War 1941-1947 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 172; Lisle A. Rose, Dubious Victory: The United States and the End of World War II, Vol. I (Oberlin: Kent State University Press, 1973), 96; Robert H. Ferrell, "Truman's Foreign Policy: A Traditional View," in The Truman Period as a Research Field, 26.

supported the views of Stimson and Forrestal. As a result, the new Administration decided to oppose any detailed discussion of an international trusteeship machinery at the upcoming San Francisco Conference.<sup>13</sup>

Harry S. Truman was poorly prepared for the presidency. Roosevelt had done little to inform his Vice President of major policy developments, particularly in the area of foreign affairs. More important, Truman's political expertise was wholly in the realm of domestic politics and, as a result, he possessed a limited understanding of the complex nature of international diplomacy. American leaders, such as Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg, expressed justifiable concern over the nation's future.<sup>14</sup> Admiral Leahy, for example, wondered how "the complicated and critical business of the war and the peace can be carried forward by a new President who is completely inexperienced in international affairs."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> International Trusteeship, April 18, 1945, Stettinius Papers, Box 735, Memoranda For the President, UVAL; The decision indicates Truman's desire to keep his options open in areas that the Red Army had not yet occupied.

<sup>14</sup> Alonzo L. Hamby, The Imperial Years: The United States Since 1939 (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1976), 110; Rose, Dubious Victory, 84-90; Athan Theoharis, "The Rhetoric of Politics: Foreign Policy, Internal Security, and Domestic Politics in the Truman Era, 1945-1950," in Politics and Policies of the Truman Administration, edited by Barton J. Bernstein (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, Inc., 1970), 202; Louis W. Koenig, ed., The Truman Administration: Its Principles and Practice (New York: New York University Press, 1956), 2.

<sup>15</sup> William D. Leahy, Diary Notes, April 12, 1945, William D. Leahy Papers, Box 5, Diaries 1945, LOC.

Truman's parochial and provincial political background certainly limited his world view and rendered a balanced appraisal of the delicate problems of postwar diplomacy infinitely more difficult. At the same time, Truman's Midwestern conservatism fostered inflexibility and impatience in negotiations. The new President thus lacked the temperament and understanding required for the tactful implementation of his predecessor's policies.<sup>16</sup> In addition, Truman's diplomatic inexperience produced a penchant for oversimplification, while impulsiveness compounded the dangers already inherent in following a leader possessing such serious personal shortcomings. As Bert Cochran explains, at times "some of his associates were not sure that Truman understood the implications of his decisions."<sup>17</sup>

Truman's approach to diplomatic issues was a reflection and an extension of his response to domestic problems. He believed that local communities could solve their own particular problems with a minimum of outside interference. Thus, in foreign affairs, Truman was a staunch supporter of the principle of national self-determination as a panacea

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Daniels, The Man of Independence, 16; McLellan, Commentary, in The Truman Period as a Research Field, 153; Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 197; Koenig, The Truman Administration, 261.

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Bert Cochran, Harry Truman and the Crisis Presidency (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1973), 135; David K.E. Bruce, Oral History Interview Transcript, March 1, 1972, HSTL, 46-47; Harry Middleton refers to Truman as "an expert at oversimplification," The Compact History of the Korean War, 97.

for international problems.<sup>18</sup> Soviet actions in Eastern Europe deeply disturbed Truman, because Stalin refused to accept the basic ingredient of Truman's postwar program. For Truman, only the worldwide realization of the liberal political ideal of national self-determination would ensure postwar peace and security. The new President was determined to force the Soviet Union to respect each nation's freedom of choice, although it was questionable that the United States possessed the means to achieve such an objective.

Many of Roosevelt's advisors had become dissatisfied with a policy that continued to emphasize Moscow's willingness to cooperate with the United States after the war. These men welcomed the new President's decisiveness and urged the adoption of a firm posture of opposition to Soviet expansion. During private discussions, Harriman informed Truman that Stalin was imposing his will on Eastern Europe in direct violation of wartime agreements. Leahy and Forrestal joined Harriman in arguing that Soviet actions represented a clear political and strategic threat to American security. In response, Truman assured his advisors that he intended to be firm in his dealings with Stalin and insist upon the fulfillment of the Yalta Agreements.<sup>19</sup>

Truman assumed the hardline attitude toward Stalin that

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<sup>18</sup>

Hamby, Beyond the New Deal, 459.

<sup>19</sup>

Truman, Years of Decision, 72; Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 201-202; Daniels, The Man of Independence, 270.

Roosevelt's advisors recommended without hesitation. "To a man of Truman's blunt, contentious personality," John Lewis Gaddis observes, "this tough policy must have seemed particularly congenial." Almost immediately, Truman came to rely on those advisors most firmly committed to a policy of toughness toward the Soviet Union.<sup>20</sup> On April 23, 1945, the President informed his advisors that, during his discussions with Molotov that day, he would assume a hard line on Poland and demand Soviet fulfillment of the Yalta Agreements. Although Truman had not abandoned the possibility of cooperation with the Soviet Union, it was doubtful whether tough rhetoric alone would improve Soviet-American<sup>21</sup> relations in the postwar world.

Leahy welcomed the change in American policy and noted that, with the imminent defeat of Germany, "no particular harm can now be done to our war prospects even if Russia should slow down or even stop its war effort in Europe and Asia." Thus, the Truman Administration was already beginning to question earlier support for the extension of Soviet influence in Asia. Harriman was already urging a hard line in the Far East, expressing the conviction that the United

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Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 206; McLellan, Commentary, in The Truman Period as a Research Field, 153; George Curry, James F. Byrnes, Vol. XIV: American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy, edited by Bemis and Ferrell (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1965), 313.

21

Rose, Dubious Victory, 104-105; Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 198-206.

States could expect the same pattern of Soviet action in Manchuria and Korea that existed in Poland and Rumania.<sup>22</sup>

Interestingly enough, George F. Kennan did not entirely agree. He dispatched a cable from Moscow expressing doubts that the Soviets had created a "Korean Liberation Committee" in the "obviously unnatural surroundings" of Siberia.

Instead, if such a group existed at all, it was probably located at Yen-an with the Chinese Communists.<sup>23</sup> Although American support for a Korean trusteeship had begun to waver, the Truman Administration decided to maintain impartiality<sup>24</sup> toward the Korean exile movement.

### III

Harsh words alone would not force the Soviet Union to abandon its control over Eastern Europe. Yet, the United States could prevent a repetition of this unhappy set of circumstances in the Far East, since the Red Army was not in occupation of this area. American leaders certainly recognized that if American forces liberated those areas

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Leahy Diary Entry, April 23, 1945, Leahy Papers, Box 5, Diaries, 1945, LOC; Herbert Feis, Contest Over Japan (New York: W.W. Norton, 1967), 27-28.

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Kennan to Stettinius, April 17, 1945, FRUS, Vol. VI, 1945, 1026-1027.

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Rhee quickly criticized the continued absence of recognition, complaining that Korea was again the "victim of secret diplomacy," Rhee to Truman, May 15, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1028-1029; New York Times, May 29, 1945, 3:4; Intelligence Report, June 25, 1945, RG 226, OSS 3201, NA.

under Japanese domination, Soviet expansion in Asia would not emerge as a serious problem. In May, 1945, Harriman had reminded Truman that Soviet involvement in the Pacific War would necessitate Soviet participation in the occupation of Japan. Relative to Korea, Harriman alleged that Stalin had questioned the need for trusteeship in the event that the Koreans could rule themselves during the Yalta Conference.<sup>25</sup> Although the record does not reveal such a statement, Truman was clearly impressed with Harriman's warning that Korean self-government meant "sovietization" if Stalin occupied the Korean peninsula.

Under-Secretary of State Joseph C. Grew also expressed concern over the consequences of Soviet entry into the Pacific War. He urged Truman to obtain Stalin's assent to a number of conditions prior to the implementation of the Yalta Agreement on the Far East. Grew desired Moscow's specific support for Chiang Kai-shek's regime, respect for Chinese control in Manchuria, and agreement to implement a four-power trusteeship in Korea. Grew agreed with Harriman that the Soviet Union, in refusing to fulfill its agreements in Europe, had sacrificed American trust. Thus, the United States had every right to deny Stalin a free hand in Asia.<sup>26</sup>

Korea's fate was, however, completely tied to American military capabilities and its strategy for the defeat of

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Millis, The Forrestal Diaries, 56.

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Grew and Johnson, Turbulent Era, 1456-1457.

Japan. If Stalin refused to support a Korean trusteeship, only prior American occupation could guarantee Korea's independence. American military leaders continued to insist upon military victory over Japan as the highest priority. For example, MacArthur urged Washington not to delay a frontal assault on the heartland of Japan. He also favored early Soviet participation in the Pacific War, arguing that Moscow would inevitably seize Manchuria and Korea and might as well<sup>27</sup> earn such territorial acquisitions.

Grew strongly disagreed with MacArthur's conclusions. If Moscow entered the Pacific War, he predicted, the Soviet Union would emerge as the dominant power in postwar Asia and constitute an even larger threat than Japan to American security. Grew offered the dire prophesy that once Moscow entered the war "Mongolia, Manchuria, and Korea will gradually slip into Russia's orbit to be followed in due<sup>28</sup> course by China and eventually Japan . . . ." To avert such a catastrophe, the United States had to maintain its military power and control several strategic areas in the Pacific. While Grew kept these views largely to himself, Harriman expressed similar apprehensions to Truman and urged the President to meet with Stalin and Churchill within a few weeks to terminate the developing split among the Allies.

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<sup>27</sup>  
Herbert Feis, The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 5-11.

<sup>28</sup>  
Grew and Johnson, Turbulent Era, 1445-1446.

In particular, Harriman pointed out that the Yalta Agreements on China and Korea were vague and ambiguous and in need of considerable clarification.<sup>29</sup>

An insoluble dilemma thus faced the Truman Administration in Asia. Washington had to devise a military strategy for the defeat of Japan, which would provide a strategic position from which the United States could react in the face of anticipated Soviet duplicity. On May 21, the War Department presented its case in support of MacArthur's two-phase plan for the defeat of Japan. It urged rapid Soviet entry into the Pacific War in order to save American lives, while specifically rejecting Grew's suggestion that the United States withhold the Yalta concessions until Stalin promised to respect the sovereignty of China and Korea. The War Department contended that the entire issue was academic because "Russia is militarily capable of defeating the Japanese and occupying Karafuto, Manchuria, Korea and North China before it would be possible for the U.S. military forces to occupy these areas." In the face of conflicting advice, Truman rejected the State Department's advice and,<sup>30</sup> on May 25, approved MacArthur's plan.

Truman really had no choice, because American alternatives

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Grew Memorandum, May 15, 1945, FRUS, The Conference of Berlin (Potsdam), Vol. I (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960), 14; Grew and Johnson, Turbulent Era, 1462-1464.

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Rose, Dubious Victory, 132-133; Grew and Johnson, Turbulent Era, 1458-1459.

were few and far from promising. The SWNCC did consider the option of adopting a program to train and equip a Korean military force in China, which could invade Korea and establish control prior to Soviet entry. The War Department registered its opposition to the plan, arguing that the Korean prisoners of war were of low caliber. As Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy explained, it would be "impractical to make combat soldiers of such personnel."<sup>31</sup>

State Department official Earl R. Dickover disagreed with McCloy's judgment at the SWNCC meeting of May 18, 1945. He speculated that such a Korean force would be a powerful propaganda weapon that would spark acts of sabotage against the Japanese inside Korea. To resolve the dispute, the SWNCC submitted the proposal to General Albert C. Wedemeyer in Chungking for comment. In response, Wedemeyer strongly opposed the plan, because of insufficient transportation facilities, trainers, and equipment which made the plan infeasible. On May 29, the SWNCC dropped the idea from consideration. It did, however, decide to increase American ties with important exile leaders in order to maintain influence over future developments.<sup>32</sup>

Truman soon realized, as Roosevelt had, that if the

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<sup>31</sup>  
SWNCC 115, G-3 Comments, May 4, 1945, RG 319, OPD 336.2 (23 April 45), NA.

<sup>32</sup>  
Summary, SWNCC Meeting, May 18, 1945, RG 218, CCS 370 Korea (April 23, 1945), NA; Memorandum, May 19, 1945, RG 319, OPD 336.2 (Korea), NA.

United States could not use its military power in Asia to foster Soviet caution, diplomatic agreement was the only alternative. Rather than arranging for an early meeting of the Allies, as Harriman desired, Truman decided instead to send Harry Hopkins to Moscow in an effort to resolve outstanding differences and firm up the Yalta Agreements.<sup>33</sup>

State Department officials formulated a detailed set of recommendations for the Hopkins Mission. The instructions stressed the importance of obtaining Soviet support for a four-power Korean trusteeship which guaranteed equal representation in the civil administration. In addition, Hopkins was to achieve Stalin's assurance that the international arrangement would concentrate on training reliable local Koreans for self-government. Hopefully, through Allied cooperation, the trusteeship would produce a Korean government that truly reflected the free will of the people. Both the War and Navy Departments supported these recommendations, but urged delay regarding specific military matters.<sup>34</sup>

Unfortunately, all the planning and preparation was wasted effort. At Moscow, Hopkins completely ignored the recommendations and refused to engage in a detailed discussion

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Gaddis argues that the Hopkins mission was evidence of Truman's conciliatory attitude, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 232-233; Rose suggests that Truman sought to trade Soviet control over Eastern Europe for an American sphere of influence in Asia, Dubious Victory, 180-181.

34

Grew to McCloy, May 21, 1945, RG 319, OPD 363 TS (5 June 45), NA; Grew to Forrestal, May 21, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VII, 882-883.

of Korea. He merely pointed out that the Yalta Agreement only provided for a four-power trusteeship, but did not specify its duration. Hopkins observed that the period of international guidance might last as long as twenty-five years, but certainly a minimum of five to ten years. Stalin avoided specifics as well, but did reaffirm his complete support for a four-power trusteeship.<sup>35</sup>

Clearly, the Hopkins Mission did not indicate that the Soviet Union intended to undermine the Korean trusteeship agreement. Yet, Soviet action in Europe did suggest the possibility of Stalinist expansion in Asia. Chiang never doubted that Moscow had designs on Korea and continually reminded Washington of the existence of Soviet-trained Korean guerillas in Siberia. In contrast to the exiles in Chungking and the United States, he observed, the Korean Communists possessed administrative experience, military skill, and political prestige.<sup>36</sup>

Despite their apprehensions, Truman and his advisors decided to continue American reliance on the trusteeship policy and refusal to compromise Korean self-determination. In June, 1945, Grew announced that the KPG did not have "at the present time the qualifications requisite for obtaining

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Memorandum of Conversation, May 28, 1945, FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, Vol. I, 47; See also, Herbert Feis, Between War and Peace: The Potsdam Conference (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 114-116.

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Memorandum, D.C. Poole, May 20, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VII, 870-876.

recognition." Early in July, the British indicated their complete support for the American position. Truman also informed T.V. Soong of his intention to abide by the provisions of the Yalta Agreements on the Far East. Based upon the results of the Hopkins Mission, the President expressed confidence that Stalin intended to support Chiang's regime and international control over Korea.<sup>37</sup> Thus, the Truman Administration decided to trust Stalin to fulfill his promises. In the absence of a willingness to use military power, Truman had little other choice.

## IV

Military strategy reinforced Truman's commitment to achieve a Korean trusteeship. In the wake of the Hopkins Mission, American military leaders continued to advocate direct invasion and Soviet entry into the Pacific War as the best method for defeating Japan. Late in May, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) rejected a proposal to land troops in Manchuria or Korea, because such action would prolong the war and have doubtful impact on the Japanese war machine. Since America's highest priority was the rapid defeat of Japan, "the employment of substantial United States forces

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Grew Statement, DSB, XII, 311 (June 8, 1945), 1058-1059; Winant to Stettinius, July 2, 1945, RG 59, 711. 95/7-245, NA; Elsey Memorandum, July 1, 1945, FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, Vol. I, 309-310; Feis, The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II, 164-165; Grew and Johnson, Turbulent Era, 1466-1468.

in Manchuria and Korea is not justified."<sup>38</sup> Such military strategy precluded the achievement of a sufficiently powerful military position after the war from which the United States could oppose Soviet expansion on the northeast Asian mainland.

Truman gave final approval to MacArthur's invasion plan—code-named "Olympic"—at a White House strategy meeting on June 18, 1945. At that time, Marshall managed to convince Navy Chief of Staff Ernest R. King that the United States had to occupy Kyushu prior to an invasion of Japan. His strongest argument stressed that "Olympic" was the least expensive strategy available, particularly in comparison with a potential landing in Korea:

An outstanding military point about attacking Korea is the difficult terrain and beach conditions which appear to make the only acceptable assault areas Fusan . . . and Keijo . . . . To get to Fusan which is strongly fortified area, we must move large and vulnerable assault forces past heavily fortified Japanese areas. The operation appears more difficult and costly than assault on Kyushu. Keijo appears an equally difficult and costly operation. After we have undertaken either one of them we still will not be as far forward as going into Kyushu.<sup>39</sup>

Nevertheless, Truman decided to delay final approval for the second phase of the plan—actual invasion of Japan—since he

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Cress to JCS, May 31, 1945, RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea, Section I (3-19-45), NA; Feis, Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, 288.

39

Feis, The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II, 8; "Objectives and Strategy Japan," Briefing Book Paper 590, June 18, 1945, FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, Vol. I, 903-10.

was aware that the successful testing of the atomic bomb<sup>40</sup> might remove the necessity for this costly operation.

American military leaders had already begun preparations for a possible sudden collapse of Japan in the aftermath of an atomic attack. On June 14, the JCS instructed MacArthur and Pacific Fleet Commander Nimitz to formulate plans for the early occupation of Japan. Truman approved this action on June 29. On the same day, the President authorized an intensification of bombing and blockade operations against Japan in order to reduce the enemy's ability to resist the<sup>41</sup> scheduled invasion on November 1, 1945.

While completing military plans, Truman also prepared for the Potsdam Conference. On June 30, he announced his appointment of James F. Byrnes as Secretary of State, arguing that only an individual who had held elective office should occupy the highest position in the cabinet. In reality, Truman did not accept Edward R. Stettinius, Jr. and his devotion to the United Nations as congenial with an effective approach in Soviet-American relations. Ironically, Truman later regretted his choice of Byrnes. The new Secretary of

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Feis, The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II, 11; Leahy believed that Japan would surrender before an invasion of the islands was necessary, I Was There, 384-385.

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Memorandum of the Chiefs of Staff, June 29, 1945, FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, Vol. I, 910-911; Feis, Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, 296; Truman continued to rely on Soviet entry as a means to hasten Japan's defeat. King, however, believed that Soviet aid was no longer indispensable and Truman did not have to "beg" for Stalin's assistance.

State was determined to perform an active role in policy formulation. Byrnes was confident of his own ability and his independent spirit would have a decisive impact on the Soviet-American dispute over Korea.<sup>42</sup>

Stimson was also engaged in preparations for Potsdam. Early in May, 1945, he requested a policy position paper on Korea from the State Department. The response stressed the likelihood of widespread unrest and demands for agrarian reform in Korea after years of imperialist exploitation. The absence of an experienced and representative group of exiles to assume governmental responsibilities would compound Korea's problems. In addition, the report predicted that Moscow would insist upon establishing a "friendly" government in Korea. The State Department observed that the unfavorable conditions in postwar Korea would probably contribute to a favorable reception of Communist ideology. Thus, a Soviet-sponsored socialist regime "might easily receive popular support."<sup>43</sup>

Final Briefing Book papers for Potsdam stressed that the United States had to obtain specific Soviet support for the Cairo Declaration and Korean independence. In order to

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Richard D. Burns, "James F. Byrnes (1945-1947)," in An Uncertain Tradition, 220; Truman later appointed Marshall as Secretary of State, thereby undermining his own justification; Curry, James F. Byrnes, 307; Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 285.

<sup>43</sup>

Policy Paper, State Department, June 22, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 561-564.

eliminate Korean suspicions, it would be important that none "of the interested countries alone . . . invade Korea." The State Department urged that the Allies designate Korea a combined zone of operations under a single unified command. American planners hoped to obtain support for a multinational invasion force and "agreement among the three powers that, with China's anticipated cooperation, they will jointly support whatever measures appear best adapted to develop in Korea a strong, democratic, independent nation." A four-power international supervisory body would replace the military government as quickly as possible to shorten the duration of occupation and decrease the chance of tension among the Allies. Although Soviet participation was vital, the State Department emphasized the importance of avoiding complete Soviet control at all costs.<sup>44</sup>

America's Korean policy thus sought staged independence in three phases, consisting of Allied occupation and military government, international administrative supervision, and finally the achievement of complete sovereignty.<sup>45</sup> Such an approach was not only realistic, but feasible, since the

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<sup>44</sup> Briefing Book Paper No. 605, "Relationship of the Soviet Union to the War Against Japan," and Briefing Book Paper No. 606, Undated, FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, 924-927; Briefing Book Paper No. 251, June 29, 1945, FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, 311; Briefing Book Paper No. 252, FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, Vol. I, July 4, 1945, 311.

<sup>45</sup> Briefing Book Paper No. 253, July 4, 1945, FRUS, and Leahy Notes, Undated, FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, Vol. I, 314-315; Leahy read these recommendations and added his support. He probably informed Truman accordingly.

Soviet Union continued to indicate support for trusteeship. In July, Stalin expressed interest in discussing the matter during consultations with T.V. Soong. Molotov suggested the formulation of a detailed understanding on trusteeship, since the proposal was unusual and unprecedented. Soong refused, however, to engage in specifics. He later informed Harriman of his fears that Moscow intended to include Soviet-trained exiles in the postwar government and thereby dominate Korea. Harriman agreed that China's concern was justified. He urged Truman that, in preparation for Potsdam, the State Department should prepare "a detailed discussion of the character of the proposed four power trusteeship for Korea." Evidently, the President approved the suggestion, since Leahy instructed Grew to prepare the study while enroute to Potsdam.<sup>46</sup>

Truman insists in his memoirs that his main concern at Potsdam was to obtain from Stalin the specific time of the planned Soviet entry into the Pacific War. He also sought Stalin's assurances of support for the Cairo Declaration, although American military advisors stressed that the United States "should not attempt to back up the Cairo Declaration with armed force."<sup>47</sup> News of the successful preliminary testing of the atomic bomb reached Truman on the day of his

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<sup>46</sup> Harriman to Byrnes, July 3, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VII, 914; Harriman to Truman, July 9, 1945, FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, Vol. I, 243.

<sup>47</sup> Truman, Years of Decision, 411-412; Chandler to Lincoln, July 6, 1945, RG 319, OPD 014.1 TS, Section III, NA.

arrival at Potsdam. Stimson testifies that at this point the President began "losing his interest" in Soviet entry into the Pacific War.<sup>48</sup>

Truman and Byrnes, it seems clear, both hoped that the successful utilization of the atomic bomb against Japan would bring a quick end to the war. Not only would this save many American lives, but it would remove the numerous complications entailed in Soviet participation in the defeat of Japan. It now seemed possible to achieve the unilateral occupation of Korea and avoid the distasteful necessity for trusteeship. Stimson harbored serious doubts about the wisdom of leaving anything to chance. He continued to urge an agreement on multinational occupation of Korea, because:

If an international trusteeship is not set up in Korea, and perhaps if it is, these Korean divisions [in Siberia] will probably gain control, and influence the setting up of a Soviet dominated local government, rather than an independent one. This is the Polish question transplanted to the Far East.<sup>49</sup>

Yet, Truman and Byrnes believed that they had found an avenue of escape from the Korean dilemma. The rapid surrender of Japan would preempt Soviet entry into the war and eliminate the possibility of a "sovietized" Korea.

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Stimson and Bundy, On Active Service in Peace and War, 637; See also, Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 244-246.

<sup>49</sup>

Stimson to Truman, July 16, 1945, FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, Vol. II, 631.

Truman, Churchill, and Stalin met at Potsdam in July, 1945, to discuss the postwar settlement. On July 17, Stalin stated that he would not declare war on Japan until China agreed to the terms of the Yalta Agreement on the Far East. Truman responded that there existed some misunderstandings about the terms of the agreement. For example, the United States believed that Dairen was to be a free port ultimately under Chinese control.<sup>50</sup> The following day, Stalin observed that the Soviet Union would not be able to enter the war against Japan before August 15. These initial discussions reinforced America's determination to preempt Soviet entry into the Pacific War. Byrnes privately proposed that the Allies issue an ultimatum demanding Japanese surrender within two weeks and threatening complete destruction after that deadline. He reasoned that if Soong stood firm and Stalin delayed entrance into the Pacific War, the atomic bomb would bring the prompt defeat of Japan "and this will save China."<sup>51</sup> Quite obviously, such a chain of events would also preclude Soviet control over Dairen and Korea.

On July 22, the Allied leaders discussed the issue of international trusteeship. Stalin observed that Molotov

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<sup>50</sup> Feis, The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II, 73.

<sup>51</sup> Conference Notes, July 17, 18, and 20, 1945, James F. Byrnes Papers, File 54 (1), Clemson University Library, Clemson, South Carolina.

was the "expert" on the subject and suggested that the time had arrived to discuss specific areas, such as the Italian colonies and the mandated islands. Eden's sharp rejoinder was "Do you want our mandates?" Stalin responded that there were other mandates that deserved attention and the Allies could also exchange views on Korea. Churchill strongly opposed any further discussion of the matter, but Truman expressed his willingness to refer the matter to the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM). There then ensued an acrimonious and prolonged discussion of the fate of the Italian colonies as Churchill displayed a marked suspicion of Soviet motives in the Mediterranean. Finally, Churchill reluctantly agreed to allow the CFM to consider the Soviet proposal on trustee-<sup>52</sup>ship. Unfortunately, Korea's future was now involved with the unrelated issue of Anglo-Soviet competition in the Mediterranean. The best and last chance for an amicable settlement of the Korean issue was lost.

Leahy later observed quite accurately that the long discussion of trusteeship actually revealed nothing specific about Soviet postwar intentions.<sup>53</sup> Britain's overreaction certainly made the task no easier. The Soviet trusteeship proposal was inoffensive enough, while Moscow possessed

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<sup>52</sup>  
Conference Notes, July 22, 1945, FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, Vol. II, 264-266.

<sup>53</sup>  
Leahy, I Was There, 408; Diary Entry, July 22, 1945, Leahy Papers, Box 5, Diaries, 1945, LOC; Cho, Korea in World Politics, 44

a clear right to lay claim to certain of the Axis mandates. In addition, the Yalta Agreements called for negotiations to determine the specifics of international trusteeship.<sup>54</sup> Events in Eastern Europe, however, prevented Truman from trusting Stalin. On July 23, Harriman visited Stimson and expressed great apprehension over Stalin's motives in colonial areas. The Soviet Union was no longer acting as a continental power, but was seeking "to branch out in all directions." Harriman speculated that Stalin favored immediate trusteeship in Korea in order to demand a similar settlement on Hong Kong and Indochina. Aware that Britain and France would reject such action, Harriman believed that Stalin and Molotov would "probably drop their proposal for trusteeship of Korea and ask for solitary control of it."<sup>55</sup>

Stimson conveyed Harriman's scenario to Truman during a meeting that afternoon. The President agreed that Stalin had demonstrated his expansionist intent, but believed the Soviet leader was bluffing. Stimson related later that Truman then assured him that "the United States was standing firm and he was apparently relying greatly upon the information as to S-1." That same day, Truman had received word that the United States could drop the atomic bomb on Japan

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<sup>54</sup> Soviet Trusteeship Proposal, Document 733, July 20, 1945, FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, Vol. II, 632-633.

<sup>55</sup> Stimson Diary Note, July 23, 1945, FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, Vol. II, f260.

during the first week of August. Clearly, Truman and Byrnes hoped that if the United States used the bomb on schedule, the Soviet Union would not enter the Pacific War and only Britain, China, and America would occupy Korea.<sup>56</sup>

General Marshall did not fully share Truman's confidence in the atomic strategy. On July 23, he explained to Stimson that Soviet troops were already massing in Siberia and the United States could do little to prevent the seizure of any territory Stalin desired. Marshall continued to support Soviet entry as the surest means for hastening the surrender of Japan. During the Allied military meeting the following day, Marshall's views seemed to be the basic ingredient in the American approach. Soviet General Alexei E. Antonov stated that the Soviet army would enter the war during the latter part of August. He then inquired as to American intentions to land in Korea. Marshall responded that the United States intended to concentrate on the occupation of Kyushu and thus did not contemplate entry into Korea in the near future. Without control of Kyushu, any landing in Korea would be open to air attack.<sup>57</sup>

Allied military leaders met again on July 26 and agreed upon zones of air and naval operations, which resulted in

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<sup>56</sup> Feis, The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II, 194-195.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 89-90; Combined Chiefs of Staff Report, July 23, 1945 and Tripartite Military Meeting Minutes, July 23, 1945, FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, Vol. II, 1462-1469 and 345-353.

the division of Korea just below the 41st parallel. The Allies also provided for coordination between zones, a liason apparatus after the Soviets entered the war, and the exchange of communications equipment. Antonov then asked for the specific date of the American landing on Kyushu. Marshall responded that the United States intended to begin operations in late October. While Antonov expressed approval, he also indicated a strong desire for the action to occur at an earlier date.<sup>58</sup> Thus, American military leaders ignored the Briefing Book papers and agreed to nothing specific regarding the multi-national occupation of Korea. Truman later explained that the Allies did not establish clear lines for ground action because "it was not anticipated by our military leaders that we would carry our operations to Korea."<sup>59</sup>

American military leaders apparently accepted Truman's argument that Soviet participation in the Pacific War was no longer necessary on July 25. On that date, Marshall requested MacArthur's plan for the occupation of Japan in the event of sudden surrender, as well as information on force requirements for a possible entry into Korea. MacArthur's office responded that, although the plan was incomplete, it provided for the occupation of Japan twelve

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<sup>58</sup> Soviet-American Chiefs of Staff Meeting Minutes, July 26, 1945, FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, Vol. II, 410-415; Department of State, A Historical Summary, 60.

<sup>59</sup> Truman, Years of Decision, 383.

days after surrender and entry into Korea at a later date. Marshall immediately ordered MacArthur to prepare to enter Japan in the very near future and to establish occupation of Korea as the next priority.<sup>60</sup> During discussions with Lieutenant General John E. Hull, Marshall explained that, in the event of Soviet entry, the United States should control at least two major ports. Thus, Marshall and Hull decided upon a line near the 38th parallel, but both hoped that Japan's quick surrender would render Soviet action unnecessary.<sup>61</sup>

American policy toward Korea thus experienced a remarkable transformation during the Potsdam Conference. Truman and his advisors decided to abandon trusteeship in anticipation of a rapid end to the Pacific War that would forestall Soviet occupation. At the CFM meeting on July 23, Byrnes joined Eden in opposing any detailed discussion of trusteeship. Molotov agreed to table his proposal, but requested that the final protocol provide specifically for the inclusion of the trusteeship issue on the agenda for the London Foreign Ministers Meeting scheduled for September, 1945.

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Marshall to MacArthur, July 25, 1945 and Craig to Hull, July 25, 1945, RG 319, OPD 014.1 TS, Section III, NA; Schnabel, Policy and Direction, 7.

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Appleman, From the Nakdong to the Yalu, 2-3; Feis, The China Tangle, 325; Strangely enough, the recollections of two military leaders differ greatly from reality. Matthew B. Ridgway argues that the Allies agreed at Potsdam to a five-year trusteeship excluding the United States, The Korean War (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), 42-47; J. Lawton Collins contends that an Allied agreement provided for the division of Korea at the 38th parallel, War in Peacetime (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), 25.

Eden objected and Molotov then insisted that the protocol at least note Moscow's raising of the issue. After some discussion, Byrnes agreed to support Molotov's request.<sup>62</sup>

When the Allies drafted the final protocol, however, both Byrnes and Eden opposed the inclusion of a general statement on the trusteeship issue. Byrnes rejected the Soviet proposal because "trusteeship as presented in the Soviet request was much broader and it was not his understanding that the Big Three had agreed to refer it to the Council of Foreign Ministers." Molotov relented, observing that he did not intend to press the matter.<sup>63</sup> As a result, the final protocol only noted that the Allies had raised and examined the trusteeship issue, but referred specifically only to the Italian colonies. Stalin accepted this reluctantly, pointing out that "the Russians were given little in this paper."<sup>64</sup>

Potsdam thus witnessed the emergence of no definitive agreement on Korea. It appears quite clear that the Soviet Union had genuinely sought to fulfill prior agreements for international cooperation in Korea, while the United States

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<sup>62</sup>

CFM Meeting Minutes, July 23, 1945, FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, Vol. II, 282-283.

<sup>63</sup>

Soviet Draft Proposal on Trusteeship, FRUS, and CFM Meeting Minutes, August 1, 1945, FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, Vol. II, 1594-1595 and 550-551.

<sup>64</sup>

Yost Memorandum, August 7, 1945 and State Department Minutes, August 1, 1945, FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, Vol. II, 636-637 and 593.

and Britain now adopted a policy of delay. The Truman Administration was pursuing a strategy that required the quick defeat of Japan to ensure success. On July 28, Byrnes observed that Soviet entry into Darien and Port Arthur would result in permanent control. Korea clearly fell into the same category. Realism thus dictated Truman's actions. If the atomic bomb brought Japan's rapid surrender, the United States could avert in Korea a repetition of the difficulties being experienced in Eastern Europe.<sup>65</sup>

## VI

America's strategy for preventing Soviet entry into the Pacific War proceeded according to plan. On July 26, the United States and Britain issued the "Potsdam Declaration" demanding Japan's immediate surrender. In the absence of a response, the United States dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9 respectively. In the interim, Moscow declared war on Japan and subscribed to the "Potsdam Declaration," which included a reaffirmation of the pledge to support the eventual independence of Korea.<sup>66</sup> Tragically, Stalin's decision to

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<sup>65</sup> Millis, The Forrestal Diaries, 78; Feis, Between War and Peace, 321; Feis, The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II, 330-331.

<sup>66</sup> Potsdam Declaration, July 26, 1945, FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, Vol. II, f1474-1475.

enter the war earlier than American leaders expected had destroyed Truman's strategy. Yet, one can hardly fault the Soviets for attempting to avert a fait accompli and ensure participation in the determination of Japan's future. At the same time, Soviet entry meant that the United States was not in a position to guarantee Korea's independence.<sup>67</sup>

Byrnes observes in his memoirs that Japan's surrender was no surprise. Soviet entry prior to August 15, however, was certainly unexpected.<sup>68</sup> The SWNCC was already engaged in completing plans for the occupation of Japan. On July 28, MacArthur had cabled his proposal—code-named "Blacklist"—which anticipated unified Allied occupation and administration of Japan, Korea, Formosa, and the China coast. Nimitz opposed MacArthur's position and sent his own plan to King, which called for a more rapid occupation under the direction of the Navy. This inter-service rivalry forced the JCS to delay action until MacArthur and Nimitz agreed on a unified operation. In the meantime, Marshall considered the inclusion of Korea in the Chinese zone of operations and cabled Wedemeyer requesting his comments on the idea.<sup>69</sup>

Soviet entry into the Pacific War meant that the United

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<sup>67</sup>

Feis, Contest Over Japan, 9.

<sup>68</sup>

Byrnes, Speaking Frankly, 212.

<sup>69</sup>

Sutherland to Marshall, July 28, 1945, and Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, August 1, 1945, RG 319, OPD 014.1 TS, Section III, NA; Marshall to Wedemeyer, August 9, 1945, RG 319, OPD 371, TS, Korea, NA.

States could not afford further delay. On August 10, Washington ordered Wedemeyer to assist China in occupying Formosa and Korea, while the American force would concentrate on Japan. On the same day, Japan asked for terms and the United States made a final attempt to prevent unilateral Soviet occupation of Korea. Byrnes instructed the SWNCC to prepare a plan for Soviet-American occupation of Korea, which would include a division of the peninsula into two zones with the line as far north as possible.<sup>70</sup> American military leaders cautioned against such action, pointing out that the United States had limited men and material in that area, while the Soviet Army was poised on the Korean frontier. Nevertheless, late in the evening on August 10, the SWNCC instructed Colonels C.H. Bonesteel III and Dean Rusk to find a line in Korea that would harmonize the political desire to have American forces receive the surrender as far north as possible and the obvious limitations on the ability of American forces to reach the area.<sup>71</sup>

Bonesteel and Rusk decided upon the 38th parallel as a suitable dividing line and the SWNCC incorporated this provision into a preliminary draft of "General Order Number One." Truman clearly recognized that time was of the

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<sup>70</sup>

SWNCC Meeting Minutes, August 11, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1039; Truman, Years of Decision, 444.

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Rusk to G. Bernard Noble, July 12, 1950, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1038-1039; Schnabel, Policy and Direction, 9; Collins notes that this division ironically resembled Japan's proposal to Russia in 1896, War in Peacetime, 25.

essence and thus informed the other Allies immediately of the general terms for accepting Japan's surrender. The President still hoped, however, that the United States could occupy most of Korea. On August 11, he ordered Marshall to arrange for the occupation as soon as possible of Darien and a port in Korea.<sup>72</sup> In all probability, Truman was responding to an urgent cable from American Military Attache General William Deane in Moscow on the same day:

Conclusions I have reached through discussion on reparations and otherwise . . . lead me to the belief that our forces should occupy quickly as much of the industrial areas of Korea and Manchuria as we can, starting at the southerly tip and progressively northward. I am assuming all of this will be done at no risk of American lives . . . and occupancy to continue only until satisfactory agreements have been reached between the nations concerned with respect to reparations and territorial rights and other concessions.<sup>73</sup>

Harriman strongly supported such action the following day, urging that the United States establish a position in Korea and at Darien as soon as practicable.<sup>74</sup>

At the SWNCC meeting of August 12, Admiral M. B. Gardiner voiced support for Truman's desires. He proposed a revision of "General Order Number One" to include the 39th parallel, thus providing for American occupation of

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SWNCC Meeting Minutes, August 11, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 634-637; Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, August 11, 1945, RG 319, OPD 014.1 TS, Section III, NA.

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Deane to Truman, August 11, 1945, Truman Papers, PSF (Pauley), HSTL.

74

Truman, Years of Decision, 433-434.

Dairen and a larger portion of Korea. After referral to the JCS, the SWNCC reaffirmed the 38th parallel, probably because the Soviets entered Korea on August 12. General G.E. Lincoln explained that the Soviet Union certainly would not accept the new line, nor could the United States hope to reach a point any further north.<sup>75</sup> Thus, the final draft of "General Order Number One" possessed only minor changes on Korea and Truman dispatched it to the other Allies on August 15 for approval. The JCS was satisfied that the 38th parallel provided for not only American control over the capital of Korea, but also sufficient land to apportion zones of occupation to China and Britain. Yet, American leaders did recognize that the Allies had not agreed on administrative and governmental control in Korea after occupation. The JCS urged Truman to obtain a detailed agreement, while at the same time formulating a policy directive for the eventual American occupation commander.<sup>76</sup>

Subsequent attempts to portray the 38th parallel decision as the product of military expediency and convenience hardly reflect the reality of the situation. Political

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<sup>75</sup> SWNCC Meeting Minutes, August 12, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 645; Schnabel, Policy and Direction, 10.

<sup>76</sup> JCS Memorandum, August 14, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 657-658; Feis, The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II, 151; James E. Webb's testimony before Congress in June, 1949, provides an accurate description of the events surrounding the proposal and acceptance of "General Order Number One" and the 38th parallel, U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Korean Aid, Hearings on H.R. 5330, 81st Cong., 1st sess., June 1949, 118-119.

and strategic considerations were primarily responsible for American actions.<sup>77</sup> After Truman abandoned trusteeship, the United States lacked sufficient power to block Soviet expansion when Moscow entered the Pacific War. Many American leaders even doubted whether Stalin would accept the 38th parallel. In anticipation of such a rejection, the JCS was prepared to order the immediate occupation of Pusan.<sup>78</sup> Just as Stalin had maintained good faith on trusteeship, however, he also cooperated in quickly approving the terms for accepting Japan's surrender.<sup>79</sup> Rusk later expressed his surprise that Moscow accepted terms which clearly did not reflect the Soviet Union's superior military position.<sup>80</sup>

Several scholars have criticized the 38th parallel

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<sup>77</sup> Truman insists that "there was no thought at the time other than to provide a convenient allocation of responsibility for the acceptance of Japanese surrender. All previous discussions on the subject of Korea had shown the Russians agreed with us that Korea would pass through a trusteeship phase before attaining independence," Years of Decision, 445; See also, "White Paper on Korea," Current History, XIX (September 1950), 170; Cabell Phillips, The Truman Presidency: The History of a Triumphant Succession (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966), 292.

<sup>78</sup> U.S. Department of State, United States Policy in the Korean Crisis, Far Eastern Series #34 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, July 1950), ix; Schnabel, Policy and Direction, 11

<sup>79</sup> Stalin to Truman, August 12 and 16, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 634 and 667-668; Stalin also agreed without hesitation to Truman's appointment of MacArthur as Supreme Commander (SCAP). Later, Truman argued that "I forced an agreement out of the Russians to accept him in that position," Truman to MacCormick, September 7, 1950, Truman Papers, PSF 129, General (MacArthur), HSTL.

<sup>80</sup> Rusk to Noble, July 12, 1950, FRUS, 1945, Vol.

decision, offering a variety of reasons. Certainly the line was ill-advised as a permanent boundary, since it cut across natural areas of geographic, cultural, and climatic continuity. On the west coast, for example, a small peninsula was part of the American zone, yet possessed no land connection to that area. In view of the alternative of complete Soviet control, however, Truman believed he had scored a major success.<sup>81</sup> Clearly, the decision meant de facto recognition of Soviet control in northern Korea, but Truman hoped to remove the barrier through subsequent negotiation. Soon-sung Cho argues that the United States should have airlifted troops into north Korea and that Truman's failure to do so<sup>82</sup> was an indication of shortsightedness and indifference. Yet, the United States had formulated plans for the occupation of Korea, but Moscow's rapid movement into the peninsula precluded implementation of the operation.

Stalin's decision to enter the Pacific War spoiled Truman's strategy for excluding Moscow from Korea. As a result, the United States had to settle for half a loaf, since its troops were over 600 miles away. In fact, the

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VI, 1039.

<sup>81</sup>

Middleton contends that it would be "difficult to conceive of a more unsatisfactory military boundary," The Compact History of the Korean War; Shannon McCune, "The Thirty-Eighth Parallel in Korea," World Politics, I, 2 (January 1949), 227; Arthur L. Grey, Jr., "The Thirty Eighth Parallel," Foreign Affairs, XXIX (April 1951), 482; John C. Caldwell, The Korea Story (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952), 10.

<sup>82</sup>

Cho, Korea in World Politics, 52-58.

Soviets could have occupied the entire peninsula before the United States troops could have reached Korea and Truman realized the political importance of avoiding such an event. If he had not, the United States would have never pressed for a zone of occupation in that area.<sup>83</sup> Under these circumstances, control of southern Korea was the most that Truman or anyone else could expect. Stalin's willingness to respect the agreement on surrender made possible the American occupation of south Korea.<sup>84</sup>

Stalin's acceptance of the 38th parallel was not the product of altruism. In all probability, the Soviet leader sought to maintain good relations with Truman to gain an equal voice in Japan. At the same time, Stalin probably viewed the 38th parallel as a suitable division of Korea into spheres of influence. Moscow certainly viewed the line as possessing some basis in history, while constituting a rough halving of the country.<sup>85</sup> Stalin would have preferred

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83

Cho errs when he argues that the Administration overlooked the political implications of Soviet occupation, Korea in World Politics, 52; U.S. Department of State, The Fight Against Aggression in Korea, Far Eastern Series #37 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, Autumn 1950), 3; Hermes, Truce Tent and Fighting Front, 5.

84

Goodrich, Korea, 13; Walt Rostow disagrees, arguing that the Soviet Union would not challenge American authority in Korea "if the United States had the purpose and will to exercise it," The United States in the World Arena, 201.

85

Martin Lichterman, "To the Yalu and Back," in American Civil-Military Decisions: A Book of Case Studies, edited by Harold Stein (Birmingham: University of Alabama Press, 1963), f634; McCune, "The Thirty-Eighth Parallel in Korea," 226; Bruce Cumings, "American Policy and Korean

a unified and friendly Korea, but he would accept temporary division in the interests of Allied cooperation. If Soviet-American relations deteriorated, he could always maintain control in the north and preserve Soviet national security. An attempt to seize the entire peninsula, on the other hand, would alarm the United States and negate possible concessions<sup>86</sup> in other important areas.

A concern over the future of Japan also dominated Truman's attitude toward Korea. The President believed that, if Stalin controlled the peninsula, the Soviet Union could undermine Chiang's position in China and place the security of Japan in doubt. Thus, occupation of south Korea was Truman's second priority in Asia at the time of Japanese surrender.<sup>87</sup> When Stalin requested a zone of occupation in Japan, Truman responded that MacArthur would possess complete control. Harriman enthusiastically supported this decision, observing that Stalin sought complete dominance over Japan and Korea. On August 27, Harriman met with Stalin and apparently won his support for American occupation policy in Japan. Significantly, Stalin decided to

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Liberation," in Without Parallel, 46-47; Beloff, Soviet Foreign Policy in the Far East, 156.

<sup>86</sup>

Grey, "The Thirty-Eighth Parallel," 486.

<sup>87</sup>

Feis, The China Tangle, 338; Ernest R. May offers the highly speculative argument that Truman occupied Korea in order to use withdrawal as a bargaining counter to gain Soviet concessions elsewhere at a later date, "Lessons" of the Past: The Use and Misuses of History in American Foreign Policy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 53-55.

respect the Korean arrangement and halted the Soviet Army<sup>88</sup> at the 38th parallel despite Truman's obdurance.

Unfortunately for Korea, once the Soviet Union and the United States both entered the peninsula, only a diplomatic agreement could end the partition. Korea would soon become a captive in the developing Soviet-American Cold War, since both nations sought to determine the course of Korea's political and economic development. Neither Stalin nor Truman would acquiesce in any settlement that appreciably<sup>89</sup> strengthened his adversary. Thus, Korea was once again the pawn in a struggle between the major powers. For the United States, the 38th parallel decision constituted an overextension of American power and prestige into an area<sup>90</sup> of marginal value to American national security.

## VII

Truman's refusal to grant Stalin an equal voice in Japan rendered an amicable solution to the Korean problem

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Stalin to Truman, August 16, 1945, Truman to Stalin, August 17, 1945, Harriman to Byrnes, August 23, 1945, and Harriman to Truman, August 27, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 667-670, 689-690, and 695-696.

<sup>89</sup>

Harold M. Vinacke, The United States and the Far East 1945-1951 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1952), 59; Pauline Tompkins, American-Russian Relations in the Far East (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 319.

<sup>90</sup>

Barton J. Bernstein, "American Foreign Policy and the Origins of the Cold War," in Politics and Policies of the Truman Administration, 16.

infinitely more difficult. Truman and Byrnes certainly recognized this fact, but remained optimistic nonetheless. At a press conference, Truman stated that the Allies had discussed Korea at Potsdam and expressed confidence that Korea would eventually emerge as a free nation.<sup>91</sup> Such optimism lacked reality in view of the absence of any firm agreement among the Allies. Perhaps worse, the United States faced the formidable task of implementing change in Korea in an atmosphere of anarchy that prevailed throughout Asia at the end of World War II. Japan's defeat left vast areas struggling for a new equilibrium and few Asian nations possessed experienced leaders with specific programs for postwar reconstruction. Competition for political control revolved around each native group's ability to instigate anti-imperialist agitation and exploit revolutionary nationalism.<sup>92</sup>

Korean exiles also continued to press the United States for recognition. During the Potsdam Conference, Rhee charged Truman with entering into an illicit deal with Stalin confirming the "Yalta sell-out." He warned that "appeasing the Soviet Union, at the sacrifice of justice to

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Feis, The China Tangle, 394; Truman Comments, August 16, 1945, U.S. President, Public Papers of the Presidents: Harry S. Truman, 1945-1953, Vol. I: 1945 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), 226.

92

Steel, Pax Americana, 162; Robert T. Oliver, Why War Came in Korea (New York: Fordham University, 1950), 24-26.

Korea, is bound to result in disaster."<sup>93</sup> Washington did consider approving Rhee's request to deliver shortwave broadcasts to Korea urging rebellion, as well as the "Napko Project" for introducing clandestine agents into Korea by submarine. With Japan's surrender on August 15,<sup>94</sup> however, the JCS dropped both plans from consideration.

In Chungking, Tjo Sowang and Kim Koo successfully enlisted the support of the new American Ambassador Patrick J. Hurley. The KPG sought participation in the Allied acceptance of Japanese surrender and any postwar discussion of Korea. Korean apprehension over Soviet influence and actions in Korea greatly impressed Hurley. After noting Moscow's refusal to contact the KPG, Tjo urged the United States and China to assist in transporting the legitimate Korean government to its homeland. Hurley now began to dispatch alarming cables to Washington, stressing that the Korean Communists had left China for Korea with the intention of creating a Soviet puppet regime. He urged the Truman Administration to utilize the KPG leaders as assistants and interpreters, while sending missionaries to the north.<sup>95</sup>

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93

Rhee to Truman, July 21, 1945, and Rhee to Lockhardt, July 25, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1031-1036.

94

Hull Memorandum, August 6, 1945, RG 319, OPD 381, CTO, NA; MacFarland to Nimitz, June 18, 1945, RG 218, CCS 385, Korea (3-16-45), NA.

95

Hurley to Byrnes, August 14, 1945, Kim Koo to Rhee, August 17, 1945, and Hurley to Byrnes, August 29, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1036-1037 and Vol. VII, 540; Hurley to Byrnes, August 31, 1945, RG 59, 895.01/8-3145,

Despite Hurley's warnings and apprehension over Soviet intentions, Truman continued to maintain impartiality toward the KPG. On August 23, the War Department rejected Rhee's request to accompany the American occupation force to Korea.<sup>96</sup> Significantly, America's attempt to be impartial was not a complete success. On August 18, William J. Donovan, director of the OSS, conveyed to Truman a letter from Kim Koo requesting recognition. Donovan supported such action, noting the successful record of wartime cooperation between the OSS and the KPG. This clear violation of stated American policy on Korea upset Leahy, who urged Truman not to respond to Kim's note. Leahy recommended to Truman "a draft reply to General Donovan informing him that you do not consider it proper for any agents of Donovan's office to transmit to the President messages from officials of self-styled governments that are not recognized by the Government of the United States."<sup>97</sup> Truman approved the suggestion, but it is doubtful that Goodfellow ceased his advocacy of diplomatic and material support for the KPG.

Inside Korea, the independence movement lacked unity, strength, and purpose, as well as experience in government

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NA; New York Times, August 20, 1945, 2:2.

<sup>96</sup>  
Chandler to Rhee, August 23, 1945, RG 319, OPD 381, CTO, NA.

<sup>97</sup>  
Donovan to Truman, August 18, 1945 and Leahy to Truman, August 22, 1945, Leahy Papers, RG 218, Memos to and From Truman, 1945, NA; Also in Truman Papers, White House Central Files, Confidential, Box 30, OSS, HSTL.

affairs. Several leaders vied for political power as provincialism and factionalism hampered united action. The only group that enjoyed some semblance of cohesion was the Communist Party, which had organized and controlled the Korean underground. The undisputed leader of the Korean resistance movement was a Communist named Pak Heun-yong, who organized local Communist cells and published a radical newspaper to foster rebellion. On the eve of Allied occupation, Communism was extremely popular, particularly among young Koreans.<sup>98</sup> In 1945, the Communist Party was in control of Korean nationalism and "unquestionably the country's most important single political force."<sup>99</sup>

Quite obviously, the Japanese were far more concerned about Pak and his underground movement than the feeble exile movement. News of Japan's surrender shocked the Korean people, because censorship and propaganda had isolated them from any knowledge of Allied military successes. Upon surrender, the Japanese were deathly afraid that their recent servants would retaliate. The Koreans themselves fostered such fears, declaring a spontaneous holiday and staging wild parties and demonstrations.<sup>100</sup> In the face of

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<sup>98</sup>

E. Grant Meade, American Military Government in Korea (New York: King's Crown Press, 1951), 32-33; Lee, The Politics of Korean Nationalism, 271-278; Beloff, Soviet Foreign Policy in the Far East, 158.

<sup>99</sup>

Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 320-322.

<sup>100</sup>

Ibid., 114.

such chaos, Japanese Governor Nobuyuki Abe decided to court local leaders in the hope of forming a pseudo-Korean government to maintain law and order and protect Japanese lives and property. Local landlords and the Communists rejected Abe's offer, fearing the onus of collaboration. Abe then turned to the prominent leftist leader Lyuh Woon-heung, who possessed a considerable following both inside Korea and overseas. Lyuh accepted, but only on the condition that Abe release political prisoners, guarantee freedom of speech and foreswear interference in his political activities. On August 15, Abe agreed and Lyuh formed the "Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence."<sup>101</sup>

Lyuh's regime immediately set about creating local "People's Committees" to assume administrative responsibilities. Most Koreans accepted Lyuh's authority, including professional people, landlords, intellectuals, and students. Thus, Lyuh emerged as the unchallenged de facto leader throughout Korea.<sup>102</sup> By the end of August, one hundred thirty-five committees were in existence and Lyuh utilized the Japanese communication, transportation, and administration network for considerable centralization. The main objective of the "People's Committees" was to expropriate

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<sup>101</sup>

Cummings, "American Policy and Korean Liberation," in Without Parallel, 54-55; McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 46; Kim, Divided Korea, 48-49.

<sup>102</sup>

Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 114-117; Dallin, Soviet Russia and the Far East, 258.

the land of the Japanese and their Korean collaborators, while releasing all political prisoners. Lyuh's public pronouncements also reflected his extreme socialist philosophy, but such views corresponded "with reasonable accuracy to the views of the Korean majority."<sup>103</sup>

Soviet entry into Korea only enhanced the leftward drift. Lyuh realistically recognized that he had to respect the views of the Communists if he hoped to enjoy Soviet support. Increasingly, wealthy Koreans became the objects of political repression, as the Lyuh regime denied conservatives any influence in the "People's Committees." Late in August, news of imminent American occupation caused Lyuh to convene a national congress in Seoul to provide his regime with the stamp of legitimacy. The Communists controlled the proceedings and formulated a platform that guaranteed civil liberties, called for the expropriation of Japanese property, recommended equal access to the militia and police force, and supported such reforms as the eighteen year old vote, child labor laws, and an eight hour work day. On September 6, in the presence of six hundred delegates, Lyuh proclaimed the establishment of the "Korean People's Republic."<sup>104</sup>

For a few days during the summer of 1945, then, Koreans

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<sup>103</sup>

Meade, American Military Government in Korea, 71-72; Allen, Korea's Syngman Rhee, 74; Berger, The Korean Knot, 52.

<sup>104</sup>

Lauterbach, "Hodge's Korea," 350-351; Dallin, Soviet Russia and the Far East, 260.

were relatively united in support of the People's Republic and Lyuh's vision of Korea's future. Yet, few knowledgeable Koreans believed that conservative exile leaders would support such a regime. More important, after the arrival of the United States and the Soviet Union, outside factors began to play a significant role in determining Korea's destiny. Korea emerged as a true testing ground for Soviet-American cooperation, because the two nations met on neutral territory and pursued policies reflecting vastly different ideologies. Both Truman and Stalin were determined that postwar Korea would reflect their own national values and institutions. Thus, both the United States and the Soviet Union sought to conquer, as well as liberate.<sup>105</sup>

Unfortunately, the 38th parallel separated two areas that were traditionally dissimilar, thus compounding the problem of zonal division. The north was rich in industry, hydroelectric power, and such minerals as coal, iron ore, and a variety of chemicals. The south, on the other hand, was much more agricultural and valuable for its production of rice and fish.<sup>106</sup> More important, the two zones manifested traditional sectional differences in social and

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<sup>105</sup>

Lauterbach, "Hodge's Korea," 349; Meade, American Military Government in Korea, 4-5; Robert T. Oliver, "Tug of War in Korea," Current History, XIII, 74 (October 1947), 222.

<sup>106</sup>

U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Conditions in South Korea, 1947, 3; "Review of Korea's Postwar Economy," Far Eastern Economic Review, II, 8 (August 23, 1951), 230-237.

religious respects, while being separate politically during ancient times. North Koreans possessed a more radical ideological outlook, as well as an attitude of stubborn superiority which caused them to view southerners as lazy, effete, unambitious, and scheming rascals.<sup>107</sup>

Differing systems of land tenure contributed to this divergence between north and south Korea. Landlordism was much less prevalent in the north, where plots were smaller and less productive. South Korea, however, experienced serious agrarian overpopulation and a higher rate of Japanese absentee-landownership. In addition, the American zone possessed an inordinate share of rich and conservative landlords, poverty-stricken farmer-tenants, dissatisfied workers, and Japanese businessmen.<sup>108</sup> Thus, the real tragedy of the 38th parallel was that the line separated

regions with physical differences and long established economic, social and political diversity. The super-position of a rigid barrier over a pattern which already has latent divisive tendencies is most dangerous—The regional diversities, which were elements of strength when Korea was a unit, . . . [became] critical disruptive forces.<sup>109</sup>

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OSS Report, Undated, RG 226, XL 10423, NA; Beloff, Soviet Foreign Policy in the Far East, 157; McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 59; Schnabel, Policy and Direction, 12.

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McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 128; Lee, The Politics of Korean Nationalism, 229; Hagwon Sunoo and William N. Angus, "American Policy in Korea: Two Views," Far Eastern Survey, XXV, 15 (July 31, 1946), 228-231; Andrew J. Gradjdanzev, "Korea Divided," Far Eastern Survey, XIV, 20 (October 10, 1945), 283.

109

McCune, "The Thirty-Eighth Parallel," 228.

Such circumstances increased the likelihood that partition would be permanent. Perhaps worse, Japanese exploitation resulted in serious economic deterioration during the war.<sup>110</sup> Thus, when the United States occupied Korea, Truman and his advisors confronted extremely difficult problems.

## VIII

American occupation of Korea experienced an inauspicious beginning. Originally, Washington instructed Stilwell's 10th Army to enter Korea, but on August 12 designated the 24th Corps as a replacement. The JCS occupation plan—code-named "Campus"—required three weeks to gather sufficient men and an additional three weeks for the acquisition of assault ships to transport these troops to Korea.<sup>111</sup> Truman ordered American military leaders to occupy Korea at an earlier date, thus forcing the JCS to turn to the 24th Corps which was stationed on Okinawa. As a result, the American occupation force possessed little knowledge of the land and people it was to control, since availability and the need for quick action dictated its choice.<sup>112</sup>

Uncertainty surrounded America's Korean policy in

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Gradjdanzev, "Korea Divided," 281.

<sup>111</sup>

Memorandum of the Assistant Chief of Staff, August 12, 1945 and Brief of JCS Study, August 15, 1945, RG 319, OPD 014.1 TS, Section IV, NA.

<sup>112</sup>

Sawyer and Hermes, Military Advisors in Korea, 3.

the summer of 1945 meant that there were no clear directives for the commander of the United States Armed Forces in Korea (USAFIK). On August 22, MacArthur requested information pertaining to any Allied agreements on Korea. He explained that he was formulating detailed instructions for the 24th Corps Commander and operating on the assumption of an occupation on a quadripartite basis. In response, the JCS informed MacArthur that the State Department had no knowledge of any agreement to four-power occupation. The Allies had only settled upon a trusteeship after Japan's defeat. Thus, the State Department urged the JCS to administer Korea's civil affairs in such a manner as to facilitate the handling of the nation as a unit. In addition, the USAFIK Commander was to strive for the creation of an Allied control council which would hasten the implementation of the trusteeship arrangement.<sup>113</sup>

On August 28, Washington cabled a more specific directive to MacArthur. This SWNCC plan provided that the USAFIK Commander would treat Korea as a liberated area and attempt to contact the Soviet Commander as soon as practicable for the formation of an administrative body which would formulate unified policies for all of Korea. In the meantime, the American Commander would continue the operation of the local judicial system and institute only

necessary economic, social, and financial reforms. Most important, the JCS authorized the temporary use of Japanese officials and Korean collaborators where security permitted and technical expertise was in short supply.<sup>114</sup>

Japan's rapid defeat left the United States unprepared for the immediate occupation of Korea. Thus, the United States instructed Japan to maintain law and order in Korea until the arrival of the USAFIK. Interestingly enough, Abe now reversed his support for the Lyuh regime, which had acted effectively to limit looting and bloodshed in the wake of mass rioting.<sup>115</sup> More important, the conservative elements now began to organize opposition to Lyuh's radical philosophy, hoping to prevent expropriation and possible imprisonment. Kim Sung-soo took the lead in forming the Korean Democratic Party, composed of conservatives, landlords and professional people, with collaborationist support. As the People's Republic became more radical, the Democratic Party increased its commitment to preserve the status quo. On September 1, 1945, the United States dropped leaflets in Korea announcing American occupation and thus removing the necessity for cooperation with Lyuh. The conservatives no longer needed to fear Soviet occupation of south Korea.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup>

SWNCC to JCS, August 28, 1945, and JCS to MacArthur, September 2, 1945, RG 218, CCAC 014.1, Section I, NA.

<sup>115</sup>

Meade, American Military Government in Korea, 71; Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 116.

<sup>116</sup>

Berger, The Korean Knot, 49-50; Lee, "American

American policy did not, however, seek to bolster wealthy landlords and prevent meaningful reform. Truman genuinely sought the creation of Korean political and economic independence through the elimination of Japanese colonialism and the formation of a self-governing, sovereign state that reflected the will of the people. On September 7, 1945, MacArthur formally established American control in southern Korea and guaranteed the protection of individual and property rights.<sup>117</sup> The following day, the 24th Corps landed in Korea under the command of Lieutenant General John Reed Hodge. At that time, Washington had not completed occupation guidelines and the JCS could send only a summary of instructions. It would be nine months before Washington sent a final directive to Korea. Forced to rely on expediency and common sense, rather than long range plans, American occupation manifested uncertainty and vacillation in the extreme. At an early date, American Military Government (AMG) became known as "operation trial and error."<sup>118</sup>

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Policy Toward Korea," 108-111; Schnabel, Policy and Direction, 16; Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 278; Cumings, "American Policy and Korean Liberation," in Without Parallel, 57

<sup>117</sup>

U.S. Department of State, Korea, Office of Public Affairs (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, August 1951), 7; MacArthur Proclamation, September 7, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1043.

<sup>118</sup>

JCS to Hodge, August 5, 1945, RG 218, CCAC 014 Korea, Section I, NA; Meade, American Military Government in Korea, 225; McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 46.

John R. Hodge was poorly prepared to deal with the complexities of the Korean situation. Born and raised on a farm in Golconda, Illinois, Hodge graduated from the University of Illinois and later taught military science and tactics at a college in Mississippi. A tough, gristly combat soldier, who had fought with distinction at Leyte, Bougainville, and Okinawa, he possessed little political or administrative experience.<sup>119</sup> Upon arrival, Hodge hardly endeared himself to the local populace when he observed that "Koreans are the same breed of cats as the Japanese."<sup>120</sup>

Declining morale compounded Hodge's problems, since the American soldiers in Korea were anxious to return home after Japan's surrender. The USAFIK also suffered from inadequate housing, irregular delivery of supplies, and inferior post exchange facilities.<sup>121</sup> A total lack of familiarity with the Korean climate, customs, and culture, let alone the language, magnified the seriousness of the situation. Hodge quickly turned to missionaries and English-speaking Koreans for advice. The AMG soon earned the derisive sobriquet of "government by interpreter." In addition, Washington informed Hodge of its determination

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Truman Papers, PPF 3920, John R. Hodge, HSTL; Tompkins, American-Russian Relations in the Far East, 322.

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Quoted in Gunther, The Riddle of MacArthur, 130.

121

Meade, American Military Government in Korea, Lee, "American Policy Toward Korea," 145.

to cut his force level in half within four months. Such circumstances forced Hodge to emphasize the preservation of law and order. Quite understandably, he refused to tolerate even remote threats to the security of his command.<sup>122</sup>

A general atmosphere of anarchy prevailed in south Korea at the time of American occupation. Koreans used their new-found freedom to attack any symbol of Japanese authority. The Japanese police reacted hysterically and, on the day of American arrival, massacred a large number of people massed to welcome the landing. Hodge's first action was to seek assistance from local leaders to deal with such problems. Upon requesting a meeting with two representatives from each party, however, a group of twelve hundred leaders confronted the startled USAFIK commander.<sup>123</sup>

Korean leaders universally opposed any delay of complete independence, but could agree on little else. The ambiguity of the Cairo Declaration only worsened the situation. Korean exiles engaged in a propaganda campaign which translated "in due course" as "immediately" or "in a few days."<sup>124</sup> Lyuh quickly registered his claim as the

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C. Clyde Mitchell, Korea: Second Failure in Asia (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Institute, 1951), 15; Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 212-214; Gunther, The Riddle of MacArthur, 182.

123

Lauterbach, "Hodge's Korea," 350; Sunoo and Angus, "American Policy in Korea: Two Views," 230; New York Times, September 9, 1945, 1:7.

124

Meade, American Military Government in Korea, 44.

legitimate leader of Korea's national government, while Kim Sung-soo denounced the People's Republic for collaboration with the Japanese. In his initial report, Political Advisor H. Merrell Benninghoff indicated the revolutionary nature of the situation when he observed that "southern Korea can best be described as a powder keg ready to explode at the application of a spark." The widespread demand for radical change, Benninghoff surmised, was probably Soviet-inspired. He then offered the conclusion that occupation "by armed forces of nations having widely divergent political philosophies, with no common command, is an impossible situation."<sup>125</sup>

Hodge strongly supported Benninghoff's assessment. He began at an early date to urge Soviet-American agreement to the quick removal of the 38th parallel, thus allowing the United States to withdraw. If there was to be a trusteeship, Hodge desired its immediate implementation and proposed skipping the stage of interim civil administration.<sup>126</sup> He noted that southern deficiencies in coal and electric power were the result of partition and were causing economic distress. Soviet Commander Ivan Chistiakov initially refused to respond to Hodge's communications. Hodge thus warned Washington that progress in the direction of Korean

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New York Times, September 12, 1945, 1 and 9; Benninghoff to Byrnes, September 15, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1049-1052.

126

Hodge to War, September 19, 1945, RG 319, OPD 014.1 TS (18 September 45), Section V, NA.

independence and self-government was essential or the United States would sacrifice public trust and respect. The 38th parallel decision "created a situation impossible of peaceful correction with credit to the United States unless immediate action on an international level is forthcoming to establish an overall provisional government which will be fully supported by occupation forces under common policy."<sup>127</sup>

Soviet policy in north Korea represented an additional spur to action. Hodge had feared that the Soviets would be in occupation of Seoul upon his arrival, but his apprehension proved unwarranted. Early reports from the north indicated, however, that the Soviets were treating the people with "barbarous cruelty" and attempting to destroy the existing order in favor of a "Bolshevik philosophy." One Australian journalist speculated that the Soviet purpose was

the establishment here not of a democratic but a Communist type of government. Their concept . . . embodies the complete reduction of the social structure to chaos, absolute integration and mass destruction . . . I am convinced that they are in contact with the Japanese communistic wing which was forced underground during the last decade . . . I believe that you can anticipate aggressive action in support of their fundamental purpose which is not so much the establishment of a sound peace and its preservation as it is the imposition of their own philosophy of life in Japan and Korea.<sup>128</sup>

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127

Hodge to MacArthur, September 24, 1945 and Benninghoff to Byrnes, September 26, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1054-1060.

128

Leahy Diary Note, September 29, 1945, Leahy Papers, Box 5, Diaries 1945, LOC; Schnabel, Policy and Direction, 14; MacArthur to War, September 28, 1945,

Many wealthy Koreans fled southward after Soviet entry and brought stories of looting, confiscation, and even sexual assaults. Communists were reportedly seizing political power and Benninghoff urged Washington to prevent Moscow from organizing "People's Committees."<sup>129</sup> For Truman, the similarity between Korea and Eastern Europe was all too obvious.

America's Korean policy clearly faced a crisis in the fall of 1945. Truman feared Soviet intentions in Asia and attempted to prevent "sovietization" in Korea. After Truman abandoned trusteeship at Potsdam and Stalin entered the Pacific War, the United States could ensure the implementation of the Cairo Declaration only through the use of force. This dilemma was, however, of Truman's own creation. On several occasions, Stalin indicated his support for an Allied agreement on trusteeship, but Truman hoped to end the war quickly and exclude Moscow from Korea altogether. It remains a matter of speculation whether trusteeship could have reconciled Soviet-American differences on Korea. Yet, Truman's refusal to negotiate a specific agreement guaranteed Korea's partition. Stalin's unwillingness to discuss reunification at the local level made the division permanent. Thus, Korea emerged at the end of World War II as a divided nation that was not independent, but a captive of the Cold War.

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Truman Papers, PSF 41 (Korea), HSTL.

129

Vincent to Acheson, October 1, 1945 and Benninghoff to Byrnes, October 1, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1065-1067; Dallin, Soviet Russia and the Far East, 285-286.

Chapter III:

In Search of a Settlement

Soviet-American partition of Korea in 1945 was among the most unfortunate outgrowths of World War II. The 38th parallel decision transformed Korea into a major battleground in the emerging Cold War. After occupation, Soviet and American objectives in Asia became incompatible, which meant that Korean reunification without bloodshed was a virtual impossibility. As one critic explains:

In a sense, both struggled to create a nation to serve their own national interests. Neither wished to give up its predominant role over half the country in exchange for a united Korea that might end up in the hostile camp.<sup>1</sup>

Few observers could ignore the symbolic nature of the Soviet-American confrontation in Korea. One could be optimistic about the future of cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union if the major powers agreed to remove the 38th parallel and grant Korean independence. In the absence of a settlement, the fulfillment<sup>2</sup> of the Cairo Declaration was extremely unlikely.

Both Truman and Stalin were suspicious of each other's motives and intentions in Korea. Clearly, Moscow would not

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<sup>1</sup> Cho, Korea in World Politics, 156; See also, Goodrich, Korea, 16-17.

<sup>2</sup> New York Times, November 25, 1945, IV, 8:2.

accept anything less than a "friendly" Korea. Washington's policy, on the other hand, was far more contradictory and tragic. Truman sincerely sought to end colonial domination over Korea, but, in the main, political and strategic motives determined American actions. Increasingly, rising fears of the Soviet Union caused the Truman Administration to pervert its initially idealistic goals. American officials came to view the Koreans as impetuous children, unaware of the magnitude of the Soviet threat facing their nation.<sup>3</sup>

Koreans criticized the American Military Government almost from the moment of its creation. Hodge announced at a press conference his intention to use Japanese personnel because of the limitations on American manpower.<sup>4</sup> Korean protests were immediate and violent, producing more chaos than the policy was designed to prevent. Adverse publicity in the United States and street demonstrations in Korea dictated a reversal of the policy.<sup>5</sup> At a press conference, Truman defended the decision as a practical necessity, but promised that MacArthur would remove the Japanese as soon

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<sup>3</sup> Steel, Pax Americana, 269; Yoo, The Korean War and the United Nations, 49.

<sup>4</sup> Hodge was merely following orders in using the Japanese, but U. Alexis Johnson had warned against the use of Japanese personnel in Korea under any circumstances, Steintorf to Byrnes, August 26, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1041-1045; Memorandum, "Japanese Capitulation," Undated, Byrnes Papers, File 569 (2), CUL.

<sup>5</sup> New York Times, September 10, 1945, 1:6 and September 11, 1:6 and 22:2.

as possible. The SWNCC informed MacArthur that the decision to use Japanese and collaborators was unfortunate and contrary to the overall intent of American policy. On September 12, MacArthur announced that he had ordered Hodge to immediately<sup>6</sup> remove Governor Abe.

Criticism refused to subside and Under-Secretary of State Dean G. Acheson urged Truman to issue a public statement clarifying American policy. He suggested that the President stress the temporary nature of the decision to use Japanese technicians and the necessity for "time and patience" in the pursuit of Korean independence. The final statement also emphasized that any Japanese retained in positions of importance were acting as "servants of the Korean people."<sup>7</sup>

The New York Times hailed the action as the proper decision. By October 18, Hodge had removed virtually all Japanese from south Korea.<sup>8</sup> Although the incident appeared trivial, it possessed great significance. In reacting quickly to popular protests, the United States had established a pattern of political action in which Korean leaders would use such pressure to influence American policy.

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<sup>6</sup>  
Truman Comments, September 12, 1945, Public Papers, Truman 1945, 318; SWNCC Memorandum, September 11, 1945, RG 218, CCAC 014 Korea (8-28-45), Section I, NA; New York Times, September 14, 1945, 1:3.

<sup>7</sup>  
Acheson to Truman, September 14, 1945, Truman Papers, OF 471, HSTL; "Statement on the Liberation of Korea," September 18, 1945, Public Papers, Truman 1945, 325

<sup>8</sup>  
New York Times, September 21, 1945, 20:3.

Hodge's emphasis on security dominated his approach to local political developments. In response to the myriad of opposing political groups, Hodge came to rely upon the most educated and wealthy sector of Korean society. As Benninghoff explained in his initial report, the upper class supporters of the KPG were the most encouraging aspect of the Korean affair. From the outset, Hodge allied the United States with the landlords, capitalists, and conservatives, all of whom opposed major reforms. He urged Truman and Byrnes to facilitate the return of Kim Koo's regime as a "figurehead" government that would stabilize the situation. Hodge's attitude was essentially military, emphasizing law and order rather than the American ideals of political democracy and national self-determination.<sup>9</sup>

Hodge's rejection of the People's Republic was a foregone conclusion. He easily accepted the argument that Lyuh's regime was subversive and under Soviet domination. Rather than forcing an end to factionalism through support for the People's Republic, Hodge dismissed Lyuh's claim to legitimacy and argued that the regime represented only a minority of Koreans.<sup>10</sup> Although the People's Republic was

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<sup>9</sup> McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 270; Kim, Divided Korea, 30-31; Goodrich, Korea, 15; Lee, "American Policy Toward Korea," 167-168; Denna Frank Fleming, The Cold War and Its Origins, Vol. II (Garden City: Doubleday, 1961), 590.

<sup>10</sup> Cumings, "American Policy and Korean Liberation," in Without Parallel, 50-51; Meade, American Military Government in Korea, 235; Cho, Korea in World Politics, 73.

under virtual Communist domination, it was extremely popular and efficient during its short tenure of control. Hodge clearly contributed to the already pronounced polarization in Korean politics. While officially recognizing neither the conservatives nor the radicals, Hodge pursued policies favoring an increase of rightist political power.<sup>11</sup>

Moscow was better informed than the United States on domestic affairs in Korea. The Soviet Union maintained a close relationship with the Korean Communists, while many returning Koreans were Soviet citizens and members of the Red Army.<sup>12</sup> Yet, it is doubtful that Stalin possessed a preconceived "blueprint for sovietization," as some scholars have suggested. In all probability, Moscow instructed the occupation commander, Ivan Chistiakov, to utilize those local Koreans that were not hostile to the Soviet Union and willing to support a "friendly" government. In its initial phase, Soviet occupation policy reflected considerable caution, as Chistiakov observed local political developments and supported such well-known nationalistic

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Bertram D. Sarafan, "Military Government: Korea," Far Eastern Survey, XV, 23 (November 20, 1946), 350; Gunther, The Riddle of MacArthur, 180-181; Cho, Korea in World Politics, 70-73; Glenn D. Paige, "Korea," Communism and Revolution: The Uses of Political Violence, edited by Cyril E. Black and Thomas P. Thornton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 217; McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 90; Berger, The Korean Knot, 50.

12

U.S. Department of State, North Korea: A Case Study in the Techniques of Takeover, 13; Meade, American Military Government in Korea, 58-59; Simmons, The Strained Alliance, 22-23.

13

leaders as Cho Man-sik.

On August 25, Chistiakov recognized the authority of the "People's Committees" and began to support Lyuh. George McCune observes that the Soviet Union "actually did permit the Koreans of their choice to exercise real authority, whereas in the American zone, the Korean employees of Military Government were allowed little power and no authority."<sup>14</sup> Moscow did not impose an alien puppet regime, but allowed sufficient local power to indicate its good intentions without losing ultimate control. In contrast to Eastern Europe, Stalin did not believe that national self-determination in Korea would necessarily produce an anti-Soviet government in 1945.

For many north Koreans, Lyuh's program served best their needs and aspirations. Unlike the Western democratic model, the socialist system permitted the type of radical change that most Koreans favored. In addition, Japanese domination had accustomed the people to the imposition of authority from above.<sup>15</sup> Communist control of the Korean

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Chong-sik Lee, "Kim Il-song of North Korea," Asian Survey, VII, 6 (June 1967), 378; Simmons, The Strained Alliance, 25; Suh, "A Preconceived Formula for Sovietization," in The Anatomy of Communist Takeovers, 475.

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McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 52; See also, Kim, Divided Korea, 88.

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Cummings, "American Policy and Korean Liberation," in Without Parallel, 55; Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 324-333; McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 180-181; Suh, "A Preconceived Formula for Sovietization," in The Anatomy of Communist Takeovers, 480.

underground at the time of liberation also facilitated the assumption of administrative responsibilities at the local level. One can also argue that many knowledgeable Koreans accepted inordinate Communist influence after realizing that Korean independence would depend upon developing amicable relations with the Soviet Union. Criticism of Moscow would have been foolish and counter-productive.<sup>16</sup>

## II

Hodge believed that the Soviet Union was pursuing a pattern of "sovietization" from the outset and seeking ultimate control over the entire Korean peninsula. The USAFIK Commander later explained that his response to the threat was based upon MacArthur's personal advice "to be patient and not to give the Russians an inch."<sup>17</sup> His support for Korean conservatives and rejection of the Lyuh regime, however, only reinforced Moscow's determination to maintain complete control in the north. As early as September 3, 1945, the Soviets indicated opposition to the KPG and that group's claim to legitimacy. Comments in the Soviet press stressed that Korea had to rely on contacts with its closest neighbors for economic, social, and political development.

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16

John N. Washburn, "Soviet Russia and the Korean Communist Party," Pacific Affairs, XXIII, 1 (March 1950), 63; Lauterbach, "Hodge's Korea," 358.

17

Hodge to MacArthur, August 28, 1948, Douglas MacArthur Papers, Box 5, Correspondence, John R. Hodge, Douglas MacArthur Memorial Library, Norfolk, Virginia.

Moscow could never be certain of Korea's friendship, if those individuals hostile to the Soviet Union, such as Syngman Rhee, were able to obtain political control.<sup>18</sup>

Benninghoff was as certain as Hodge of Moscow's hostile intentions. Comparing Korea to Rumania, he observed that it was "more than a probability that they will sovietize northern Korea as they sovietized eastern Europe." He also noted that the Lyuh group was more vocal and better organized than the "democratic conservatives" who favored the Western model of political development.<sup>19</sup> Hodge became increasingly disillusioned and frustrated as "every time two Koreans sit down to dinner they form a new political party."<sup>20</sup>

Hodge attempted to foster the unity of all political groups in Korea except the extreme left and thus end factionalism. On October 5, Military Governor Archer V. Arnold appointed an Advisory Council of eleven prominent Koreans under the chairmanship of Kim Sung-soo. Hodge insisted that the action was a step toward Korean self-government and independence.<sup>21</sup> Most Koreans, however,

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<sup>18</sup>  
Harriman to Byrnes, RG 59, September 3, 1945, 895.01/9-345, NA.

<sup>19</sup>  
Benninghoff to Byrnes, September 29, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1061.

<sup>20</sup>  
Sarafan, "Military Government," 354; See also, Meade, American Military Government in Korea, 151.

<sup>21</sup>  
Benninghoff to Atcheson, October 9, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1069; Lauterbach, "Hodge's Korea," 349-350; Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 130.

considered the body unrepresentative, since it included only wealthy businessmen, landlords, and professional people. In addition, the appointment of a well-known collaborator ensured that the body would be "universally hated and dis-<sup>22</sup>trusted throughout Korea." The central purpose of the Advisory Council was, of course, to undermine Lyuh's popular support. Hodge also proceeded to outlaw the "People's Committees" and create new local councils under the control of the conservative elements. Yet, Hodge's expectation of the development of democracy based upon platforms and specific proposals never materialized. Individual leaders continued to compete for special status and privileges,<sup>23</sup> thus compounding the already existing confusion.

Hodge soon determined that only the return of the KPG would restore stability. Chiang Kai-shek supported this conclusion, insisting that only active support for the Kim Koo regime would forestall Soviet control throughout Korea. Chiang urged the United States to use KPG officials in the military government and even suggested recognition.<sup>24</sup> In response, Acheson reemphasized that the United States

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Sarafan, "Military Government," 353; Meade, American Military Government in Korea, 61; Tompkins, American-Russian Relations in the Far East, 323.

23

Sunoo and Angus, "American Policy in Korea," 228; Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 130.

24

Hodge to War, September 29, 1945, RG 319, OPD 381 CT0, NA; Robertson to Acheson, September 25, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1057; Acheson Memorandum, RG 59, September 26, 1945, 895.01/9-2645, NA.

favored no particular group and would allow anyone to join  
 the AMG who was qualified and wished to serve.<sup>25</sup> On October  
 16, Acheson announced that the United States would provide  
 transportation to Korea for any exile wishing to return.  
 Byrnes cabled Hurley that the United States was particularly  
 interested in the return of Kim Koo and Kimm Kui-sik.<sup>26</sup>

Although Byrnes and his advisors agreed that Korean  
 political stability was important, they were apprehensive  
 about Rhee's rising influence. On September 5, Washington  
 delayed approval of Rhee's return because his passport bore  
 the title "High Commissioner."<sup>27</sup> In all probability, the  
 State Department was cautious because it realized that  
 Rhee's anti-Sovietism would only hinder contacts with the  
 Soviet Commander. At this point, Preston Goodfellow  
 interceded on behalf of his old friend Rhee and convinced  
 the Passport Division Chief, Ruth B. Shipley, to issue the  
 necessary papers. Shipley granted a passport without the  
 knowledge of Byrnes and evidently because she believed Rhee  
 to be a "nice patriotic old gentleman."<sup>28</sup>

Rhee stopped in Tokyo for discussions with MacArthur

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Acheson to Robertson, September 27, 1945 and  
 Acheson to Hurley, September 21, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol.  
 VI, 1060 and 1046.

26

New York Times, October 10, 1945, 10:2; DSB,  
 XIII, 330 (October 21, 1945), 642; Byrnes to Hurley,  
 October 16, 1945, FRUS, 1945. Vol. VI, 1060.

27

Oliver, Syngman Rhee, 210-211.

28

Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 128.

while enroute to Korea. Initially, MacArthur confirmed that the United States intended to be impartial and would provide Rhee with no special considerations.<sup>29</sup> Political Advisor George Atcheson informed Washington that he possessed serious doubts regarding the wisdom of this approach:

I believe the time has come when positive American action, in the political field in Korea should be taken. I realize that to give open official approval or support to any one leader, group or combination, is contrary to past American thinking. But situation in Korea fully warrants such a step and there is reason to believe that unless positive action is taken to give the Koreans a start in governmental participation and organization, our difficulties will increase rather than diminish, and the Communistic group set up and encouraged by the Soviets in northern Korea will manage to extend its influence into southern Korea with results which can readily be envisaged.<sup>30</sup>

Apparently, MacArthur agreed, since Rhee returned to Korea on October 16 aboard MacArthur's private plane. Hodge greeted Rhee with great fanfare and provided him with a room in the AMG hotel, gas coupons, and a personal body guard.<sup>31</sup> Such favoritism hardly reassured the Soviets regarding American intentions and certainly aroused suspicion.

This rapid turn of events alarmed many American

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MacArthur to War and JCS, October 19, 1945, RG 319, OPD 381 CTO, NA.

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Atcheson to Byrnes, October 15, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1091-1092.

31

Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 128-129; Kim, Divided Korea, 57-58; Oliver, Syngman Rhee, 213-214; Cumings, "American Policy and Korean Liberation," in Without Parallel, 65.

officials in Washington. Noting Soviet hostility toward Rhee, the War Department informed Hodge that the close relationship with Rhee tended "to jeopardize success of United States negotiations . . . regarding 38°." Yet, as Truman explains in his memoirs, the absence of other popular political leaders and the nature of the Korean situation<sup>32</sup> left Hodge with little alternative but to support Rhee. Upon his return to Korea, all groups urged Rhee to accept a position of leadership in their parties in hopes of increasing their popularity and political power.<sup>33</sup> From the outset, however, Rhee rejected cooperation with any party and sought to unify all Koreans under his leadership. By 1945, Syngman Rhee considered himself the embodiment of "new Korea" and embarked upon a determined course of action for the creation of a separate government in south Korea strong enough to force the Soviet Union to abandon the north. While overtly expressing his non-partisanship, he created a new party—"The Society for the Rapid Realization of Korean Independence."<sup>34</sup>

Rhee also benefited from the influence of Goodfellow

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War to MacArthur, October 22, 1945, RG 218, Leahy Papers, Korea 1946-47, NA; Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, 329.

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McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 244; Oliver, "Tug of War in Korea," 224.

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Cumings, "American Policy and Korean Liberation," in Without Parallel, 65; Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, 329; New York Times, October 18, 1945, 4:5; Allen, Korea's Syngman Rhee, 71.

and his other lobbyists in Washington. On November 5, 1945, Jay Jerome Williams asked Truman to approve the return of Goodfellow from terminal leave to serve as special advisor to the AMG. He stressed that Hodge desired Goodfellow's advice. In addition, Goodfellow could utilize his long experience with the resistance movement to foster the unification of all faction. Vincent opposed the plan, pointing out that Williams, Rhee, and Goodfellow had criticized the State Department during the war for non-recognition of the KPG. Byrnes refused to send Goodfellow as Truman's personal representative, but agreed to allow him to join the AMG if Hodge requested such action. Truman instructed Byrnes to "handle the matter as you see fit." Thus, the Secretary of State decided to permit Goodfellow to travel to Korea as special advisor to Hodge. Impartiality was at an end.<sup>35</sup>

### III

American leaders quickly recognized that events were overtaking the United States in Korea. Further delay only increased the permanence of partition. America's desire to demobilize added urgency to the task of achieving Korean reunification and independence, since only a settlement with Moscow would allow the United States to withdraw. As early

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Williams to Byrnes, Vincent Memorandum, Byrnes to Truman, and Truman to Byrnes, November 16, 1945, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/11-1645, NA.

as September 30, the SWNCC turned again to trusteeship as the only solution to the Korean problem and began to formulate a specific proposal. Washington ordered Hodge to continue to seek coordination with Chistiakov to arrive at uniform and centralized occupation policies. In addition, the SWNCC instructed Hodge to create an administrative structure capable of extension throughout Korea in the hope that trusteeship would conform to the American model for Korean reconstruction. Hodge's response questioned the logic of these directives, since Chistiakov had already refused to engage in substantive discussions of any matter. He doubted if Moscow would agree to any steps toward reunification until the foreign ministers resolved the outstanding issues in the Korean impasse.<sup>36</sup>

Moscow's refusal to engage in local negotiations coupled with the need to reduce the level of American forces in Korea forced the Truman Administration to consider a formal approach to the Soviet government. On October 4, 1945, the JCS requested Hodge's comments on the feasibility of trusteeship and his recommendations for the specific provisions of the planned diplomatic overture. The State Department also ordered Benninghoff to return to the United States to offer his firsthand observations.<sup>37</sup> In preparation

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<sup>36</sup> War to MacArthur, September 30, 1945, RG 319, OPD 014.1 TS, Section IV, NA; Marshall to MacArthur, October 1, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1067; Berger, The Korean Knot, 56.

<sup>37</sup> JCS to Hodge, October 4, 1945, RG 218, CCAC 014

for discussions in Washington, Hodge and Benninghoff formulated a series immediate needs in Korea, such as civilian advisors, economic aid, a "figurehead" government, and an end to the 38th parallel. While in the United States, Benninghoff noted Korean factionalism and Soviet-directed political agitation as continuing sources of difficulty. He emphasized that quick action was essential, because even<sup>38</sup> the conservatives had begun to criticize the AMG.

In the meantime, the War Department was continuing to urge the rapid implementation of trusteeship. Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson emphasized that demobilization was reducing the number of troops available for the Korean occupation. He expressed the hope that a Korean Constabulary could assume responsibility for the preservation of law and order and thus permit the United States to maintain only a small force in Korea.<sup>39</sup> Alarming news from Tokyo underlined the necessity for a Soviet-American agreement. MacArthur reported that the Soviet Union was stripping factories and industrial installations in north Korea and shipping the materials to Russia. He informed Truman's personal representative, Edwin A. Locke Jr., that unless the United States

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Korea (8-28-45), Section II, NA.

<sup>38</sup>

Memorandum, October 16, 1945, RG 319, OPD 336 Korea, Section I, NA; T.N. Dupuy to Lincoln, October 29, 1945, RG 319, OPD 336, Korea, Section I, NA.

<sup>39</sup>

Patterson to Byrnes, November 1, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1111.

acted immediately, Korea's partition would be permanent.<sup>40</sup>

As early as October 8, 1945, the State Department had prepared a draft proposal on Korean trusteeship, which the JCS approved ten days later.<sup>41</sup> As something of a trial balloon, John Carter Vincent publicly announced on October 21 that the United States supported the principle of Allied cooperation in the supervision and guidance of dependant peoples. He explained that the United States and China had agreed to a period of preparation for self-government in Korea and expressed hope for Soviet-American cooperation in that nation. The creation of an independent, democratic, and prosperous Korea was not only just, but in the interests of Soviet-American security.<sup>42</sup>

On October 22, the SWNCC recommended that Byrnes open negotiations as soon as possible for the coordination of occupation policy in Korea, the removal of the 38th parallel and the establishment of a trusteeship. The United Nations would possess ultimate responsibility and provide the supervisory machinery to ensure Korea's sovereignty. Under this arrangement, the United States could withdraw and the Koreans could assume as many governmental responsibilities

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<sup>41</sup>

Truman, Years of Decision, 521-522.

<sup>42</sup>

Draft on Korean Trusteeship, October 13, 1945, Byrnes Papers, File 569 (2), CUL; Berger, The Korean Knot, 57.

<sup>43</sup>

Vincent, "The Post-War Period in the Far East," DSB, XIII, No. 330 (October 21, 1945), 644-648.

as possible. The SWNCC emphasized that the American public was demanding withdrawal from Korea, while the USAFIK<sup>44</sup> appeared unable to resolve several complex problems.

Byrnes communicated the new American policy decision to Harriman on November 3, instructing him to approach the Soviets with a request to end the 38th parallel as a closed barrier. The American proposal called for adequate and regular delivery of coal and electricity to the south, uniform fiscal policies, coastwide shipping, orderly resettlement of displaced persons, and the resumption of inter-zonal trade. The occupation commanders were also to begin immediate negotiations for the realization of Korean independence. On November 7, Byrnes further instructed Harriman to raise with Molotov the issue of alleged Soviet removals of power station equipment along the Yalu River.<sup>45</sup>

Harriman complied with the instructions, but expressed pessimism regarding the chances for success. He insisted that Moscow would not forego control over north Korea or allow the area to become a springboard for attack on Russia. From the Soviet viewpoint, Korea was no different than Finland, Poland, or Rumania.<sup>46</sup> Forrestal shared Harriman's

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<sup>44</sup> SWNCC to Byrnes, October 22, 1945 and SWNCC to JCS, October 24, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1094-1102.

<sup>45</sup> Byrnes to Harriman, November 3, 1945 and November 7, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1106-1109 and 1112-1113; Gilmer to Hull, November 7, 1945, RG 319, OFD 336 Korea, NA.

<sup>46</sup> Harriman to Molotov, November 8, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. II: General: Political and Economic Matters (Washington,

pessimism, observing that the United States could expect Moscow to consolidate control over northern Korea. He agreed, however, that Washington should protest Soviet dismantling of the power station, although Stalin probably<sup>47</sup> took the action because he felt surrounded.

On November 7, Byrnes informed Hodge of the decision to approach the Soviet Union and assured the commander that negotiations would now progress rapidly for the termination of the Korean partition, the creation of a trusteeship, and the withdrawal of American troops. Once again, he rejected support for the KPG or any other faction, since it "might greatly complicate the political problems facing military government, as well as encourage the Soviet commander to sponsor a similar group in his zone and thus postpone<sup>48</sup> establishment of a unified Korea." The War Department remained skeptical of Byrnes' policy and feared rising public criticism of American occupation. It began to formulate a public information program to apprise the American people of the complex and serious nature of the Korean situation. If Soviet-American negotiations failed, the War Department believed that continued occupation of

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D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1967), 627; Harriman to Byrnes, November 12, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1121 and RG 59, 895.01/11-1245, NA.

<sup>47</sup>

Millis, The Forrestal Diaries, 107-108.

<sup>48</sup>

Vincent to Vittrup, November 7, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1113-1114.

Korea would be a complete impossibility.<sup>49</sup>

Despite widespread skepticism regarding the approach, the State Department completed a preliminary draft of a four-power trusteeship on November 6. Some officials questioned the length of the document, since it contained no less than thirty-eight articles. Alger Hiss and others explained, however, that "it will be the first of several trusteeship agreements and should be a model for them." Perhaps more important, Moscow had indicated on previous occasions a preference for detailed agreements, rather than ones "couched in general terms." Thus, the Korean trusteeship proposal possessed added significance.<sup>50</sup>

America's proposal for trusteeship envisioned the creation of an Executive Council and High Commissioner to organize and implement general policy directives in Korea. Representatives of China, Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union would serve on the Council, which would base its decisions on majority rule. Within thirty days after the High Commissioner assumed control, Soviet and American troops would withdraw. The plan also provided for an elected legislature, judicial system, police force, constabulary army, constitution, technical aid, and

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<sup>49</sup>

Hull to Vittrup, November 10, 1945, RG 319, OPD 336, Korea, NA; New York Times, November 6, 1945, 18:3.

<sup>50</sup>

Trusteeship Proposal, November 6, 1945, Byrnes Papers, File 596 (2), CUL; Blakeslee to Vincent, November 14, 1945, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/11-1445, NA.

participation in the secondary organizations of the United Nations. The trusteeship machinery would maximize Korean participation, thus fostering experience in self-government and speeding the termination of international control. Byrnes hoped that Stalin would accept this plan and that Korea would gain full independence on March 1, 1951.

George Atcheson, MacArthur's political advisor, had already advocated the adoption of positive steps for the realization of Korean independence. During October, 1945, he recommended that Washington announce the legal separation of Korea from Japan and the consummation of Soviet-American negotiations to end the partition. On November 3, the JCS ordered MacArthur to effect the complete governmental and administrative separation of Korea from Japan. At the same time, the State Department responded to Atcheson's other suggestion and formulated a "Joint Policy Declaration" on Korea. If accepted, the Allies would issue a public promise for the early fulfillment of the Cairo Declaration through the negotiation of a specific trusteeship agreement.<sup>51</sup>

During the fall of 1945, the Truman Administration turned once again to the trusteeship formula as a means for ending the 38th parallel. On November 11, Truman received

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Atcheson to Byrnes, October 4, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1068; JCS to MacArthur, November 3, 1945, U.S. SCAP, Political Orientation of Japan September 1945 to September 1948, Vol. I (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1949), 3; Joint Policy Declaration, November 13, 1945, Byrnes Papers, File 569 (2), CUL.

British and Canadian support for the convening of an early meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers to discuss Korea and a number of other issues. According to Leahy, Britain and the United States "agreed as to the immediate desirability of establishing an international control of Korea for a period of five or more years in preparation for self-government, and that assent of China and the Soviet Republics should be obtained through diplomatic channels."<sup>52</sup> American policy toward Korea had then completed a full circle during 1945. Unfortunately, successful creation and implementation of a trusteeship agreement was now extremely difficult, since both Moscow and Washington were firmly entrenched in the divided Korean peninsula.

## IV

On November 16, 1945, the State Department announced that the United States intended to approach the Soviet Union for the purpose of eliminating the 38th parallel. The statement observed that Hodge had attempted to negotiate at the local level, but had been unable to remove the unnatural barrier. Washington also indicated its intention to foster the return of qualified and prominent Korean exiles as quickly as possible "to work with local Korean leaders in the unification of the diverse political elements." The

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Leahy Diary Note, November 11, 1945, Leahy Papers, Box 5, Diaries 1945, LOC; Truman, Years of Decision, 540.

United States expressed confidence that Soviet-American negotiations and support for democracy would speed Korean reunification and independence.<sup>53</sup>

If Truman and his advisors thought that the Koreans had changed their attitude of opposition to trusteeship, they were sadly mistaken. Rhee seized the initiative and inaugurated a program to unify all political elements around a demand for immediate self-government. Rhee's party became an outspoken critic of the 38th parallel and mobilized opposition to trusteeship and cooperation with the Soviet Union. Early in November, Rhee convened a conference of forty-five political parties and demanded immediate freedom. In return for recognizing the KPG, Rhee and his followers promised elections within one year. The conference drew up a resolution that expressed "shock and consternation" over Vincent's proposal for a joint trusteeship in Korea.<sup>54</sup>

Such protests greatly disturbed Byrnes, who quickly instructed Hodge to limit Rhee's pronouncements. Byrnes warned that "unguarded references to the Soviet Union and the 38th parallel" would only complicate negotiations with Moscow. Hodge and MacArthur were more concerned regarding

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<sup>53</sup>  
Press Release, DSB, XIII, No. 334 (November 18, 1945), 812-813.

<sup>54</sup>  
New York Times, November 3, 1945 and October 14, 1945; Rhee to Byrnes, November 4, 1945, FRUS, Vol. VI, 1110-1111; Cumings, "American Policy and Korean Liberation," in Without Parallel, 76; Limb to Vincent, November 11, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1115-1117.

Communist agitation in south Korea which was thriving on increasing economic distress. Hodge believed that the People's Republic was pursuing a campaign of criticism which reflected the work of a "well trained group of outside experts." Rather than hampering Rhee's activities, Hodge urged actions to bolster the conservatives as the legitimate representatives of south Korea. He recommended recognition of the KPG, while MacArthur offered private transportation<sup>55</sup> for the Kim Koo regime back to Korea.

Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy supported Hodge's assessment. On November 13, he reminded Acheson that Syngman Rhee was not only reliable, but confident and unconfused in purpose. Since Moscow would probably refuse to negotiate, McCloy suggested that the AMG maximize the use of Korean exiles to prepare them for the rapid assumption of governmental responsibilities. Acheson refused to go any farther than fostering the return of prominent exiles. He emphasized that the AMG would treat all civilian employees<sup>56</sup> as individuals without official status. Acheson's caution was justified. In Chungking, Chiang had supplied Kim Koo with a sizable amount of money and group of Chinese advisors

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Byrnes to Acheson, October 25, 1945, Hodge to War, November 2, 1945, and MacArthur to Marshall, November 5, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1105-1106 and 1112; MacArthur to Marshall, October 25, 1945, RG 319, OPD 336 Korea, NA.

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McCloy to Acheson, November 13, 1945 and Vincent to Acheson, November 16, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1119 and 1127; Hull to Hodge, November 21, 1945, RG 319, OPD 336 Korea, NA; New York Times, November 20, 1945, 4:8.

prior to his departure.<sup>57</sup> Although the exact nature of China's influence in the KPG remained a matter of doubt, Stalin certainly could not have been optimistic regarding the motives and intentions of the Kim Koo regime.

American officials in Seoul refused to accept the logic of either impartiality or trusteeship. William R. Langdon, now political advisor, reported that the Soviet Commander had issued a proclamation pledging his support for a democratic form of government, the protection of civil liberties, and the ouster of the Japanese. He urged Byrnes to support the Kim Koo regime, because the KPG was considered "quasi-legitimate by all elements and parties." More important, popular opposition to trusteeship meant that continued impartiality was foolish. Langdon offered a detailed plan for turning over control in Korea to Kim Koo with or without Moscow's approval.<sup>58</sup> Hodge joined in urging positive action, noting the increased popularity of Lyuh among the uneducated and working masses. Since Lyuh refused to renounce his claim to legitimacy, Hodge informed MacArthur of his intention to denounce Lyuh's People's Republic and issue a "declaration of war" against its activities.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> McNair to War, November 16, 1945, RG 226, OSS, XL 31447, NA.

<sup>58</sup> Langdon to Byrnes, November 18, 1945 and November 20, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1129-1132.

<sup>59</sup> Hodge to MacArthur, November 25, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1133-1134.

It seems clear that Hodge and Langdon were overreacting. Quite obviously, not all the leftists were under Soviet direction and many were only demanding change.<sup>60</sup> To preserve order, Langdon admitted, the USAFIK initially "picked out a disproportionate number of rich and conservative persons." Uncertainty remained, however, regarding which extreme really possessed a wider social base of support. In view of the inordinate amount of individual ambition, sectional rivalry, and intolerance of opposition, Langdon concluded that support for the KPG was the most logical course of action.<sup>61</sup> Yet, even support for the conservatives would not resolve the American dilemma, since the leftists would oppose such a policy. Support for Kim Koo's regime, which arrived in Korea on November 23, 1945, was certainly not enough. Rising inflation, economic deterioration, and the steady influx of refugees from the north only compounded the problem of mounting tension and unrest in south Korea.<sup>62</sup>

Hodge's extreme recommendations concerned Secretary Byrnes greatly. While appreciating Hodge's problems, Byrnes rejected any action that constituted a violation of national self-determination. Besides, Moscow would never accept a

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<sup>60</sup>  
New York Times, November 22, 1945, 11:1 and November 27, 1945, 3:2.

<sup>61</sup>  
 Langdon to Byrnes, November 26, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1135.

<sup>62</sup>  
New York Times, December 4, 1945, 2:5 and December 6, 1945, 3:2.

fait accompli.<sup>63</sup> Hodge continued to stress the need for action nevertheless, arguing that Soviet "control probably exists" over the People's Republic. Lyuh's regime was better organized and financed than any of its rivals. Langdon observed that all Koreans demanded self-government and warned that support for trusteeship would lead to civil strife. Both Hodge and Langdon recommended Soviet-American negotiations at the government level to allow a separate government in each zone, an end to the fortification of the 38th parallel, and American access to north Korea.<sup>64</sup> Despite Langdon's warnings, Byrnes was determined to follow through on the trusteeship proposal. Significantly, Washington ordered MacArthur to delay the announcement of the policy until Hodge had time "to make necessary arrangements to prepare to counteract the expected unfavorable reception by the Koreans . . . of the trusteeship plan."<sup>65</sup>

Upon his arrival in Moscow for the Council of Foreign Ministers meeting, Byrnes received a cable from Seoul indicating that the Korean situation had reached crisis proportions. Hodge observed that, although the Koreans were not ready for complete independence, popular opposition

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<sup>63</sup> Byrnes to Langdon, November 29, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1137-1138.

<sup>64</sup> Hodge to War, December 7, 1945, RG 319, OPD 336, Korea, Section I, NA; Langdon to Byrnes, December 11 and 14, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1141-1143.

<sup>65</sup> Memorandum for the JCS, December 11, 1945, RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45), Section III, NA.

to the absence of self-government had produced a favorable atmosphere for "radical leftism if not raw Communism." The general public indicated an increasing tendency "to look to Russia for the future" because of "the usual oriental slant" of "doing homage to the man with the largest weapon." Quick action was essential. In the absence of a suitable agreement, Hodge urged that Korea be left to its "own devices and an inevitable internal upheaval for its self purification." Most important, the USAFIK Commander strongly opposed any attempt at trusteeship, since outside supervision constituted a "sword of Damocles" for Koreans.<sup>66</sup> Byrnes persisted in his pursuit of a trusteeship agreement nevertheless and the issue soon emerged as the crux of the Soviet-American impasse on the entire Korean issue.

## V

In November, 1945, the SWNCC formulated a detailed policy paper on American policy in Asia. It included the thrust of the Korean trusteeship plan, but stressed that success required compromise and cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union. American officials had to avoid support for elements in Korea hostile to Moscow at all costs. In contrast to the United States, the Soviet Union assigned special strategic significance to Korea. The

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MacArthur to JCS for Hodge, December 16, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1144-1148.

SWNCC then offered the following conclusion:

In this regard, we must recognize that the United States occupies an exposed and untenable position in Korea from both a military and political standpoint. A prolonged occupation of Korea on our part cannot but create suspicion by the USSR that we have advanced our military strength in East Asia to a point beyond those which are necessary and requisite for the security of the United States . . . .

Washington should anticipate and accept Moscow's desire for special influence in Korea, while opposing excessive Soviet interference. The SWNCC endorsed trusteeship as a means of lessening the likelihood of Soviet domination, reducing tension in northeast Asia, and permitting American withdrawal. If Stalin insisted upon total control, however, the report recommended immediate termination of trusteeship and Korean self-government.<sup>67</sup>

Byrnes travelled to Moscow in December 1945 in the hope of breaking the Soviet-American deadlock on a number of issues. An objective and cooperative atmosphere characterized the meeting, as the Allied foreign ministers discussed Korea in a frank and straightforward manner.<sup>68</sup> Byrnes placed Korea on the agenda on the same day that Hodge warned against trusteeship. Byrnes urged the acceptance of an agreement for the local commanders to engage in negotiations for the resolution of those issues Harriman had raised

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<sup>67</sup> SWNCC Policy Paper, November 29, 1945, Byrnes Papers, File 569 (3), CUL.

<sup>68</sup> Feis, Contest Over Japan, 84; Curry, James F. Byrnes, 176-177; Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 281.

in November. The essential first step for the unification, trusteeship, and independence of Korea was the creation of a unified administration. Molotov responded that a general agreement on the formation of a Korean government and trusteeship was necessary prior to any discussion of specific issues relating to reunification. He requested a copy of the American proposal and time to study its provisions. British Foreign Minister Aneurin Bevan wanted to see the original Soviet-American agreement, but Molotov correctly observed that there had been only "an exchange of views." The foreign ministers agreed to defer the matter until Molotov studied<sup>69</sup> the American proposal.

In the final American paper, Byrnes only summarized briefly his trusteeship proposal. He focused instead on the Harriman recommendations and the vital necessity for local coordination to end the 38th parallel. It also included provisions for the possible extension of trusteeship to ten years. On December 17, Bevan voiced strong support for the American proposal and urged its referral to committee to work out the details. Molotov explained that he had not had sufficient time to study the plan and requested a delay at<sup>70</sup> that time and again on the following day.

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Moscow Conference Minutes, December 16, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. II, 617-621.

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American Proposal on Korea, December 17, 1945 and Moscow Conference Minutes, December 17 and 18, 1945, FRUS, Vol. II, 639-643 and 660.

Other American leaders continued to press the State Department for a quick resolution of the Korean problem. Hodge explained that if Moscow agreed to guarantee unification and independence, perhaps trusteeship would not be necessary. Forrestal supported such action and recommended that, in the event of Soviet refusal, each nation should implement a five year trusteeship in its own zone. Patterson reminded Byrnes of the deteriorating situation in Korea and urged quick action. The JCS complained that it was unable to issue adequate directives to Hodge and drastically needed advice.<sup>71</sup> Although Acheson agreed that a Soviet-American settlement was necessary, he expressed doubt over the seriousness of the USAFIK position. He informed Hodge that Byrnes was aware of his problems and intended to discuss Korea at Moscow. Washington would inform Seoul of any progress in the negotiations.<sup>72</sup>

On December 20, Molotov accepted the American argument that local discussion of "urgent" questions was needed, but recommended governmental agreement on a long-term trusteeship plan. Bevan inquired if Moscow was then approving the American plan. Molotov responded that he would distribute a counter-proposal that evening. Byrnes expressed his

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Millis, Forrestal Diaries, 125; Patterson to Acheson, December 19, 1945, RG 319, OPD 336, Korea, NA; Dunn to Byrnes, December 19, 1945, RG 218, CCS 014.1 TS, Korea, NA.

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Acheson to Langdon, December 20, 1945, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/12-2045, NA; War to MacArthur, December 20, 1945, RG 218, Leahy Papers, Korea 1945-1947, NA.

desire for cooperation, but, for some unexplained reason, argued that the American proposal was what Stalin had in mind at Potsdam.<sup>73</sup> In any event, Molotov submitted the Soviet proposal, which contained four specific provisions. First, the major powers would create a Korean Provisional Government to undertake all necessary measures for the development of Korean industry, transportation, agriculture, and culture. Second, Soviet-American representatives would form a Joint Commission to consult with local parties and social organizations and formulate the procedures for the creation of such a provisional government. Third, the Joint Commission would "help and assist (trusteeship)" in the political, economic, and social progress of Korea for democratic self-government and independence. It would also formulate a five year trusteeship plan and submit it for approval to the four powers. Finally, the Soviet-American occupation commanders would convene a Joint Conference within two weeks to answer "urgent" questions and begin<sup>74</sup> permanent coordination in the administrative field.

Byrnes accepted Molotov's proposal on December 21 with only minor alterations. Clearly, the Korean agreement was eminently satisfactory for both the Soviet Union and the United States. Moscow accepted trusteeship because it

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<sup>73</sup>  
Moscow Conference Minutes, December 20, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 697-698.

<sup>74</sup>  
Soviet Proposal on Korea, December 20, 1945, FRUS, Vol. II, 699-700.

genuinely desired cooperation on the issue as it had from the outset. Opposition to such a plan would mean unilateral American control in the south and a complete inability for compromise and concession in other areas.<sup>75</sup> Moscow still insisted upon a "friendly" Korea and thus refused to agree to eliminate the 38th parallel until the successful implementation of a specific plan for a provisional government and trusteeship. Byrnes also negotiated in good faith, patiently searching for a compromise that was satisfactory to both nations. He accepted the Soviet proposal in the interests of Soviet-American cooperation and because it differed from the American proposal only in emphasis. Only the most cynical observer could conclude that the United States "sold out" Korea at Moscow or resist the more cheerful expectation that Stalin would faithfully observe the trusteeship agreement.<sup>76</sup>

As the Truman Administration had anticipated, the Moscow Decision pleased few Koreans. The United States believed, however, that Korean political immaturity justified the absence of immediate independence. Also, the temporary continuation of outside control seemed the only

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Informal Meeting Minutes, December 21 and 22, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. II, 716-717; Goodrich, Korea, 21; Cho erroneously argues that there "was no reason to believe that the Soviet Union favored the idea of trusteeship, if indeed it did not actually dislike it," Korea in World Politics, 97.

<sup>76</sup>

Byrnes, Speaking Frankly, 222; Curry, James F. Byrnes, 190; Feis, Contest Over Japan, 98.

means for securing Soviet cooperation in reunification. In Korea, however, news of the trusteeship plan produced an immediate and violent outburst of opposition that bordered on mass hysteria. Extremists held demonstrations, closed stores and schools, and staged work stoppages. Rowdy youth groups roamed the streets intimidating AMG personnel, while distributing leaflets and posters protesting trusteeship. Hodge appealed to Washington to reconsider the policy and "kill the trusteeship idea for the Koreans."<sup>77</sup> The JCS rejected the request and predicted that once Hodge fully<sup>78</sup> explained the decision, the Koreans would accept it. Hodge remained unconvinced, since Kim Koo ordered his followers not to cooperate with the AMG and even threatened to seize power. All civilian employees went on strike. Hodge now urged Washington to even avoid the use of the word trusteeship, since any mention of it "immediately precludes<sup>79</sup> any normal process of reasoning of the Koreans."

Prior to the Moscow Conference, Korean leaders had curtailed political activism. During this period, the People's Republic continued to increase its popularity in

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<sup>77</sup> Langdon to Byrnes, December 30, 1945, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/12-3045, NA; Emmons to Byrnes, December 30, 1945, and Hodge to MacArthur, December 30, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1152-1154; Hodge to War, December 30, 1945, RG 319, OPD 336 Korea, NA.

<sup>78</sup> Eisenhower to MacArthur for Hodge, December 30, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. VI, 1155.

<sup>79</sup> Hodge to War, December 31, 1945, RG 218, Leahy Papers, Korea 1945-1947, NA.

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rural areas. The KPG quickly turned to the trusteeship issue in an effort to outflank its leftist opponent. The Communists initially joined all Koreans in opposing trusteeship, but suddenly reversed themselves and became the most outspoken defenders of the Moscow Decision. During a demonstration on January 3, 1946, the leftists hastily substituted the word "up" for "down" on their signs which then read "Up with Trusteeship." Moscow undoubtedly ordered the switch, but certainly the Communists could not expect the United States to adopt a more favorable attitude toward their political aspirations if they opposed trusteeship. More important, the Korean leftists were far more realistic, since they realized that only through support for the Moscow Decision could Korea gain reunification and independence.<sup>81</sup>

Byrnes reacted to the Korean protests in an unexpected and extremely unfortunate manner. Upon his return from Moscow, he delivered a radio address summarizing the results of the conference. After expressing displeasure over the absence of progress toward Korean unification, Byrnes voiced satisfaction that the United States and Soviet Union had agreed to open discussions to resolve immediate economic and administrative problems. He then summarized the trusteeship agreement, but included the suggestion that the Joint

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New York Times, December 20, 1945, 7:2, December 23, 1945, 14:6, and December 27, 1945, 4:1.

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New York Times, December 28, 1945, 12:2; Kim, Divided Korea, 62.

Commission "may find it possible to dispense with a trustee-<sup>82</sup>ship," since the ultimate goal was to hasten independence. This statement bore no relationship to the Moscow Decision and was a purely unilateral American action. In response to Korean complaints and without Soviet approval, Byrnes added a qualification to the settlement. Moscow's subsequent suspicion regarding American good faith and intentions was completely justified.

Hodge eagerly seized upon Byrnes' statement to reassure the KPG that the United States did not intend to implement trusteeship in Korea. Despite clear evidence to the contrary, Hodge privately told Kim Koo and Rhee that trusteeship was not an indispensable aspect of the Moscow Decision. In his public statement, Hodge explained that complete independence would rapidly follow reunification and the<sup>83</sup> creation of a provisional government. Such assurances placated the KPG and its supporters. Kim Koo ordered government employees to return to work, thus ending four days of mass chaos. Hodge could now report that the crisis had passed. The KPG had been able to retreat with a minimal loss of prestige, because Byrnes had provided "a very small hole for saving of Korean face . . . ." Hodge strongly urged

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Byrnes Radio Address, December 30, 1945, DSB, XIII, 340 (December 30, 1945), 1035-1036; Byrnes, Speaking Frankly, 222; Berger, The Korean Knot, 57-62.

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Langdon to Byrnes, December 30, 1945, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/12-3045, NA; New York Times, December 31, 1945, 1:7 and January 2, 1946, 2:1.

Washington to refrain from any future references to trusteeship in the hope that the issue would disappear.<sup>84</sup>

American actions in the wake of the Moscow Conference resulted in the emergence of an inescapable dilemma. Hodge had decided to support a political faction that depended upon opposition to trusteeship for its popular appeal. Yet, the Moscow Decision demanded that the United States support some form of trusteeship for Korea. If Truman expected to successfully resolve the Korean dilemma, he would have to either convince Kim Koo and his supporters to accept trusteeship or abandon the conservatives entirely. The only other alternative was permanent partition.

## VI

An emerging split between Truman and Byrnes made an objective appraisal of the Moscow Decision quite difficult. Jonathan Daniels is probably correct when he observes that the characters and personal histories of the two men precluded cooperation on a permanent basis.<sup>85</sup> For Leahy, the origins of Truman's opposition to Byrnes' diplomacy rested in China policy. In November, 1945, he suggested that the same "communist-inclined influence" that led to the Hurley

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<sup>84</sup>

New York Times, January 3, 1946, 2:8 and 18:2; Kim, Divided Korea, 62; Hodge to War, January 3, 1946, RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45), Section III, NA.

<sup>85</sup>

Daniels, The Man of Independence, 308.

resignation was having an impact on Byrnes. According to Leahy, Truman was concerned, surprised, and displeased over Byrnes' support for a coalition government in China.<sup>86</sup> It is also possible that Truman had grown tired of the extent to which others commanded the policy-making process and sought to reassert control.<sup>87</sup> In any event, Truman's dissatisfaction with Byrnes climaxed after the Moscow Conference.

On December 26, the President expressed agreement with Leahy's judgment that Byrnes was guilty of appeasement at Moscow. The appearance of compromise only masked a Soviet victory.<sup>88</sup> Truman later argued that "Byrnes lost his nerve in Moscow" and granted unnecessary concessions without his knowledge or approval. One could not compromise with Stalin and Truman was "tired babying the Soviets." Byrnes should have demanded the creation of a strong central government and positive action for economic rehabilitation.<sup>89</sup> On the

<sup>86</sup>

Leahy Diary Entries, November 28 and December 12, 1945, Leahy Papers, Box 5, Diaries 1945, LOC.

<sup>87</sup>

Truman, Years of Decision, 547; Burns, "James F. Byrnes," in An Uncertain Tradition, 242; Smith, Dean Acheson, 25.

<sup>88</sup>

Leahy Diary Entry, December 12, 1945, Leahy Papers, Box 5, Diaries 1945, LOC; Burns, "James F. Byrnes," in An Uncertain Tradition, 234; Westerfield, Foreign Policy and Party Politics, 205.

<sup>89</sup>

Truman, Years of Decision, 552; William Hillman, (ed.), Mr. President: The First Publication From the Personal Diaries, Private Letters, Papers, and Revealing Interviews of Harry S. Truman (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1952), 21-23; Feis, Contest Over Japan, 120; Daniels, The Man of Independence, 310; Burns, "James F. Byrnes," in An Uncertain Tradition, 234.

night of December 29, Truman conveyed his displeasure to Byrnes. When Byrnes qualified the American policy on Korea the following day, the American Secretary was probably responding to Truman's criticism. Thus, the Administration decided at the outset of 1946 to adopt a new posture of verbal toughness in the hope that Stalin would begin "to play the game the American way."<sup>90</sup>

Truman's new approach initially focused in Korea on diluting the trusteeship provision of the Moscow Decision. Acheson, for example, informed the Chinese that trusteeship would not be necessary, since it would only complicate Korea's future. For some unexplained reason, Acheson expressed confidence that the Soviet Union supported the abandonment of a policy it had just agreed upon.<sup>91</sup> In response to Korean protests, the State Department referred critics to the Byrnes speech which indicated that trusteeship might not be necessary. In Korea, Hodge continued to acquiesce in response to conservative criticism of the Moscow Decision. Korean politics now became even more polarized, since Kim Koo saw no need for cooperation with either the Soviet Union or the People's Republic.<sup>92</sup> Ironically, Hodge

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<sup>90</sup> Reitzel, Kaplan, and Coblenz, United States Foreign Policy, 89.

<sup>91</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, January 4, 1946, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/1-446, NA.

<sup>92</sup> Russell to Yunkio Kim of the Dongi Hoi, December 31, 1945, RG 59, 895.01/12-3145, NA; New York Times, January 5, 1946, 5:6.

came to view support for trusteeship as Communist-inspired. Only the conservatives appeared to reflect what the AMG  
<sup>93</sup>  
 believed were truly popular desires.

In preparation for Soviet-American negotiations, Truman decided to dispatch Secretary of War Patterson to Korea during January, 1946, on a fact-finding mission. Patterson engaged in extensive discussions with Hodge immediately upon his arrival and privately expressed satisfaction with the USAFIK commander's abilities. He also spoke to several Korean leaders "dressed in black coats, swallow-tails, with striped trousers." At a press conference, the American Secretary stressed that Hodge had relied on the best talent in Korea for advice and was doing "a constructive job." Although he refused to specify when the major powers would grant complete independence, Patterson urged the Koreans to create and "maintain a united political front so that the  
<sup>94</sup>  
 world may know exactly what you want."

Significantly, Patterson refused to comment on a number of questions that the press had submitted prior to the conference. He would not respond to any inquiries regarding the nature of the trusteeship or how the foreign ministers raised the issue at Moscow. Nor would Patterson indicate the force levels of the American army during the remainder

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<sup>93</sup>

Goodrich, Korea, 53.

<sup>94</sup>

Memorandum, December 27, 1945 and Diary Entries, January 13 and 14, 1945, Patterson Papers, Box 23, General Correspondence, 1945-1947, Trips Overseas, LOC.

of the occupation.<sup>95</sup> Such evasiveness did not satisfy American soldiers in Korea. They had met on January 9, in anticipation of Patterson's visit, to organize action protesting the delay in demobilization. They even raised over two thousand dollars to finance a program to publicize criticism of the American refusal to spread the burden of Korean occupation. Patterson conferred with six soldiers regarding their grievances and expressed sympathy. He assured them Washington intended to rapidly replace men presently in service with volunteers and draftees. After observing conditions in Korea, however, Patterson privately expressed the view that living conditions were adequate in terms of food, shelter, and health.<sup>96</sup>

Patterson held a press conference upon his return to Washington and explained that American policy was aimed at assisting "the Koreans in getting an independent stable government in order that the Japanese may not renew their designs there . . . for further aggressive warfare."<sup>97</sup> The Soviet Union certainly agreed with such sentiments, but disagreed as to those leaders most able to create a friendly

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Memorandum on Press Conference Questions, January 13, 1946, Patterson Papers, Box 23, General Correspondence, Trips Overseas, LOC.

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New York Times, January 11, 1946, 4:2 and January 13, 1946, 18:4; Diary Entry, January 14, 1946, Patterson Papers, Box 23, General Correspondence, Trips Overseas, LOC.

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Press Conference Remarks, January 26, 1946, Patterson Papers, Box 21, General Correspondence, Press Conferences, LOC.

and peaceful Korea. In the wake of Patterson's visit, the United States and the Soviet Union began negotiations which both hoped would resolve outstanding differences in Korea.

Washington and Moscow expressed public confidence that the Moscow Conference formula provided a feasible solution to the Korean problem. Soviet-American cooperation would result in the successful realization of Korean independence and the return of economic recovery and political stability.

More important, implementation of the Korean trusteeship would indicate mutual trust and confidence among the great powers.<sup>98</sup> The Soviet-American Conference represented the first test of the Moscow Decision, as the local commanders attempted to answer "urgent" questions. The JCS instructed Hodge to rely on Harriman's letter as the foundation for negotiations. His primary objective was to remove the 38th parallel as a fortified barrier and establish a liason with the Soviet Commander to facilitate economic and administrative coordination. Any domestic reforms would await the achievement of unification.<sup>99</sup> Hodge had urged wider instructions, but the JCS rejected his request.

Hodge and Chistiakov arrived at an agreement on convening the Conference in Seoul sometime during the third

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<sup>98</sup> New York Times, January 4, 1946, 20:2 and January 18, 1946, 18:3; Izvestia, January 12, 1946, quoted in Beloff, Soviet Foreign Policy in the Far East, 160-161.

<sup>99</sup> JCS to Hodge, November 29, 1945, RG 218, Leahy Papers, Korea 1946-1947, NA.

week of January. The Soviet delegation arrived on January 16 and met immediately with American representatives to discuss the removal of the 38th parallel.<sup>100</sup> After fifteen sessions, however, it was quite apparent that the two delegations disagreed in their interpretations of the Moscow Decision. The Soviets sought coordination of policy and the exchange of goods alone, while the Americans favored more complete administrative and economic integration.<sup>101</sup> Moscow refused, for example, to discuss the free circulation of newspapers and uniform fiscal policies. In addition, the Soviets would agree to offset fertilizer deficiencies in the south only in return for rice shipments to the north. The Americans responded that the United States sought something more than coordination based upon barter, while insisting that the south possessed no rice surplus. The Soviet delegation greeted these arguments skeptically and refused to sacrifice complete control in north Korea.<sup>102</sup>

Soviet unwillingness to accept the American approach for resolving "urgent" problems quickly irritated Hodge, who

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DSB, XIV, 343 (January 27, 1946), 111-112; New York Times, January 16, 1946, 2:5 and January 17, 1946, 17:1.

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Department of State, Korea, 4; Department of State, The Record on Korean Unification, 5-6; Benninghoff to Byrnes, February 15, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII: The Far East (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1971), 634-636.

102

Goode to Hull, January 29, 1946, RG 319, Planning and Operations 337, Case 5, NA; U.S. Department of State, Korea's Independence, Far Eastern Series #18 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, October 1947), 4.

complained that point four of the Moscow Decision included "weasle words." One can appreciate Hodge's unhappiness with the Soviet approach, since he blamed continued partition for his food and power problems in the south. Certainly, Moscow could have agreed to offset American coal and fertilizer deficiencies, but rising suspicion of American intentions prevented such a gesture. In addition, the Soviet delegation was probably correct legally in that the Moscow formula did not envision complete zonal integration.<sup>103</sup>

Despite Hodge's dissatisfaction, the final Soviet-American agreement on economic and administrative coordination was clearly encouraging. Rail, truck, and coastwide shipping trade between zones resumed, as well as nationwide mail service. The negotiators also reached agreement on the creation of a permanent liason between commands and uniform radio frequencies. The Soviets refused, however, to agree to joint control over transportation and communications, arguing that a definitive national arrangement for economic and administrative unity had to await the creation of a provisional government.<sup>104</sup>

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103

Hodge to War, January 25, 1946, RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45), Section III, NA; New York Times, February 7, 1946, 17:2.

104

Hodge to War, February 19, 1946, RG 218, CCAC 014 Korea (8-28-45), Section III, NA; The State Department argued later that Moscow agreed only to mail exchange, Guide to the U.N. in Korea, Far Eastern Series #47 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, August 1951), 9; See also, Berger, The Korean Knot, 65.

## VII

Moscow's unwillingness to eliminate the 38th parallel completely alienated Hodge. The USAFIK Commander informed Washington of his considerable apprehension that a similar divergence of interpretation would emerge during the negotiations for the creation of a provisional government. He requested additional information regarding the commitments Byrnes had made at Moscow in order to be better prepared to meet a repetition of Soviet unilateralism.<sup>105</sup> In particular, Hodge favored the establishment of complete freedom of speech, press, and movement throughout Korea. If Moscow displayed reluctance, the American Commander intended to "discreetly let the Korean people know that the Soviets are failing to cooperate with the U.S. in breaking down the 38° barrier." The State Department quickly rejected the strategy. It would only authorize Hodge's issuance of a public statement indicating that the United States sought a wider agreement with Moscow for zonal integration.<sup>106</sup>

Hodge also continued to urge American support for the Kim Koo regime, despite its obvious anti-Sovietism. He suggested that Washington sponsor the KPG's participation

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105

Hodge to War, January 18, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 611-612; Hodge to War, January 22, 1946, RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-18-45), Section III, NA; New York Times, February 7, 1946, 22:5.

106

Dupuy Memorandum, February 13, 1946, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Section III, Cases 3-15, Box 21, NA.

at the United Nations, but the State Department rejected the idea. Washington would approve Hodge's dispatch of private Koreans as observers, but only if it was vital to the USAFIK command. Discussions with former Civil Administrator in Korea Brainard Prescott confirmed the wisdom of caution and impartiality. Prescott stressed that Hodge was exaggerating the Communist threat and observed that Lyuh's group was "somewhat more truly representative of a majority of the Korean people."<sup>107</sup> Kim Koo was certainly not working for Soviet-American cooperation. While calling for a suspension of demonstrations and boycotts, Kim Koo insisted that Moscow and Washington were not committed to the implementation of trusteeship. More important, he organized conservative parties into an "Anti-Trusteeship Committee" dedicated to preventing the fulfillment of the<sup>108</sup> Moscow Decision.

Hodge publicly pursued a policy designed to still protests and end petty politics, warning that rioting and murder only ensured trusteeship. The AMG took action to outlaw rightist youth groups guilty of inflicting violence on the left. In private cables, however, Political Advisor Benninghoff pointed to Lyuh's group as the source of unrest.

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107

Dunn to SWNCC, January 4, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 606; Vincent Memorandum, January 5, 1946, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/1-546, NA.

108

Benninghoff to Byrnes, January 23, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 615; New York Times, January 14, 1946, 2:5; Kim, Divided Korea, 63.

Far from being mere liberals, Lyuh's group was allegedly under Soviet control.<sup>109</sup> Quite obviously, Benninghoff and Hodge had the upcoming Joint Commission negotiations in mind and hoped to provide the KPG with optimum prestige. They urged Washington to refer to the Korean representative body working under the Joint Commission as an "interim government" rather than a "provisional government," arguing that Kim Koo's regime already held the latter title.<sup>110</sup> Acheson flatly rejected the proposal and ordered the American command to view the KPG as a political party alone and without any special status. The War Department supported the decision, but observed that "this confusion might conceivably give the US members of the Joint Commission some bargaining advantage in discussions with the Soviets establishing a 'Provisional Government.'" Hodge now sought to delay the convening of the Joint Commission until the conservatives had an opportunity to form a broader and more unified rightist coalition.<sup>111</sup>

American tolerance of rightist opposition to the Moscow Decision disturbed the Soviet Union greatly. On January 19, Tass denounced the AMG for allowing criticism of the Soviet

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109

Benninghoff to Byrnes, January 22, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 613-614; New York Times, January 22, 1946, 19:2.

110

Benninghoff to Byrnes, January 7, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 608.

111

Dupuy Memorandum, February 19, 1946, RG 319, P&O 014.1 TS, Section I, Case 1, Box 6, NA; Acheson to Benninghoff, January 12, 1946, and Hodge to War, January 22, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 608 and 613.

Union and trusteeship. Three days later, it charged that Hodge was inspiring opposition to the Moscow Decision.<sup>112</sup> Hodge quickly dismissed these accusations as fallacious. The USAFIK Commander stated publicly that Moscow had no right to criticize him for permitting freedom of expression in the southern zone. Yet, Hodge had actually done very little to deter Kim Koo. In fact, he privately opposed the pursuit of trusteeship, arguing that deadlock was inevitable because of the incompatibility of the Soviet and Korean attitudes toward international control.<sup>113</sup>

Moscow continued to protest Hodge's permissive attitude toward dissent. It publicized the text of the American proposal at Moscow, which did not include provisions for a provisional government and would have delayed independence for ten years. Tass even forwarded the false contention that the Soviet Union had opposed trusteeship from the start, but American opposition to immediate independence forced Molotov to accept trusteeship. Kennan speculated that the Soviets sought to discredit all non-leftist elements as collaborators and reactionaries and thus obtain complete control over the provisional government.<sup>114</sup>

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112

New York Times, January 23, 1946, 15:6; Berger, The Korean Knot, 62-63.

113

Hodge to War, January 25, 1946, RG 218, Leahy Papers, Korea 1946-1947, NA.

114

Kennan to Byrnes, January 25, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 617-620.

Acheson acted immediately to counter Soviet charges and issued a public statement insisting that the United States sought a united and independent Korea. Byrnes had brought up the subject of the 38th parallel at Moscow, rather than a provisional government, as the best means for facilitating the promotion of Korean welfare. Acheson argued that Byrnes and Molotov discussed the possibility that trusteeship might not be necessary, but, if it was, the arrangement would last at least five years and perhaps longer. Acheson cabled this statement to Seoul for use in clarifying the Soviet-American disagreement, but noted that the Tass account was accurate.<sup>115</sup>

In the meantime, Harriman conferred with Stalin in an attempt to reassure the Soviet leader of American good faith. Stalin expressed concern over reports that the new American military governor Arthur L. Lerch was encouraging Korean opposition to the Moscow Decision. Harriman insisted that the rumors were erroneous and not consistent with American policy. Stalin remained unconvinced and requested a public disavowal of actions that contributed to anti-Sovietism.<sup>116</sup> Mutual distrust and suspicion thus reached new levels of intensity on the eve of the opening of Soviet-American negotiations at the Joint Commission.

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115

Acheson Press Conference Remarks, DSB, XIV, 334 (February 3, 1946), 155; New York Times, January 26, 1946, 7:6; Vincent to Benninghoff, January 25, 1946, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/1-2546, NA.

116

Harriman to Byrnes, January 25, 1946, FRUS, 1946. Vol. VIII, 622.

Hodge's subsequent actions hardly contributed to an increase of Soviet confidence and trust in American intentions. Late in January, 1946, the American Commander gained Rhee's and Kim Koo's agreement to the liquidation of the KPG in return for the formation of a new "Representative Democratic Council." Preston Goodfellow, having recently arrived in Korea as Hodge's advisor, became the principal architect of the advisory body.<sup>117</sup> Not surprisingly, conservatives dominated the Representative Democratic Council and Rhee was its chairman. Hodge emphasized that the body was not a provisional government, but a device for increasing Korean influence in the American occupation policies.<sup>118</sup> In reality, Hodge hoped to mobilize unity among the conservatives in anticipation of the Joint Commission deliberations. Benninghoff even recommended that the United States grant fifty million dollars in aid to the newly-formed Korean group in order to bolster its prestige and offset rising Soviet popularity.<sup>119</sup>

Lyuh quickly denounced the Representative Democratic Council as undemocratic, unrepresentative, and contrary to the Moscow Decision. Such charges were obviously grounded

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Benninghoff to Byrnes, January 28, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 627; Oliver, Syngman Rhee, 219.

118

New York Times, January 29, 1946, 1:2; Berger, The Korean Knot, 65.

119

Benninghoff to Byrnes, February 9, 1946 and Benninghoff to Acheson, January 13, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 630 and 611.

in fact, since Rhee soon used the Council as the primary vehicle for the exercise of political influence in Korea.<sup>120</sup> The leftist reversal on the trusteeship issue lent credence to the charge that Lyuh was a Soviet puppet. During early 1946, the conservatives experienced a steady rise in popularity. American support for Rhee was largely responsible for undermining the political position of the People's Republic. In some respects the results were tragic:

By throwing United States support only to the right in a country which demanded and needed radical reform, [American representatives in Seoul] alienated a healthy segment of the left which could have been wooed and perhaps even won by a living exposition of American democracy. Excluded from office-holding, many militant Korean radicals were pushed further left and closer to the Communists . . .<sup>121</sup>

Soviet leaders would have sought extensive leftist and Communist representation in the provisional government regardless of Hodge's actions. Yet, American support for the right and tolerance of opposition to trusteeship caused the Soviet Union to become even more inflexible in its demand for a "friendly" Korea.

During the fall of 1945, the Truman Administration was in search of a settlement that would permit the United States to withdraw from Korea. American leaders feared Soviet intentions in the peninsula and returned to the

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<sup>120</sup>

Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 282-285.

<sup>121</sup>

Paige, "Korea," in Communism and Revolution, 221; Lauterbach, "Hodge's Korea," 363.

wartime policy of trusteeship as the best means for avoiding "sovietization." At the Moscow Conference, Secretary Byrnes relied upon compromise and accommodation to arrive at a satisfactory agreement. Unfortunately, by the end of 1945, many American leaders had concluded that further bargaining with the Soviet Union would be unwise and even dangerous. In addition, Truman feared that an attitude of conciliation would bring charges of appeasement from Congress.<sup>122</sup>

Truman thus adopted a new approach that required Soviet acceptance of the American interpretation of the Moscow Decision. Such a policy possessed serious limitations. First, Soviet interests in Korea were far more important than those of the United States. Stalin certainly recognized that Truman would not resort to military means to impose his will. Second, Truman never formulated a concrete plan of action to produce the requisite military and economic power to force a settlement on American terms.<sup>123</sup> The absence of any clear American interests in Korea and the limitations on American military resources meant that Truman's hardline would be little more than rhetorical bombast.<sup>124</sup> If Truman wanted to be tough with Stalin, Korea was surely the wrong place for a test of strength.

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<sup>122</sup>

Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 281-290.

<sup>123</sup>

Burns, "James F. Byrnes," in An Uncertain Tradition, 243; Curry, James F. Byrnes, 306.

<sup>124</sup>

Hamby, Beyond the New Deal, 113-114.

Chapter IV:

Patience With Firmness

Truman's policy toward the Soviet Union experienced a fundamental reorientation during the first months of 1946. Previously, the United States had engaged in negotiation and compromise in an attempt to resolve outstanding differences with Moscow. Shortly after the Moscow Conference, Truman concluded that further concessions would be unwise and decided that it was time "to get tough with Russia." Secretary Byrnes accepted the change and labeled the new approach "patience with firmness."<sup>1</sup> In Korea, the new policy meant that the United States would demand Soviet acceptance of the American interpretation of the Moscow Decision. If Stalin refused, Truman intended to remain in occupation until Moscow agreed to a settlement on American terms.

American actions in Korea during the remainder of 1946 effectively illustrated the limitations of the "patience with firmness approach." It was difficult to avoid pessimism regarding the future of Soviet-American negotiations in view of American actions fostering opposition to trusteeship and Soviet unwillingness to permit conservatives

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<sup>1</sup> Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 284 and 313.

to obtain political power in Korea. Even Leahy recognized the probability of stalemate and predicted a civil war during 1946.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps worse, Truman apparently believed that he could "out-wait" Stalin and force a Soviet retreat. Instead, Korea remained divided and Truman found "he could not by huffing and puffing blow the house down."<sup>3</sup> For Korea, "patience with firmness" only guaranteed the permanence of partition.

American military leaders clearly realized that more positive action was essential. The JCS expressed concern in January, 1946, over the absence of long range plans for Korea, let alone a policy directive for the Joint Commission. General Hull explained to Vincent that Hodge was a good man but needed intelligent political direction.<sup>4</sup> Hodge's problems were, indeed, becoming more intense. USAFIK morale continued to be extremely low and the AMG officials still were unable to understand Korean society and politics.

Perhaps more important, the Koreans were becoming more vocal in demanding the sale or distribution of previously Japanese-owned land holdings. Hodge had created the "New Korean Company" shortly after American arrival to replace the "Oriental Development Company," which was a huge

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<sup>2</sup>  
Leahy Diary Entry, January 1, 1946, Leahy Papers, Box 5, Diaries 1946, LOC.

<sup>3</sup>  
Feis, Contest Over Japan, 123.

<sup>4</sup>  
Vincent Memorandum, January 28, 1946, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/1-2846, NA.

Japanese holding company in control of shipyards, textile and shoe factories, iron mills, and chemical plants.<sup>5</sup> In anticipation of the Joint Commission, Hodge requested permission to announce the sale of these possessions "in order to get beneficial local support and bargaining power with the Russians." The State Department authorized only the "transfer" of some farmlands, urban residences, and small businesses subject to the future provisional government's approval of these transactions. The AMG would maintain control over large Japanese industries and businesses, utilizing the profits for reparations and to offset the costs of occupation.<sup>6</sup>

In the absence of significant reform and long range plans, conditions in south Korea continued to deteriorate. Inflation remained high, living conditions poor, and wages inadequate.<sup>7</sup> Hodge blamed his difficulties on Soviet obdurance and the State Department's refusal to follow his policy recommendations. He demanded to know who was responsible for advising against immediate self-government and the abandonment of trusteeship. Warning that the Koreans were losing confidence in the United States, Hodge

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<sup>5</sup> Department of State, Korea 1945 to 1948, 28-31; Fehrenbach, This Kind of War, 42; Lauterbach, "Hodge's Korea," 360-361.

<sup>6</sup> Bonesteel Memorandum, February 23, 1946, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea, Section I, Cases 1-14, Box 87, NA; Eisenhower to MacArthur, February 23, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 638-639.

<sup>7</sup> Lauterbach, "Hodge's Korea," 361-362.

urged the adoption of a positive policy to counter rising Soviet influence in the south. Koreans were so uneducated and stubborn that they easily accepted and believed Soviet propaganda. Washington's policy of delay only increased the probability that Stalin would obtain control over the entire peninsula. Hodge observed pessimistically that "north and south will never be really united until the Russians are sure that the whole will be soundly communistic."<sup>8</sup>

Moscow's initial policy in Korea had been cautious. But American acquiescence in the face of Korean protests against the Moscow Decision forced a policy reappraisal. The Soviets considered Truman's actions in Korea as aggressive since the area was not vital to the national security of the United States.<sup>9</sup> To ensure control in a "friendly" Korea, the Soviet Union placed its trusted clients into positions of authority in north Korea early in 1946. Symbolic of the change was Chistiakov's decision to place Cho Man-sik under house arrest. During October and November of 1945, the people had elected local "People's Committees" based upon universal suffrage.<sup>10</sup> At a conference in Pyongyang during

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<sup>8</sup>  
MacArthur to JCS, February 2, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 628-630; Berger, The Korean Knot, 64-65; Forrestal observed at the time that Hodge's main problem was his over-reliance on "wealthy U.S.-educated Koreans," Millis (ed.), The Forrestal Diaries, 135; Lauterbach, "Hodge's Korea," 367.

<sup>9</sup>  
Suh, "A Preconceived Formula for Sovietization," in The Anatomy of Communist Takeovers, 486; Tompkins, American-Russian Relations in the Far East, 321.

<sup>10</sup>  
Beloff, Soviet Foreign Policy in the Far East, 164-

February, 1946, representatives "elected" Kim Il-sung chairman of the "Provisional People's Committee." While local elections reflected a considerable degree of popular participation in the selection of leaders, higher level administrative and political positions increasingly became the private preserve of Korean exiles. Yet, in contrast to American occupation policy,

the Soviet civil administration kept well in the background and gave the Koreans maximum experience in self-government. The Soviets made a determined effort to see to it that the rank and file of the Korean administration as well as the mass of the people believed that they were responsible for their own government.

Moscow's public devotion to Korean self-rule averted popular charges of Soviet imperialism and alien domination. In actual fact, however, the Soviet Union maintained ultimate<sup>11</sup> authority over events in the northern zone.

Most Koreans favored sweeping social and economic changes. While the United States delayed action, the Soviet Union implemented a major program of land reform in March, 1946, expropriating the Japanese, collaborators, large land-<sup>12</sup>lords, and the church. The North Korean regime distributed this land without any payment requirement. Despite

165; Kim, Divided Korea, 96-97.

<sup>11</sup>

McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 180; John N. Washburn, "Russia Looks at North Korea," Pacific Affairs, XX, 2 (June 1947), 152-160.

<sup>12</sup>

Kim, Divided Korea, 96; McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 201-207.

prohibitions against sale and a high tax in kind, the people generally welcomed the ouster of the Japanese and the old ruling elite.<sup>13</sup> More important, possession of land gave the average Korean a stake in the new regime, while forcing the wealthy, the educated and those who had collaborated to flee southward. Langdon himself observed that the Soviet reforms have "fallen heavily on the unfortunate conservative and propertied classes, many of whom have taken refuge in our zone."<sup>14</sup>

By June, 1946, the Soviets had instituted the eight hour day, sexual equality, and nationalization of large industry, communications, transportation, and banking. Improvements in education and extensive ideological indoctrination produced a new elite dedicated to Korean political strength, economic progress, and reunification.<sup>15</sup> A sense of mission and purpose characterized the North Korean military, police, bureaucracy, and Communist party. During 1946, then, the Soviet Union had satisfied the popular desire for major reform and created the foundation for a Korean socialist state. With the exception of support for

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<sup>13</sup> Department of State, North Korea: A Case Study in the Techniques of Takeover, 57; Washburn, "Russia Looks at North Korea," 156; Caldwell, The Korea Story, 63.

<sup>14</sup> Langdon to Byrnes, August 23, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 728; Department of State, North Korea: A Case Study in the Techniques of Takeover, 6-7.

<sup>15</sup> Suh, "A Preconceived Formula for Sovietization," in The Anatomy of Communist Takeovers, 487; Washburn, "Russia Looks at North Korea," 156-158.

trusteeship, Moscow understood Korean society and politics<sup>16</sup>  
much better than the United States.

Both the Soviet and American commanders thus sought to foster the emergence of a Korea that reflected their own experiences and would be amenable to the international aims of their respective nations. Clearly, the United States was less organized and exhibited more division of purpose, but, in many respects, this was a self-inflicted wound. Hodge permitted the south Koreans to propagandize against trusteeship and denounce it as a form of foreign domination. Yet, international control was at the heart of the Moscow<sup>17</sup> Decision. Hodge believed that he could not abandon support for the conservatives without allowing a Soviet-dominated minority to seize power. Ultimately, the United States would face an extremely difficult and unpleasant choice. Truman could not simultaneously support the conservatives and maintain good faith in his relations with the Soviet Union.

## II

American leaders remained confident that bilateral negotiations would achieve Korean unification and independence. Vincent publicly expressed the belief that the

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<sup>16</sup>

Jon Halliday, "The United Nations and Korea," in Without Parallel, 112; Cho, Korea in World Politics, 131; Dallin, Soviet Russia and the Far East, 257.

<sup>17</sup>

Gardner, Introduction, in The Korean War, 15; Meade, American Military Government in Korea, 155.

Joint Commission would constitute a successful test of Soviet-American cooperation in Asia. He stressed that the United States sought only the creation of a truly representative government and the rapid realization of Korean independence. "Korea," Vincent insisted, "must not become an international political football." Edwin Martin, Director of Korean Economic Affairs, observed that economic unification remained the sole means for achieving economic recovery and political stability. He recognized, however, that the elimination of the 38th parallel and the implementation of long-range plans would have to await the emergence<sup>18</sup> of a Korean provisional government.

State Department planning for the Joint Commission began early in 1946. When Hodge requested instructions, however, the Administration had not completed its work. As a result, on February 11, the USAFIK Commander received an SWNCC policy paper that dealt only with point one of the Moscow Decision. Washington instructed Hodge to take no action beyond the formation of a provisional government. The SWNCC paper ordered the AMG to encourage "the various Korean political factions to reach fundamental agreement on the political, economic and social policies to be applied by the new government, including essential democratic reforms." Significantly, Washington also instructed Hodge

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Vincent and Martin Comments, Radio Broadcast, NBC University of the Air, "Korea and the Far East," DSB, XIV, 343 (January 27, 1946), 104-110.

to rapidly civilianize the military government and provide local Koreans with the experience necessary to allow a rapid assumption of governmental responsibilities. In the event of a breakdown at the Joint Commission, Hodge would<sup>19</sup> implement "Koreanization" in the southern zone alone.

Hodge's main concern was to obtain Soviet support for freedom of speech, press, and movement throughout the peninsula. If Moscow rejected this proposal, it would be impossible to obtain an accurate cross-section of Korean opinion. Thus, Hodge informed Washington of his intention to base the American delegation's position on a demand for recognition of freedom of expression throughout Korea from<sup>20</sup> the outset of negotiations. Earlier in February, Hodge explained to Ambassador Harriman during the latter's visit to Korea that freedom of choice would produce a democratic government in Korea rather than a Soviet puppet. Upon his return to Washington, Harriman conveyed to Truman Hodge's conviction that firmness was essential, because Stalin sought to extend Soviet ideology and territorial control<sup>21</sup> throughout the Far East.

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War to Hodge, February 11, 1946, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Section III, Case 3-15, NA; SWNCC Policy Paper, January 28, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 624-627.

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MacArthur to JCS for Hodge, February 12, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 632-633.

21

Leahy Diary Entry, February 21, 1946, Leahy Papers, Diaries 1945-1946, Box 5, LOC; New York Times, February 3, 1946, 23:1.

Soviet actions in north Korea alarmed Hodge, particularly after the creation of the "Provisional People's Committee." He believed that Lyuh's party had joined forces with the northerners in return for the promise of political appointments in the puppet regime. Hodge explained that he would respond to the challenge in the following manner:

I plan to keep up prestige of the Korean Representative Democratic Council, make every effort to gain full backing of the Korean people, and discredit the Communists. This will probably get liberal and pink press of US on my back, but feel any other local action now would be fatal.

State Department officials expressed sympathy with Hodge's position and observed that the Soviets "are applying the same tactics they have applied in Eastern Europe in order to gain control . . . through minority groups controlled by the Soviet Government."<sup>22</sup> Once again, the Truman Administration assumed that Soviet policy remained the same regardless of geographic location. If Korean leftists were critical of American policy, they were acting under Moscow's direct influence and instruction.

Soviet-American relations in Korea were clearly on a collision course. Washington instructed Hodge to issue a public statement indicating American determination to realize a free and independent Korea. It also approved Hodge's desire to insist upon the right of freedom of

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Hodge to War, February 24, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 641; Draft Memorandum, February 28, 1946, RG 59, 740. 00119 (Control Korea)/2-2846, NA; War to Hodge, March 1, 1946, RG 218, CCAC 014 Korea, Section III, NA.

expression in consultations at the Joint Commission. In the event of Soviet obdurance, Hodge would announce that Moscow had opposed free speech and elementary civil liberties.<sup>23</sup> The United States still believed that reunification would bring true economic health and political stability to Korea, but it was unlikely that the Joint Commission could successfully end the partition. On March 6, Hodge announced his intention to allow all groups to express their opinions freely and not favor any particular faction or permit any single party to dominate. The Joint Commission would begin negotiations no later than March 13 and Hodge<sup>24</sup> expressed hope for rapid progress.

Moscow's public criticism of American policy in Korea indicated that success at the Joint Commission was unlikely. The Soviets denounced Hodge's creation of the Representative Democratic Council as a violation of the Moscow Decision. In response, the State Department issued a statement denying any intention of unilaterally creating a separate government in south Korea. The United States was merely encouraging Koreans to participate in certain government functions in order to gain experience for the ultimate assumption of responsibilities after independence.<sup>25</sup> Moscow remained

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<sup>23</sup>  
JCS to MacArthur for Hodge, February 28, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 644.

<sup>24</sup>  
New York Times, March 1, 1946, 20:1, March 7, 1946, 2:7, and March 12, 1946, 15:5.

<sup>25</sup>  
State Department Statement, "U.S. Policy in Korea,"

unconvinced and charged that Rhee had agreed to allow American businessmen and financial groups to exploit the Korean economy and mineral resources. From the outset, it was quite clear that the Soviet Union would not permit<sup>26</sup> Rhee to participate in the reconstruction of Korea.

For the United States, Kim Il-sung was equally unacceptable. During February, the northern and southern leftists and Communists formed a new "Democratic People's Front." Langdon expressed alarm over Moscow's consolidation of control in the north and the increase in leftist agitation in the south. He predicted that Korea would soon become "a new Poland" in the orient.<sup>27</sup> Truman agreed that the situation was dangerous. In a public address on April 6, 1946, the President stressed that American efforts to foster rehabilitation and development in Asia were part of the American strategy for peace. While recognizing that the Soviet Union possessed important interests in Asia, Truman insisted that Moscow had to respect the American<sup>28</sup> desire for peace and security in the area. In reality, Truman hoped to improve American prestige and international

April 5, 1946, DSB, XIV, 354 (April 14, 1946), 644.  
<sup>26</sup>

Langdon to Byrnes, April 10, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 658-659; New York Times, March 14, 1946, 2:2.  
<sup>27</sup>

Langdon to Byrnes, March 19, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 648; New York Times, March 15, 1946, 5:4 and March 19, 1946, 14:5.  
<sup>28</sup>

Harry S. Truman, Army Day Address, April 6, 1946, Public Papers, Harry S. Truman, 1946, 189.

support at Soviet expense. If the United States was patient and firm, the Soviet Union would have no choice but to accommodate itself to American policy objectives.<sup>29</sup>

### III

On March 20, 1946, the Joint Soviet-American Commission finally began its negotiations in Seoul. General Terenty Shtikov's opening statement stressed that the provisional government had to reflect wide representation and complete support for the Moscow Decision. In response, Hodge emphasized that only complete freedom of expression would ensure the creation of a democratic government. Thus, the lines of disagreement were clear and, as in Eastern Europe, Korea's fate hinged upon the ability of the great powers to resolve divergent interpretations of an international agreement.<sup>30</sup>

Shtikov, during the early sessions, opposed the American proposal for nationwide consultations, favoring instead discussions within each individual zone. The American delegation, in its private cables, expressed dissatisfaction with the Soviet position, viewing it as arbitrary. In addition, Moscow's determination to implement the trusteeship agreement surprised American representatives in Seoul.<sup>31</sup> During later

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<sup>29</sup>

Curry, James F. Byrnes, 309.

<sup>30</sup>

Hodge to Byrnes, March 22, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 652; New York Times, March 21, 1946, 24:2.

<sup>31</sup>

Vincent to Williams, March 25, 1946, RG 59, 5013B

sessions, Shtikov opposed any action that would treat Korea as a unit. He argued that the American proposal for a national "Consultative Union" was contrary to the Moscow Decision and unacceptable. Moscow also rejected any suggestion of economic integration prior to the creation of a provisional government.<sup>32</sup>

Despite these differences, the negotiators finally reached agreement on the first phase of the Joint Commission's action, which would include consultation with parties, consideration of a platform, recommendation of a charter, and the choice of personnel for the provisional government. The Joint Commission organized three subcommittees to deal with specific measures for attaining each objective. Moscow was clearly willing to implement the Moscow Decision, but only if the United States agreed to a provisional government and trusteeship prior to reunification. Soviet Political Advisor G.M. Balasanov privately informed Langdon that Moscow expected a successful settlement in late May.<sup>33</sup>

Although there was ample reason for optimism, Hodge continued to issue pessimistic forecasts from Seoul. He criticized Washington for its devotion to the efficacy of negotiations and its failure to consult him on the

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Korea/3-2546, NA.

<sup>32</sup>

Borton to Williams, April 2, 1946, RG 59, 501BB  
Korea/4-246, NA.

<sup>33</sup>

Ibid.; New York Times, March 31, 1946, 14:1.

trusteeship policy. Byrnes' patience finally wore thin. In a letter to Patterson, he denied that Washington had failed to keep Hodge informed on the Moscow Decision. Byrnes confessed himself "somewhat perturbed by the attitude taken by General Hodge" in view of the relatively promising start in Joint Commission negotiations. The American Secretary of State reminded Patterson that the United States was committed to the fulfillment of the Moscow Decision. Hodge's job was to cooperate with the Soviets, not to debate the wisdom of the trusteeship policy.<sup>34</sup>

Patterson quickly responded to Byrnes and expressed agreement that interdepartmental coordination was crucial for the successful formulation and implementation of American foreign policy. The Secretary of War stated that during his recent visit to Korea Hodge's abilities had impressed him. He was confident of Hodge's earnest desire for cooperation. Even Harriman, Patterson explained, had been "so favorably impressed by General Hodge's ability and diplomacy" that the Ambassador was now expressing confidence in the possibility of a satisfactory solution to the Korean problem.<sup>35</sup> Even the JCS expressed support for Hodge, observing that the State Department had probably not informed the USAFIK

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<sup>34</sup> Byrnes to Patterson, April 1, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 655.

<sup>35</sup> Patterson to Byrnes, April 10, 1946, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/4-1046, NA.

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Commander adequately.

An emerging deadlock at the Joint Commission soon overshadowed this dispute between the State and War Departments. Shtikov had made it quite clear that both commands had to agree on the parties for consultation and all such groups had to support the Moscow Decision. Soviet suspicion of American intentions increased when the American delegation announced that there were five hundred legitimate parties and social organizations in south Korea eligible for consultation as compared to only forty in the north. When Shtikov objected to consultation with those groups hostile to trusteeship, Langdon stressed that Korean opposition to the Moscow Decision represented no legal criterion for the determination of legitimacy. Byrnes cabled support for the American delegation's rejection of the Soviet desire to  
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exclude those parties opposing trusteeship.

Quite obviously, Moscow was using the trusteeship issue to exclude a sizable group of Korean leaders hostile to the Soviet Union. Yet, the United States was in the unenviable position of insisting upon consultation with those individuals who sought to undermine the work of the Joint Commission. Vincent expressed sympathy for the Soviet position,

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36  
Craig Memorandum, March 4, 1946, RG 319, P&O 091, Korea, Section I, Cases 1-14, Box 87, NA.

37  
Borton to Williams, April 2, 1946, RG 59, 501BB Korea/4-246, NA; Langdon to Byrnes, April 5, 1946 and Byrnes to Langdon, April 5, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 657-658.

explaining that Stalin believed most Koreans supported the Moscow Decision. Most Koreans opposed trusteeship "because of purposely distorted presentation by certain returned 'leaders' out of touch with the people, in order to get popular support to further their own ambitions." Byrnes argued, however, that to disenfranchise an "overwhelming majority" of Koreans because of a disagreement over Korean readiness for independence would be unreasonable and undemocratic. The Joint Commission should refuse to consult only with uncooperative extremists. In reality, fears of sovietization dictated the Administration's action. The United States believed that the exclusion of the conservatives would ensure a Communist seizure of power.<sup>38</sup>

Many observers recognized that the absence of published reports from the Joint Commission indicated probable difficulties in negotiations. Rumors of armed clashes at the parallel added further alarm.<sup>39</sup> On April 18, however, the deadlock appeared broken with the publication of a joint communique on consultation. The Joint Commission agreed to consult "truly democratic parties and social organizations" which signed a declaration pledging support for Soviet-American decisions relative to the creation of a provisional government. More important, the pledge included a provision

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<sup>38</sup> Vincent to Byrnes, April 12, 1946, RG 59, 50135 Korea/4-1246, NA; Byrnes to Langdon, April 16, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 600-601.

<sup>39</sup> New York Times, April 17, 1946, 24:2.

requiring all signators to support section three of the  
 Moscow Decision, which specified trusteeship.<sup>40</sup>

Hodge was satisfied with the compromise, since it appeared to allow rightist participation. The USAFIK Commander now turned his attention to a more distasteful expectation. He believed that the Soviets would permit consultation only with representatives of groups, rather than prominent individual leaders. Since "the southern political structure includes almost equally left . . . and moderate-rightists, we would either have to nominate an unrepresentative slate for the south or expect its being outnumbered by combined strength of North and South Moscow controlled groups." Hodge recommended delay and consultation with "all schools of political thought irrespective of our estimate of their popular backing." In the meantime,

we shall build up evidence of exclusions of all but Leftist parties in north and south and lack of facilities for US to observe in the north. We will then demand either immediate lifting of 38 barrier and complete freedom in north for the political activities of moderate parties or else acceptance of our views in matter of composition of government, structure, etc.

If Moscow objected, Hodge believed that the "threat of full publicity . . . to which the Russians have already shown their sensitivity" would force Soviet compliance.<sup>41</sup>

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Joint Commission Communique #5, April 18, 1946, DSB, XVI, 395 (January 26, 1947), 168-173.

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Hodge to War, April 20, 1946, RG 319, P&C 091, Korea, Cases 1-14, Section I, Box 87, NA.

Moscow soon indicated its strategy for determining the composition of the Korean provisional government. The Soviet Union argued with considerable justification that a mere signature on a pledge provided no guarantee of support for the Moscow Decision. The Representative Democratic Council had already expressed publicly its opposition to trusteeship. Kim Koo and his supporters resented having to sign a declaration of support for a policy they opposed.<sup>42</sup> Thus, Shtikov indicated his refusal to consult with those groups most vociferous in criticism of the Moscow Decision. In response, the American delegation prepared for an open break with Moscow over the issue of free expression. Acheson instructed the Moscow, Nanking, and Paris embassies to stress American support and Soviet opposition for an end to the 38th parallel and freedom of speech throughout Korea in explaining the deadlock.<sup>43</sup>

All Korean political factions were becoming restive over the absence of progress at the Joint Commission. Lerch assured Korean conservatives that signing the pledge would not prevent criticism of trusteeship. Leftists and Communists denounced the United States for supporting reactionary elements and demanded the immediate withdrawal of all

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<sup>42</sup> Langdon to Byrnes, April 14, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 660; New York Times, April 11, 1946, 13:5 and April 23, 1946, 11:4.

<sup>43</sup> Acheson to Certain Diplomatic Embassies, April 25, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 661.

foreign troops. <sup>44</sup> Scattered acts of violence and the discovery of assassination plots became common occurrences. On April 27, Hodge predicted open warfare if the Soviet policy of delay and Communist underground activities continued. He urged Soviet-American withdrawal no later than January 1, 1947, as the only means for achieving Korean independence. <sup>45</sup>

On May 7, Hodge informed Washington of his intention to adjourn the Joint Commission sine die the following day. Hodge offered several reasons to justify his action. First, American opposition to Soviet demands for the exclusion of parties not under its domination would bolster the morale of anti-Communist Korean nationalists. Second, support for free speech was a sound position internationally, since no nation would support penalizing individuals for opposing trusteeship. Third, Hodge reasoned that, if America forced Moscow to back down, popular pressure in the north would undermine the political position of the Soviet puppets. In conclusion, Hodge emphasized that, if "Korea is to be truly independent, the time for a showdown on Soviet pretentions is now." To accept the Soviet position would result in <sup>46</sup> minority rule and a violation of the Atlantic Charter.

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<sup>44</sup> Langdon to Byrnes, April 30, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 663; New York Times, April 28, 1946 and April 26, 1946, 8:2.

<sup>45</sup> Langdon to Byrnes, May 14, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 677; Dupuy Memorandum, April 30, 1946, RG 319, P&O 014.1 TS, Section I, Case 1, Box 6, NA.

<sup>46</sup> Hodge to War, May 7, 1946, RG 218, Leahy Papers.

Quite obviously, the issue was far deeper than mere freedom of speech. Both Washington and Moscow viewed the Korean problem in the larger context of their international competition. While the Soviet Union insisted upon the exclusion of those groups hostile to Moscow, the United States demanded the inclusion of these same individuals as a barrier to further Communist expansion. Neither side was willing to permit an "unfriendly" Korea.

## IV

Deadlock at the Joint Commission confirmed the permanence of partition and constituted the first step on the road to civil war.<sup>47</sup> Langdon still hoped for a Soviet-American agreement and urged Washington to cease arguing that trusteeship was not a vital ingredient of the Moscow Decision. Not only did Moscow view trusteeship as "something absolute and almost sacred," but Korean actions seemed to justify a period of foreign training and guidance. Once convinced that the policy was not a barrier to independence, Langdon believed that the Koreans would accept trusteeship. More important, with the creation of a provisional government and the withdrawal of the Red Army, the absolutist, repressionist regime in the north would collapse. Thus,

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Korea 1946-1947, NA; Hodge to War, May 9, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 665; New York Times, May 8, 1946, 10:5.

<sup>47</sup>

Saraïan, "Military Government: Korea," 352.

Langdon's plan envisioned the emergence of a reunified Korea if the great powers agreed to a timetable for the completion<sup>48</sup> of withdrawal by February, 1947.

Lerch did not share Langdon's optimism regarding the likelihood of Korean acceptance of trusteeship. In fact, Hodge's announcement of such a policy change would certainly spark widespread rioting and disorders. Nor would the creation of a provisional government and the withdrawal of Soviet troops ensure the emergence of a democratic and independent Korea. Lerch recommended instead the creation of an "Allied Commission" to supervise the restoration of<sup>49</sup> Korean self-government and guarantee freedom of choice.

Washington rejected the recommendations of both Langdon and Lerch. Although the Administration appreciated Hodge's difficulties, it did not believe that the time was right to propose joint military withdrawal. Stalin and the Koreans would view any indication of American departure

as a desire on our part to rid ourselves of the responsibility we have assumed in Korea. Despite protestations we might make to the effect that we had no intention of withdrawing unless the Soviets withdrew simultaneously, those Koreans who now look to us for assistance . . . would despair and possibly seek security by aligning themselves with the Soviets. The Soviets would probably foster such an interpretation, and would themselves be encouraged to continue their intransigence.

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Langdon to Byrnes, May 8, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 677-670.

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Lerch Memorandum, May 3, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 675.

Washington insisted that the United States had to remain in occupation until Korea's independence was a certainty. "It would be most unfortunate," the War Department observed, "if the U.S. were to be placed in the position of having freed Korea from Japanese domination only to facilitate subjugation, however veiled, by the Soviets."<sup>50</sup>

Acheson informed Seoul on May 18, 1946, that the United States would refuse to reopen Joint Commission negotiations until Moscow recognized the principle of freedom of expression. It was doubtful, however, that "patience with firmness" would alter the Soviet position. Truman believed that the wrongness of Moscow's position was obvious to all and international criticism would force Stalin to retreat. More important, Soviet support for consultation only with the advocates of trusteeship would discredit Moscow inside Korea and compel the acceptance of the American stand.<sup>51</sup>

Moscow quickly indicated that the American strategy was not likely to succeed. On June 3, Pravda harshly criticized the United States for violating the Moscow Decision and adjourning the Joint Commission without justification. The Soviets charged that Hodge was permitting reactionaries to oppose the Moscow Decision, while refusing to consult a number of parties that were truly democratic. Under no

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Hull and Bonesteel to MacArthur for Hodge, May 11, 1946, RG 319, P&O 014.1 TS, Section I, Case 1, Box 6, NA.

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Acheson to Seoul, May 18, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 680; New York Times, May 11, 1946, 26:3.

circumstances would the Soviet Union permit "imperialist forces" to use Korea "as a base and jumping-off place for an attack on our country." Moscow demanded complete support for trusteeship and rejected the legitimacy of those Koreans hostile to the Soviet Union.<sup>52</sup> It was clear that the Soviet-American impasse over Korea would continue.

American occupation policy was also not contributing to a resolution of the Korean problem. Hodge still suffered from a lack of definitive guidance and was unable to inaugurate programs for the achievement of economic and political stability. His most striking failure was in the area of rice collection. The influx of refugees and the chaos of postwar conditions had created a serious food deficiency and Hodge instituted a program of forced requisitions to avert a crisis. The general public viewed the quotas as excessive and forcibly resisted collection. Hodge thus turned to the Korean police to enforce observance of the system. As a result, the police acquired farreaching powers for investigation and punishment, completely discrediting the AMG. Invariably, the police used its power to eliminate leftist opposition, frequently relying upon brutality and torture.<sup>53</sup>

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American Embassy in Moscow to Byrnes, July 1, 1946, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/7-146, NA; New York Times, May 16, 1946, 15:3; Beloff, Soviet Foreign Policy in the Far East, 163.

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Meade, American Military Government in Korea, 228-229; New York Times, August 6, 1946, 2:6; Sarafan, "Military

Hodge's concern for early American withdrawal prompted his heavy emphasis on the creation of an indigenous Korean military force. During February, 1946, he opened a training school in Seoul and solicited candidates from a number of quasi-military groups present in Korea since liberation. Hodge was so pleased with the results that he organized a "National Youth Association" to provide the manpower necessary for the eventual creation of a genuine Korean army. An Ho-sang, graduate of Jena and avowed admirer of Hitler's Nazi Youth, became the director of the new organization. While the United States provided the equipment and advice, An Ho-sang supplied a program of anti-Communist political indoctrination and strict discipline that lent itself readily to rightist exploitation. By the summer of 1946, youth groups of the left and right engaged in warfare and terrorism on a major scale throughout the zone.<sup>54</sup>

Patterson recognized the critical nature of the situation and began to urge more decisive action. Late in May, the SWNCC decided to authorize an election in south Korea for the creation of a limited degree of representative government. The facade of self-rule in the north, the SWNCC observed, placed American military rule in south Korea in an unfavorable light. Upon the urging of the new

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Government: Korea," 352; Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 142-144; McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 269.

<sup>54</sup>  
Sawyer and Hermes, Military Advisors in Korea, 12; Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 141.

American Ambassador in Moscow Walter Bedell Smith, Washington instructed Hodge to maximize the cooperation among Koreans in support of American policy.<sup>55</sup> Hodge appreciated the necessity for fostering the emergence of Korean political unity. In an attempt to demonstrate his impartiality, he ordered the closing of three rightist newspapers on charges of abusive, libelous, and inaccurate reporting.<sup>56</sup>

It was quite clear, however, that the AMG was more concerned about the activities of the leftists. Langdon noted that captured Communist documents indicated that Moscow intended to undermine American support, forge a united front, and seize control at the appropriate moment much as the Soviets had done in Eastern Europe.<sup>57</sup> Hodge complained that the Soviet Consul General in Seoul was supervising a campaign of violence and terror to force American withdrawal. At Hodge's urging, Byrnes instructed Smith to inform Molotov that, unless Moscow allowed an American Consul General in Pyongyang, the Soviets would have to leave Seoul. As expected, Moscow rejected reciprocity. Much to the pleasure

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<sup>55</sup> War Council Meeting Minutes, May 16, 1946, Patterson Papers, General Correspondence, 1945-1947, Box 23, LOC; Leahy Diary Entry, April 26, 1946, Leahy Papers, Diaries 1946, Box 5, LOC; SWNCC Memorandum, May 22, 1946, and Smith to Byrnes, May 18, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 680-681; Borton to Williams, May 21, 1946, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/5-2146, NA.

<sup>56</sup> Emmons to Byrnes, May 22, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 683-684.

<sup>57</sup> Langdon to Byrnes, June 7, 1946, FRUS, Vol. VIII, 700-703.

of Hodge, the Soviet Union announced that its Consul General would close on May 28, 1946.<sup>58</sup>

Langdon fully supported the new American policy of "patience with firmness," believing it would force Moscow to compromise. Soviet strategy relied upon America's frustration and eventual withdrawal, which would permit a Communist seizure of power. Through unity, patience, and resolve, Langdon observed, the United States could foster the emergence of a strong, independent, democratic coalition and thereby thwart the Soviet plan. The AMG had already begun preparations for the formation of a South Korean Interim Government (SKIG), while broadening the base of domestic political support for American policy. Such action did not satisfy Rhee and his supporters. Upon his departure from Korea, Preston Goodfellow strongly advocated immediate elections in south Korea alone and the transfer of governmental responsibilities to Koreans.<sup>59</sup>

# V

Edwin Pauley's trip to north Korea during the early summer of 1946 was principally responsible for the

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<sup>58</sup>

Smith to Byrnes, May 22, 1946, Byrnes to Smith, May 24, 1946, and Smith to Byrnes, June 5, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 682-692.

<sup>59</sup>

Langdon to Byrnes, May 24, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 685-689; Byrnes to Seoul, May 25, 1946, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/5-2546, NA; New York Times, May 24, 1946, 12:2.

formulation of a more definitive American policy toward Korea. Pauley was Truman's representative on the Allied Reparations Commission and had expressed concern in December of 1945 regarding the reports of Soviet removals from Korea. On December 7, Pauley had announced that a final assessment of reparations for Korea would have to await an analysis of the needs of the entire nation.<sup>60</sup> In view of the temporary division of Korea, he suggested that a survey team inspect both the Soviet and American zones. On March 22, Pauley formally requested Soviet permission to enter north Korea and determine the validity of reports charging large removals of industrial equipment from that area. Any removals would alter the requirements of recovery and require just compensation in Europe. If the rumors were false, only confirmation<sup>61</sup> could ensure the preservation of Allied harmony.

Truman publicly supported the proposal, arguing that only full knowledge of the resources and productive ability of north Korea would permit a proper formulation of a reparations program for Japan and "any long range plan for the peaceful economy of East Asia."<sup>62</sup> Initially, the Soviet Union refused to reply. On May 13, Byrnes again issued a

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<sup>60</sup> Pauley Statement, December 7, 1945, Truman Papers, PSF (Pauley), HSTL.

<sup>61</sup> Pauley to Truman, March 22, 1946, Truman Papers, PSF (Pauley), HSTL.

<sup>62</sup> Truman, Press Conference Remarks, May 2, 1946, Public Papers. Harry S. Truman, 1946, 224-225.

formal request that Moscow allow Pauley to enter north Korea. To everyone's surprise, two days later Chistiakov<sup>63</sup> granted permission for the inspection.

Pauley compiled a detailed diary of his trip to the Soviet zone. Upon his arrival on May 29, Chistiakov assured him that the rumors of Soviet removals were without foundation. Pauley inspected a large number of pig iron, fertilizer, aluminum, and textile factories. The Soviets denied entrance only to a small area around Hungnam, arguing that the train ride to that area would require far too much time. While he did notice some generators crated for shipment, Pauley concluded that any looting was the product of illegal action on the part of the Koreans themselves. Upon inquiry, he found that many of those reporting Soviet removals had not<sup>64</sup> actually witnessed such Soviet action. After his return to Seoul, Pauley reported that there was "no substantial industrial removals from the Russian-administered territory of Northern Korea." In marked contrast to Manchuria, the Soviets were attempting to rehabilitate and restore north<sup>65</sup> Korean industrial activity, rather than cripple recovery.

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Pauley to Byrnes, May 10, 1946, Memorandum, Undated, and Byrnes to Pauley, May 15, 1946, Robert L. Dennison Papers, Confidential, Box 3, White House Messages, Traffic 1946, HSTL.

<sup>64</sup>

Pauley Diary Notes, June 20, 1946, Truman Papers, PSF (Pauley), HSTL; Also in, Byrnes Papers, File 503, CUL; New York Times, June 6, 1946, 10:3-4; Carter to Wolfe, May 30, 1946, Dennison Papers, Confidential, Box 3, HSTL.

<sup>65</sup>

Pauley Report, "Survey of Resources," July 23,

Pauley's final report to Truman had a decisive impact on the subsequent development of America's Korea policy. It expressed concern that Korea was "not receiving the attention and consideration it should." The confrontation of democracy and Communism across the 38th parallel, Pauley observed, meant that Korea was "an ideological battleground upon which our entire success in Asia may depend." The Soviets recognized that the Korean economy was conducive to the development of Communism and intended to remain until its puppets possessed complete control. Pauley warned that the loss of Korea would endanger the security of Japan and warned<sup>66</sup> against any American concessions to the Soviet Union.

Pauley also offered a series of policy recommendations. First, the United States should inaugurate a propaganda campaign stressing Soviet violations of existing agreements. Second, the AMG should educate Koreans as to the advantages of the democratic system. Third, American economic aid to Korea for recovery was advisable. Finally, the United States should transfer a number of teachers and technicians to Korea for the development of industrial growth. Unless the United States implemented a positive program to meet popular needs and desires, eventual Soviet control over the entire peninsula was certain. Pauley's report impressed

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1946, DSB, XV, 370 (August 4, 1946), 233-234; New York Times, June 4, 1946, 15:4-6; McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 216.

<sup>66</sup>

Pauley to Truman, June 22, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 706-708.

Truman, who immediately arranged for a meeting with Byrnes<sup>67</sup> to reassess American policy in Korea.

Early in June, 1946, Assistant Secretary of State for Occupied Areas John H. Hilldring arrived at similar conclusions. He drafted a memorandum stressing the need to broaden the base of Korean participation in governmental affairs. Hilldring based his recommendation on the following observation:

There is reason to interpret the collapse of negotiations in the Joint Commission as the result of a clash between United States insistence upon respect for the principle of freedom of speech and Soviet determination to prevent certain avowedly anti-Soviet Korean leaders from participation in a Provisional Korean Government. These leaders constitute a group of older emigre Koreans who have returned to Korea since the capitulation of Japan. They are not thought to be completely representative of Korean political opinion, nor are they felt to be essential to the establishment of Korean democracy or the attainment of United States objectives in Korea. On the other hand, their presence on the political scene greatly increases the difficulty of reaching an agreement with the Soviet Union. For these reasons, it can be concluded that attainment of United States objectives in Korea is on the whole hampered by their participation in Korean politics.

Hilldring also recommended that the AMG continue to support coordination with the Soviets and attempt to resume Joint Commission negotiations. Hopefully, American observance of the Moscow Decision in combination with increased Korean

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Ibid.; Truman to Acheson, July 3, 1946, Truman Papers, PSF, Box 160, Cabinet File, State Department, folder 2 (Acheson), HSTL.

support for participation in southern affairs would force<sup>68</sup>  
Moscow to recognize the principle of freedom of speech.

Even economic advisor Arthur C. Bunce concluded that Hodge had to cease his overreliance on the extreme conservatives. In an article written for Pacific Affairs entitled "Can Korea be Free?," Bunce contended that Hodge's support for the right rather than the People's Republic had permanently polarized Korean politics. Perhaps worse, when Byrnes and Hodge chose to acquiesce in the face of opposition to trusteeship, Soviet leaders became justifiably suspicious of American intentions. As a result, Moscow's definition of democracy as support for trusteeship was actually an attempt to preserve national security and bar anti-Soviet Koreans from positions of power. Bunce concluded that the deadlock would cease to exist only if "the U.S.S.R. could be convinced that the U.S. command does not intend to support any particular group of leaders and if the U.S.S.R. would open up the border so that the world can know the conditions that exist in the north . . . ." Unless the AMG broadened the base of domestic support, distrust, fear, and misunderstanding<sup>69</sup> in Soviet-American relations would continue.

Significantly, Hodge suppressed Bunce's article and rejected any request to allow its publication. As an

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Hilldring Memorandum for War Department, June 6, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 692-698.

<sup>69</sup>

Langdon to Byrnes, Text of Proposed Article, June 28, 1946, RG 59, 740.00119, (Control Korea)/6-2846, NA.

American representative in Korea, Bunce's comments would completely discredit Hodge's claim of impartiality. More important, "patience with firmness" precluded an even-handed analysis of the Soviet-American disagreement in Korea. For Hodge, the Soviet Union was not seeking to defend its national security, but pursuing a determined course of ideological expansion.

## VI

Truman placed American policy toward Korea on a more positive course during the summer of 1946, albeit belatedly. Based upon Vincent's strong support for Pauley's recommendations, the President ordered Hodge to institute liberal reforms such as land redistribution and even nationalization of some industries. In addition, Washington demanded that Hodge foresake his attachment to Korean clients in favor of a broader coalition embracing not only conservatives, but liberals and moderates as well. The War Department argued that broader Korean support would add substance to the American position and place pressure on Moscow to resume negotiations. The Administration would not consider a direct approach to Moscow at the government level unless political unrest in Korea reached crisis proportions.<sup>70</sup>

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Truman to Pauley, July 16, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 713-714; War to MacArthur for Hodge, July 17, 1946, RG 319, Leahy Papers, Korea 1946-47, NA.

Hodge decided to build the new coalition around Kimm Kui-sik. Kimm was well-suited for the role, since the old scholar-statesman had been the symbolic leader of the Korean left since World War I.<sup>71</sup> Rumors quickly circulated that the AMG was preparing to create an interim council excluding extreme conservatives. It was obvious to all that the policy sought to increase popular support for the United States in the south and thus outflank the Soviet Union. On July 1, 1946, Lerch announced a plan for the creation of a South Korean Interim Legislative Assembly (SKILA) that would be half-elected and half-appointed. He emphasized that the new body did not constitute a separate government, but was an attempt to discover Korean popular desires and foster support for American policies.<sup>72</sup>

Such a policy, if implemented in September, 1945, might have contributed to the creation of a united, democratic, and independent Korea. The new moderate coalition's fortunes depended, however, on a negotiated settlement of Soviet-American differences at the Joint Commission.<sup>73</sup> Such an eventuality was no longer probable, although the wisdom and realism of the new American approach was a welcome change from past policy. Almost immediately, Langdon reported

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<sup>71</sup> Benjamin Weems, "Behind the Korean Elections," Far Eastern Survey, XVII, 12 (June 23, 1948), 143.

<sup>72</sup> New York Times, June 22, 1946, 2:5 and July 2, 1946, 17:5; Kim, Divided Korea, 69-70.

<sup>73</sup> Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 134.

progress toward political unity. Kimm and Lyuh were able to join forces with relative ease, much to the chagrin of Rhee and Kim Koo.<sup>74</sup>

In approving the SKILA plan, Hodge emphasized continued American support for the Moscow Decision. He predicted that the new program would foster the emergence of Korean democracy.<sup>75</sup> Yet, elections alone would not resolve Korea's political problems, since the nation possessed no experience with democracy. The traditional reliance on community government decreased the likelihood that individual choice would prevail. Widespread illiteracy meant that the secret ballot was not possible, except at the final stage of an indirect election process. There also remained the disturbing problem of Syngman Rhee, who maintained considerable support because of Hodge's initial backing and his reputation as a patriotic leader. American Joint Commission delegate Edward Thayer recommended that Rhee "be gently eased out of the Korean political picture" since he "had outlived his period of usefulness."<sup>76</sup> Such was more easily said than done.

After the SKILA announcement, the conservatives mobilized in an attempt to control the forthcoming elections. The extreme left, on the other hand, denounced American

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<sup>74</sup> Langdon to Byrnes, July 3, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 710-711; Kim, Divided Korea, 63.

<sup>75</sup> New York Times, July 10, 1946, 5:1.

<sup>76</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, Division of Japanese Affairs, July 16, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 715-716.

policy as premature and in violation of the Moscow Decision. Pak instituted an organized campaign to disrupt the Kimm-Lyuh coalition, charging that the United States was playing a clever game to maintain control. Lyuh refused to succumb to such pressure and labored diligently to moderate leftist demands for rapid reform.<sup>77</sup> America's professed willingness to reopen negotiations with the Soviet Union also hampered Communist operations. Acheson publicly announced that the United States was prepared to resume the Joint Commission sessions at any time. Until negotiations resumed, however, the United States intended to encourage Korean participation in the military government and create conditions "under which political and economic democracy can flourish."<sup>78</sup> Kimm and Lyuh thus experienced considerable success in reducing Communist political appeal and increasing leftist support for participation in the SKILA elections.

Hodge also implemented steps toward the creation of an SKIG, appointing Korean leaders to work with the various AMG bureaus in governing the country. Most south Koreans manifested a new sense of optimism over the opportunity to

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<sup>77</sup> Langdon to Byrnes, July 28, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 720-721.

<sup>78</sup> Langdon to Byrnes, August 2, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 722-723; Acheson, "Anniversary of Korean Liberation," August 13, 1946, DSB, XV, No. 373 (August 25, 1946), 384; Velma Hastings Cassidy, "American Policy in Occupied Areas," DSB, XV, 372 (August 18, 1946), 291; Communist involvement in a counterfeiting operation also discredited the party, New York Times, July 30, 1946, 7:1.

participate in governing their own affairs. Enthusiasm<sup>79</sup> regarding the election of a legislature grew steadily. Leading Korean politicians joined Kimm Kui-sik in fostering political unity and anticipated virtual self-government by early 1947. At the same time, Hodge acted to regularize fiscal and economic policies, thus stimulating popular support for the AMG. The USAFIK also formed a Constabulary Army, supplied it with American equipment, and allowed it to participate in military maneuvers and anti-guerilla operations. By early 1947, the Constabulary had increased its prestige and effectiveness to the point where it could<sup>80</sup> counter the police's frequent abuse of power.

Communist leaders quickly recognized that American policy would soon rob them of any influence in southern affairs. Thus, Pak organized a campaign of strikes and disturbances to demonstrate opposition to separate government. The Communists also used threats and bribes in an attempt to undermine the Kimm-Lyuh coalition. Hodge quickly instituted a policy aimed at silencing Communist opposition through closing newspapers and arresting radical journalists. After a riot at Taegu in October, 1946, Hodge issued a warrant for Pak's arrest. While publicly

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Lerch to Shoemaker, September 16, 1946, Edgar A. J. Johnson Papers, Box 1, Correspondence, General 1946-1971, HSTL; New York Times, September 15, 1946, 7:8; McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 74.

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New York Times, September 19, 1946, 13:2; Sawyer and Hermes, Military Advisors in Korea, 22-26.

claiming an impartial position, the USAFIK Commander allowed the police and youth groups to retaliate against the Communists. As a result, a vicious circle of violence prevailed, as Korean rightist brutality provoked leftist retaliation<sup>81</sup> thus producing further excesses.

Rising violence in south Korea jeopardized the success of Truman's policy of "patience with firmness." The Communists were able to exploit continued inflation, persistent shortages, and the onerous rice collection program to undermine the popular support for the AMG. Despite murders, burnings, and sabotage, Kimm and Lyuh were able to marshal sufficient support for the creation of a "Coalition Committee" in support of American policy. Yet, Kimm and Lyuh found it increasingly difficult to foster political unity<sup>82</sup> in an atmosphere of unrest, violence, and disorder. To a group of visiting American Congressmen, America's Korea policy appeared "uncertain, fumbling, confused . . . ." In some respects, however, inaction was Hodge's only alternative, since intervention would bring charges of partiality<sup>83</sup> and repression from both sides.

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New York Times, August 25, 1946, 23:5, September 29, 1946, 53:3, and September 7, 1946, 16:3,7; Caldwell, The Korea Story, 67; Kim, Divided Korea, 67.

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New York Times, October 8, 1946, 10:4 and October 10, 1946, 12; Langdon to Byrnes, November 1, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 754-756.

83

New York Times, September 30, 1946, 12:2; Patterson to Hodge, October, 1946, Patterson Papers, General Correspondence 1945-1947, John R. Hodge, Box 20, LOC.

## VII

Hodge and Langdon soon realized that "Koreanization" was not sufficient to force Moscow to resume negotiations. In July, 1946, the USAFIK Commander expressed doubts that Soviet-American negotiations would resume in the near future and requested Washington to relieve him of command.<sup>84</sup> The State Department remained unwilling to authorize an approach to Moscow at the government level. Hilldring argued that "the United States has more to gain by pursuing a positive constructive program in Korea than by demonstrating to the Soviets . . . our anxiety to dispose of the Korean problem quickly." The SWNCC agreed, observing that Moscow would view such an approach as a sign of weakness.<sup>85</sup> Washington also informed Hodge that trusteeship was a fundamental aspect of the Moscow Decision and the United States intended to support this provision. The Administration clearly refused to be impatient and expressed determination<sup>86</sup> "to stick it out."

Many War Department officials shared Hodge's skepticism

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Hodge to War, July 14, 1946, MacArthur Papers, Box 5, Correspondence, VIP File, DMML.

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War Department Memorandum, July 25, 1946, RG 319, P&O 091, Korea, Section I, Cases 1-14, Box 87, NA; JCS Memorandum, August 2, 1946, RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45), Section VIII, NA.

86

Lincoln to Hull, June 13, 1946, RG 319, P&O 092 TS, Cases 50-52, Box 30, NA; Hilldring to SWNCC, July 25, 1946 and Clayton to Langdon, September 13, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 719 and 736-737.

regarding Truman's approach. Economic development of Korea would require a considerable degree of financial support and the War Department's resources were inadequate for the task. Similarly, the Navy Department had indicated its reluctance to furnish the necessary personnel for establishing a Korean Coast Guard.<sup>87</sup> Probably in response to War Department complaints, Truman intervened. In a letter to Patterson, he expressed his conviction that the United States would have to remain in occupation of Korea for "a considerable length of time." Successful implementation of Pauley's recommendations would require adequate funds and experienced personnel. Truman informed Patterson that he was instructing the Navy Department to provide every assistance necessary for the accomplishment of American objectives. The State Department had already promised complete support for Hodge. The President then expressed confidence that the creation of political strength and economic recovery in south Korea would compel "the Soviets to make the first step towards the resumption of negotiations."<sup>88</sup>

Hodge and Langdon rejected Truman's optimism and warned that the United States could not ignore Korean demands for immediate reunification. If Moscow continued to refuse to

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Dupuy Memorandum, June 13, 1946, RG 319, P&O 091, Korea, Section II, Case 15, Box 87, NA; Craig Memorandum, June 4, 1946, RG 319, P&O 014.1 TS, Section I, Case 1, Box 6, NA.

88

Truman to Patterson, August 12, 1946 and JCS Memorandum, August 2, 1946, RG 319, CSA Korea, NA.

reopen the Joint Commission, America's position in Korea would soon become untenable.<sup>89</sup> Bunce was far more sanguine about the potential for successful implementation of the Pauley recommendations. He agreed that the situation was difficult, but argued that, given sufficient financial support, the United States could "outsit the Russians and sell democracy." These comments reinforced Washington's decision to persevere. It instructed the AMG to foster such policies as land reform, equal economic opportunity, trade unionism, and freedom of political expression.<sup>90</sup>

Forrestal joined the State Department in expressing support for "patience with firmness." He pledged complete cooperation with the War Department in carrying out Pauley's proposals, but stressed "the desirability of clarifying the issues in the Far East in the minds of the American public."<sup>91</sup> Truman thus decided to issue a public explanation of the nature of American objectives in Korea. Acheson's statement emphasized that the United States was determined to fulfill the Moscow Decision, but not at the expense of the principle of national self-determination.

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Langdon to Byrnes, August 23, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 726; Hodge to War, August 8, 1946, U.S. Civil Affairs Division Archives, Record Group 335, WDSCA 014, Korea, 11 June 1946, Section III, Box 249, NA.

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Bunce to Byrnes, August 26, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 731-733; Borton to Vincent, August 29, 1946, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/8-2946, NA.

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Forrestal to Truman, August 14, 1946, James V. Forrestal Papers, Box 41, "Memos to the White House," PUL.

American occupation was temporary and sought only to ensure Korean freedom of choice. Acheson stressed that the United States would welcome honest criticism of its policies and favored complete freedom of expression. He urged Koreans to seek unity and cooperation for the realization of self-government and to prevent a minority from seizing power.<sup>92</sup>

Even if the Koreans supported Truman's policy, the successful implementation of Pauley's recommendations would require Congressional support. Langdon favored a Congressional resolution reaffirming American support for the Cairo Declaration and pledging "concrete assistance to the economy and educational rehabilitation of southern Korea . . . ." Byrnes recognized that the new Korean policy would require considerable financial assistance, but denied Langdon's request. The Administration had not sufficiently cultivated Congressional support to achieve such a result. When the United States presented the proposal to Congress, Byrnes<sup>93</sup> promised to include Langdon's proposed resolution.

Truman's application of "patience with firmness" in Korea reflected a more basic trend in the American approach to relations with the Soviet Union during the summer of 1946. Clark Clifford, who became special counsel to Truman

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Acheson, "U.S. Objectives in Policy Toward Korea," August 30, 1946, DSB, XV, 375 (September 8, 1946), 462; New York Times, August 31, 1946, 2:1 and September 1, 1946, 4:7.

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Langdon to Byrnes, September 14, 1946, RG 335, WDSCA 014 Korea, 11 June 1946, Section IV, Box 249, NA.

in July, added consistency and a sense of purpose to American anti-Sovietism in September with the completion of his "Russian Report." This document convinced Truman that granting concessions to Stalin only encouraged Moscow to seek further expansion. More important, Truman came to the realization that any evidence of indecision and vacillation on his part reduced the likelihood of Congressional support for "getting tough with Russia." The President's decision to clearly vocalize American opposition to Soviet expansionism explains in large measure Truman's dismissal of Secretary of Commerce Henry A. Wallace. Congressional support for Truman's objectives in Korea and elsewhere was possible only if the Administration convinced the nation that compromise with Stalin was no longer a viable alternative.<sup>94</sup>

Political factionalism and Communist-directed violence in south Korea was, however, quickly undermining the logic of Truman's approach. In addition, continued Soviet control in the north would soon render reunification permanently impossible.<sup>95</sup> As a result, the State Department continued to seek a resumption of Soviet-American negotiations, while publicly expressing its determination to be patient and firm. There appeared to be reason for optimism after

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<sup>94</sup> George M. Elsey, Oral History Interview Transcript, Vol. 2, April 4, 1970, HSTL, 263-266; Hamby, Beyond the New Deal, 118; Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 319-321 and 339-341.

<sup>95</sup> New York Times, October 11, 1946, 10:2.

Langdon visited the Soviet zone on October 9, 1946. During discussions, Soviet Political Advisor Balasanov informed Langdon that Moscow would never accept Rhee or Kim Koo for consultation because these two leaders were hostile to the Soviet Union. He also refused to accept American approval of opposition to trusteeship as compatible with support for the Moscow Decision. Langdon urged Balasanov to support the inclusion of Rhee and Kim Koo in consultation, arguing that both would eventually accept trusteeship. Balasanov violently disagreed, but accepted a compromise nonetheless. Langdon and Balasanov decided that a pledge not to undermine the work of the Joint Commission was sufficient to warrant consultation.<sup>96</sup>

Langdon returned from Pyongyang with an extremely positive attitude. While in the north, he enjoyed not only freedom of movement, but also cordial and hospitable treatment. He quickly cabled the compromise agreement to Washington for approval. This would require all Korean parties to promise not to "foment or instigate mass opposition" to either the Joint Commission or the Moscow Decision. On October 26, however, Chistiakov communicated to Hodge his willingness to resume negotiations based only upon the "exact fulfillment" of the Moscow Decision. With some justification, the Soviet leader observed that it would be

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Langdon to Byrnes, October 9, 1946 and October 17, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 743-745 and 748.

counter-productive to discuss fulfillment of the Moscow Decision with Koreans whose pledge of support was "an empty declaration." Chistiakov insisted that the trusteeship provision was fundamental and "democratic" parties supported it. The United States was responsible for the suspension of the Joint Commission and the Soviet General reminded Hodge that only the creation of a provisional government would open the door to reunification and recovery.<sup>97</sup>

Hodge responded to Chistiakov on November 1 and offered the Langdon-Balasanov compromise as a basis for agreement. The United States remained committed to the principle of freedom of expression, but Hodge agreed that instigation of mass opposition to the Moscow Decision was improper and an abuse of free speech. At the same time, the American General attempted to defend his previous actions. He insisted erroneously that the Moscow Decision was not specific on the necessity for trusteeship.<sup>98</sup>

Chistiakov replied on November 26 and explicitly stated that the exclusion from consultation of all Koreans who had previously opposed trusteeship was essential. The Langdon-Balasanov compromise was not sufficient to guarantee that "reactionary parties and groups" would "retreat from their hostile position towards the Moscow Decision, but merely

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.; Langdon to Byrnes, November 1, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 757-758.

<sup>98</sup> Langdon to Byrnes, November 2, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 760.

curtail temporarily their activities . . . so that they may have an opportunity to take part in the consultation with the Joint Commission." Chistiakov insisted that the Soviet Union also supported freedom of speech, but pointed out that consultation with such groups would only hamper attempts to  
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implement the Moscow Decision.

Hodge quickly grasped at Soviet support for freedom of expression and suggested that the two nations were close to an agreement. Although exclusion of opponents of trusteeship violated the principle of freedom of expression, Hodge expressed his willingness to accept the Soviet proposal of October 26 as the basis for discussion. The absence of any Soviet reply and the rigidity of Chistiakov's previous communications forced Bunce to conclude that Moscow had rejected the latest American proposal. As 1946 came to a close, it appeared that Soviet-American negotiations would  
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never resume and Korea would remain a divided nation.

### VIII

Hodge's efforts to build political stability in south Korea during the fall of 1946 were a total failure. The USAFIK Commander initially attempted to cooperate with the

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Langdon to Byrnes, December 12, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 799-780.

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"Proposals for Reopening Joint Commission," DSB, XVI, 395 (January 26, 1947), 168-173; Bunce to Martin, December 31, 1946, RG 59, 895.00/12-3146, NA.

"Coalition Committee." He organized a "Joint American-Korean Conference" to investigate the sources of the recent violence in the American zone. On October 4, the "Coalition Committee" announced support for the creation of a legislative assembly, but attached certain conditions. The Kimm-Lyuh group demanded the elimination of any American veto on legislation, exclusion of collaborators as candidates, recognition of the national authority of the body, and provisions for close observation and supervision of voting to ensure fairness.<sup>101</sup> Although Hodge's agreement to these conditions was doubtful, American policy was apparently experiencing a degree of success.

Cooperation was extremely short-lived, largely because Hodge completely mishandled the SKILA elections. On October 13, 1946, Lerch announced that the AMG would conduct elections within five days. Lyuh immediately protested that recent disturbances provided a poor atmosphere for free choice and many leaders remained in hiding and would be unprepared for participation. Despite such cogent arguments, the AMG held elections from October 17 through 22 without disorder. Lerch announced that the SKILA would convene on November 3, thus signifying a major American success.<sup>102</sup>

Kimm and Lyuh boycotted the election in protest over

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<sup>101</sup>

Langdon to Byrnes, November 3, 1946, and Langdon to Byrnes, November 14, 1946, FRUS, Vol. VIII, 761-768.

<sup>102</sup>

New York Times, October 16, 1946, 8:6.

Hodge's unnecessary haste. As a result, and because Rhee and Kim Koo controlled the administrative facilities, the conservatives scored a sweeping victory. Many collaborators gained election, while only fourteen of forty-five representatives were not extreme rightists.<sup>103</sup> The AMG constructed the election law to produce just such a result. Indirect election permitted the village "hetman" to control the selection of electors, while the taxpayer qualification meant over-representation for the Korean landlords. In the opinion of AMG official E. Grant Meade, "the majority of the people were in favor of the left, but were too apathetic, cynical, and poorly organized to make a real contest of the election."<sup>104</sup> In view of the intimidation, beatings, and mob-action of the previous month, no reasonable individual could view the election as free. The "Coalition Committee" also charged police interference, misrepresentation, and falsification of returns. The undemocratic and superficial character of the SKILA election was apparent to all.<sup>105</sup>

Hodge thus proceeded to undermine the position of the Kimm-Lyuh group after diligently striving to foster its

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Langdon to Byrnes, November 3, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 763; Meade, American Military Government in Korea, 189; There is a complete list of SKILA members in the index to the USAFIK records, RG 8, MacArthur Papers.

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McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 78-80; Meade, American Military Government in Korea, 186-187.

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Mitchell, Second Failure in Asia, 18; McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 80; Halliday, "The United Nations and Korea," in Without Parallel, 114-115.

creation. Quite obviously, Hodge feared that the holding of truly free elections would produce a leftist victory. Communist dominance in the north meant that maximum rightist representation in the south was vital for the achievement of some sort of balance.<sup>106</sup>

Hodge did attempt to placate Kimm and promised to appoint more moderate delegates to the remaining forty-five seats, thus balancing the political complexion of the legislature. He asked Kimm to supply a list of perspective candidates and from it selected what one observer considered a fair cross-section of political thought. Yet, despite such efforts, the SKILA still possessed only thirty members not closely allied with Rhee and Kim Koo.<sup>107</sup>

Hodge's appointments incensed Rhee. The conservative leader met with the USAFIK Commander and strongly criticized his actions. Hodge responded that he would not allow Rhee to either intimidate him or seize power illegally. Unable to influence Hodge, Rhee traveled to the United Nations in search of support. Upon arrival, he demanded that the United Nations obtain Soviet-American withdrawal and then admit a separate southern regime to the United Nations.<sup>108</sup> Rhee's

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Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 153-154;  
Meade, American Military Government in Korea, 186-187.

<sup>107</sup>

Langdon to Byrnes, November 24, 1946, Langdon to Byrnes, November 3 and 14, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 764-771; "Korea: Chronology of Principal Events, 1945-1950," World Today, VI, 8 (August 1950), 321.

<sup>108</sup>

Oliver, Syngman Rhee, 229; Berger, The Korean

activities threatened to undermine Truman's attempt to force Soviet compliance with the American interpretation of the Moscow Decision. Langdon speculated that Rhee was attempting "to steal the show at home," because the Korean leader feared implementation of the Moscow Decision would rob him of political control.<sup>109</sup> To counter Rhee's strategy, the State Department instructed the AMG to reinforce the position of the "Coalition Committee" and the SKILA. In response, Hodge urged Rhee to announce the dissolution of the Representative Democratic Council, since "it no longer has any official status as an advisory body connected with the military government . . . ." Hodge also ordered Rhee to return all equipment and vehicles that the AMG had loaned to the Council during its tenure of office.<sup>110</sup>

Rhee quickly accepted the American challenge to his authority. He issued a proclamation demanding immediate independence and national self-determination in south Korea alone. In the event of American refusal, Rhee instructed his followers to engage in violence and sitdown strikes to demonstrate that the United States was "helpless without

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Knot, 70-71; Langdon to Byrnes, November 27, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 772; New York Times, December 6, 1946 and December 11, 1946, 18:4.

<sup>109</sup>

Langdon to Byrnes, December 12, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 775-778.

<sup>110</sup>

State Department Memorandum, December 13, 1946, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/12-1346, NA; MacArthur for Hodge to War for Rhee, December 21, 1946, RG 335, WDSCA 014 Korea, Section IV, 11 June 1946, Box 249, NA.

cooperation of his group." These were not idle threats. Aside from considerable popular support, Rhee also enjoyed control over those Koreans Hodge had appointed to positions in the SKIG. Understandably, the USAFIK Commander now appealed to Washington for assistance:

Rhee is nuisance in that he wants everything done his own impractical way and wants to head separate Govt [sic] of South Korea. However, we cannot and must not overlook his potential to do irreparable damage unless carefully handled.

Hodge suggested that Goodfellow or Arnold approach Rhee and convince him to foresake his attitude of confrontation.<sup>111</sup>

Washington decided instead to issue a statement disclaiming any American intention to create a separate government in south Korea. Hodge charged that "certain elements" were, through lack of knowledge or malicious intent, attempting to create the impression that the SKILA was "a completely independent body designed as the forerunner of [a separate] government." He termed such assumptions "incorrect and dangerous," explaining that efforts to undermine American policy for "selfish political and personal gains" could only decrease the likelihood for Korean unification, independence, and democracy. The Administration hoped that this strong statement of support for the Moscow Decision would deter Rhee from further attempts to

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Hodge to Byrnes, December 31, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 785-786; Bunce to Martin, December 31, 1946, RG 59, 895.00/12-3146, NA.

create a separate government.<sup>112</sup>

Unfortunately, Rhee refused to cease his attacks on the AMG and the Moscow Decision. Langdon reported that Rhee's "henchmen" were organizing a campaign of violence and obstruction designed to embarrass the United States. He urged Washington to issue a statement deploring such action and warning that opposition to the Moscow Decision would preclude participation in any provisional government.<sup>113</sup>

The Administration quickly complied and printed Hodge's public order to Koreans to cease instigating opposition to the AMG. Significantly, Hodge's statement admitted that Korean dissidents engaged in "ill-advised political activity" were hampering progress at the Joint Commission. He expressed American sympathy for the Korean desire for independence, but warned that disorder, violence, and false propaganda only undermined international confidence in the Korean capacity for self-government.<sup>114</sup>

American attempts to still Rhee's criticism were a complete failure. The old patriot now opened a personal

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Hodge Statement, "U.S. Policy Toward Unified Government in South Korea," January 4, 1947, DSB, XVI, 394 (January 19, 1947), 128-129; New York Times, January 4, 1947, 8:2; Langdon to Byrnes, January 5, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI: The Far East (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1972), 596.

113

Langdon to Byrnes, January 17, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 598-600.

114

Hodge Statement, "Activities of Dissident Korean Groups," January 16, 1947, DSB, XVI, 396 (February 2, 1947), 210; New York Times, January 23, 1947, 15:1.

attack on Hodge, charging that the USAFIK Commander was responsible for the delay in granting Korean independence. In a personal letter, Rhee appealed to MacArthur for support in convincing Washington to abandon the Joint Commission. He favored separate elections for a provisional government in south Korea alone.<sup>115</sup> The SKILA then passed a resolution denouncing trusteeship and rejecting any attempt to compromise the principle of freedom of expression. Hodge complained that the great majority of Koreans opposed trusteeship and a few rightist leaders were utilizing the issue to further "their own ends and rebuild a waning personal power." If the Joint Commission reconvened, Hodge admitted that the United States would have to support the exclusion of these groups from consultation.<sup>116</sup>

Rhee's strategy was succeeding. The United States could avoid a leftist-dominated provisional government only through repudiation of the Moscow Decision. Hodge stressed that it was pointless to attempt to sell the idea of trusteeship to the Koreans:

The Koreans are insanely thirsty for power and sovereignty. Although they are unfit for self-rule without guidance, they hypnotize themselves to believe that all ills, economic, political and social, would disappear over night if everything were turned over to them. They bitterly resent all control or talk of control.

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Rhee to MacArthur, January 20, 1947, MacArthur Papers, Box 8, Correspondence, VIP File, DMML.

116

Hodge to State, January 26, 1947, RG 335, WDSCA 014 Korea (1 Nov 46-31 Jan 47), Section V, Box 249, NA.

Clearly, the creation of a separate government was not a panacea, because the Korean leaders were incapable of cooperation. Thus, Hodge offered a dire prognosis:

Korea has developed into a real hot-spot of the Orient, now ripe for a full-fledged civil war or unsurpassed savagery unless positive and cooperative international action is taken immediately. It is my carefully considered opinion that unless the Joint Commission should successfully reconvene or positive action be taken in Korean situation on a national level within the next two months, we may lose the opportunity of accomplishing our avowed mission in Korea and will have lost the confidence of the Koreans.

Tragically, the USAFIK Commander could offer no specific recommendations for improving conditions or ending the Korean crisis.  
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Truman's policy of "patience with firmness" was then a complete failure. Soviet refusal to reconvene the Joint Commission coupled with the worsening economic and political situation in Korea convinced many American leaders that a policy change was imperative. The War Department, in particular, recognized that only Soviet-American withdrawal would lead to the elimination of the 38th parallel and the resolution of Korea's manifold problems. Unfortunately, American military and diplomatic capabilities in the area were extremely limited. Hodge hardly possessed enough power to maintain a viable posture in Korea, let alone apply pressure on Moscow to moderate its position. Perhaps more

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Hodge to MacArthur for War, January 20, 1947, RG 335, WDSCA 014, Korea (1 Nov 46-31 Jan 47), Section V, Box 249, NA.

important, the answer in Korea was "simply another part of the solution of the worldwide conflicts of ideology between democracy and communism." In the absence of a Soviet-American settlement in the very near future, the War Department favored withdrawal from the peninsula at the earliest possible date.<sup>118</sup>

Soviet-American relations in Korea reached a total deadlock at the outset of 1947. Moscow refused to permit extreme conservatives hostile to the Soviet Union to obtain positions of authority in a Korean provisional government. Washington recognized, however, that the exclusion of the rightists would ensure a leftist victory. Truman's harsh words could not force the Soviets to moderate their stance; nor did holding firmly to principle increase the probability of a settlement. The reason for this unfortunate situation was, as Susan Hartmann explains, that "the Administration had developed a policy of verbal and diplomatic firmness toward the Soviet Union but had reached no decision about deploying U.S. power to bolster this approach."<sup>119</sup> The gap between American objectives in Korea and the means available for achievement was significant and dangerous. Truman had to implement a positive policy or sacrifice any degree of credibility in the Soviet-American dispute over Korea.

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<sup>118</sup>

Norstad Memorandum, November 26, 1946, RG 319, P&O 337 TS, Section I, Cases 2-24, Box 73, NA.

<sup>119</sup>

Susan M. Hartmann, Truman and the 80th Congress (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1971), 48.

Chapter V:

An Avenue for Escape

Soviet actions during the immediate postwar years convinced Truman that Stalin was determined to expand his political influence and territorial control beyond Eastern Europe. By the beginning of 1947, Truman had decided that Moscow's consistent "course of secretiveness, duplicity, obstructive hostility, and tacit repudiation of agreements" demanded an American response. Yet, the popular demand in the United States for demobilization and a balanced budget seriously hampered the American ability to react.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps more significant, Truman still hoped to limit the extent and duration of the American commitment to act positively in international affairs. After all, the United States could never protect every country from the threat of invasion and subversion without undermining its own national security and economic strength. Only if each nation could develop the internal strength requisite for self-defense, could the United States assure the preservation of worldwide peace and stability at reasonable cost.

American policy toward Korea revealed clearly that Truman's attempt to "out-wait" Stalin was foolish. Not

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<sup>1</sup>  
Koenig (ed.), The Truman Administration, 5; Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 344-345.

only had Moscow refused to negotiate, but American occupation was becoming increasingly unpopular. "Koreanization" had begun, but Hodge's ineptitude had alienated the very group that Washington depended upon for the success of its policy. Rhee's activities presented a more persistent and dangerous problem. Inflation, power shortages, and insufficient food contributed to an economic crisis that discredited the AMG and spawned domestic violence. Hodge observed in January, 1947, that most Koreans had abandoned any hope for the success of the Joint Commission. Washington's continued reliance on Soviet-American negotiations was only encouraging further dismay, discouragement, and declining Korean morale.<sup>2</sup> American leaders attempted to improve conditions through the resumption of international trade and the encouragement of American investment in south Korea. Vincent explained that only economic interaction<sup>3</sup> could foster prosperity and political democracy. Yet, it was unlikely that businessmen would undertake such a risky venture, since complete Communist control seemed probable.

As early as October, 1946, Hodge predicted that the North Koreans would invade the American zone within six months. He urgently requested additional troops and permission to terminate forcible rice collection, to strengthen

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<sup>2</sup>  
Hodge to War, January 17, 1947, Johnson Papers, Box 1, Korea-General File, HSTL.

<sup>3</sup>  
Vincent, "American Business with the Far East," DSB, XV, 386 (November 24, 1946), 959-963.

the rightist youth groups, and to publicly denounce the Soviet Union for attempting to subvert the AMG. Hodge even addressed a personal letter to Patterson emphasizing the seriousness of the Korean crisis:

As you know . . . , things are far from smooth. The two basic causes are that the Koreans want their own country to themselves and that the Russians are constantly infiltrating their highly trained and indoctrinated agitators into our zone to take full advantage of every possible point in the low level economic situation that can cause discontent as well as manufacture a lot of points that are without the slightest basis in fact. The international flavor is becoming heavy and there can be no question but as to the worldwide push of Communism with the main all-out effort now directed against the United States. I hope our nation wakes up before we become too saturated with the Soviet brand of "democracy."<sup>4</sup>

Despite such appeals, Washington refused to approve Hodge's recommendations. Both Vincent and MacArthur agreed that it would be "entirely inappropriate" to utilize the youth groups for defense. Since Truman still hoped for a resumption of Soviet-American negotiations, the State Department refused to accuse Moscow publicly of subversion.<sup>5</sup>

By early 1947, however, many American leaders came to share Hodge's pessimistic attitude. The JCS Planning Committee, for example, concluded that American withdrawal

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<sup>4</sup> MacArthur for Hodge to Eisenhower, October 28, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 750-751; Hodge to Patterson, November 5, 1946, Patterson Papers, Box 20, General Correspondence, 1945-1947, John R. Hodge, LOC.

<sup>5</sup> War Department Memorandum, October 29, 1946, RG 319, P&O 092 TS, Section V-A, Part I, Case 85, Box 31, NA; Vincent to Byrnes, October 29, 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. VIII, 751-752.

would "leave Korea's politically immature people open to control through highly-organized Communist minorities." Yet, the study predicted that the Soviets would obtain at least indirect control throughout Korea by 1956 regardless of American actions.<sup>6</sup> Faced with such a dilemma, Truman searched for an avenue of escape that would resolve the conflict between American prestige and security interests in Korea and the limitations on American power.

Soviet actions in North Korea during early 1947 added additional pressure on the Administration to adopt a new course of action. The "Provisional People's Committee" had virtually completed its reform program by the end of 1946 and held elections from November to March, 1947. As anticipated, there was only one candidate for each office to gain approval or rejection.<sup>7</sup> In February, a "Congress of People's Committees" convened to approve retroactively all previous reforms and adopt a national economic plan for the completion of nationalization and the consummation of agrarian collectivization. The Congress then created a permanent "People's Assembly," which in turn "elected" a Presidium and organized a Supreme Court.<sup>8</sup> Clearly, Soviet

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<sup>6</sup> JCS Planners, "Estimate of Probable World Situation Up to 1956," October 9, 1946, RG 218, CCS 092, NA.

<sup>7</sup> Dallin, Soviet Russia and the Far East, 291; Beloff, Soviet Foreign Policy in the Far East, 166.

<sup>8</sup> Dallin, Soviet Russia and the Far East, 292; Beloff, Soviet Foreign Policy in the Far East, 166; McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 173; Kim, Divided Korea, 105-106.

actions did not occur in a vacuum. Much as the United States fostered the emergence of Korean self-government, so too was Moscow fashioning a separate regime.

State Department officials continued to support the patient pursuit of previously established objectives. For them, negotiations at the Joint Commission remained the most promising course of action:

Our position in Korea is clearly hopeless unless cooperation with the Russians can eventually be achieved. Unilateral action must be presented as a shortrun course which has been forced upon us. Our program, it should be emphasized, is a means of demonstrating to the USSR that cooperation is desirable.

Hugh Borton and Edwin Martin of the Division of Northeast Asian Affairs insisted that a friendly and prosperous Korea was crucial to Asian stability, but would be possible only after reunification. If the United States demonstrated its determination to fulfill its commitments and willingness to cooperate with the Soviet Union, Korea would eventually gain a democratic government and national independence.<sup>9</sup>

Hilldring vocalized State Department policy toward Korea on March 10, 1947, before the Economic Club of Detroit. He emphasized that the United States could ill-afford to ignore events in Korea, because stability throughout Asia was crucial for American national security. At the same time, the United States possessed a unique opportunity to

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<sup>9</sup>  
Gross to Borton, January 6, 1947, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/1-647, NA; New York Times, December 29, 1946, 19:1.

demonstrate "what American democracy can accomplish in rehabilitating the economic, social, and political life of a country impoverished by four decades of bondage." Success in Korea would not only contribute to the improvement of Soviet-American relations, but also foster the maintenance of the open door throughout Asia. Failure to fulfill America's moral obligation, on the other hand, would produce "discouragement and disappointment to democratic peoples everywhere . . . , and the damage to real democracy throughout the world would be incalculable."

Hilldring then summarized American wartime commitments regarding Korea and recounted the course of Soviet-American negotiations under the Moscow Decision. He stressed Soviet responsibility for the continuation of the 38th parallel, while indicating American willingness to reopen negotiations at any time. In the meantime, however, the United States would continue to fortify its position in south Korea and insist upon the achievement of its objectives. In closing, the Assistant Secretary of State expressed optimism that, despite numerous difficulties, a new Korea would emerge enjoying economic self-sufficiency, as well as political freedom and independence.<sup>10</sup> He failed, however, to outline the means that the United States would utilize to achieve this noble vision of Korea's future.

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Hilldring Address, "Korea—House Divided," March 10, 1947, DSB, XVI, 403 (March 23, 1947), 544-547.

## II

War Department pressure was undoubtedly the most significant and persistent factor involved in Truman's decision to reconsider his Korea policy. During January, manpower and material shortages placed the continuation of American occupation in doubt. The War Department could no longer finance a commitment that had reached a cost of one million dollars per day. Hodge continued to cable pessimistic reports from Korea and strongly urged the development of a "positive line of action." Patterson decided to press the State Department for the acquisition of enough funds from Congress to prevent the necessity for American withdrawal.<sup>11</sup>

On January 22, 1947, MacArthur offered a series of proposals for breaking the Soviet-American deadlock. His recommendations included the submission of the Korean issue to the United Nations; the formation of an international commission of disinterested nations to devise a plan for fulfilling the Cairo Declaration; a four-power conference to clarify the Moscow Decision; and finally, a high level Soviet-American conference to resolve basic issues preventing reunification and independence. Further delay, MacArthur warned, would be disastrous for the Korean people,

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Norstad Memorandum, January 4, 1947, RG 319, P&O 091, Korea, Section III, Cases 16-50, Box 87, NA; Hodge to War, January 17, 1947, RG 335, WDSCA 014, Korea (1 Nov 46-31 Jan 47), Section V, Box 249, NA.

Allied wartime commitments, and American prestige and  
<sup>12</sup>  
 influence in Asia.

On January 23, General Lincoln forwarded a series of recommendations to Howard C. Peterson, Assistant Secretary of War. This memorandum rejected MacArthur's proposals as premature, as well as the alternative course of immediate Korean independence. Lincoln proposed instead that the United States redouble its efforts to achieve an agreement with the Soviet Union, while transferring administrative responsibility from Hodge to the State Department. Vincent read the memorandum and agreed that MacArthur's recommendations were impractical because each would fail in the absence of Soviet cooperation: A new approach to Moscow, on the other hand, was probably useless and would indicate American impatience. Vincent supported a request to Congress for fifty million dollars to continue American occupation. The State Department remained confident that  
<sup>13</sup>  
 "patience with firmness" would end Soviet obdurance.

Patterson voiced the military's position at the SWNCC meeting of January 29. He explained that Korea was the "single most urgent problem now facing the War Department." After noting the inadequacies in transportation, electrical

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<sup>12</sup>

MacArthur to War, January 22, 1947, RG 335, WDSCA 014, Korea (1 Nov 46-31 Jan 47), Section V, Box 249, NA.

<sup>13</sup>

Lincoln to Peterson, January 23, 1947, RG 319, P&O 092 TS, 1946-1948, Case 85, NA; Vincent to Marshall, January 27, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 601-603.

power, and fertilizer, Patterson complained that the absence of able Korean political leaders only magnified America's problems. In addition, further negotiations with the Soviet Union would be pointless. Despite these problems, the SWNCC determined that continued occupation of Korea was essential. Truman's advisors decided to approach Congress with a request for financial assistance to prevent a potential economic and political collapse. The SWNCC also created a Special Inter-Departmental Committee composed of Arnold, Penfield, and J. Weldon Jones of the Bureau of the Budget to formulate a positive program for aid to Korea.<sup>14</sup>

After studying the Korean problem, the Committee concluded that the continuation of present policy would produce an untenable USAFIK position. Granting independence, on the other hand, would only foster continued economic deterioration and lead eventually to Soviet domination. It seemed undesirable to refer the matter to the United Nations or the CFM, since such action would constitute an admission of failure and draw Soviet charges of bad faith. The Special Committee recommended instead a three-year program of six hundred million dollars to guarantee the strength of American occupation. Such a program would demonstrate to Congress Truman's determination to fulfill American commitments and to Moscow the extent of America's resolve.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>

Millis (ed.), The Forrestal Diaries, 241-242.

<sup>15</sup>

Memorandum of the Special Inter-Departmental

Truman finally possessed an aggressive, positive program that would provide a stable basis for Korean independence and promote popular support. The Committee's recommendations constituted in essence a decision for the creation of a separate government. The study portrayed Soviet-American relations in Korea as a test of strength and assumed that, if the United States spent enough money, Stalin would be unable to match the effort and would have to retreat. Any sign of weakness would only undermine the policy. The United States, ran the Committee's recommendation, should also raise the Korean issue at the next CFM meeting in order to publicize Soviet inflexibility. The State Department supported the program, although it still opposed any American approach to the Soviet government for a resumption of negotiations.<sup>16</sup>

If Truman adopted the Special Committee's recommendations, he would have to obtain Congressional support. In 1946, however, the Republicans had registered significant gains in the midterm elections. For the first time since 1930, the Democratic Party was in a minority in both the House and the Senate. As a result, Truman and his advisors feared Congressional opposition to foreign aid and military

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Committee, February 25, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 609-613; State Department Memorandum on Korea, January 13, 1947, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/1-1347, NA.

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Ibid.; Vincent and Hildring Memorandum to Marshall, February 28, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 618-619.

expenditures. Such apprehension was justified; Congress proceeded to cut six billion dollars from the budget to allow a reduction in taxes.<sup>17</sup> Truman benefited, however, from the presence of a new Secretary of State. George C. Marshall enjoyed Truman's unqualified trust and respect, while inspiring confidence even among Congressional critics<sup>18</sup> of the Administration.

Marshall's assumption of control at the State Department clearly pleased the War Department. American military leaders believed that Marshall would favor withdrawal from Korea at the earliest possible date. They urged Patterson to support the Special Committee's recommendations, although they doubted Congressional approval of aid to Korea. The War Department also placed great emphasis on the need for a final approach to the Soviet government to reopen negotiations. Patterson conferred with Marshall and conveyed to him the views of the military. He stressed that withdrawal was imperative, either in conjunction with the Soviets or<sup>19</sup> after the creation of a separate south Korean regime.

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Jones, The Fifteen Weeks, 90-91.

18

Daniels, The Man of Independence, 316; Alexander DeConde, "George C. Marshall (1947-1949)," in An Uncertain Tradition, 248; See also, Robert H. Ferrell, George C. Marshall, Vol. XV: American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy, edited by Samuel Flagg Bemis and Robert H. Ferrell (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1967).

19

Norstad to Patterson, February 25, 1947, RG 319, P&O 092 TS, 1946-1948, Case 85, NA; War Department Intelligence Division Memorandum, February 11, 1947, RG 319, P&O 091, Korea, Section III, Cases 16-50, Box 87, NA.

In Korea, Langdon arrived at conclusions resembling those of the Special Committee. He recommended the building of a strong constitutional, representative, democratic regime in the south under the leadership of Kimm Kui-sik. A constructive program of economic assistance coupled with "Koreanization" would foster the emergence of a genuinely moderate political majority. If successful, the American policy would prevent Rhee from seizing power and pressure<sup>20</sup> the Soviet Union to cooperate at the Joint Commission. Hodge returned to Washington to urge the adoption of a more positive program in Korea. Patterson pressed Truman to meet with the USAFIK Commander to discuss the critical nature of the Korean situation. The Secretary of War considered Hodge "a splendid soldier" and stressed his<sup>21</sup> "brilliant fighting record in the Pacific."

Truman conferred with Hodge in Washington on February 24, 1947. The USAFIK Commander focused his comments on the economic distress and political chaos in the American zone of occupation. Hodge emphatically stated that only a Soviet-American agreement would provide for the resolution of Korea's difficulties. Evidently, Hodge's comments impressed the President, since Truman authorized one final

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Langdon to Marshall, February 20, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 607-608.

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Marshall to MacArthur, February 7, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 606; Patterson to Truman, February 19, 1947, Truman Papers, OF 471, HSTL; See also, Patterson Papers, General Correspondence 1945-47, John R. Hodge, Box 20, LOC.

overture to the Soviet Union. In his public comments after the conference, Hodge strongly criticized Moscow for creating a powerful army in north Korea in clear violation of the Moscow Decision. He speculated that the military force included five hundred thousand troops. This placed south Korea at the mercy of its northern neighbor.<sup>22</sup>

Hodge also appeared on February 25 before the Senate Armed Services Committee. In his recollection of the testimony, Senator Harry Byrd remembered Hodge's warning that, in the event of American withdrawal, the northern regime would initiate an invasion to gain control over the entire peninsula. It is doubtful whether Hodge recommended continued occupation, but probably emphasized instead the need for a negotiated settlement.<sup>23</sup> At any rate, Marshall held a press conference the same day and announced that he had ordered a new study of American policy in Korea. The New York Times concluded that the Administration was intending to prevent the emergence of a "new Poland" in

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Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, 323; New York Times, February 25, 1947, 1:1.

23

Patterson to Hodge, February 24, 1947, Patterson Papers, General Correspondence, 1945-1947, John R. Hodge, Box 20, LOC; Henderson contends that Hodge urged Congress to support continued American occupation, Politics of the Vortex, 150. The record he cites does not, however, provide such evidence, U.S. Congress, Senate, Joint Committee on Armed Services and Foreign Relations, Military Situation in the Far East, Hearings to Conduct an Inquiry into the Military Situation in the Far East and the Facts Surrounding the Relief of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur from his assignment in that Area, Vol. III, 82nd Cong., 1st sess., 2008.

Asia. It predicted that Marshall would raise the issue during the April CFM meeting in Moscow. If the Soviets refused to cooperate, the United States would proceed to<sup>24</sup> create a separate government in south Korea.

### III

Truman confronted an extremely difficult situation in Korea during the early months of 1947. The crisis in Greece, however, forced the Administration to defer action on Korea and focus its attention on events in the eastern<sup>25</sup> Mediterranean. In response to the emergency, Truman delivered his famous March 12 speech to Congress requesting economic and military assistance for Greece and Turkey. Of particular importance was Truman's pledge to "assist free people to work out their destiny in their own way." The "Truman Doctrine" pleased Leahy greatly, as Truman rejected isolationism with the "directness of a soldier and the<sup>26</sup> vision of a statesman." Many scholars have accepted Leahy's evaluation and argued that the "Truman Doctrine" represented a revolution in American foreign policy. For them, the United States renounced isolationism in 1947 and

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<sup>24</sup>

New York Times, February 26, 1947, 2:4, 24:2.

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Jones, The Fifteen Weeks, 137.

<sup>26</sup>

Leahy Diary Entry, March 10, 12, 1947, Leahy Papers, Diaries 1947, Box 5, LOC; For the text of Truman's speech, see Graebner, Ideas and Diplomacy, 730-731.

accepted the responsibility for preventing the expansion of  
<sup>27</sup>  
 Soviet power and ideology.

One must seriously question the conclusion that the "Truman Doctrine" really constituted a major turning point in postwar American diplomacy. The United States had already indicated opposition to totalitarianism during World War II and had implemented certain measures to counter the Soviet threat. The failure of "patience with firmness" had forced an alteration in tactics, but the basic strategy remained intact. Truman now sought to contain the Soviet Union through the use of economic assistance and such a policy required Congressional support. Thus, the crisis in Greece and Turkey was merely the first occasion requiring Truman to request an appropriation of funds. The "Truman Doctrine" speech was then only the public enunciation of a  
<sup>28</sup>  
 previously adopted approach to the Soviet threat.

Many scholars have also ignored the essentially limited nature of the means Truman intended to use in countering the Soviet challenge. The President himself stressed that "our help should be primarily through economic and financial aid which is essential to economic stability and orderly political processes." At relatively low cost and without the loss

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Selig Adler, The Isolationist Impulse (New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1958), 406; Rostow, The United States in the World Arena, 208; Ferrell, George C. Marshall, 74-75.

<sup>28</sup>

Smith, Dean Acheson, 47; Gaddis, "Was the Truman Doctrine a Real Turning Point?," 389; Hartmann, Truman and the 80th Congress, 54; May, "Lessons" of the Past, 44.

of American lives, Truman expected to halt Soviet expansion through a limited commitment to foster local self-defense. As a result, Truman and his advisors "regarded containment as an escape from the nightmarish choices of letting the Communist juggernaut go unhalted, or else going to war to stop it." Such an approach was, as Joseph Marion Jones<sup>29</sup> explains, "not an illogical extension of lend lease."

Truman feared, however, that Congress and the American public would not accept the financial burdens that were entailed in the adoption of containment. The Republican Party had indicated its determination to reduce government spending and thus satisfy the traditional public desire for lower taxes. Such an emphasis on economy threatened to circumvent Truman's strategy. The President recognized that he had to educate the general public to the necessity for<sup>30</sup> accepting the responsibilities of world leadership. He thus decided to "scare hell out of the country" and portray the Soviet threat to American security as immediate, dire, and global in proportions. The speech appealed to extreme emotionalism and described a worldwide and inescapable conflict between two ideologies:

At the present moment in world history nearly

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Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, 106; Adler, The Isolationist Impulse, 396-399; Jones, The Fifteen Weeks, 21.

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Leahy Diary Entry, February 27, 1947, Diaries 1947, Box 5, LOC; Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 317 and 352.

every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one.

One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, . . . and freedom from political oppression.

The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority.

Truman emphasized that the United States had to act to resist the Soviet strategy of conspiracy and subversion, because "totalitarian regimes imposed on free peoples, by direct or indirect aggression, undermine the foundations of international peace and hence the security of the United States."<sup>31</sup>

In terms of rhetorical justification, the "Truman Doctrine" did represent a truly radical change in American diplomacy. Truman installed uncompromising hostility as the hallmark of America's approach to relations with the Soviet Union. Not only was there insufficient evidence to justify such a response, but the rhetoric of the Administration vastly oversimplified the choices confronting the nation.<sup>32</sup> Kennan and Charles E. Bohlen strongly objected to Truman's overstatement of the nature and extent of the crisis. The two Russian experts urged specificity in the perception of

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Quoted in Graebner, Ideas and Diplomacy, 731; Eric F. Goldman, The Crucial Decade—And After: America, 1945-1960 (New York: Random House, 1960), 59; Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 352; Athan Theoharis, Seeds of Repression: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of McCarthyism (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 56-57; Westfield, Foreign Policy and Party Politics, 222.

32

Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 352; Theoharis, Seeds of Repression, 31; May, "Lessons" of the Past, 44.

the Soviet threat, the formulation of an American response, and the justification of decisions to the public. Truman also recognized the rhetorical exaggeration of the "Truman Doctrine," but argued that it was necessary to shock Congress into action and obtain popular support.<sup>33</sup>

Truman's elaboration of the containment policy actually implied a much wider commitment of American power and prestige than the President in fact intended. As a result, it misled the general public and the nation's political leaders as to the nature and extent of the Soviet challenge and the policy of containment. Gabriel Almond contends that the average American "can draw inferences and arrive at sober conclusions if he can trust his specialists to formulate the issues and alternatives in such a manner that a reasoned choice becomes possible."<sup>34</sup> Many observers rightly criticized containment as a sweeping overextension of American power and prestige. Congressmen charged that widespread intervention would place a heavy strain on the American economy, lead to the support of reactionary leaders, destroy the United Nations, and even provoke war with the Soviet Union.<sup>35</sup> Truman's rhetoric prevented a realistic appraisal of the situation and, as Alonzo

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<sup>33</sup> Hartmann, Truman and the 80th Congress, 58-59; Bohlen, The Transformation of American Foreign Policy, 87; Gaddis, "Was the Truman Doctrine Really a Turning Point," 400.

<sup>34</sup> Gabriel A. Almond, The American People and Foreign Policy (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1955), 7-8.

<sup>35</sup> Hartmann, Truman and the 80th Congress, 60-64; Lippman, The Cold War.

Hamby explains, "emotionalized the Cold War and made rational discourse between the U.S. and the Soviet Union still more difficult."<sup>36</sup>

Initially, apprehension over the potentially disastrous results of containment was unjustified. Since Truman recognized and rejected the implications of his rhetoric, American interventionism remained under control. The Korean War convinced Truman and his advisors, however, that the Soviet conspiracy described in the Truman Doctrine speech was a reality. From that point onward, the presence of Communism justified any American attempt to suppress insurgent movements. At the outset, however, Truman actually envisioned a policy of "rational interventionism" relying wholly on economic and financial assistance. Far from being revolutionary, Truman's policy of containment sought to preserve American security through a limited increase in an already reluctant commitment to act positively for the achievement of international peace and stability.<sup>37</sup>

Containment was, in reality, a logical and somewhat realistic approach to the perceived Soviet strategy of subversion and intimidation. Truman and his advisors were aware of the limitations on American manpower and never

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<sup>36</sup>

Hamby, Beyond the New Deal, 174; Reitzel, Kaplan, and Coblenz, United States Foreign Policy, 107; Theoharis, Seeds of Repression, 56.

<sup>37</sup>

Steel, Pax Americana, 23; Richard J. Barnet, Intervention and Revolution: The United States in the Third World (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1968), 9.

contemplated the use of combat troops. Korea provides an excellent example of the essence of containment, since the United States, in 1947, began a long and difficult campaign to create a strong and stable government in south Korea. Containment would permit the United States to withdraw, but not force the abandonment of the area to the Soviets. The Administration anticipated that containment would resolve the Korean problem and end a policy of "confusion, delay, and neglect."<sup>38</sup> The application of containment in Korea would force the Soviet Union to compromise and thus permit reunification and independence.

#### IV

Acheson, during his appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee regarding aid to Greece, confirmed that the Administration was contemplating a three-year program of economic and technical assistance for Korea. The State Department program, in its final form, envisioned five hundred forty million dollars in aid to a newly elected provisional government. Civilian advisors would replace military officials within three months and Truman would appoint a new political advisor with wider administrative and decision-making powers. The State Department transmitted the plan to Patterson on March 28

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<sup>38</sup>

New York Times, March 19, 1947, 22:3.

with the intention of implementing the policy during fiscal year 1948.<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately, Truman had such a difficult time obtaining Congressional support for aid to Greece that he decided to delay action on the Korean appropriation.<sup>40</sup>

Rhee greeted the news of the "Truman Doctrine" speech with a great deal of satisfaction. He immediately wrote Truman, congratulating him for "this courageous stand against communism" and requesting the President to "instruct the American military authorities in Korea to follow your policy and abandon their efforts to bring about coalition and cooperation between nationalists and communists." Rhee insisted that Korea should be as much a "bulwark against communist expansion" as Greece. Rhee perceived that the Administration was moving in the direction of supporting the formation of a separate government and quickly requested Truman to appoint none other than Preston Goodfellow as the first American ambassador to Korea.<sup>41</sup>

Washington's hostile attitude toward Rhee remained

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New York Times, March 25, 1947, 8:1; Hilldring to Vincent, March 25, 1947 and Vincent to Hilldring, March 27, 1947, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/3-2747, NA; Acheson to Patterson, March 28, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 621-623; Acheson admitted the limited nature of the "Truman Doctrine" when he stressed that the Administration did not intend to help every nation. Although the principle was clear, action would depend on each individual case, Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 352.

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Lippman, The Cold War, 45-46.

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Rhee to Truman, March 13, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 620; Rhee to Truman, March 26, 1947, Truman Papers, OF 471, HSTL.

unchanged. Despite American attempts to foster a negotiated settlement, the extreme right continued to criticize the Moscow Decision and the AMG. As a result, the State Department strongly opposed any action that might contribute to an increase in Rhee's political power.<sup>42</sup> It urged the War Department to refuse Rhee's request for an interview with Patterson for the following reasons:

It is believed that the large political support which Rhee commands among extreme conservatives, Rhee's personal ambitions which might combine with and influence his patriotism, his political naivete and the growing restlessness of the Korean people in the non-attainment of independence, combine to make Rhee Syng Man one of the most dangerous figures in Korean political life. . . . Penfield . . . states that in his opinion Mr. Rhee has done more than any other Korean to make it difficult for U.S. Army in Korea. Mr. Penfield also feels that Rhee would make capital out of the fact that he had seen the Secretary of War and would broadcast this fact in Korea, thus building himself up . . . .

Although the Administration was preparing to support the formation of a separate government in south Korea, it was clear that the United States hoped to avoid relying on Rhee's leadership in the venture.<sup>43</sup>

Tragically, the United States could not ignore Rhee's political power. American support for Rhee and Kim Koo at the outset of occupation had provided a reservoir of

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Brown to War, March 14, 1947, RG 335, WDSCA 014, Korea (1 Feb to 30 Apr 47), Section VI, Box 250, NA; James K. Penfield Memorandum, March 28, 1947, RG 59, 895.01/3-2847, NA.

43

War Department Intelligence Division Memorandum, March 26, 1947, RG 319, CSA 091 Korea, Case 8, NA.

strength for the extreme conservatives. Hodge had also created a Korean police force that he no longer controlled and was now under Rhee's direction. The extreme right dominated the National Youth Movement, which the USAFIK had trained and equipped. The Movement numbered approximately thirty thousand and was under the command of Lee Bum-suk, erstwhile Chinese army officer. Langdon observed that most National Youth members were sons of wealthy landlords and businessmen, who invariably supported "those political parties which, by their agitation of the 'trusteeship' issue, . . . have caused US-USSR relations in the country to become even more strained."<sup>44</sup> After Hodge abandoned Rhee, it was hardly surprising that the old patriot used the tools the AMG had provided to maintain influence and power.

Rhee also benefited from a small coterie of dedicated supporters in the United States. Although some were undoubtedly idealistic advocates of Korean independence, Vincent believed that "the majority are individuals bent on deriving personal advantage from being associated with Dr. Rhee."<sup>45</sup> Robert T. Oliver styled himself "special advisor" to Rhee and was particularly annoying for the State Department. During January, 1947, he met with Vincent and urged acceptance of Rhee's plan for recognition of a separate

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<sup>44</sup>  
Langdon to Byrnes, January 21, 1947, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/1-2147, NA.

<sup>45</sup>  
Vincent to Frederick B. Lyon, January 24, 1947, RG 59, 895.01/1-2447, NA.

government in south Korea and the holding of national elections after Soviet-American withdrawal. If the United States supported Rhee, Oliver believed, Moscow would have no choice but to "come to terms for a Government for the whole of Korea." In the event of American refusal, Oliver indicated his intention to undermine the Administration's support within Congress, while Rhee would instigate a general uprising against the AMG in Korea.<sup>46</sup> Such threats only reinforced the State Department's already deeply-engrained distrust of Rhee's motivations.

Bunce quickly realized that Washington could not apply containment in Korea without proper preparation. Moderate elements were far too weak to contest rightist control of any election or civil administration. The recent SKILA election, Bunce observed, was a "rubber stamp affair" in which Hodge allowed the extreme right to control events "through propaganda and police force." He also criticized the USAFIK Commander for labeling all non-rightist groups as pro-Communist and thus forcing moderates into the Soviet camp. Only a Soviet-American agreement on trusteeship would prevent the emergence of a dictatorship under Rhee.<sup>47</sup>

Yet, the Administration could not afford to delay

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<sup>46</sup>  
Vincent to Hilldring, January 27, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 603-604; H.J. Cummings to J. Edgar Hoover, January 24, 1947, RG 59, 895.01/1-2447, NA.

<sup>47</sup>  
Bunce to Marshall, February 24, 1947, RG 59, 895.00/2-2447, NA.

withdrawal. During early 1947 the USAFIK soldiers instigated a publicity campaign to dramatize the desperate situation confronting American occupation in Korea. Several individuals complained in letters to newspapers and family of insufficient food, inferior medical treatment, inadequate housing, deficient clothing, and preferential treatment for officers. Perhaps worse, some criticized the AMG for inefficiency and corruption, charging military officials with brutality and illegal search and seizure.<sup>48</sup> Hodge heard of these complaints while in Washington and immediately ordered an investigation. Subsequent reports concluded that complaints came from younger, newly-arrived soldiers who were lonesome and had exaggerated their grievances.<sup>49</sup> It was clear, however, that American occupation of Korea was rapidly becoming untenable.

Rising dissatisfaction with continued American presence in Korea convinced Patterson that withdrawal was absolutely essential. He criticized the State Department program for prolonging occupation and forcefully advocated "a course of action whereby we get out of Korea at an early date and . . . all our measures should have early withdrawal as their

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Hodge to Seoul, March 3, 1947, RG 319, P&O 312.1, Section XII-A, Case 467, NA; Sergeant Harry H. Savage to Truman, March 31, 1947, RG 59, 895.01/3-3147, NA; Eversull Report, April 1, 1947, RG 319, 091 Korea, Section III, Cases 16-50, Box 87, NA.

<sup>49</sup>

Seoul to Hodge, March 6, 1947, RG 319, P&O 312.2, Section III-A, Case 467, NA; Ward to Mueller, April 1, 1947, RG 6, Box 1, Ward Memorandum, DMML.

overriding objective." Patterson judged the Korean situation "potentially explosive" and doubted if an aid program<sup>50</sup> would improve conditions.

Hodge was certain that withdrawal was necessary, but recognized that the United States could not abandon south Korea precipitately. Upon his return to the American zone, he announced that the United States was about to implement a program of economic and political assistance. "If we can't get Russian cooperation," Hodge explained, "we must carry out our commitments alone." The USAFIK Commander denied that the United States was creating a separate government. The policy sought instead to foster freedom, democracy, and sound government. Some observers, including the Koreans, believed Moscow would be unable to compete with the American program and would agree to reopen negotiations. When Lieutenant General G.P. Korotkov replaced Chistiakov, they<sup>51</sup> predicted that a turn toward conciliation was imminent.

Truman was not as anxious as Hodge to publicize American plans for Korea. On two occasions during the spring, the President denied having reached a decision on extending aid to the divided nation.<sup>52</sup> Truman clearly hoped that

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Patterson to Peterson, April 7, 1947, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea, Section II, Case 15, Box 87, NA; Patterson to Acheson, April 4, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 626-627.

<sup>51</sup>

New York Times, April 1, 1947, 17:4; April 6, 1947, 43:1; April 11, 1947, 18:3.

<sup>52</sup>

Truman Comments, April 3, 1947 and May 15, 1947, Public Papers, Harry S. Truman, 1947, 191 and 247.

Marshall's final overture at Moscow would succeed and did not want to alarm Stalin. At the same time, the Administration would not allow the United States to be mired in the Korean deadlock. As Vincent explained, "our program seems to us to be the only way of accomplishing" the reduction of our commitments "once we rule out the alternative of abandonment of Korea to USSR domination." The United States did not intend to match Soviet military forces in Korea, but would institute a three-year, phased withdrawal. If Moscow refused to cooperate, Truman would submit the issue to the United Nations as a last resort.<sup>53</sup>

Containment in Korea sought to create economic strength and political stability without overextending American commitments. Withdrawal would occur, but without severe damage to American prestige. A JCS study considered Korea as second only to the Philippines in its strategic unimportance to the national security of the United States. In terms of need, on the other hand, only Greece, Italy, and Iran surpassed Korea. Of particular importance, however, were the reasons that the JCS forwarded in support of the State Department's aid program for Korea:

as a result of the 38° parallel agreement, this is the one country within which we alone have for almost two years carried on ideological warfare in direct contact with our opponents, so that to lose this battle would be gravely detrimental to United States prestige, and therefore

security, throughout the world. To abandon this struggle would tend to confirm the suspicion that the United States is not really determined to accept the responsibilities and obligations of world leadership, with consequent detriment to our efforts to bolster those countries of Western Europe which are of primary and vital importance to our national security.

Korea's value in an armed conflict, rather than an ideological-diplomatic confrontation, was of minor importance. Thus, the JCS stressed that "current assistance should be given Korea only if the means exist after sufficient assistance has been given the countries of primary importance . . . for the United States . . ."<sup>54</sup>

Acheson informed Marshall on April 11 that the State Department program had received interdepartmental approval. A significant inclusion was the provision for transfer of control in Korea from the War to the State Department as of June, 1948. Press reports accurately summarized the nature and extent of the program. The United States could not afford to abandon Korea because of potential damage to its prestige, but Truman would not defend the peninsula in the event of a major war.<sup>55</sup> The Administration did not, however, anticipate the outbreak of hostilities in Korea. The SWNCC formulated a Korean defense program providing for only limited military assistance. The United States would supply

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<sup>54</sup>  
JCS to SWNCC, May 5, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 737-739.

<sup>55</sup>  
Acheson to Marshall, April 11, 1947, RG 218, CCAC 104, Korea, Section III, NA; U.S. News, XX, 15 (April 11, 1947), 24-25.

only small arms and a limited number of radios, vehicles, and spare parts to a police-style Constabulary army consisting of twenty-five thousand men.<sup>56</sup>

## V

Marshall attended the fourth CFM meeting in Moscow during the spring of 1947. On April 2, the Secretary of State forwarded for comment a proposed letter to Molotov requesting a resumption of the Joint Commission. Acheson responded that the letter should stress prior Soviet refusal to consult with a majority of Korean leaders. The Joint Commission could resume only if the negotiators recognized the principle of freedom of expression. If Moscow disagreed, then the United States could legitimately proceed to implement the Moscow Decision in the southern zone alone.<sup>57</sup> Acheson appeared to consider Marshall's final initiative on Korea a mere formality.

Soviet-American negotiations in Moscow during April, 1947 were a dismal failure. In the wake of the adjournment of the CFM meeting, Truman rejected the logic and wisdom of high-level, bilateral negotiations with Moscow and chose instead to build "situations of strength" against the

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<sup>56</sup> SWNCC Ad Hoc Committee Report on Truman Doctrine, February 21, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 727-730.

<sup>57</sup> Marshall to Acheson, April 2, 1947 and Acheson to Marshall, April 5, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 624-625 and 628-629; Korean War Documents File, Box 243, General, HSTL.

Communist advance.<sup>58</sup> The existence of a "Cold War" was now public knowledge and drew wide comment in the American press. Strangely enough, the spring of 1947 witnessed a Soviet-American reconciliation, albeit temporarily, on the issue of Korea. In all probability, Stalin agreed to one final attempt at a negotiated settlement in an effort to forestall the creation of a separate south Korean regime hostile to the Soviet Union.<sup>59</sup>

Marshall's initial communication emphasized the absence of progress toward the realization of the Cairo Declaration. He blamed the Soviet Union for refusing to permit the economic reunification of the nation and thereby denying Korea political independence and self-government. In April, the American Commander attempted to reopen the Joint Commission, but the Soviet Commander refused to offer a favorable reply. The deadlock, Marshall insisted, was the result of Moscow's desire to exclude a majority of south Korean leaders from consultation based upon a unilateral definition of the word "democratic." He then recommended that, in the interests of Korea's well-being, the Joint Commission reconvene based upon respect for the principle of freedom of expression. In the meantime, Washington intended to implement the Moscow

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Coral Bell, Negotiation From Strength: A Study in the Politics of Power (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1963), 21; DeConde, "George C. Marshall," in An Uncertain Tradition, 252.

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Dallin, Soviet Russia and the Far East, 304; Cho, Korea in World Politics, 158.

Decision in its own zone of occupation. Quite obviously, the Truman Administration would not permit the Soviets to again engage in stalling tactics.<sup>60</sup>

Molotov responded that the United States was responsible for the absence of progress at the Joint Commission, since it refused to comply with the provisions of the Moscow Decision. Economic and political reunification was crucial for Korean independence and prosperity, but was possible only after the creation of a provisional government. Molotov observed that the United States insisted upon consultations with individuals unwilling to support the execution of the Soviet-American agreement. After reciting Soviet-sponsored reforms in the north, he pointed to the absence of similar progress in the south. Since Moscow favored eventual Korean unification and independence, Molotov agreed to reconvene the Joint Commission on May 20, but based only upon the "exact execution of the Moscow Agreement on Korea."<sup>61</sup>

Marshall quickly recognized that Moscow intended to use the phrase "exact execution" for continued exclusion of those Korean leaders opposed to trusteeship. As a result, he again wrote Molotov and offered the American "interpretation" of the Moscow Decision to avoid any misunderstanding. The

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Marshall to Molotov, April 9, 1947, DSB, XVI, 407 (April 20, 1947), 716-717; New York Times, April 13, 1947, 47:5.

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Molotov to Marshall, April 19, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 633-634; Also in, DSB, XVI, 409 (May 4, 1947), 812-814.

United States believed that the Joint Commission should not deny any Korean representative consultation because of previously expressed views on the future government of Korea, provided each individual was willing to cooperate with the major powers. Marshall also expressed pleasure at the Soviet indication of support for free elections and explained that the United States was considering "a constructive program for the rehabilitation of the economy of Korea and for its educational and political development." If Molotov accepted the American viewpoint, Hodge would resume participation in the Joint Commission negotiations on May 20, 1947.<sup>62</sup>

Molotov's reply stressed that the occupation commanders had adequately discussed the "conditions for consultation" at the Joint Commission. He thus accepted the American Commander's amendments to the Soviet proposal of November 26, 1946, which provided for consultation with only those groups fully in support of the Moscow Decision. Signing Communique #5 was sufficient for consideration, but the negotiators would exclude any party or social group that "fomented or instigated" active opposition to the work of the Joint Commission. Marshall quickly accepted Molotov's proposal, since it was essentially the American position. Yet, it was clear that the extreme right would continue to oppose trusteeship. As Langdon explained, unless the Soviet

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Marshall to Molotov, May 2, 1947, DSB, XVI, 410 (May 11, 1947), 947; Also in FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 638.

Union approved complete freedom of expression, the right would not participate. The United States could then expect widespread disturbances and an absence of real progress at the Joint Commission.<sup>63</sup>

American leaders were certain that the threat of economic assistance had forced Moscow to compromise. Truman reiterated the American desire for a unified and democratic government, while expressing confidence that Marshall's actions were fostering such a result. "The best way to meet Communism North of the Thirty Eighth Parallel," The New York Times argued, "is to strengthen democracy south of the border, to show there that the latter is the better way of life, to prove that life, liberty and happiness can be better pursued in a democratic society than a totalitarian one." This editorial urged the President to quickly form a strong and stable government in south Korea capable of attracting the enthusiastic support of north Koreans.<sup>64</sup>

Hodge and Langdon were not as sanguine about the chances for success at the Joint Commission. It was unlikely that Moscow would permit any criticism of the Moscow Decision. The Marshall-Molotov compromise hardly constituted a Soviet

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Molotov to Marshall, May 8, 1947, Marshall to Molotov, May 12, 1947, and Langdon to Marshall, May 11, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 639-640; See also, DSB, XVI, 411 (May 11, 1947), 995-996.

64

Truman Comments, Special Conference with Radio News Analysts Association, Public Papers, Harry S. Truman, 1947, May 13, 1947, 240; New York Times, April 13, 1947, IV, 8:2, April 23, 1947, 24:2, and April 25, 1947, 7:1.

acceptance of the American position. The Soviet delegation would still be able to exclude those groups that opposed trusteeship, but now the United States had an obligation to accept the results. Resumption of the Joint Commission would find the American delegation in the awkward position of supporting the suppression of those groups whose freedom of expression it had demanded during previous sessions.<sup>65</sup>

American political commentators from both ends of the spectrum supported the adoption of a more positive course of action in Korea. American occupation had, after all, been an unqualified failure. The partition had contributed to economic deterioration, while the absence of self-government spawned rising hostility toward the United States. Acceptance of the "Truman Doctrine" assumed that an effort to combat Soviet expansionism would require more than words. Although American conservatives were concerned about other nations "crowding forward, hat in hand," they joined liberals in recognizing that the defense of American freedom required the expenditure of funds. Only a positive program of economic assistance and education in democracy would produce an independent and self-governing Korea.<sup>66</sup>

Truman was confident that Moscow would find competition

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<sup>65</sup>  
New York Times, May 1, 1947, 15:5 and May 12, 1947, 20:2; Baloff, Soviet Foreign Policy in the Far East, 168.

<sup>66</sup>  
New York Times, May 18, 1947, IV, 4:6; Time, XLIX, 20 (May 30, 1947), 30-31; New Republic, CXVI, 18 (May 5, 1947), 25-27; Life, XXII, 20 (May 19, 1947), 32; Goodrich, Korea, 26-28; Lauterbach, "Hodge's Korea," 360.

impossible once the United States instituted its program for economic assistance. Rather than producing a settlement, however, Truman's strategy would only lead to a deeper Soviet-American stalemate. A genuine reconciliation was possible only after the two major powers arrived at a suitable basis for amicable relations. Patterson recognized the inescapable dilemma facing the United States in Korea. The Soviets possessed a stronger geographic position, while the United States had few strategic and economic interests in the peninsula. Yet, Truman and Marshall refused to accept Patterson's argument that continued occupation was not worth the expense. The Administration was determined to withdraw only after south Korea was capable of self-defense. In the prevailing "Cold War" atmosphere, neither Washington nor Moscow would permit reunification unless Korea was "friendly" to its own individual national interests.<sup>67</sup>

## VI

Korean conservatives greeted the news of the Marshall-Molotov compromise with extreme consternation and despair. Kim Koo announced his intention to reform the KPG and try to seize power. Lerch immediately denounced Kim's plan and barred the KPG from staging political meetings. The Representative Democratic Council then issued a statement

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<sup>67</sup> Lauterbach, "Hodge's Korea," 136-137; Millis (ed.), The Forrestal Diaries, 273.

demanding immediate American withdrawal and transfer of authority to an interim government.<sup>68</sup> Langdon recommended that Washington ignore the proclamation, since it was an obvious attempt to embarrass the United States and sabotage the Joint Commission. He described Rhee and Kim Koo as "diehards" who pursued an intransigent course because their "fate is bound up in the status quo."<sup>69</sup>

One can easily understand the reasons for Rhee's actions. He and Kim Koo feared that the Soviet Union and the political power of the Korean leftists would prevent either of them from obtaining positions of authority in the new Korean government. Although the Korean desire for self-government was genuine, the extreme right was actually exploiting the concept of trusteeship to further its own ambitions. The new head of the American delegation to the Joint Commission Major General Albert E. Brown attempted to moderate Rhee's attitude during several conferences, but experienced little success. Thus, Brown had to warn Rhee and Kim Koo that continued criticism of the Soviet Union and trusteeship would require exclusion from consultations.<sup>70</sup>

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New York Times, May 14, 1947, 10:2 and May 18, 1947, 31:5; Hodge to War, May 17, 1947, RG 335, WDSCA 014 Korea (1 May to 30 Jun 47), Section VII, Box 250, NA.

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Langdon to Marshall, May 17, 1947, and Langdon to Marshall, May 18, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 644-645; New York Times, May 17, 1947, 7:4.

70

Langdon to Marshall, May 21, 1947, RG 59, 740. 00119 (Control Korea)/5-2147, NA; New York Times, May 19, 1947, 3:5.

In response, Rhee accused Hodge of favoring a Communist victory in Korea and demanded a clarification of American policy which would permit opposition to trusteeship.<sup>71</sup>

Hilldring instructed Hodge to assume a strong posture of opposition to Rhee's demands. The United States completely supported the Joint Commission and would not allow anyone to embarrass American policy. Nor would Washington authorize any statement modifying the terms of the Moscow Decision, since such action would only endanger the work of the Joint Commission.<sup>72</sup> Evidently, Rhee soon realized that his strategy of confrontation was ill-advised, since his activities only reinforced America's determination to support the Moscow Decision. Realizing that his persistent denunciations were counter-productive, Rhee adopted a lower profile and toned down his criticisms.<sup>73</sup> Hodge welcomed Rhee's turn toward moderation, arguing that there was now an even chance for conservative cooperation with the Joint Commission.<sup>74</sup>

Soviet-American negotiations at the Joint Commission resumed in a cordial atmosphere of informality and ease.

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Langdon to Marshall, May 21, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 646-647; Rhee to MacArthur, May 23, 1947, MacArthur Papers, Box 8, Correspondence, VIP File, Rhee, DMML.

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Hilldring to Hodge, May 21, 1947 and Marshall to Langdon, May 23, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 647-648.

73

Hodge to Hilldring, May 26, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 651-652; New York Times, May 20, 1947, 24:1; Time, XLIX, 2 (June 2, 1947), 34.

74

Hodge to MacArthur, June 2, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 661.

The three subcommittees began to study the basic elements of the Moscow Decision. Almost immediately, the negotiators began to disagree on the conditions for consultation. The Soviets proposed sending invitations only to the thirty largest parties, while the remaining groups would just submit questionnaires. The United States, on the other hand, opposed the formation of a selective "Consultative Body" and sought discussions with all parties claiming a minimum of one thousand members in two or more provinces. The Joint Commission could then choose a representative body of individuals to form a provisional government. Soviet delegation chief Shtikov requested a postponement to consider these proposals. A report that the negotiations had indefinitely adjourned indicated the extent of pessimism surrounding the Joint Commission.<sup>75</sup>

On May 31, Shtikov explained that the Soviet Union favored limitations on consultation in the interests of expediting the proceedings. In addition, he proposed June 10 as a deadline for the completion of signatures on pledges of support for the Joint Commission. Brown cabled to Washington his "definite impression that the Soviet delegation is under some driving compulsion to complete something concrete in the way of plans for provisional govt [sic] within the next 2 months." Moscow also sought to include in the

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<sup>75</sup> Langdon to Marshall, May 23, 1947, FRUS, May 24, 1947, and May 30, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 649-657; New York Times, May 29, 1947, 1:1.

questionnaires a requirement to bar Japanese collaborators from participation in the provisional government. The American delegation opposed this provision, explaining privately that the "wording . . . is pure . . . Labor Party (Communist) lingo and would at outset align us on the Communist side."<sup>76</sup>

Despite these differences of opinion, the Joint Commission enjoyed steady progress during the first week of June and completed an agreement on consultation on June 7. Moscow agreed to consult with all parties that signed the communique pledging support for the Joint Commission. The United States agreed to include the issue of Japanese collaborators in the questionnaires and also approved the formation of a "Consultative Body" because of "the soundness of the principle it represents." Applications for consultation were due for submission no later than June 23. After Subcommittee #1 had studied the applications, it would compose a list of eligible parties and extend invitations for consultations in Seoul on June 25 and in Pyongyang five days later. At the same time, any party or social group could submit a completed questionnaire no later than July 1 dealing with the nature of the future Korean government. On July 5, the Joint Commission and the Koreans would begin work on a program for creating a provisional government and

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Langdon to Marshall, June 1, 4, and 6, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 658-666; New York Times, 1, 2, 3, and 5, 1947, and June 7, 1947, 7:5 and June 8, 1947, 27:2.

the structure, principles, and platform of the final Korean government. The Joint Commission would then approve the subsequent proposals, after which it would recommend specific members of the provisional government.<sup>77</sup>

Soviet willingness to compromise had a decisive impact on American strategy in Korea. The Truman Administration quickly concluded that the "Truman Doctrine" was responsible for Moscow's change of heart. Washington reasoned that Stalin was hoping an attitude of conciliation would

cause the US Government, or at least Congress, to be so optimistic as to abandon, in expectation of early agreement by the Joint Commission, the proposed program of economic, political and educational rehabilitation in our zone, mentioned by General Marshall. The Soviets would then have reason to hope that delay and obstruction in the Joint Commission will so discourage the US people, and the Korean people, as to assure eventual accomplishment of Soviet aims in Korea.<sup>78</sup>

In all probability, Moscow did attempt to avert the application of containment in Korea through the adoption of a more conciliatory approach. The events during early June at the Joint Commission indicated a willingness to compromise.<sup>79</sup>

Yet, Stalin probably was engaged in one final attempt to reunify Korea under a "friendly" government. Moscow

<sup>77</sup>

Langdon to Marshall, June 7, 9, and 11, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 666-672.

<sup>78</sup>

Lincoln to Norstad, May 12, 1947, RG 319, P&O 092, TS, Section V-A, Part I, Case 85, Box 31, NA.

<sup>79</sup>

Berger errs when he argues that the announcement of the containment policy caused Moscow to cease cooperation with the United States in Korea, The Korean Knot, 73.

genuinely believed that the United States intended to exclude those individuals from consultation who were hostile to the Moscow Decision. If the United States again insisted upon complete freedom of expression, however, the deadlock would surely reappear.

## VII

Some scholars have strongly criticized the Truman Administration for refusing to support Syngman Rhee. The policy of delay, they contend, meant that the subsequent south Korean regime was weaker than necessary.<sup>80</sup> Yet, one must assess American actions in the context of the expected rewards of containment. Truman and his advisors believed that American economic assistance would produce a truly democratic and stable Korean government without relying on the leadership of Syngman Rhee. More important, if the threat of economic aid brought about the Marshall-Molotov compromise, similar tactics would eventually force the Soviets to agree to reunification as well. As a result, Truman authorized the formulation of an economic aid program regardless of events at the Joint Commission. Such an approach, the President believed, would counter the Soviet strategy of stall and delay.

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Dallin, Soviet Russia and the Far East, 298-299; Cho, Korea in World Politics, 134-136; Kim, Divided Korea, 74-75.

Soviet-American agreement on the terms of consultation clearly surprised Rhee and Kim Koo. While the two leaders originally refused to cooperate with the Joint Commission, they now announced their willingness to participate. Yet, Rhee and Kim Koo continued to oppose the Moscow Decision and refused to attend a banquet honoring the Soviet and American delegations. Once again, Brown warned the extreme right that such an attitude would preclude consultation and sacrifice any influence in the new provisional government. In response, Rhee resumed his hostile posture and criticized the United States for violating the principle of freedom of expression and intending to betray Korea. Kim Koo organized demonstrations opposing trusteeship and the extreme right even threw dirt and stones at the Soviet delegation on June 24. Shtikov immediately protested, but Hodge did nothing.<sup>81</sup>

Such actions substantiated the Soviet argument that the extreme conservatives were insincere when they pledged to cooperate with the Joint Commission. When negotiations resumed, Shtikov would certainly demand the exclusion of those rightists opposed the trusteeship. Rhee's activities thus placed Hodge in an extremely difficult position. He could not tolerate open defiance of American authority; yet repression would merely produce more violence. As a result, he did little to punish the demonstrators, except publicly

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New York Times, May 26, 1947, 12:2, June 7, 1947, 7:5, June 14, 1947, 8:7, and June 17, 1947, 13:5.

rebuking Kim Koo for his behavior. As expected, the extreme conservatives refused both to file applications for consultation and to fill out any questionnaires. Hodge cabled Washington that Kim Koo was now planning a series of rail<sup>82</sup> and electric strikes to demonstrate against trusteeship.

On June 25, the Joint Commission resumed its deliberations in an "extremely cordial" atmosphere. A preliminary "Consultative Body" composed of over four hundred Korean leaders was present. The negotiators had registered the results of the questionnaires, which revealed the delicate nature of America's situation. While the leftist respondents manifested a high degree of unity, organization, and purpose, the rightist element was completely divided. In the north, three parties and thirty-five social organizations filed for consultation, representing approximately thirteen million people. In the south, on the other hand, over four hundred parties registered with the Joint Commission and claimed a membership of an incredible sixty-two million individuals. Slightly more than fifty percent of the respondents were rightist, but even Hodge admitted that<sup>83</sup> the results "obviously indicated duplication and padding."

Moscow also judged the number of parties seeking

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New York Times, June 24, 1947, 17:6 and June 25, 1947, 20:3; Hodge to Marshall, June 19, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 675; Hodge to War, June 27, 1947, RG 335, WDSCA 014, Korea (1 May to 30 Jun 47), Section VII, Box 250, NA.

83

Jacobs to Marshall, June 26, 1947 and Hodge to Marshall, June 26, 1947, FRUS, Vol. VI, 679-680.

consultation in the south as inordinately high. The right was primarily responsible for the exaggeration, since two-thirds of those groups registering were members of the conservative faction. If the Joint Commission disqualified only a small number of rightist parties, leftist control was certain. Thus, Shtikov insisted upon the exclusion of those parties belonging to the "Anti-Trusteeship Committee." In part, the rightist assault on the Soviet delegation motivated Shtikov's action, since violent opposition to trusteeship<sup>84</sup> seemed to demonstrate an unwillingness to cooperate. Yet, the American delegation realized that the disqualification of the eight rightist parties in question would ensure a leftist majority in the provisional government. Marshall quickly approved Brown's desire to firmly oppose the<sup>85</sup> exclusion of these parties.

America's dilemma in Korea was then quite clear. If the United States supported Rhee, reunification was impossible and true democracy improbable. If the United States agreed to compromise at the Joint Commission and exclude the most extreme conservatives, however, a leftist majority was certain. The situation seemed even more precarious after the American delegation visited Pyongyang early in July.

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Jacobs to Marshall, July 9, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 688-689; Leon Gordenker, The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea: The Politics of Field Operations (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1959), 10.

85

Jacobs to Marshall, June 28, 1947 and Marshall to Jacobs, July 2, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 681-682.

Joseph E. Jacobs, the new Political Advisor, reported the creation of an authentic Communist satellite regime similar to the Soviet puppet governments in the Balkans. The existence of a strong army and police force meant that even if the Joint Commission successfully formed a representative provisional government the northern Communists could easily impose their will upon a divided southern populace. Jacobs explained that the right accurately perceived its only chance for survival in frustrating the Joint Commission and obtaining American support for a separate government.<sup>86</sup>

American problems in Korea were not confined to the reemergence of deadlock at the Joint Commission. During late May, 1947, Roger Baldwin of the American Civil Liberties Union arrived in Korea to "observe the progress of democracy." Conditions in Japan favorably impressed Baldwin, but he arrived in Korea at the very moment when political agitation was at its peak. As a result, Baldwin witnessed an incredible amount of violence and terrorism. He attributed popular dissatisfaction to the absence of land reform, the creation of a repressive police force, and the utilization of Japanese collaborators in the AMG. The United States had to adopt a definitive program in Korea for the creation of political democracy and economic progress,

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Jacobs to Marshall, July 7, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 690-691; Jacobs' previous diplomatic assignment had been in Albania. Washington expected his experience in Eastern Europe to strengthen the American delegation at the Joint Commission, DSB, XVI, 415 (June 15, 1947), 1178.

Baldwin concluded, rather than continuing to rely upon the  
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 tactics of political repression.

Baldwin's observations received a considerable amount of attention in the American press. Time observed that "a lack of U.S. policy, an inept military government and factionalism among Korean politicians has produced a 'reign of terror.'" Hodge's militaristic approach, the magazine argued, had produced a "police state" in which law and order were artificial. The United States also relied too heavily on the right and suppressed the left, thus forcing truly moderate and democratic elements to choose sides. Time blamed the National Youth Movement for much of the violence and unrest in Korea. The organization's staunch nationalism was responsible for most of the agitation against trustee-  
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 ship and the Joint Commission.

Baldwin himself wrote an article in The Nation, warning that in the absence of genuine reform a Soviet victory in Korea was inevitable. Anti-Communism was not enough to produce real democracy, while terrorism only facilitated the emergence of Communist control. Baldwin strongly urged the United States to protect basic civil liberties and broaden the basis of "Koreanization" to include more moderate

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New York Times, June 27, 1947, 13:4; Baldwin Memorandum on Korea, Enclosure #1, Jacobs to Marshall, June 26, 1947, RG 59, 895.00/6-2647, NA.

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Time, L, 2 (July 14, 1947), 22-23 and XLIX, 26 (June 30, 1947), 25-26.

political elements. American economic aid and political guidance were also necessary for the emergence of political unity and responsible government. Baldwin concluded that "our answer to the challenge of communism can only be a working democracy, capable of satisfying the needs and claims of a desperate, brave, and long-suffering people."<sup>89</sup>

Jacobs and Hodge believed that Baldwin's visit was far too short to allow a proper appraisal of the American predicament. Baldwin had ignored the magnitude of the Communist threat and the sinister nature of the Soviet strategy confronting American occupation in Korea. In their conversations with Baldwin, Jacobs and Hodge stressed that it was necessary to limit popular freedom in the interests of security. Yet, both American leaders admitted that Baldwin's criticisms were "fair and reasonable."<sup>90</sup>

American representatives in Seoul now concluded that a Soviet-American agreement was impossible. Jacobs contended that the Soviets were "either stalling for time or wish to reach a deadlock" at the Joint Commission. Stalin would accept a settlement only if it guaranteed complete Soviet control throughout the peninsula.<sup>91</sup> Rhee agreed with

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<sup>89</sup> Roger Baldwin, "Our Blunder in Korea," The Nation, CLXV, 5 (August 2, 1947), 119-121.

<sup>90</sup> Hodge to MacArthur, May 24, 1947, Enclosure #2 and Jacobs to Marshall, June 26, 1947, RG 59, 895.01/6-2647, NA.

<sup>91</sup> Hodge to Marshall, July 3, 1947 and Jacobs to Marshall, July 8, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 685-687 and

such conclusions and immediately resumed his campaign of opposition to cooperation with the Joint Commission. Hodge reported that Rhee's demands for a separate government were receiving considerable popular support. Several conservative leaders announced their intention to cease cooperation with the Joint Commission. An increase in violence and terrorism were also contributing to the deterioration of American prestige. Hodge warned Washington that unless it abandoned its faith in a negotiated settlement the United States would never achieve its objectives in Korea.<sup>92</sup>

### VIII

Many American leaders continued to hope that economic aid would produce a strong south Korean regime and thus force the Soviet Union to cooperate. On June 3, 1947, Acting Budget Director Frederick J. Lawton approved the two hundred fifteen million dollar assistance program for Korea. In forwarding the plan to Truman, Lawton explained that the State Department "feels that economic improvement in South Korea will help to overcome Soviet reluctance to reunite the two zones." In addition, reunification would facilitate the achievement of economic self-sufficiency,

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693-694; New York Times, July 6, 1947, 22:3.

<sup>92</sup>

Hodge to Marshall, July 7, 1947 and MacArthur for Hodge to Marshall, July 9, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 691-692 and 696; New York Times, July 3, 1947, 2:2.

thereby reducing the cost and duration of American assistance.<sup>93</sup> The strategy of containment thus promised complete success at relatively low cost. America's Korean policy reflected a much larger program of "peaceful revisionism,"<sup>94</sup> in which containment would act as a liberating force. Through the use of economic aid, the United States would compel Moscow to accept the American vision of postwar reconstruction in Korea and elsewhere in the world.

State Department officials had also prepared a Presidential message to Congress requesting approval for aid to Korea.<sup>95</sup> Unfortunately, circumstances prevented Truman from implementing containment in Korea during 1947. In the first place, Chiang Kai-shek was pressing the Administration for economic and military assistance. The President, however, was apprehensive on the matter of support for Chiang because of Communist victories over the nationalists.<sup>96</sup> If Truman refused aid to Chiang, he would have far more difficulty in obtaining an appropriation for Korea. Second, Truman recognized that Congress would be parsimonious irrespective of

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<sup>93</sup> Lawton to Truman, June 3, 1947, Truman Papers, OF 471, HSTL.

<sup>94</sup> Bell, Negotiation From Strength, 23; James Irving Hancock, "The Impact of the Korean War on American Military Strategy," Unpublished Master's Thesis (University of Virginia, 1967), 16.

<sup>95</sup> Draft of Speech, June 3, 1947, Truman Papers, OF 471 (Miscellaneous), HSTL.

<sup>96</sup> Tang Tsou, America's Failure in China 1941-1950 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 446-453.

of the nation involved. If the Administration submitted too many requests in Asia, it would endanger the Marshall Plan for European recovery. In any event, Truman did not have to make a final decision on requesting aid for Korea. On June 27, Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg informed Acheson that he would oppose any new authorizations for foreign assistance during the remainder of that Congressional session.<sup>97</sup> Suddenly, Truman confronted not only a deadlock at the Joint Commission, but also Congressional refusal to support the application of containment in Korea.

Truman and his advisors decided to delay action at the Joint Commission while they searched for another avenue for escape from the Korean dilemma. Marshall announced that the United States had no intention of terminating negotiations or altering its policy of support for the Moscow Decision. He also instructed Hodge to inform Korean leaders that only cooperation with the Joint Commission would produce reunification. The United States would not consider the formation of a separate government until the complete collapse of Soviet-American negotiations. Marshall also emphasized that the United States was determined to defend the rights of every group willing to cooperate with the Joint Commission and to support the Moscow Decision.<sup>98</sup>

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Acheson to Marshall, June 27, 1947, RG 59, 740.00119, (Control Korea)/6-2747, NA; Acheson to "Jim," August 1950, Acheson Papers, Box 65, Correspondence, HSTL.

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New York Times, July 17, 1947, 10:6; Jacobs to

America's Korea policy nevertheless began to turn during the second week in July toward the formation of a separate government. At the Joint Commission, the American delegation absolutely refused to accept the Soviet position on the exclusion of any group from consultation. Hodge observed that Shtikov's demand for the exclusion of conservative parties which refused to renounce the "Anti-Trusteeship Committee" was a "leftist ruse" designed to prevent rightist participation in Korean self-government. He cabled Washington his intention to insist upon complete freedom of expression for all groups, even at the risk of permanent adjournment. Hodge then removed the ban on demonstrations against the Moscow Decision. The extreme right hailed the action as indicative of an end to appeasement. Few observers failed to discern America's apparent willingness to accept the inevitable failure of negotiations.<sup>99</sup>

Rhee's tactics were partially responsible for the increasing rigidity of American policy. His campaign against the Soviet Union, trusteeship, and Hodge attracted the support of many conservative leaders who represented those very groups Moscow sought to exclude from consultation. The American delegation found it necessary to defend the principle of complete freedom of expression, since only the

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Marshall, July 9, 1947 and Marshall to Jacobs, July 14, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 697 and 701-703.

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Hodge to Marshall, July 10, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 697-700; New York Times, July 12, 1947, 4:7.

participation of these conservative leaders would prevent a leftist dominated provisional government. Yet, even Jacobs admitted that these rightist leaders were "for the moment apparently separated from the leadership of Syngman Rhee and Kim Koo [but] in fact still sympathetic if not subservient to their policies and leadership."<sup>100</sup> Clearly, the Soviet demand for exclusion of several conservative parties was legitimate under the terms of the Marshall-Molotov agreement.

In July, 1947, Rhee's opposition to trusteeship reached a climax. During discussions with Hodge, Rhee explained that he would neither support nor participate in any government that the Joint Commission sponsored. On July 19, a rightist fanatic assassinated Lyuh, thus demonstrating unmistakably the price entailed in the pursuit of moderate objectives. Few Koreans could henceforth oppose Rhee's strategy and cooperate with the Joint Commission without placing their lives in danger.<sup>101</sup> Jacobs observed that Lyuh's death had completed the polarization of Korean politics. Rhee now predicted publicly the eventual formation of a separate government under his leadership and enjoying American economic assistance and military

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Hodge to Marshall, July 16, 1947 and Jacobs to Marshall, July 16, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 703-707; New York Times, July 16, 1947, 10:6 and July 22, 1947.

101

Hodge to Marshall, July 17, 1947 and Jacobs to Marshall, July 19, 1947. FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 708-709; New York Times, July 20, 1947, 34:3; The Nation, CLXV, 10 (September 6, 1947), 228-229; Rhee to MacArthur, July 23, 1947, MacArthur Papers, Box 8, Correspondence, DMMEL.

protection. Significantly, Jacobs cabled Washington that the situation was deteriorating so rapidly that American support for Rhee was now the only available option.<sup>102</sup>

Lyuh's assassination permanently eliminated the alternative of forming a separate government under the leadership of a genuinely moderate political coalition. Rhee's control of the SKIG and the SKILA precluded the possibility of truly free elections. He also dominated the police and the National Youth Movement which ensured his own rise to power. Ironically, the American attempt to support the Joint Commission and a moderate coalition had alienated Rhee, who was no longer responsive to American advice and influence.<sup>103</sup> Bunce insisted that Washington had to decide quickly whether to support the extreme conservatives and thus sacrifice moderate cooperation or attempt to create a genuine middle-of-the-road coalition as the foundation of a separate government. In reality, by the fall of 1947, the United States had no choice but to support Syngman Rhee.<sup>104</sup>

Jacobs believed that decisive action in Korea was long overdue. On July 25, he requested permission to present a series of final proposals at the Joint Commission to

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<sup>102</sup>

Jacobs to Marshall, July 21, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 710-711.

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Tompkins, American-Russian Relations in the Far East, 334; Jacobs to Marshall, June 20, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 677.

<sup>104</sup>

Bunce to Martin, July 22, 1947, RG 59, 895.00/7-2247, NA.

break the deadlock. In the absence of Soviet acceptance, Jacobs recommended referral of the matter to the Council of Foreign Ministers. It was clear that Moscow was not interested in a settlement because its tactics of delay were successfully undermining America's position in Korea. The State Department responded that it was already giving urgent consideration to a number of alternative courses of action in the event of an indefinite prolongation of the Soviet-American stalemate. Washington promised Jacobs a definitive reply within one week and ordered Seoul in the meantime to "use all appropriate measures to insure continuance of negotiations."<sup>105</sup>

Hodge accepted further delay only with a great deal of reluctance. He observed that the Communists

now draw hundreds of thousands of followers from non-Communist Korean nationalists who hate trusteeship but who wish to move forward . . . I must emphasize that this is now the most powerful single political group in Korea.

The USAFIK Commander feared that continued American inaction would seriously undermine his position, while only advancing the Soviet objective of obtaining complete control. Conservative agitation for complete independence coupled with Soviet-sponsored leftist subversion was seriously endangering the security of American occupation. Hodge warned that if Washington allowed the further deterioration of his

position the United States would have to acquiesce eventually in the face of a complete Communist victory.<sup>106</sup>

Trusteeship, Hodge explained, was the fundamental cause of America's predicament. Moscow had cleverly maneuvered the United States into a position requiring support for trusteeship. Consequently, the American delegation was

in the unenviable position where every plug for the success of the Joint Commission is, in effect, a plug for the Communist controlled group and where in defending the right of Koreans to appear before the Joint Commission and freely express themselves, we are defending many conspirators against the success of the Moscow Decision who actually wish negotiations to fail.

For Hodge, there existed only one alternative. He urged Washington to adopt a posture of complete support for the extreme conservatives, since the emergence of a moderate coalition was no longer feasible. Such an approach demanded an effort to "stamp out communism in South Korea even at the cost of bloodshed." While creating a separate government in the American zone, the United States could submit the issue of Korean reunification to the United Nations for action.<sup>107</sup>

State Department officials now recognized that the formation of a separate government was probably unavoidable. In the then prevailing atmosphere of terror, extortion, and destruction, democracy could never flourish. In addition,

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<sup>106</sup>

Hodge to War, July 27, 1947, RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45), Section 11, NA; Hodge to War, July 27, 1947, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/7-2747, NA.

<sup>107</sup>

War Department Summary, August 1, 1947, RG 319, P&O 092 Korea TS, Section V-A, Part I, Case 85, Box 31, NA.

Washington still hoped to prevent a complete victory for Rhee's "corrupt minority." Washington therefore instructed Hodge to implement measures for the elimination of police corruption and youth group violence. Such action was certainly admirable, but came too late to counter the pre-<sup>108</sup>dominant position of the extreme right.

State Department officials on July 29 finally completed work on a new American policy for Korea. John M. Allison of the Division of Northeast Asian Affairs was responsible for writing the draft of a proposal outlining a course of action to meet each of three contingencies. First, if the Soviets broke off negotiations at the Joint Commission prior to August 5, the United States would request an urgent CFM meeting. Marshall would then propose that the United Nations supervise free elections for the creation of a legislature in each zone. These Korean leaders would then select representatives to serve in a provisional government that would speak for the entire nation. After consultations with the four major powers, the new Korean government would arrange for the withdrawal of foreign troops and the acquisition of economic aid for recovery. If Moscow refused to cooperate, the United States would submit the issue to the United Na-<sup>109</sup>tions and implement the same program in south Korea.

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108

Borton Memorandum, July 24, 1947, RG 59, 895.00/7-2447, NA.

109

Allison Memorandum, July 29, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 734-735.

A second contingency provided for action in the event that Moscow persisted in its refusal to cooperate at the Joint Commission beyond August 5. After that date, Marshall would suggest that the Joint Commission formulate a report summarizing its progress toward the fulfillment of Korean self-government. The proposal would also provide for the implementation of the program outlined above and the submission of the Korean issue to the United Nations.

Possible Soviet refusal to respond to any American initiative was the final contingency. Under such circumstances, the United States would proceed to form a separate government in the American zone and, on September 10, 1947, refer the issue of Korean reunification to the United Nations. In forwarding the proposal to the SWNCC, the Ad-hoc Committee stressed that continued inaction would only produce more violence and rising public pressure in the United States for immediate withdrawal. To abandon Korea under such circumstances would not only ensure a Communist victory, but "discourage those small nations now relying upon the U.S. to support them in resisting internal and external Communist pressure."<sup>110</sup>

While Truman's advisors pondered Allison's recommendations, the American delegation continued to cooperate with the Soviets at the Joint Commission. Brown attended a

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.; Ad-hoc Committee to SWNCC, August 4, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 735-741.

leftist gathering held in honor of the Soviet and American delegates and pledged support for the Moscow Decision. He also stressed that the United States intended to protect the opponents of trusteeship. A promise of cooperation was sufficient to warrant participation in the formation of a provisional government.<sup>111</sup> In response, the "Anti-Trusteeship Committee" issued a statement pledging support for the Joint Commission. At the same time, it demanded the right of "honest expression of difference to any measure should it infringe upon Korean national sovereignty or interfere with Korean internal politics."<sup>112</sup> The Soviets were now even more vehement in demanding the exclusion of the extreme right. On July 29, Shtikov rejected the final series of American proposals. Jacobs cabled Washington urgently requesting new directives. Soviet-American negotiations at the Joint Commission had completely collapsed.<sup>113</sup>

## IX

In August, 1947, Truman adopted Allison's recommendations in an effort to bypass the stalemate at the Joint

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<sup>111</sup>  
1947. New York Times, July 27, 1947, 7:6 and July 28,

<sup>112</sup>  
Letter from the "United Council," July 28, 1947, DSB, XVII, 425 (August 24, 1947), 400; Jacobs to Marshall, July 31, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 736.

<sup>113</sup>  
Jacobs to Marshall, July 30, 1947, and August 2, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 736-737; New York Times, August 8, 1947, 8:1.

Commission. Patterson and Forrestal had quickly approved the plan, presumably in the belief that it would speed withdrawal. On August 6, Hilldring forwarded the Allison memorandum to Marshall and recommended approval as well. Truman's advisors hoped that the United States could terminate military government and replace Hodge with a Civilian Administrator during the first six months of 1948. In preparation for the new American initiative, the State Department issued a series of statistics regarding the Joint Commission. The statement was an obvious attempt to portray the Soviet Union as an advocate of minority rule in Korea.<sup>114</sup>

On August 12, Ambassador Smith presented Marshall's letter to Molotov proposing that the Joint Commission formulate a report on the progress of Korean independence. The Secretary of State emphasized American support for freedom of expression and representative self-government. Since previous attempts to realize Korean sovereignty had experienced little progress, Marshall recommended a Soviet-American conference on August 21 to discuss the course of negotiations at the Joint Commission.<sup>115</sup>

In Korea, Brown immediately proposed that the two delegations begin work on a joint report. Shtikov responded

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Hilldring Memorandum, August 6, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 742; Hilldring to Lovett, August 8, 1947, RG 59, 895.00/8-847, NA; Joint Commission Commissioner Statement, August 10, 1947. DSB, XVII, 423 (August 10, 1947), 296-297.

115

Marshall to Smith, August 11, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 748-749; DSB, XVII, 425 (August 24, 1947), 398-399.

that he did not possess authority to engage in a discussion of the matter. American leaders in Seoul suspected another Soviet attempt to stall and urged Washington to proceed with the aggressive implementation of the American strategy.

Brown informed Shtikov that the American delegation would formulate a unilateral response subject to change if Moscow<sup>116</sup> decided to participate.

Washington also took steps to bolster Hodge's position. Jacobs had noted that Koreans were losing respect for the USAFIK Commander because the AMG tolerated extremist criticism of the United States. The new Undersecretary of State Robert Lovett thus approved for release a statement denying<sup>117</sup> rumors that Hodge was not implementing American policy.

After the American demarche of August 12, however, the United States had little to fear from the extreme right. Only the left remained critical of American policy, since separate government served Rhee's purposes. Thus, Hodge ordered the police to conduct a series of raids against the extreme leftists, seizing subversive documents and imprisoning a number of major Communist leaders. Jacobs defended such action as vital to the creation of a strong, American-oriented southern regime. The time had come, Jacobs argued,

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<sup>116</sup>

Jacobs to Marshall, August 14, 1947, and August 19, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 753-757.

<sup>117</sup>

Hodge to Marshall, August 11, 1947, Jacobs to Marshall, August 12, 1947, and Lovett to Jacobs, August 15, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 747-754.

to end "provisional" policies and create a governmental structure. Hodge thoroughly agreed and requested permission to close all remaining leftist newspapers. He observed that "the time for politeness, accepted as weakness by the Communists and by the Russians, is ended."<sup>118</sup>

American delegates at the Joint Commission completed work on a separate report on August 20 and immediately forwarded the document to Washington. As expected, it emphasized the American defense of freedom of expression in contrast to the Soviet determination to achieve minority rule. Molotov's answer to the American proposal arrived in Washington three days later. It began with a denunciation of the recent arrests and imprisonments in the southern zone as "abnormal and inadmissible." The Soviet leader reiterated that Moscow supported consultation with only those individuals who fully supported the Moscow Decision. At the same time, Molotov accepted the American proposal for a joint report in the interests of Korean independence.<sup>119</sup>

Shtikov immediately indicated his willingness to begin consideration of a joint report, but the American delegation had obviously registered a fait accompli. Brown then delivered a blistering denunciation of the Soviet delegation

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Jacobs to Marshall, August 14, 17, and 21, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 753-761; Hodge to War, August 25, 1947, RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45), Section 11, NA.

119

Hodge to Marshall, August 20, 1947 and Lovett to Jacobs, August 23, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 757-760 and 764-765.

for its protests against the recent arrests in the south. He charged Shtikov with exploiting a false issue to mask Moscow's refusal to accept broad consultations with all legitimate Korean groups. More important, the Soviet Union was sponsoring the infiltration of subversive elements into south Korea and the United States was only engaged in legal self-defense. Brown agreed to release these prisoners, if the Soviets freed political prisoners in the north and agreed to a formula for wider consultations at the Joint Commission. Jacobs privately observed that American attendance at future sessions was pointless in view of Shtikov's "uncompromising, untenable, and intransigent" attitude.<sup>120</sup>

Evidently, Lovett agreed that Moscow was stalling and wrote Molotov on August 26 denying that Hodge was engaged in "oppression and persecution." He then charged the Soviet Union with violating the Marshall-Molotov compromise, since it refused to consult with all parties signing the required pledge to cooperate with the Joint Commission. Since further discussions in Korea were pointless, Lovett recommended a four-power conference to convene in Washington on September 9 for consideration of the joint report. At the same time, the United States would recommend the adoption of the Allison plan, which Lovett outlined in his letter to Molotov. Of particular importance was the provision that the elected

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Jacobs to Marshall, August 20, 22, 25, and 26, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 760, 762-763, and 766-769.

legislature would reflect the two-to-one population  
 121  
 superiority of the south over the north.

Soviet-American negotiations at the Joint Commission remained hopelessly deadlocked. Jacobs observed that under present conditions it would be difficult to maintain negotiations beyond August 31. The formulation of a joint report was absolutely impossible, while Shtikov refused to consider any program for elections unless the Joint Commission excluded the opponents of trusteeship from consultation. Brown strongly criticized the Soviet delegation for refusing to accept truly free elections. He also rejected Shtikov's demand for equal representation of each zone in a united legislature. Such tactics, Brown explained, "would change the normally substantial rightist-moderate majority throughout North and South Korea to an overwhelming and  
 122  
 unrealistic leftist majority."

Moscow made plain its refusal to accept the American strategy in Molotov's letter to Lovett of September 4. The Soviet leader criticized the United States for refusing to foster the emergence of a democratic government in Korea. He explained that America's refusal to support the Joint Commission and to terminate repression of truly "democratic"

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 121

Lovett to Smith, August 26, 1947 and Lovett to Jacobs, August 27, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 771-775; The text of both the Molotov and Lovett letters appear in DSB, XVII, 427 (September 7, 1947).

122

Jacobs to Marshall, August 26, 1947 and September 3, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 769-778.

parties in the south only consolidated the "abnormal situation."<sup>123</sup> At the Joint Commission, Shtikov refused to accept the American desire for a detailed joint report. He would agree only to a summary of the twelve decisions of the Commission. Thus, in accordance with the Allison plan, Truman instructed Marshall to present the Korean issue to the United Nations General Assembly on September 17, 1947. The President explains in his memoirs that Korea appeared to be one area where the United States could withdraw without serious danger to American national security. In essence, the Administration had decided to "turn the problem over to the U.N. and to get out of the way in case of trouble."<sup>124</sup>

Some scholars have criticized Truman for deciding to withdraw from Korea at the earliest possible date.<sup>125</sup> In view of the monumental problems facing the United States, however, one can certainly sympathize with the American desire to disengage. Korea was, after all, a fragile and complex issue, tangential to the main thrust of American postwar policy. Congressional unwillingness to provide financial support for containment, coupled with the limits on American manpower and material, meant that Truman had

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<sup>123</sup> Molotov to Marshall, September 4, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 779-781; DSB, XVII, 430 (September 28, 1947).

<sup>124</sup> Jacobs to Marshall, September 5, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 782; Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, 324; Muccio, Oral History Interview Transcript, December 27, 1973, HSTL, 13-14.

<sup>125</sup> Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 150.

few alternatives other than disengagement. The real tragedy of Truman's decision to withdraw was that success required support for the extreme right. After 1947, the realization of a genuine democracy in Korea was virtually impossible.<sup>126</sup>

Frustration played a significant role in the development of America's Korea policy. Truman himself complained to Edwin A. Locke Jr. that "Korea, of course, is in a bad way and we feel sorry about it but nearly every place where the Russians have a thing to do with affairs, political or otherwise, there is a mess."<sup>127</sup> American efforts to find a negotiated settlement only served to magnify the problems of occupation, while increasing demands in Korea and the United States for withdrawal. Jacobs warned that unless Washington found a solution to the Korean dilemma "we may have to abandon the country willy nilly."<sup>128</sup> Thus, Truman decided to rely on the United Nations to bridge the gap between the objective of reunification and the absence of available means to achieve success.<sup>129</sup> Truman believed that he had finally discovered an avenue for escape.

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<sup>126</sup> Kim, Divided Korea, 78-79; Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 151-153.

<sup>127</sup> Truman to Locke, August 15, 1947, Truman Papers, OF 471, HSTL.

<sup>128</sup> Jacobs to Marshall, September 8, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 763; New York Times, September 10, 1947, 26:1.

<sup>129</sup> Denis Stairs, The Diplomacy of Constraint: Canada, the Korean War, and the United States (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 17; Vinacke, The United States in the Far East, 65.

Chapter VI:

The Dilemma of Withdrawal

Congress was extremely reluctant to approve the expansion of American foreign policy commitments during the immediate postwar years. As a result, Truman was unable to apply the containment policy in Korea during 1947 and turned to the United Nations in an effort to resolve his predicament. The President's reliance on the international organization had increased following the Iranian Crisis of early 1946. He recognized that the United States could refer problems to the United Nations and expect to enjoy the support of a sizable majority for its objectives.<sup>1</sup> As early as May, 1947, the Administration had considered advocating Korean elections under United Nations supervision and observation. Such action would indicate American good faith, a desire to fulfill international commitments, and support for international cooperation.<sup>2</sup> Korean unification was not sufficiently vital to American security to warrant unilateral action, but the issue provided an excellent

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<sup>1</sup>  
Douglas to Marshall, June 11, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. I: The United Nations (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), 755-756; Robert G. Wesson, "The United Nations in the World Outlook of the Soviet Union and the United States," in Soviet and American Policies in the United Nations, edited by Alvin Z. Rubinstein and George Ginsburgs (New York: New York University Press, 1970), 6-7.

<sup>2</sup>  
Rusk to Gross, May 9, 1947, RG 59, 895.00/5-947, NA.

opportunity to assume an unequivocal position in support of national self-determination before the world community. In addition, if the West demonstrated its unity and resolve, Stalin might agree to a suitable settlement in Korea.<sup>3</sup>

It was extremely unrealistic for Truman to expect the Soviets to accept Lovett's proposals. Stalin certainly recognized that he would be in a minority at a four-power conference as well as at the United Nations. Political and psychological pressure of this sort would only harden the Soviet position. An attempt to legislate an agreement on Korea, rather than reaching a settlement through methods of mediation and compromise, would merely eliminate the chances for a successful agreement. Truman believed, however, that he had no alternative. He expected the United Nations to implement policies that the United States was unable to execute through its own efforts. The United Nations, given a volatile issue of this sort, possessed no agencies or powers sufficient to complete its assigned task.<sup>4</sup> Only a Soviet-American agreement or a Korean civil war would bring

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<sup>3</sup> Goodrich, Korea, 40; Reitzel, Kaplan, and Coblenz, United States Foreign Policy, 176-177; Halliday, "The United Nations in Korea," in Without Parallel, 119; Daniel S. Cheever, "Keeping the Peace: An Interpretation of Soviet and American Security Policies," in Soviet and American Policies in the United Nations, 143.

<sup>4</sup> Stairs, The Diplomacy of Constraint, 17; Gordenker, The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea, 12; Lincoln Bloomfield, The United Nations and U.S. Foreign Policy: A New Look at the National Interest (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967), 182; Goodrich, Korea, 41.

reunification, but the Truman Administration refused to accept the reality of either course.

Communist successes in China during the summer of 1947 indicated that the United States could remain in occupation of south Korea only with great difficulty. Truman clearly recognized the connection between the two countries and America's overall position in Asia. On July 11, he announced that General Albert C. Wedemeyer would visit China and Korea on a fact-finding mission pursuant to a general reappraisal of American policy in these areas.<sup>5</sup> While in China, Wedemeyer cabled Marshall that the Soviet Union was engaged in the masterful pursuit of complete control throughout Asia. O. Edmund Clubb agreed, observing that once Moscow seized Manchuria "the last missing segment in the Soviet 'cordon sanitaire' of sympathetic political groupings about its Asiatic frontiers will have been fitted into place." Such reports only confirmed Washington's suspicion that Stalin would expand into any area of Asia where conditions were favorable.<sup>6</sup>

After surveying conditions in Korea, Wedemeyer concluded that "the same sinister forces that militate against

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<sup>5</sup>  
Marshall Memorandum, July 8, 1947, Truman Papers, White House Central Files, Confidential, Box 34, State Department Correspondence, 1946-47, Folder 9, HSTL; DSB, XVII, 420 (July 20, 1947), 149.

<sup>6</sup>  
Wedemeyer to Marshall, August 3, 1947, Clubb Memorandum, August 3, 1947, and JCS to SWNCC, June 9, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VII: The Far East: China (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1972), 705, 713, and 839-846.

a program of democratization and rehabilitation in other areas of the world . . . are present in Korea."<sup>7</sup> The Soviets were responsible for the instigation of riots, rebellions, and terrorism in south Korea, while building a sizable puppet army in the north. Although outright invasion was unlikely, Wedemeyer believed that Korea had to develop sufficient military strength to combat infiltration and subversion. Any attempt at cooperation and conciliation would not only fail but also further the Soviet objective of political expansion and economic enslavement. Nor could the United States withdraw prematurely, because such action would ensure total Soviet control. Wedemeyer warned against any "ideological retreat" in Korea, since such a policy would only increase<sup>8</sup> Soviet prestige and undermine America's position in Japan.

Wedemeyer recognized, however, that the creation of a Korean democracy involved a number of unique and difficult problems. Both the Korean police and the National Youth Movement had committed countless acts of violence, extortion, brutality, and intimidation, obtaining the universal hatred and distrust of the Korean people. Yet, the AMG had to rely on these same elements to maintain law and order. Wedemeyer stressed that, in the absence of major reforms, a truly free

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<sup>7</sup> Wedemeyer to Ambassador Stuart, September 3, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 765.

<sup>8</sup> Wedemeyer Report, September 19, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 796-802; Also in, U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Report to the President September 1947, By Lt. General A.C. Wedemeyer, 82nd Cong., 1st sess., 1951.

election was impossible, since the extreme right would control the outcome. Wedemeyer emphasized that "every possible opportunity must be used to seize the initiative in order to create and maintain bulwarks of freedom." He recommended extensive American economic assistance and the formation of an American-officered "Korean Scout Force." If the United States acted positively, the Soviets would eventually accept a "neutralized" Korea as a buffer zone in northeast Asia.<sup>9</sup>

Other American leaders shared Wedemeyer's judgment that the United States could ill-afford to abandon Korea. Francis B. Stevens of the Division of East European Affairs argued that certain ideological imponderables were more important than Korea's strategic value. He opposed withdrawal on political grounds, explaining that Korea

is a symbol to the watching world both of the East-West struggle for influence and power and of American security in sponsoring the nationalistic aims of Asian peoples. If we allow Korea to go by default and to fall within the Soviet orbit, the world will feel that we have lost another round in our match with the Soviet Union, and our prestige and the hopes of those who place faith in us will suffer accordingly. In the Far East, the reliance of national movements on American support would be seriously shaken, and the consequences might be far reaching.

A complete Communist victory in Korea would only serve to reinforce Stalin's devotion to the strategy of subversion and indirect aggression for expansion in other areas.<sup>10</sup>

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Ibid.

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Stevens Memorandum, September 9, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 784-785.

Strategic considerations dominated the attitude of most of Truman's advisors in regard to Korea. Both the Policy Planning Staff and the Division of Northeast Asian Affairs recommended American withdrawal because of Korea's minor importance to national security and the extent of American commitments in other areas. On September 15, the SWNCC requested the JCS to comment on the relationship between Korean occupation and American security.<sup>11</sup>

In the meantime, Washington asked Jacobs to provide his views on the future course of American policy in Korea. America's Political Advisor replied that a decision was not possible until the Administration determined whether Korea was vital to American security. In the event that Truman decided not to apply the "Truman Doctrine" in Korea, Jacobs recommended a graceful withdrawal and a settlement with the Soviet Union. He predicted subsequent anarchy and considerable bloodshed, but philosophically offered the following realistic observation:

In any event we cannot give democracy, as we know it, to any people or cram it down their throats. History cries loudly that the fruits of democracy come forth only after long evolutionary and revolutionary processes involving the expenditure of treasure, blood and tears. Money cannot buy it; outside force and pressure [sic] cannot nurture it.

Regardless of ultimate action, Jacobs appealed to Washington for a quick decision. He concluded that further delay would

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<sup>11</sup>

Ibid.; SWNCC to JCS, September 15, 1947, David Lloyd Papers, Box 10, Korean Documents, HSTL.

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make the entire Korean question academic.

Despite Stevens' warnings, the JCS concluded that "from the standpoint of military security, the United States has little strategic interest in maintaining the present troops and bases in Korea . . . ." <sup>13</sup> While any American offensive on the Asian mainland would bypass Korea, American military leaders argued that an enemy position on the peninsula would be vulnerable to air attack. In addition, the USAFIK could contribute to national security more effectively if the Administration deployed it elsewhere. More important, in the absence of a major socio-economic rehabilitation program, the JCS believed that disorders and unrest would render the American position in Korea untenable and force withdrawal under humiliating circumstances. <sup>14</sup> On September 24, Kennan informed Butterworth of the JCS position. He urged the State Department to inform Seoul of the decision "to cut our losses and get out of there as gracefully but promptly as possible." <sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>  
Jacobs to Marshall, September 19, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 804-807.

<sup>13</sup>  
Forrestal to Marshall, September 26, 1947, Lloyd Papers, Box 10, Korean Documents, HSTL.

<sup>14</sup>  
JCS to SWNCC, September 26, 1947, Secretary of the Army Files, Record Group 165, 091 Korea TS, U.S. Department of the Army Archives, NA; Also in, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 817-818; Truman released the document during the 1952 Presidential campaign, November 2, 1952, Public Papers, Harry S. Truman, 1952, 323.

<sup>15</sup>  
Kennan to Butterworth, September 24, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 814.

Lovett informed Molotov on September 16 of the American decision to place the Korean issue on the United Nations agenda. Marshall's speech before the General Assembly the following day focused attention on Moscow's refusal to grant freedom of expression as the principal reason for the Korean impasse. The Secretary of State explained that the United States sought international action to remove the 38th parallel, which was responsible for economic deterioration and the absence of independence

in Korea.<sup>16</sup> On September 18, Lovett cabled to Lake Success

- the American proposal, which provided for United Nations supervised elections within six months of adoption. The subsequent legislature, reflecting the southern population superiority, would formulate a constitution and appoint a provisional government. A United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) composed of eleven nations would supervise the elections, ensure freedom of choice, and report its findings to the General Assembly.<sup>17</sup>

American leaders clearly understood the dangers involved in a decision to withdraw from Korea. Truman and his advisors were sensitive to the warnings of Wedemeyer and Stevens, but lacked the resources necessary for the

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Lovett to Molotov, September 16, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 790; Marshall, "A Program for a More Effective United Nations," DSB, XVII, 429 (September 28, 1947), 619; New York Times, September 18, 1947, 24:1, 8:1.

17

Lovett to Austin, September 18, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 794-795.

successful implementation of a more positive program. The Administration hoped, however, that if the United Nations could create a Korean provisional government Congress might approve a program of economic assistance.<sup>18</sup> In the absence of financial support, as Leahy observed, the "feasibility of [Wedemeyer's] recommendations will, . . ., have to be considered particularly in relation to U.S. commitments elsewhere in the world."<sup>19</sup> If Truman had to abandon Korea, the Communists would probably seize control of the entire peninsula, thus damaging American prestige in Asia. For Truman and his advisors, the dilemma of withdrawal was all too apparent.

## II

American leaders recognized that the United Nations might not find an answer to the Korean dilemma. As a result, the new Secretary of the Army, Kenneth C. Royall, traveled to Korea during late September on a fact-finding mission. During subsequent discussions, Hodge expressed agreement with the JCS that Korea possessed little strategic value for American security interests. He therefore favored withdrawal

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McClintock to Rusk, September 16, 1947, RG 59, 895.00/9-1647. NA; New York Times, September 18, 1947, 5:3; Cho argues that Truman sought relief from an unwanted burden, but such an evaluation is misleading, Korea in World Politics, 205.

19

Leahy to Truman, Undated, Truman Papers, PSF 32, (China-Foreign 1948), HSTL.

but only if such action did not damage American prestige and occurred over a nine month period. The United States would also have to train and equip a strong Constabulary army prior to departure. Because economic self-sufficiency was impossible, Hodge supported a five-year program of financial and economic rehabilitation. The United States had to block further Soviet expansionism; thus the expense of technical<sup>20</sup> advice and economic improvement was wholly justified.

Hodge then provided a rationalization for America's dependence on the extreme right. The conservatives engaged in "strong-arm" tactics, he admitted, but they had eliminated leftist control over the labor movement. With an end to work slowdowns and sabotage, "the increase of street cars operating in Souel [sic] from 20 to 100 within . . . a month" had been a significant development. On the other hand, Hodge expressed consternation over State Department conferences with Oliver and Ben C. Limb, stressing that "government officials in Washington should have nothing to do with the supporters of Syngman Rhee." Finally, Hodge raised the issue of southern dependence on northern electrical power, noting that Moscow could shut off the electricity at any time and use it as a political weapon. The USAFIK Commander suggested that Washington approve a delay in complete repayment of electrical equipment. The Soviets, he argued, would continue

to supply power as long as Moscow received the coveted material in return. The Administration agreed to the strategy, but later condemned the Soviet Union for shutting off<sup>21</sup> the electrical power.

Royall's mission revived American interest in a program for economic development. American military leaders began to reject outright abandonment as a proper course of action. The Army Department now favored a one billion dollar program of economic aid and technical advice over a five-year period. Only economic rehabilitation would permit the United States to withdraw safely and "thus far the US has done little more than hold its own." Continuation of present policy, on the other hand, was intolerable, since Korea would be a permanent and unprofitable liability. The Army Department anticipated that through interdepartmental coordination and Congressional cooperation the United States could build an "ideological<sup>22</sup> bridgehead on the Asian mainland."

Moscow now provided an additional reason for American withdrawal. At the Joint Commission, Shtikov recommended mutual Soviet-American disengagement to allow the Koreans to organize a provisional government through their own efforts. Brown responded that such a proposal was unprecedented and he did not possess sufficient instructions. More important,

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<sup>21</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>

Army Department Memorandum, September 23, 1947 and Economic Report on Korea, September 23, 1947, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea, Case 106, Box 89, NA.

the United Nations was now responsible for Korea's destiny. One can easily understand Soviet motivations. Moscow was aware that the northern zone was stronger economically and militarily. United Nations consideration of Korea, on the other hand, could only damage Soviet prestige and prevent a complete victory. An anticipated American refusal to withdraw would thus transfer the onus of intransigence from the Soviet Union to the United States. The Soviet proposal served to strengthen the argument of those American leaders favoring rapid withdrawal.<sup>23</sup>

Moscow was also attempting to force American departure prior to the application of containment in Korea. On October 10, Molotov informed the United States of Soviet opposition to United Nations consideration of the Korean issue. He charged the United States with consistently opposing the Moscow Decision and supporting reactionary Korean leaders. Now the United States had even refused to agree to mutual withdrawal. As a result, Molotov concluded that Soviet-American negotiations were no longer feasible. One week later, Lovett notified Molotov that military withdrawal was an integral part of Korean independence and both issues were in the hands of the United Nations.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Jacobs to Marshall, September 26, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 816; New York Times, September 27, 1947, 1:6; Buncie to Martin, September 28, 1947, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/9-2847, NA.

<sup>24</sup> Molotov to Marshall, October 10, 1947 and Lovett to Smith, October 17, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 827 and 836.

Lovett and Charles E. Saltzman, who had recently replaced Hilldring, had already recommended that the JCS and the Policy Planning Staff formulate plans for withdrawal in the event that the United Nations failed to resolve the Korean dilemma. Moscow's proposal only hastened consideration of the matter. Both Marshall and Harriman doubted whether the United States could leave Korea without inflicting considerable damage on American prestige. The Soviet proposal did, however, provide an excellent opportunity to withdraw without appearing to abandon the American client.<sup>25</sup> Both the Policy Planning Staff and the State Department agreed that the American position in Korea was untenable in the face of the Soviet-sponsored northern regime. A great deal of money and effort alone would result in the creation of a strong and stable south Korean state. Kennan, Rusk, and Allison recommended the incorporation of the Soviet proposal into the American program at the United Nations. The United States would then leave Korea, but not at the price of appearing to "scuttle and run."<sup>26</sup>

Significantly, several American commentators disagreed with the Administration's private evaluation of Korea's

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<sup>25</sup> State Department Memorandum, September 24, 1947, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/9-2447, NA; Millis, (ed.), The Forrestal Diaries, 321-322.

<sup>26</sup> Butterworth to Lovett, October 10, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 820; On October 13, Washington requested Hodge to supply information on troop requirements during the Korean elections and a schedule for rapid withdrawal, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea, TS, Section V, Box 22, NA.

strategic importance. An editorial in Colliers explained that "it is better to have the division between Communists and freedom drawn in Korea rather than, say, between North and South Dakota or at the Mississippi."<sup>27</sup> The United States had a moral obligation to ensure Korean freedom and independence. To withdraw would guarantee a complete Communist victory, thus constituting a betrayal of American commitments. Failure to halt the Soviets at the 38th parallel would destroy American prestige and eliminate the influence of the United States in Asia.<sup>28</sup> Some observers insisted that only major economic and social reforms were an adequate answer to the Soviet challenge. The United States had to adopt a more positive program, because economic aid and political advice, "rather than bullets and jails, are democracy's most effective weapons." Democracy could never flourish in an atmosphere of police repression, political graft, high taxes, and mandatory rice collection.<sup>29</sup>

American commentators not only discerned Truman's desire to withdraw, they also perceived the consequences of such action. Moscow had created a northern military force capable of moving south and conquering the entire peninsula

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<sup>27</sup>

Colliers, CXX, 16 (October 18, 1947), 76+.

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New York Times, September 27, 1947, 14:2.

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Mark Gayn, "Cold War: Two Police States in Korea," New Republic, CXVII, 11 (September 15, 1947), 15-16; Thoburn T. Brumbaugh, "Soviet Nightmare in Korea," Christian Century, LXIV, 37 (September 10, 1947), 1077-1078; Saturday Evening Post, CCXX, 10 (September 6, 1947), 26-27.

after America's departure. Many observers urged Truman to reject the Soviet proposal for mutual withdrawal and apply the necessary funds, material, and men to protect Korea from Soviet expansion. Unless the United States indicated its resolve in Korea, German and Japanese security would be in danger.<sup>30</sup> Yet, the Administration recognized that if the USAFIK remained the Soviets could leave and then charge the United States with imperialism. While the United Nations could not force Moscow to disband the northern army, it could hardly tolerate continued American occupation.<sup>31</sup>

American success in Korea still depended upon the United Nations. On October 17, chairman of the American delegation Warren Austin formally presented the proposal for Korean independence. The plan provided for elections no later than March 31, 1948 under United Nations supervision and mutual withdrawal following the formation of a provisional government.<sup>32</sup> The following day, Brown recommended a recess of the Joint Commission in anticipation of United Nations action. Shtikov responded that the Soviet delegation intended to withdraw from the negotiations permanently.

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<sup>30</sup> Business Week, 944 (October 4, 1947), 109-110; New York Times, October 14, 1947, 26:1; Time, L, 14 (October 10, 1947), 31; Nation, CLXV, 19 (November 18, 1947), 500.

<sup>31</sup> Jacobs to Marshall, October 8, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 825; Christian Century, LXIV, 41 (October 10, 1947), 1197-1198.

<sup>32</sup> Austin to Lie, October 17, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 832-835; Also in, DSB, XVII, 434 (October 26, 1947), 820-822; New York Times, October 18, 1947, 14:1.

because the United States refused to implement the Moscow Decision. On October 23, the Soviet delegation left Seoul and Soviet-American negotiations terminated officially. Subsequently, the Soviet Union formally proposed at the United Nations mutual withdrawal from Korea.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the peaceful unification of Korea was now entirely in the hands of the international organization, if it chose to act.

### III

American efforts to break the deadlock at the Joint Commission had a profound effect on domestic politics in Korea. Initially, the Koreans responded as Truman and his advisors expected. Molotov's rejection of a four-power conference to revise the Moscow Decision brought a raft of unfavorable, anti-Soviet comment.<sup>34</sup> Rhee, Kim Koo, and Kim Sung-soo quickly recognized the significance of the breakdown in Soviet-American negotiations. The extreme right initiated a high-powered campaign to force the United States to grant immediate elections for a separate government. During late August, the SKILA passed a law providing for elections within eighty days after announcement. Hodge

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Jacobs to Marshall, October 18 and 20, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 836-837 and 842-843; New York Times, October 21, 1947, 11:2; Tompkins, American-Russian Relations in the Far East, 330-331.

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New York Times, September 11, 1947, 15:2; Jacobs to Marshall, September 12, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 787-788; Jacobs to Lovett, September 9, 1947, RG 59, 895.00/9-947, NA.

agreed on the need for haste, observing that "the Koreans are enthusiastic over prospect of election and any delay would subject US to widespread criticism." The USAFIK Commander still detested Rhee, but believed that only the victory of the extreme right would prevent an eventual Communist seizure of power. Early in September, Lerch approved the SKILA election law, despite American dissatisfaction with certain of its provisions.<sup>35</sup>

Rhee not only sought immediate elections, but also Korean representation at the United Nations. During conversations with Penfield and Saltzman, Ben C. Limb requested that Washington appoint Louise Yim and himself as Korean delegates to the United Nations. Lovett immediately rejected the proposal, arguing that such action would require northern representation as well.<sup>36</sup> Jacobs supported the decision, complaining that Rhee's activities had become "a thorn in our flesh." The old patriot's demands for precipitate elections and a separate government only made American policy more difficult to implement.<sup>37</sup> Despite

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<sup>35</sup>  
Hodge to JCS, August 23, 1947, RG 335, WDSCA 014 Korea (1 Jul to 31 Aug 47), Section VIII, Box 250, NA; Jacobs to Marshall, August 17 and 23, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 755 and 763; New York Times, September 5, 1947, 5:8; Hodge to JCS, September 27, 1947, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Section III, NA.

<sup>36</sup>  
Memorandum of Conversation, September 23, 1947 and Lovett to Jacobs, September 25, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 811-812 and 815-816.

<sup>37</sup>  
Jacobs to Lovett, September 30, 1947 and October 2, 1947. FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 819-822.

American pressure, Rhee continued to agitate for immediate action, since he realized that delay could only reduce his chances for a successful assumption of power.

Rhee's relations with the AMG continued to deteriorate during October, 1947. The extreme conservatives staged a demonstration outside Hodge's headquarters protesting the absence of Korean representation at the United Nations. On October 8, Hodge issued a public statement that no Koreans would attend sessions at the United Nations. In addition, the United States would not announce a date for the elections until the United Nations acted.<sup>38</sup> Rhee was furious and denounced Hodge for fostering the revival of Communism in the south. He warned the AMG that it could expect work slowdowns and "a great deal of trouble" if elections did not occur in the near future.<sup>39</sup>

Jacobs observed that Rhee was afraid he would be unable to win truly free elections and therefore intended to exploit his control of the police and youth groups to obtain total power. Few observers could ignore that arbitrary arrests and prolonged imprisonment had removed any leftist challenge to Rhee's dominance of any electoral contest. Jacobs complained that Rhee's actions and the conservative response to the questionnaires revealed that even the most

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<sup>38</sup> Jacobs to Marshall, October 8 and 9, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 824-826; New York Times, October 8, 1947, 11.

<sup>39</sup> Jacobs to Marshall, October 10 and 29, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 829-830 and 848.

educated Koreans possessed no conception of basic principles<sup>40</sup> of Western democracy.

Reports from Seoul hardly stimulated confidence in the future of America's Korea policy. Washington began to consider the formulation of a program to create a Korean army, while enlisting civilian advisors and acquiring emergency power units for Korea. The Administration delayed final action on these matters until the United Nations acted on its<sup>41</sup> proposal. The Department of the Army expressed considerable apprehension over the logic of an American attempt to train and equip a large south Korean army. It feared that the United States would be unable to continue such assistance over a prolonged period. Termination would produce the very ill-will and loss of prestige it was intended to prevent. The American experience in China also indicated that the lack of expertise would cause the Koreans to abuse the equipment and render it useless after two years. Such waste would be<sup>42</sup> unwise in view of America's vast responsibilities.

In the meantime, Truman and his advisors proceeded with plans for withdrawal and economic aid. On October 24, the

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<sup>40</sup>

Jacobs to Marshall, October 21, 1947, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/10-2147, NA; Jacobs to Marshall, October 24, 1947, RG 59, 895.00/10-2447, NA.

<sup>41</sup>

Dupuy Memorandum, October 24, 1947, RG 319, 091 Korea, Section I, Case 1, Part I, Box 20, NA; Draper to Hodge, October 26, 1947, 091 Korea, Section II, Part I, Case 2, NA.

<sup>42</sup>

Scott Memorandum, October 16, 1947, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Section I, Part I, Box 20, NA.

President called for a special session of Congress to provide funds for the United States to "assist free men and free nations to recover from the devastation of war, to stand on their own feet, and to help one another, and to contribute their full share to stable and lasting peace." On November 10, Wedemeyer, now Director of Planning and Operations, informed MacArthur and Hodge of his decision to support withdrawal from Korea during the fall of 1948 regardless of United Nations action. He requested their comments on the logic of implementing such a proposal only in south Korea, if Moscow refused to join in simultaneous disengagement.<sup>43</sup>

Hodge responded that Moscow would never cooperate with the United Nations and support reunification. He thus urged preparations for the creation of a separate government in south Korea. The USAFIK Commander stressed the necessity for creating a strong constabulary army and implementing a program of economic assistance. Only a strong and stable southern regime could withstand pressure from the north. Hodge also noted that Rhee would support such a program, since it promised independence and self-government. In addition, the probable leftist boycott of separate elections would ensure a Rheeist electoral landslide. Hodge feared that Rhee's victory would mean the emergence of a reactionary fascist regime, but he hoped that the election of several

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Truman Radio Address, October 24, 1947, Public Papers, Harry S. Truman, 1947, 478-479; Wedemeyer to MacArthur and Hodge, October 11, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 856.

moderate leaders would temper Rhee's extremism. <sup>44</sup>

Hodge's recommendations presented a blueprint for the use of containment as a liberating force in Korea. The USAFIK Commander urged Washington to adopt the five-year rehabilitation program that the AMG had formulated during Royall's visit the previous September. A well-staffed American Embassy could then supervise the utilization of such assistance and report periodically to Washington on the progress of recovery. Once the south Korean government developed internal economic and political strength, Hodge predicted that "national feeling among the north Koreans may be aroused and sufficient pressure brought to bear upon the Soviets to compel them to permit . . . an amalgamation of the two areas." More important, Hodge's program would allow the United States to withdraw. He cabled a timetable for departure, stressing that the schedule should be flexible <sup>45</sup> so that change would be possible in case of an emergency.

Washington was receptive to Hodge's recommendations, but was concerned about the USAFIK Commander's inability to maintain stability in Korea and control Rhee. The JCS decided not to relieve Hodge immediately as long as delay did not unduly hamper American withdrawal. General Dwight D. Eisenhower argued that Hodge's knowledge and experience

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<sup>44</sup> Hodge to JCS, November 21, 1947, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, FW 38, NA.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.; Seedlock Memorandum, November 28, 1947, RG 319, 091 Korea TS, Section I, Case 1, Box 20, NA.

were an advantage, while Saltzman observed that his removal would only register a victory for Syngman Rhee.<sup>46</sup> The State Department remained dissatisfied with Hodge's performance. Butterworth believed that Hodge possessed a pessimistic attitude and low morale. His tolerance of "police state" tactics in south Korea would alienate the UNTCOK and discredit the United States in the United Nations. Interestingly enough, the American military was not sympathetic with such arguments and suspected that Butterworth was "laying the necessary groundwork to place the blame for ultimate US failure in Korea at the doorstep of the Army."<sup>47</sup>

State Department officials had good reason for concern. On December 3, an alleged supporter of Kim Koo assassinated rightist leader Chang Duk-soo. Penfield was appalled and demanded vigorous action for the restoration of law and order in the American zone. Washington instructed Hodge to crack down on the police and force them to preserve stability rather than abuse their power.<sup>48</sup> Langdon responded that he would assume personal direction over the investigation of Chang's death and press the Korean police for the release of

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<sup>46</sup> Eisenhower to Marshall, December 3, 1947, Saltzman to Marshall, December 4, 1947, and Marshall to Eisenhower, December 4, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 868-869.

<sup>47</sup> Benjamin Taylor Memorandum, December 8, 1947, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Section V, Case 31, Box 22, NA.

<sup>48</sup> Penfield to Hodge, December 11, 1947, RG 59, 895.00/12-1147, NA; Lovett to Langdon, December 11, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 867-868.

purely political prisoners. He reminded Washington, however, that Korea was "politically excited, restive, and frustrated, and economically on a subsistence margin." Some consideration for these disruptive factors was essential, if Washington<sup>49</sup> was to evaluate properly the AMG's performance.

Langdon blamed Rhee for the turbulence in south Korean politics. He strongly urged Lovett to confer with Oliver and Limb to obtain Rhee's cooperation with American policy at the United Nations. Lovett attempted to comply with Langdon's request, but experienced little success. More important, American leaders realized that nothing could "prevent Rhee from running away with the election."<sup>50</sup> A realistic assessment suggested that the United States might just as well begin to support the old patriot sooner rather than later. The Truman Administration could only hope that Rhee would be more amenable after he had to depend for survival on American aid and technical advice. Thus, Washington instructed the AMG to concentrate on creating the appearance of an atmosphere of free choice that would satisfy the UNTCOK and<sup>51</sup> guarantee international support.

Kimm Kui-sik's activities were primarily responsible for

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<sup>49</sup> Langdon to Lovett, December 13, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 877; Langdon to Lovett, December 19, 1947, RG 59, 895.00/12-1947, NA.

<sup>50</sup> Langdon to Lovett, December 6, 1947, and Lovett to Langdon, December 15, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 871 and 878.

<sup>51</sup> Whitman to Bunce, December 12, 1947, RG 59, 895.00/12-1247, NA.

Rhee's increasing reliance on terrorism and assassination. On December 20, Kimm formed the "National Independence Federation" and called for the convening of a North-South Conference to eliminate the partition of Korea. Kimm emphasized that only the Koreans themselves could end partisan strife and unite in support of independence and reunification. Continued occupation only meant more economic deterioration, the absence of political freedom, and the persistence of chaos. Finally, Kimm argued that the arrival of the UNTCOK would not bring reunification, but would only<sup>52</sup> harden the division at the 38th parallel.

Rhee and Kim Koo immediately recognized that such a moderate party would be a huge political threat if it obtained broad political support. As a result, the extreme right began to direct its activities against those individuals who expressed support for either cooperation with Kimm or the UNTCOK. Kim Koo's implication in Chang's assassination indicated the nature of the strategy. Hodge observed that Rhee was an expert in terrorism, beatings, extortion, and assassination, as well as other activities "comparable to those of Al Capone in Chicago." He appealed to Washington for more troops, since the arrival of the UNTCOK would<sup>53</sup> probably produce complete anarchy.

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<sup>52</sup>  
Langdon to Marshall, December 30, 1947, RG 59, 895.01/12-3047, NA.

<sup>53</sup>  
Langdon to Marshall and Hodge to JCS, January 3, 1948, RG 59, 895.00/1-348, NA

## IV

Korea was only part of a larger American policy problem dealing with the determination of Soviet intentions. On November 7, Marshall presented to the cabinet a report on the world situation which the Policy Planning Staff had prepared. The Secretary of State stressed that Moscow did not want war, but sought to use tactics of indirect aggression and subversion to extend its influence into areas of instability. Asia was particularly susceptible to the strategy, because the area was the victim of considerable chaos and uncertainty. Marshall then offered his comments on conditions in Korea:

there is no longer any real hope of a genuinely peaceful and free democratic development in that country. Its political life in the coming period is bound to be dominated by political immaturity, intolerance and violence. Where such conditions prevail, the Communists are in their element. Therefore, we cannot count on native Korean forces to help us hold the line against Soviet expansion. Since the territory is now of decisive strategic importance to us, our main task is to extricate ourselves without too great a loss of prestige.

Marshall urged that plans for countering the Soviet threat be careful and realistic, reflecting American capabilities. In Asia, Soviet military and economic power was limited and subject to American control if effectively challenged.<sup>54</sup>

On November 4, the United Nations Political Committee

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Policy Planning Staff Paper #13, November 6, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. I, 770-777.

approved the American proposal on Korea, including a provision for Soviet-American withdrawal within ninety days after the creation of a provisional government. Although American military leaders were apprehensive over the appearance of undue haste, Truman clearly had to demonstrate support for the Soviet proposal to disengage as soon as possible.<sup>55</sup> Ten days later, the General Assembly approved the resolution by a wide margin. Thus, the United Nations agreed to attempt success where the Joint Commission had failed. With the formation of a Korean government, the United States and the Soviet Union would withdraw, thus signaling the fulfillment of the Cairo Declaration.<sup>56</sup>

American leaders were obviously pleased that the United Nations had decided to become involved in Korean affairs. It appeared that international action might break the stalemate. Few observers mentioned that Moscow had already indicated opposition to United Nations action and its intention to boycott the American program.<sup>57</sup> In addition, the nine members that the United Nations selected to serve on the Temporary Commission certainly would not contribute to Soviet support. Australia, China, France, Canada, El

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Memorandum, November 4, 1947, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea, Section III, Cases 16-50, Box 87, NA.

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Austin to Marshall, November 14, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 857-859; Tompkins, American-Russian Relations in the Far East, 331; "Korea: A Chronology," 322.

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New York Times, October 18, 1947, 14:1 and November 5, 1947, 26:2.

Salvador, and the Philippines all possessed close economic, political, and military ties to the United States. Only Syria and India would be able to resist American diplomatic pressure, while it was unlikely that the final member, the Ukraine, would serve at all.<sup>58</sup> Quite obviously, the United Nations had chosen a plan of action reflecting the political imperatives of American foreign policy.

Marshall immediately instructed the AMG to issue a statement of support for the November 14 resolution and the UNTCOK. He also ordered Hodge to prepare for elections in accordance with the SKILA election law and contact the Temporary Commission to determine a specific date for the balloting. Hodge complied on November 19, urging all Koreans to cooperate with the United Nations and expressing his hope for success. Privately, Jacobs speculated that the Soviets might cooperate. He intended to utilize the Joint Commission machinery to assist the UNTCOK.<sup>59</sup> Jacobs also requested permission to begin registration and administrative preparations for the election. Lovett rejected this proposal, since the Administration refused to implement any action prior to the arrival of the UNTCOK in Korea.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Gordenker, The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea, 31.

<sup>59</sup> Marshall to Hodge, November 17, 1947 and Jacobs to Marshall, November 19, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 860-867.

<sup>60</sup> Langdon to Lovett, December 22, 1947 and Lovett to Langdon, December 23, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 879-880.

American caution was warranted, since many nations had expressed dissatisfaction with the course of events in Korea and opposed United Nations consideration of the matter. Dr. H.V. Evatt of Australia, for example, conferred with American leaders and argued that Korea was a question for Soviet-American resolution or, as a last resort, a Japanese peace conference. Marshall disagreed and observed that the United States had turned to the United Nations only to break the deadlock at the Joint Commission. The Secretary of State stressed the determination of the United States to fulfill its commitments and not "scuttle and run." United Nations delegate John Foster Dulles expressed his hope that the United Nations could elicit Soviet cooperation in the achievement of Korean independence. Evatt remained unconvinced. Obviously, Australia would not be alone in desiring to remain uninvolved in the Korean issue.

Canada harbored even more serious reservations about participation in United Nations action on Korea. Prime Minister McKenzie King opposed involvement so strenuously that a cabinet crisis occurred in December, 1947.<sup>61</sup> Truman even delivered a personal request to King not to withdraw from participation in the UNTCOK. King responded that only nations directly concerned with Korea's destiny should be

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<sup>61</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, October 28, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 552-553.

<sup>62</sup> Stairs, The Diplomacy of Constraint, 13.

involved. He also believed that the UNTCOK was embarking on a "fool's errand," since Soviet cooperation was extremely unlikely. As a result, the United Nations would fail to achieve anything except complete embarrassment. If the major powers could not agree, King asked pointedly, how<sup>63</sup> could the small nations find an answer to the impasse.

Canadian obdurance completely surprised the United States. One official speculated that "King was making this issue a declaration of independence to show that Canada reached its decision independently of United States." He went on to observe, however, that the Canadian boycott would be intolerable and the United States should permit King simply to avoid appointing a representative. Thus, the issue would quietly disappear.<sup>64</sup> Truman disagreed and instructed Lovett to deliver another direct appeal to King for Canadian cooperation. A "calculated policy of boycott," Lovett explained, would defeat the entire United Nations program and only advance Soviet interests. Canada's prestige and support for the November 14 resolution were crucial to the successful realization of Korean independence. Most important, the United States and Canada had to avoid<sup>65</sup> any appearance of discord in their mutual relations.

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<sup>63</sup> Atherton to Marshall, December 27, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 880-882.

<sup>64</sup> Reber Memorandum, December 30, 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VI, 887.

<sup>65</sup> Lovett to King, December 30, 1947, FRUS, 1947.

King immediately dispatched Foreign Minister Lester B. Pearson to Washington to discuss the matter. Pearson explained that King feared the consequences of United Nations involvement in such a volatile issue. Even the British agreed that Korea was of secondary importance and would unjustifiably hamper cooperation in the Security Council. Canada also opposed the apparent American desire to exclude representatives of north Korea from the United Nations debate. Lovett appealed to Pearson to support at least minor Canadian participation in the UNTCOK that would avoid adverse publicity. Pearson now expressed sympathy for the American position and recommended that Truman address a personal appeal to King requesting a reversal of Canada's position.<sup>66</sup>

Truman approached King again with an appeal for cooperation. The President emphasized that the United Nations resolution on Korea was intended to produce a settlement, not to increase Soviet-American tension. Without Canadian participation, the UNTCOK would be unable to achieve Korean independence. More important, the international community would misunderstand a Canadian boycott and question the viability of the United Nations. Truman asked King to consider the "larger picture" and avoid speculation regarding Canada's determination to support the United

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Vol. VI, 883-885.

<sup>66</sup>

Lovett Memorandum, January 3, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII: The Far East and Australasia (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1974), 1079-1081.

Nations. Although Truman admitted that a Soviet boycott of the UNTCOK was likely, he somehow predicted that the presence of the Temporary Commission would lead to the realization of Korean reunification and independence.<sup>67</sup>

Evidently, Truman's diplomatic pressure was a success, for King agreed to appoint a Canadian representative to the UNTCOK. But King emphasized that if Soviet cooperation should "not be forthcoming, and the Commission not return its mandate to the United Nations in view of the impossibility of carrying out that mandate in the whole of Korea, our representative will be told to withdraw from the Commission." King privately expressed his opinion that he would not permit the United States to use Canada and the United Nations as an appendage of the State Department.<sup>68</sup>

Even King's conditional support satisfied Truman, who quickly conveyed his gratitude to the Prime Minister for the Canadian change of heart. He explained that international support for the UNTCOK might compel Moscow to permit entry into the northern zone. Significantly, Truman exposed his inner expectations when he stressed the UNTCOK's freedom of action. If Moscow refused to cooperate, the United Nations could still observe elections in south Korea alone.

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<sup>67</sup> Truman to King, January 5, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1081-1083.

<sup>68</sup> Wailes to Lovett, January 9, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1084; King to Truman, January 8, 1948, Truman Papers, White House Central Files, Confidential, Box 35, State Department Documents 1947-1948, Folder 11, HSTL.

Truman reminded King that a strong south Korean government would constitute a major step toward democracy for the entire nation.<sup>69</sup>

Truman thus obtained international support for the pursuit of Korean independence and reunification under the United Nations supervision. At the same time, the Administration was able to complete a schedule for withdrawal that would end an expensive and unsuccessful involvement. The Department of the Army speculated that elections would occur no later than March 31, 1948 and a national assembly would convene by May 15. After the formation of a provisional government on August 15, the United States could complete withdrawal within ninety days. During the interim, the Administration would present a request to Congress for financial support for occupied areas which would include provisions for aid to Korea. Patterson expressed hope that such limited assistance would not only facilitate American withdrawal, but also place Korea on the road to economic self-sufficiency.<sup>70</sup>

During the last month of 1947, Truman began to believe that mere withdrawal was not enough. As a result, he ordered the State-Army-Navy-Air Force Coordinating Committee

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Truman to King, January 24, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1086-1087; Stairs, The Diplomacy of Constraint, 16-17.

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Schuyler to Arnold, December 30, 1947, RG 319, P&O 091, Korea, Section V, NA; War Council Meeting Minutes, December 5, 1947, Patterson Papers, General Correspondence 1945-1947, Box 23, LOC.

(SANACC) to formulate a program for the creation of a strong Constabulary army and the implementation of a multi-year program for economic development. The United States would withdraw only after it preserved its political, economic,<sup>71</sup> and security interests in Korea. Truman anticipated the emergence of a strong south Korean government enjoying the support of the United Nations and able to withstand pressure from the puppet regime in the north.

## V

Some scholars have criticized Truman for exploiting the United Nations and attempting to withdraw from Korea without appearing to abandon American commitments. The Administration allegedly lacked the determination necessary for the successful achievement of American objectives.<sup>72</sup> Truman and his advisors believed, however, that military occupation was not essential, because the Communists would never stage an open invasion. As Leahy explains, Truman's diplomatic advisors were confident that "the U.S.S.R. does not intend to accomplish its political purposes by the use of armed force but will continue its efforts by infiltration and underground activities."<sup>73</sup> As long as these tactics were

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<sup>71</sup>

Schuyler to Blum, January 2, 1948, RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45), Section 14, NA.

<sup>72</sup>

Tang Tsou, America's Failure in China, 557.

<sup>73</sup>

Leahy Diary Entry, January 8, 1948, Leahy Papers,

successful, the north Koreans would undoubtedly support the Soviet strategy as an effective vehicle for the achievement of reunification under Communist domination. Political stability and economic recovery in the south, on the other hand, would frustrate Moscow and discredit Stalin's strategy in the Soviet zone. If Korea developed enough strength for self-defense, it would experience economic recovery and emerge as a viable, democratic, Western-oriented nation in Asia worthy of emulation.<sup>74</sup>

On January 8, 1948, the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea arrived in Seoul. Hodge greeted the Commission along with an extremely large crowd that one observer described as "a rightist show." Leftists boycotted the welcoming ceremonies, while the Communists attempted to organize a general strike and a campaign of sabotage in protest of United Nations action. The extreme left demanded immediate American withdrawal and declared that it would not cooperate with the UNTCOK. Hodge acted to preserve law and order, declaring a curfew and warning against any violence.<sup>75</sup> At the same time, Hodge provided the Commission with office

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Diaries, 1948-1950, Box 6, LOC.

<sup>74</sup> Lincoln Bloomfield criticizes the United States for not pursuing a "political strategy" against Moscow that would "unbalance the nonmilitary equilibrium in our favor," The United Nations and U.S. Foreign Policy, 219. This was, however, the essence of Truman's approach in Korea.

<sup>75</sup> New York Times, January 9, 1948, 1:5, 12:3 and January 10, 1948, 18:3, 22:3.

space, housing, transportation, and food. Thus, while the leftist leaders either were in hiding or in prison, the rightists dominated government services upon which the UNTCOK would depend for its very physical existence. Under these circumstances the Commission could maintain<sup>76</sup> impartiality only with great difficulty.

Moscow's attitude remained the crucial question confronting the entire operation. Many observers believed that the Soviets would not defy the overwhelming support for international action and would permit reunification during<sup>77</sup> 1948. Marshall, on the other hand, anticipated Soviet refusal to cooperate. He instructed Langdon to impress upon the Commission that it had the power to hold elections in south Korea alone.<sup>78</sup> Marshall's appraisal found early substantiation, since the Ukraine refused to participate in the activities of UNTCOK. The El Salvadorian delegate was late in arriving in Seoul as well. Despite such difficulties the UNTCOK met quickly and decided to approach the occupation commanders with a request for cooperation. At the same time, the Commission expressed regret over the Ukrainian refusal to participate and requested the release of all political prisoners. It also organized two committees; one was to ensure

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<sup>76</sup> Gordenker, The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea, 50-52.

<sup>77</sup> New York Times, January 10, 1948, 14:2.

<sup>78</sup> Marshall to Langdon, January 6, 1948, FRUS, Vol. VIII, 1083.

the existence of a free atmosphere in Korea and the other to determine which individuals would participate in consultation with the Temporary Commission.<sup>79</sup>

Hodge promised his complete cooperation in conducting free and unfettered elections in the American zone that would reflect the will of the majority.<sup>80</sup> To no one's surprise, Korotkov refused to respond to the Commission's communication. Secretary General of the United Nations, Trygve Lie, inquired as to the Soviet attitude toward the UNTCOK. Soviet delegate Andrei Gromyko then reminded Lie that Moscow had already expressed its "negative attitude" toward the UNTCOK's activities.<sup>81</sup> The future of United Nations action in Korea thus became a matter of serious doubt.

Rhee was certain about his proper course of action in the face of Soviet intransigence. He immediately demanded separate elections and the creation of a south Korean security force.<sup>82</sup> For the first time, the United States found that its objectives were identical with those of Rhee. Significantly, Kim Koo now split with Rhee and joined Kimm

<sup>79</sup>  
New York Times, January 13, 1948, 2:3 and January 18, 1948, IV, 10:2.

<sup>80</sup>  
Jacobs to Marshall, January 24, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1085-1086.

<sup>81</sup>  
New York Times, January 24, 1948; Dallin, Soviet Russia and the Far East, 309; Department of State, The Record on Korean Unification, 9.

<sup>82</sup>  
New York Times, January 28, 1948, 2:3; Jacobs to Marshall, January 30, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1088-1089.

Kui-sik. Both leaders demanded immediate Soviet-American withdrawal and refused to accept anything less than nationwide elections. Kim Koo's motives are difficult to understand. It is possible that he sincerely opposed separate elections, fearing that such action would merely harden the partition. In all probability, however, Kim Koo came to the realization that Rhee would dominate separate elections and<sup>83</sup> would then refuse to share power.

Kimm Kui-sik impressed the Commission delegates during subsequent consultations. The moderate leader stressed that if the UNTCOK desired truly free and democratic elections "it will take considerable time to make necessary preparations." In the event Moscow prevented the UNTCOK from entering the north, Kimm strongly urged the Commission to refer the entire matter back to the Interim Committee of the<sup>84</sup> United Nations for reconsideration. Several members of the UNTCOK were receptive to Kimm's viewpoint. In addition, Moscow's uncooperative attitude prevented consultation with such northern leaders as Kim Il-sung, Kim Tu-bong, and Cho Man-sik. Thus, a number of the Commission delegates favored delay until the UNTCOK could confer with the Interim Committee. Jacobs complained privately that the Commission was giving too much credence to Kimm's opinions, since the

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<sup>83</sup>

Jacobs to Marshall, February 10, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1101-1103; Kim, Divided Korea, 79-80.

<sup>84</sup>

Jacobs to Marshall, January 29, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1087-1088.

moderates possessed little popular support. He believed the extreme right represented the majority attitude in Korea.<sup>85</sup>

Rhee and his supporters quickly instituted a propaganda campaign to convince the UNTCOK to sponsor elections in the south without further delay. On February 19, the South Korean Interim Legislature passed a resolution urging the immediate formation of a separate government. In response, Kimm Kui-sik and several of his followers walked out of the legislative body in protest, symbolically indicating the shift of American support to the extreme right. The AMG now anticipated a seventy percent rightist victory if the UNTCOK held elections and an almost complete sweep in the event of a leftist boycott.<sup>86</sup>

Communist activities also contributed to the ever increasing power of Syngman Rhee. In January, 1948, the extreme left organized a "General Strike Committee" to instigate violence, work stoppages, and sabotage throughout the southern zone. Within four months, political unrest resulted in almost three hundred deaths and over ten thousand imprisonments. Hodge informed Washington of his desperate need for more troops to maintain domestic order. Unable to supply additional men, the United States approved MacArthur's

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Jacobs to Marshall, February 2, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1089; New York Times, January 23, 1948, 12:6.

86

Gordenker, The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea, 67-68; Williams Conversation with Deputy Military Governor Helmick, February 4, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1092-1093.

request to increase the size of the Constabulary army to  
<sup>87</sup>  
 fifty thousand men.

Leftist tactics of opposition were a complete success. Two Commission delegates in particular, George Patterson of Canada and S.H. Jackson of Australia, began to exert strong pressure on the UNTCOK to investigate Hodge's "police tactics." Jacobs complained that bickering among the Commission members and criticism of the AMG was delaying the creation of a separate south Korean government. If the UNTCOK would support the American policy, such dissidents as Kim Koo and Kimm Kui-sik would bow to the inevitable and support elections in south Korea alone. Jacobs observed that only Liu Yu-wan of China and Jean-Louis Paul-Boncour of France were realistic enough to accept the fact that elections would be  
<sup>88</sup>  
 imperfect and would not include the north Koreans.

Rhee understood that the Commission might decide to delay action. He warned Hodge that the absence of separate elections would spark widespread demonstrations and unrest. The old patriot blamed Hodge for Korea's problems and threatened mass strikes to force the United States to remove  
<sup>89</sup>  
 the USAFIK Commander. Jacobs observed that the United

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<sup>87</sup>  
 Millis (ed.), The Forrestal Diaries, 375; Sawyer and Hermes, Military Advisors in Korea, 28-29; Gordenker, The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea, 66.

<sup>88</sup>  
 Jacobs to Marshall, February 2 and 8, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1089 and 1095-1097.

<sup>89</sup>  
 Jacobs to Marshall, February 10, 1948, FRUS, Vol. VIII, 1948, 1099.

States could not ignore such threats, because Rhee possessed a large following. Yet, Rhee's popularity

has nothing to do with love or veneration for the man . . . . It is . . . the result of a wide belief that Rhee is the source of all present and future political power in south Korea, the supreme protector of vested interests and the existing order of things, and that he is the man on whom to stake all one's fortunes.

Both Jacobs and Hodge expressed alarm that the referral of the Korean issue back to the Interim Committee would result in disaster. Seoul appealed to Washington to convince the United Nations not to delay action any longer.<sup>90</sup>

## VI

Events in north Korea added urgency to the need for action in the American zone. American liason officers in Pyongyang reported that the north Koreans were preparing festivities in anticipation of the announcement of a new constitution and elections for a permanent government. On February 16, the "People's Committee" proclaimed its intention to form a separate government within the next few months representing all Korea.<sup>91</sup> In their public statements, the north Koreans declared that they would not cooperate with the United Nations, since the UNTCOK was a tool of the United

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<sup>90</sup>

Jacobs to Marshall, February 9, 1948, RG 59, 895.00/2-948, NA.

<sup>91</sup>

Jacobs to Marshall, January 31, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1088-1089; New York Times, February 14, 1948, 10:2.

States. They also demanded immediate American withdrawal and called upon south Koreans to resist the creation of a separate government. Leahy no doubt expressed the Truman Administration's reaction when he privately denounced the north Korean action as a clear defiance of the United Nations and an example of Soviet satellization.<sup>92</sup>

These events only reinforced the UNTCOK's apprehension. The Commission members quickly concluded that separate elections might be unwise, since they would ensure the permanence of division and the probability of civil war. On February 6, the UNTCOK decided to refer the Korean issue back to the Interim Committee, in view of the negative attitude of the Soviet Union. The Commission chose Indian delegate K.P.S. Menon to return to New York and recommend that the United Nations authorize only the election of consultants for the determination of a future course of action. Jackson also forced his colleagues to include a provision that any government emerging from separate elections would represent only the southern zone and not all of Korea.<sup>93</sup>

Jacobs criticized the UNTCOK action as hasty and unfair, based "almost solely on testimony given by immature Koreans

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Jacobs to Marshall, February 24, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1129-1131; Time, LI, 8 (February 23, 1948), 34; Goodrich, Korea, 50; Dallin, Soviet Russia and the Far East, 310; Leahy Diary Entry, February 16, 1948, Leahy Papers, Diaries 1948-1950, Box 6, LOC.

93

Jacobs to Marshall, February 5 and 6, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1093-1094.

. . . completely overlooking the need for unity on a sensible, coherent plan for salvaging what may yet be salvaged from their country." Leftists also disliked the decision and organized strikes in the railroad, telegraph, and shipping industries. The AMG reported over one hundred incidents of violence and sabotage. Hodge denounced the demonstrators as Soviet "stooges" and arrested several thousand protesters. Such action caused Jackson to urge the inclusion in the UNTCOK report of an appraisal of conditions in south Korea emphasizing Hodge's penchant for political repression. The Commission rejected this proposal. Menon thus traveled to New York with little information and fewer recommendations.<sup>94</sup>

Jacobs blamed the Commission's uncooperative attitude on a "British Bloc" which was allegedly conspiring to implant American troops in Korea indefinitely. India, Canada, and Australia, with the assistance of Syria, were thus "playing into Soviet hands" and delaying action for free elections and extensive reforms in south Korea. Jacobs speculated that Jackson was a Communist sympathizer and was merely exploiting the issue of civil liberties to advance his ulterior motives. Syria, on the other hand, opposed separate elections to gain leverage regarding American policy toward Palestine.<sup>95</sup> Only China and the Philippines realized

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<sup>94</sup> Jacobs to Marshall, February 8 and 13, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1097 and 1109; New York Times, February 8, 1948, 1:1 and February 11, 1948, 10:2.

<sup>95</sup> Jacobs to Marshall, February 12, 1948, FRUS, 1948,

that Moscow would never allow reunification except as a result of invasion from the north. The UNTCOK majority refused to antagonize the Soviets on what appeared to be an issue of secondary importance. Hodge insisted that logic dictated separate elections, since further delay would only cause a loss of confidence in the south.<sup>96</sup>

World leaders had not failed to notice the rising violence and disruption in Korea. The Interim Committee decided that, in the interests of peace and stability, it would consider Menon's report earlier than it had originally intended. The Interim Committee thus faced the distasteful choice of either submitting to a Soviet veto or solidifying the Korean partition.<sup>97</sup> Most members of the Interim Committee believed, however, that supervised elections would produce democracy for the majority of Koreans and possibly stimulate a northern decision to join the south. Withdrawal and inaction, on the other hand, would probably result in a complete northern victory after a bloody civil war. Marshall instructed the American Embassies in each Commission member's country to urge support for separate elections as the lesser evil. The British response was typical of those nations

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Vol. VIII, 1105; Hodge to Marshall, February 14, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1110.

<sup>96</sup>  
Langdon to Marshall, February 17, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1114.

<sup>97</sup>  
New York Times, February 12, 1948, 17:1 and February 13, 1948, 20:2.

opposed to separate action. London believed that the American policy would harden the partition, but agreed to support<sup>98</sup> separate elections as a last resort.

Marshall informed Austin on February 18 that there was considerable opposition to separate elections. But he approved American support only for a brief adjournment to examine the UNTCOK report. The United States would then insist upon the fulfillment of the November 14 resolution in those areas open to observation and press Canada and Australia to accept the American position. When Menon presented the Commission report, American delegate Philip Jessup urged the Interim Committee to support elections for a government in south Korea alone.<sup>99</sup> Menon responded that, despite the absence of freedom in both zones, Korea would be ready for independence only after reunification. The Interim Committee declared a ten day recess to consider the American proposal and Menon's report. Marshall informed Langdon that the United States would press the Interim Committee members to<sup>100</sup> accept the American position when the body reconvened.

Menon's report irritated Hodge. The Commission's action

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Marshall to Certain Diplomatic Offices, February 9, 1948, Butler (Australia) to Marshall and Gallman (Great Britain) to Marshall, February 12, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1098-1099 and 1103-1105.

<sup>99</sup>

Marshall to Austin, February 18, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1116-1117.

<sup>100</sup>

Marshall to Langdon, February 20, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1124; Gordenker, The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea, 70; New York Times, February 20,

was "typical of the general failure of UNTCOK to understand in any degree the 'cold war' as waged in Korea . . . ."

Jackson and Patterson were willfully distorting the record, supporting the Communist strategy, and preventing positive action to advance Korea's welfare. While criticizing the absence of freedom, the two UNTCOK delegates were opposing measures for the creation of a stable Korean government that would act in the interests of the people. The Commission's fumbling and indecision, Hodge declared, was facilitating a Soviet victory. Such action was a clear example of appeasement. Hodge's dissatisfaction was actually a manifestation of his desire to leave. Separate elections would hardly resolve Korea's problems, but it would permit the United States to withdraw.

While the Interim Committee studied Menon's report, Marshall applied considerable pressure on foreign governments to accept the American position. The Secretary of State denied that south Korea bordered on chaos, although he admitted conditions were less than ideal. He stressed that the Koreans would not accept mere consultation, since the people favored elections instead. Marshall's tactics were successful. On February 23, Britain indicated its willingness to accept the American policy and denied any desire to

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1948, 1:1.

101

Hodge to Marshall, February 20, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1125-1127; New York Times, February 22, 1948, VI, 5:8.

hinder American objectives. India also succumbed, largely because the United States stressed that elections would produce a government for all Korea, not just the south. Marshall reasoned that once a legislature emerged representing two-thirds of Korea, Moscow would cease its opposition. The UNTCOK could then supervise the creation of a united, independent, and democratic Korea. Thus, the United States convinced two of the most influential Interim Committee members that separate elections would promote rather than hinder the implementation of the November 14 resolution.<sup>102</sup>

Jessup confidently recommended on February 24 that the UNTCOK observe elections in those areas of Korea accessible to the Commission. He observed that such action would allow a majority of Koreans to attain democracy, while further delay would only bring a Communist seizure of power.<sup>103</sup> Two days later, the Interim Committee approved the American proposal without amendment. Yet, Canada and Australia voted against the resolution and eleven nations abstained.<sup>104</sup> Jessup's advocacy greatly impressed supporters of the

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Marshall to British Embassy, February 21, 1948. British Embassy to Marshall, February 23, 1948, Marshall to Indian Embassy, February 24, 1948 and Indian Embassy to Marshall, February 26, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1124-1125 and 1127-1128.

103

Austin to Marshall, February 24, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1128-29; New York Times, February 25, 1948, 8:3.

104

DSB, XVIII, 453 (March 7, 1948), 298; New York Times, March 27, 1948, 1:4; Syria abstained as well as Colombia, Venezuela, Panama, Egypt, Iraq, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden.

proposal, but Marshall's diplomatic pressure and the recent coup in Czechoslovakia were of far greater importance. The United States was then able to convince the Interim Committee that United Nations action might result in the complete resolution of the Korean dilemma.<sup>105</sup>

## VII

American plans for withdrawal continued during the early months of 1948. In January, the SANACC considered the Hodge proposal for the creation of a security force and the implementation of economic recovery programs. The JCS and MacArthur had agreed upon the formation of an elementary military organization of "basically riflemen supported by simple weapons requiring little technical knowledge or maintenance, . . ."<sup>106</sup> American military leaders thus began to accept the State Department's argument that precipitous withdrawal from Korea was unacceptable because a Soviet victory would seriously damage American prestige.<sup>107</sup> Yet, the Army Department pressed the State Department to formulate definitive plans for providing financial assistance

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<sup>105</sup>

Gordenker, The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea, 71-75; New York Times, February 27, 1948, 20:2.

<sup>106</sup>

Wedemeyer to MacArthur, January 13, 1948 and Hall Memorandum, January 5, 1948, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Section I, Case 1, Box 20, NA.

<sup>107</sup>

Forrestal to Truman, February 17, 1948, Truman Papers, PSF 156, Cabinet (Commerce to Defense, HSTL).

to south Korea. It was important that the Administration request Congressional support for a rehabilitation program prior to March 1, 1948, if American withdrawal was to proceed on schedule.<sup>108</sup>

State Department officials were suspicious of the apparent desire of the military to withdraw from Korea regardless of conditions at the time of departure. Butterworth stressed that the United States had to avoid any implication of attempting to "scuttle and run." Although the State Department would support withdrawal by November 15, Butterworth emphasized the need for flexibility. For example, unless south Korea possessed an adequate security force prior to American departure, its survival was dubious. Marshall seriously doubted whether the Army would permit sufficient time to train a south Korean army powerful and disciplined enough to prevent a north Korean invasion. The State Department thus decided to begin immediate shipment of arms to Korea and incorporate more Koreans into the USAFIK for training.<sup>109</sup>

Undersecretary of the Army William H. Draper was dissatisfied with the State Department's attitude. Marshall and his colleagues, Draper observed, seemed to consider

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108

Seedlock Memorandum, January 31, 1948, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Section III, Cases 3-15, NA; Maddocks Memorandum, February 9, 1948, RG 319, CSA 091 Korea TS, NA.

109

Butterworth to Marshall, March 4, 1948 and Allison Memorandum of Conversation, March 5, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1137-1141.

support for a firm withdrawal date as synonymous with "appeasement." Draper effectively summarized the Army's position during his testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. The Undersecretary explained that the United States could not maintain occupation of Korea indefinitely. Sooner or later, the Koreans themselves would have to solve their problems.<sup>110</sup> One can certainly appreciate the attitude of the American military. During February, 1948, the JCS concluded that the United States could not block a Soviet military thrust into Europe and thus requested a nine billion dollar supplement to the defense budget. Truman rejected the request because he believed that the United States could not counter Soviet expansionism everywhere and still maintain fiscal and economic strength.<sup>111</sup> Such limitations on spending meant that withdrawal was essential from those areas less vital to American security.

Truman thus authorized the JCS to instruct Hodge to begin preparations for withdrawal. Hodge responded that if withdrawal was to begin on schedule—August 15, 1948—

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Biddle to Wedemeyer, March 5, 1948, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Section III, Cases 3-15, Box 21, NA; Herbert Druks, Harry S. Truman and the Russians 1945-1953 (New York: Robert Speller and Sons, 1966), 226.

111

Warner R. Schilling, "The Politics of National Defense: Fiscal 1950," in Strategy, Politics and Defense Budgets, by Warner R. Schilling, Paul Y. Hammond, and Glenn H. Snyder (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 41; Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, 331.

a final directive was necessary prior to May 15. He also believed that because of his long-standing disagreement with Rhee he should, as the USAFIK Commander, leave Korea immediately after the new Korean government assumed control. In addition, Hodge stressed that Korea would require heavier equipment militarily to ensure its survival in the event of an open invasion.<sup>112</sup>

Truman received the final SANACC recommendations for withdrawal from Korea on April 2, 1948. The proposal, National Security Council Paper #8 (NSC-8), outlined steps for the realization of an independent south Korean nation that would reflect popular desires and possess a sound economic and educational system. The paper noted that Moscow had created a separate government possessing a strong army, while serious economic problems plagued the southern zone. It recommended a one hundred eighty-five million dollar aid program for fiscal 1949 and the expansion, training, and equipping of a Constabulary army that would be effective "against any but an overt act of aggression by north Korea or other forces."<sup>113</sup> At the same time, NSC-8 provided that the United States would withdraw from Korea no later than December 31, 1948. In conclusion, the paper

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Army to MacArthur, March 18, 1948, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Section I, Case 1, Box 20, NA; Hodge to Dupuy, March 28, 1948, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Section IV, Cases 16-30, Box 22, NA.

113

Souers to Truman, SANACC Report, April 2, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1163-1169.

declared that the United States should "not become so irrevocably involved in the Korean situation that any action taken by any faction in Korea or by any other power in Korea could be considered a casus belli for the U.S."<sup>114</sup>

Truman's decision to approve NSC-8 was indicative of his desire to pursue a middle road in responding to the Soviet challenge in Korea. The United States could not "cut and run," since such a policy would constitute a betrayal of commitments. American allies and adversaries alike would criticize the United States for exploiting the United Nations as a cover for abandonment. Nor would Truman guarantee the political independence and territorial integrity of Korea against military aggression. Instead, the Administration would attempt to apply containment in Korea and build indigenous military power, economic strength, and political stability. The policy assumed that the Soviets would not instigate blatant aggression and that the north Koreans eventually would realize the advantages of reunification. On April 8, Washington dispatched to Seoul instructions for implementing NSC-8. Hodge enthusiastically began to prepare<sup>115</sup> for withdrawal before the end of 1948.

Royall and Draper immediately traveled to south Korea in the company of four American economic experts to formulate a specific assistance program. After three days of

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<sup>114</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>115</sup>

Sawyer and Hermes, Military Advisors in Korea, 30.

interviews with Hodge and prominent Korean businessmen and political leaders, the Committee observed that the Koreans were anxious to assume control over their own destiny. The Committee's report forwarded the following conclusion:

For a time after withdrawal . . . the new independent Korean Government will require continuing American aid, advice, food and raw materials in order to maintain at least the present ration level and to achieve necessary rehabilitation and governmental effectiveness. This assistance we feel should be provided for an interim period, with steps taken to assure that it is properly utilized. The Committee believes that firm support by the United States and the United Nations to the new Korean Government will inestimably help to develop participation in future Far Eastern trade on a basis valuable to the Korean people and to their neighbors.

Thus, the Army Committee decided that financial assistance alone was sufficient to provide Koreans with the means to exploit its own resources and train technicians for the maintenance of self-sufficient economic growth.<sup>116</sup>

State Department officials formulated an aid proposal embodying the arguments and recommendations contained in the Army Committee's report. The United States would continue financial assistance through fiscal 1949 to ensure safe American withdrawal with minimal loss of prestige. If the new Korean government "shows more vitality than they expect it will," the Truman Administration would consider the

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116

U.S. Department of the Army, Economic Position and Prospects of Japan and Korea and the Measures Required to Improve Them, by Percy H. Johnston, Paul G. Hoffman, Robert F. Loree, and Sydney H. Scheuer, U.S. Army Committee Report, April 26, 1948.

implementation of a major recovery program during fiscal 1950. Truman approved the approach and the State Department forwarded the bill to Jacobs for comment.<sup>117</sup>

America's decision to combine economic assistance with military disengagement in Korea reflected Truman's attitude toward the relationship between foreign policy and defense. The President was essentially a fiscal conservative, who desired not only a balanced budget, but surpluses to decrease the national debt.<sup>118</sup> This emphasis on economy in government alarmed Forrestal, who insisted that the United States faced a critical period in Soviet-American relations. On May 7, 1948, Truman and his advisors discussed the defense budget. The President stressed that American foreign policy was premised upon the expectation of peace rather than war. As a result, higher defense spending was not justified.<sup>119</sup>

Truman's attitude toward defense spending reveals clearly his reliance on American economic power to counter the Soviet challenge. In a letter to Forrestal, Truman emphasized that "military strength is dependent on a strong economic and a strong industrial and productive capacity."

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Lovett to Jacobs, April 16, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1179-1180; Seedlock Memorandum, April 16, 1948, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Section IV, Cases 16-30, Box 22, NA.

118

Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, 40; Schilling, "The Politics of National Defense," in Strategy, Politics and Defense Budgets, 136-137.

119

Millis (ed.), The Forrestal Diaries, 431-432; Schilling, "The Politics of National Defense," in Strategy, Politics and Defense Budgets, 144-145.

Any unfavorable impact on the economy, Truman explained, was intolerable. Unless international conditions deteriorated and Soviet-American tension increased, the Administration intended to hold the defense budget at a ceiling of fifteen billion dollars.<sup>120</sup> For Truman, economic aid and technical advice would serve to protect American security interests in Korea and elsewhere.

## VIII

Hodge was skeptical about the feasibility of the new American plan. Early in March, he predicted that north Korea would invade south Korea to prevent the formulation of a separate regime and "to effectively eliminate any hope of escape from their power."<sup>121</sup> Many Korean leaders shared Hodge's apprehension and demanded an American guarantee of south Korea's security. The USAFIK Commander began to press the UNTCOK for an announcement of a specific date for elections. After consultations between Hodge and Menon, the UNTCOK convened to consider the matter, despite Patterson's absence. The Commission informally approved Hodge's recommendation that the UNTCOK supervise elections on May 9.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup>

Truman to Forrestal, May 13, 1948, Hoyt S. Vandenberg Papers, Box 40, Budget 1947-48, LCC.

<sup>121</sup>

Hodge to JCS, March 6, 1948, RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45), Section 15, NA.

<sup>122</sup>

Langdon to Marshall, February 20, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1121-1122; New York Times, March 3, 1948,

As a result, Hodge was able to announce the decision on March 1, the anniversary of the rebellion of 1919. Three days later, Hodge indicated that the elections would utilize the secret ballot; all individuals over 21 years of age would be eligible to vote. Since freedom of choice was absolutely essential, Hodge warned that he would not tolerate any terrorism or intimidation.<sup>123</sup>

Patterson, upon his return from Japan, was irate. He insisted that the Interim Committee had only "recommended" supervision of separate elections. More important, the UNTCOK had taken action without his consent. When the Commission refused to clarify its decision, Patterson walked out in a huff. Menon immediately reversed the UNTCOK's decision and agreed to reconsider the entire matter.<sup>124</sup> It was now Hodge's turn to be enraged, since it appeared that he had acted without the knowledge of the Commission.

Patterson was concerned that the threatened boycott of moderate and leftist Koreans would ensure a complete victory for the extreme right. Both the Australian and Canadian Ambassadors in the United States complained to the

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13:1.

123

New York Times, March 2, 1948, 13:1; Election Proclamation, March 1, 1948, DSB, XVIII, 454 (March 14, 1948), 344-345; Marshall, "Korean Elections to Conform to Views of Interim Committee," March 10, 1948, DSB, XVIII, 455 (March 21, 1948), 475; Stairs, Diplomacy of Constraint, 22.

124

New York Times, March 9, 1948, 12:7 and March 10, 1948, 5:3; Gordenker, The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea, 79.

State Department that Hodge had exceeded his authority.

The UNTCOK's instructions precluded supervision of elections unless it was clear that an atmosphere of freedom prevailed in south Korea. American diplomatic officials responded that Hodge had coordinated with the Commission in announcing the election date. The UNTCOK's reversal had now caused an unnecessary delay, while fostering the moderate and leftist boycott that the Commission was attempting to prevent.<sup>125</sup>

Marshall addressed an appeal to Trygve Lie to not permit a "disgruntled minority" to prevent Commission action. The American Secretary of State emphasized that the refusal of the UNTCOK to supervise elections in the near future would produce an incredibly dangerous situation.<sup>126</sup>

Menon reconvened the UNTCOK on March 12 to reconsider its previous action. Jackson immediately recommended revocation of the Commission's original decision in view of the probable electoral boycott. The UNTCOK should instead leave Korea on April 15 after recommending a national conference for the holding of national elections and reunification. Jackson strongly opposed any action that would bar northern participation and harden the partition. Paul-Boncour rejected the proposal and urged rapid fulfillment

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125

Butterworth Memorandum, March 9, 1948, Allison Memorandum, March 9, 1948, and Marshall to Langdon, March 3, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1136-1137 and 1143-1145.

126

Marshall to Austin, March 11, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1149.

of the initial decision to supervise separate elections. Syrian delegate Djabi then offered a compromise that would permit the Commission to supervise elections in south Korea on May 9 only if a free atmosphere existed.<sup>127</sup>

In an extremely crucial vote, the UNTCOK decided to accept the Syrian compromise, although Canada and Australia opposed the plan. As a result, the United Nations was morally obligated to support the government that emerged from separate elections. Leon Gordenker perceptively indicates the significance of the Commission's action:

Now it had abandoned the aim of unification before or through a national election; instead it was virtually committed to the program sponsored by the United States. Such cold war allies of the United States as Australia and Canada had grave doubts about the wisdom of this program in terms of the welfare of Korea.<sup>128</sup>

Truman and his advisors had reason to be pleased. Containment in Korea now possessed international sanction. The UNTCOK would observe American implementation of the program and then certify the legitimacy of the results.

American leaders in Seoul were already preparing for elections in south Korea in accordance with the SKILA election law. While staggered elections would allow the understaffed UNTCOK to observe all polling places, the AMG

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<sup>127</sup>

Langdon to Marshall, March 12, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1150.

<sup>128</sup>

Langdon to Marshall, March 12, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1154-1155; Gordenker, The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea, 83-85.

considered such an approach overly expensive and dangerously prolonged in duration. Thus, the Commission would make spot checks during simultaneous elections throughout the American zone. The AMG also appointed an electoral board early in March composed of fifteen members, twelve of whom belonged to Rhee's political party. At the same time, American officials initiated a campaign to criticize all Korean leaders threatening to boycott the elections. Refusal to participate was a disservice to Korea and benefited only the Communists. It was clear that the United States did not want a complete rightist sweep, since an unrepresentative government would not enjoy complete international support.<sup>129</sup>

Truman and his advisors were now obsessed with preventing any delay in Korean elections. Several Korean religious groups urged a one day postponement—May 9 was a Sunday—but the United States refused. Langdon blamed American missionaries for this unwarranted interference. As a result, Marshall pressed churches in the United States to instruct their representatives to support the scheduled election date.<sup>130</sup> Finally, the Administration grudgingly acquiesced in a postponement of the elections to May 10, largely because of an anticipated solar eclipse on May 9.

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<sup>129</sup>

Langdon to Marshall, March 6, 12, and 17, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1142, 1151, and 1155; New York Times, March 14, 1948, IV. 8:2.

<sup>130</sup>

Langdon to Marshall, March 9, 1948 and Marshall to Langdon, March 11, 1948, RG 59, 895.00/3-948, NA.

Koreans would view this as a bad omen. Upon receiving this news, Niles Bond of the Division of Northeast Asian Affairs discerned some Soviet conspiracy at work. In a marginal note, he expressed amazement at "the lengths to which the Commies will go!"<sup>131</sup> Such comments indicate the mood in Washington during the spring of 1948.

Hodge acted quickly to maximize Korean participation in the elections. The USAFIK instituted an incredibly high-powered program to educate Koreans on the democratic process. The AMG used radio broadcasts, classroom sessions, pamphlets, loudspeakers, train exhibitions, and handbill distributions to inform the people "better than they have ever been informed of anything in their history."<sup>132</sup> The campaign was a huge success. On April 14, the AMG could report that over ninety percent of all eligible voters or approximately eight million people had registered. Hodge quickly observed that these statistics proved the existence of a strong desire among the people for elections despite Communist threats of violence.<sup>133</sup> One AMG official was far more candid in his observation that in the absence of the American propaganda campaign force would have been

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Jacobs to Marshall, March 24, 1948, RG 59, 501BB Korea/3-2448, NA; Jacobs to Marshall, April 4, 1948, RG 59, 895.00/4-448, NA; New York Times, April 4, 1948, 11:6.

132

Jacobs to Marshall, April 8, 1948, RG 59, 895.00/4-848, NA.

133

Jacobs to Marshall, April 13, 1948, RG 59, 895.00/4-1348, NA; New York Times, April 14, 1948, 8:3.

necessary to obtain voter registration.<sup>134</sup>

## IX

Moscow hardly looked favorably at the events transpiring in south Korea. As a result, the Soviets decided to attempt to force the United States to recognize the legitimacy of the northern regime. On March 17, Korotkov informed Hodge that in view of American bad faith the Soviets would no longer mediate between the United States and the Koreans regarding electric power. The Soviet commander forwarded a letter from Kim Il-sung indicating that the north Koreans would terminate electricity on April 15 because the United States had not paid its bills. In response, Hodge explained that equipment for payment was available in Seoul and requested a conference to discuss the matter. He insisted, however, that the Soviet commander was the only legitimate authority in the north and refused to negotiate with the north Koreans.<sup>135</sup>

On March 25, a more serious crisis confronted Hodge when the northern "Democratic Coalition Front" proposed a North-South Conference to arrange for nationwide elections and the withdrawal of all foreign troops. The Conference would convene in Pyongyang on April 14 and the northerners invited

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<sup>134</sup>

James L. Stewart, Intelligence Report, April 22, 1948, RG 59, 895.00/4-2248, NA.

<sup>135</sup>

Jacobs to Marshall, March 24, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1158.

thirteen southern representatives to attend, including Kimm and Kim Koo. Kimm responded favorably and asked Hodge to provide credentials and transportation. The USAFIK Commander understandably refused to either aid or hinder participation in the Conference.<sup>136</sup>

News of the North-South Conference alarmed Lovett, who feared that a moderate-leftist boycott would cause the elections to appear to be a private affair of Syngman Rhee. He recommended a strong propaganda campaign to discredit the northern proposal. Hodge thus issued a public statement charging the north Koreans with attempting to deceive the south Koreans and seize control. Only free elections would provide a popular mandate for action to determine Korea's destiny. Hodge argued that the appointed representatives to the Conference were mainly subversives and "stooges" who represented no one but themselves.<sup>137</sup>

Jacobs judged the Conference a "clever ruse." He argued that Kimm's support for it was the product of frustration over not possessing enough political support to gain election. Any reasonable person knew that the Conference was doomed to fail and was a "fool's paradise." Jackson and

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136

Jacobs to Marshall, March 29, 1948 and Hodge to Marshall, April 5, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1162 and 1169-1170; New York Times, March 27, 1948, 1:7; Time, LI, 14 (April 5, 1948), 29.

137

Lovett to Marshall, April 5, 1948 and Langdon to Marshall, April 6, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1170 and 1172-1174; New York Times, April 7, 1948, 14:2 and April 10, 1948, 4:2.

Patterson, however, encouraged Kimm and Kim Koo to attend and promised to postpone separate elections in the event of success.<sup>138</sup> Prior to departure, Kimm requested that the north Koreans accept certain conditions. The Conference was not to advocate dictatorship, nationalization of all industries, foreign military bases, or less than free elections. When the north accepted, Kimm and Kim Koo traveled to Pyongyang<sup>139</sup> and arrived in the northern capital on April 21.

After a week of discussions, it was clear that the North-South Conference was indeed a sham. It produced a constitution and governmental structure modeled after the Soviet Union. It also issued a proclamation blaming the United States entirely for the 38th parallel and denouncing separate elections in the south. The Conference called upon all true Korean nationalists to demand American withdrawal. Although Kimm was far from satisfied with the results, he returned with a promise from Kim Il-sung that the north Koreans would support free elections and not terminate electrical power. In return, Kimm and Kim Koo agreed to<sup>140</sup> boycott the southern elections.

Communist leaders then intensified the program of

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<sup>138</sup> Jacobs to Marshall, April 9 and 22, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1177-1178 and 1180.

<sup>139</sup> New York Times, April 21, 1948, 14:3 and April 22, 1948, 2:7.

<sup>140</sup> Jacobs to Marshall, April 30, 1948 and May 3, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1185-1191; New York Times, May 1, 1948, 1:6 and May 6, 1948, 15:3.

violence and subversion. They sought to use threats of rioting and assassination to convince the UNTCOK not to supervise the elections.<sup>141</sup> At least the chaos would hold down voter turnout. The Korean police, in turn, increased its anti-leftist repression, while Hodge placed the Constabulary army on permanent alert. In addition, the SKIG organized a series of "Community Protective Associations" to maintain local law and order. These bodies soon degenerated into youth gangs armed with clubs and axes, which roamed the countryside terrorizing the people.<sup>142</sup> During the first four months of 1948, police and extremists killed over two hundred fifty people. An additional hundred were victims of indiscriminate violence in April, including eight election officials and two candidates. Violence peaked during the week before the election, when over three hundred individuals died, only thirty-two of whom were policemen.<sup>143</sup>

Police exercised influence and intimidated voters in more subtle ways. The AMG required Koreans to register for the election at the same place where food ration cards were obtained. Blackmail was hardly unusual, while beatings,

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<sup>141</sup>

Jacobs to Marshall, May 7, 1948, RG 59, 895.00/5-748, NA; Dallin, Soviet Russia and the Far East, 311.

<sup>142</sup>

Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 157; Department of State, Korea 1945 to 1948, 15.

<sup>143</sup>

Jacobs to Marshall, April 27, 1948, RG 59, 895.00/4-2748, NA; New York Times, April 28, 1948, 17:1; Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 156; Stairs, Diplomacy of Constraint, 25.

robbery, threats, and imprisonment were the order of the day. The UNTCOK members were concerned that Korean extremists were exerting improper political pressure on the people. More important, the United States seemed unable to control in any way the actions of the police and youth groups.<sup>144</sup> To argue that south Korea possessed an atmosphere conducive to freedom of choice was patently absurd.

Predictably, the extreme right dominated the list of candidates for the May elections. The subsequent legislative body would not reflect a representative cross-section of Korean political opinion. Of nine hundred thirty-eight candidates, the AMG estimated that more than three-fourths were under the control of Rhee and Kim Sung-soo.<sup>145</sup> Twelve candidates ran unopposed, including Rhee. Significantly, Rhee's supporters on the National Election Committee rejected the application for candidacy of one Daniel Choi, who sought to oppose Rhee.<sup>146</sup> Despite such blatant unfairness and tampering, the Commission members arrived at a compromise that permitted the UNTCOK to supervise the elections. On April

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<sup>144</sup> McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 228-230; Gordenker, The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea, 92-93.

<sup>145</sup> Jacobs to Marshall, April 27, 1948, RG 59, 895.00/4-2748, NA; Benjamin Weems, "Behind the Korean Elections," Far Eastern Survey, XVII, 12 (June 23, 1948), 142; C. Clyde Mitchell, "Land Reform in South Korea," Pacific Affairs, XXII, 2 (June 1949), 151; McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 227-228.

<sup>146</sup> Allen, Korea's Syngman Rhee, 94; Gordenker, The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea, 98.

28, five members voted that a "reasonable degree of free expression" existed in south Korea. Canada, Australia, and Syria refused to participate in the charade and abstained.<sup>147</sup>

Hodge's extremely cooperative attitude partially explains the UNTCOK's willingness to proceed with the elections. For example, the AMG agreed to alter the election law, eliminating a controversial "run-off" provision and allowing previous criminals and illiterates to vote. The failure of the North-South Conference to arrive at an acceptable solution to the Korean dilemma had a decided impact on the Commission as well. Regardless of the reasons, the UNTCOK had undertaken an impossible task. Before and during the elections, observation groups had far too little time to make intense investigations and "could hardly do more than show themselves and hope to attract complaints and significant information."<sup>148</sup> The United States probably would have proceeded to hold elections anyway, but the Commission's participation was a tremendous propaganda victory. Symbolically, the United Nations was now responsible for Korea's destiny.

Elections occurred on schedule and resulted in a resounding victory for Syngman Rhee. Jacobs observed that

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147

Jacobs to Marshall, April 28, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1184; Gordenker, The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea, 104-105.

148

Reeve, The Republic of Korea, 31; Gordenker, The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea, 88 and 95-96; Department of State, Korea 1945 to 1948, 15.

Koreans cast their ballots in a calm, quiet, and orderly atmosphere. He judged the procedure and organization of the elections as truly democratic, devoid of coercion or intimidation. Over ninety percent of all registered voters cast ballots and, in several areas, all balloting was completed within the first four hours that the polling places were open.<sup>149</sup>

American observers quickly noted that the results surpassed the record of long-established democracies in the realm of voter participation and was indicative of Korea's readiness for independence and self-government.<sup>150</sup>

Jacobs, in his private communications, was far more reserved in his judgments. He noted that the organization and efficiency of the elections was unprecedented and "should give rise to a certain degree of caution and reservation in our appraisal of that efficiency." The criticism was certainly just, since the United States never ceased to emphasize that such high voter turnout in the Soviet Union proved the undemocratic nature of its elections. Jacobs also offered the honest admission that the United States was partially responsible for Rhee's electoral victory. As the American Political Advisor explained, past "American actions

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Jacobs to Marshall, May 12, 1948, RG 59, 895.00/5-1248, NA; New York Times, May 11, 1948, 11:2; Gordenker, The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea, 105-106; Tae-ho Yoo, The Korean War and the United Nations: A Legal and Diplomatic Historical Study (Louvain: Librairie Desbarax, 1965), 19.

150

New York Times, May 11, 1948, 11:2 and May 22, 1948, 14:2; Caldwell, The Korea Story, 37.

have done much to bring the dominance of the Rhee-rightist political group . . . and to discourage not only Communist but also non-Rhee, non-Communist groups from participation<sup>151</sup> in the elections."

Korean elections in May, 1948, were hardly a reflection of the popular will.<sup>152</sup> In reality, most Koreans cast ballots for independence, rather than any particular candidate. After being ignored for so long, the masses now enthusiastically engaged in contact and communication with their leaders and enjoyed a "sense of participation."<sup>153</sup> In addition, the police and youth groups either convinced the average Korean to vote or coerced him into participation. On the day of the election alone, political violence led to<sup>154</sup> forty-four killings.

Still, the United States had made the elections a test of the viability of democracy in Asia and the ability of the United Nations to resolve international problems. The outcome pleased Marshall. He congratulated the Koreans on their

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151

Jacobs to Marshall, May 13, 1948, FRUS, 1948, 1195-1197; Jacobs to Marshall, May 12, 1948, RG 59, 895.00/5-1248, NA.

152

McCune and Grey, Korea Today, 229; Almost incredibly, Cho insists that the Korean elections were an indication of political maturity, Korea in World Politics, 208.

153

Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 217-218; Kim, Divided Korea, 81.

154

Jacobs to Marshall, May 10, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1192; Kim Yong-jeung, "The Cold War: The Korean Elections," Far Eastern Survey, XVII, 9 (May 5, 1948), 101-102; New York Times, May 10, 1948, 1:1.

election and observed that the "fact that some 90 percent of the registered voters cast their ballots, despite the lawless efforts of a Communist-dominated minority to prevent or sabotage the election, is a clear revelation that the Korean people are determined to form their own government by democratic means."<sup>155</sup> More important, elections permitted Washington to proceed with its schedule for withdrawal. On May 22, the JCS ordered MacArthur to implement the preparatory phase of the operation—code-named "Crabapple." Almost immediately, American dependents began to leave Korea, while Hodge transferred surplus equipment to the Constabulary.<sup>156</sup>

Some American observers were not so sanguine about the future of Korean affairs and the nature of the American victory. Soviet sponsorship of a separate northern regime meant that a bloody civil war, rather than peaceful reunification, was in the offing. It was also apparent that police terrorism and a leftist boycott constituted "a perverted application of democratic principles of free elections." American reliance on the United Nations could not disguise the reality of the situation. South Korea enjoyed approximately the same freedoms as their northern neighbors, but without the benefits of economic stability and at least the

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<sup>155</sup>

Marshall Statement, March 12, 1948, DSB, XVIII, 465 (May 30, 1948), 700; New York Times, May 3, 1948, 20:3; See also, State Department, Korea 1945 to 1948, 15.

<sup>156</sup>

Gilchrist Memorandum, May 19, 1948 and Lawson Memorandum, May 25, 1948, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Section I, Case 1, Part III-A, NA; New York Times, May 21, 1948, 7:3.

appearance of reform.

In the wake of the Korean elections, Truman believed that international diplomatic support and an American program of economic assistance for a separate south Korean government would provide the answer to a dilemma that had confronted the United States since 1945. At the same time, Moscow's refusal to cooperate with the United Nations and permit nationwide elections had damaged the prestige of the Soviet Union in the international community. The United States, on the other hand, had demonstrated its devotion to the principles of democracy and national self-determination. If the resultant south Korean regime developed political strength and economic prosperity, the United States would reap even greater benefits. More important, once the north Koreans realized the superiority of the Western model of political and economic development, they would overthrow the Communists and seek amalgamation. Truman believed he had resolved the dilemma of withdrawal. Containment was then a liberating force that would not only halt Soviet expansion in Korea, but achieve peaceful reunification as well.

Chapter VII:

Test Case of Containment

America's Korea policy after May, 1948, concentrated on fostering the emergence of a strong and progressive democratic state in south Korea. With the benefit of hindsight, some scholars have strongly criticized the Truman Administration for creating an anti-Communist government in Korea and then refusing to supply it with sufficient moral and material support to ensure its survival.<sup>1</sup> Such an appraisal ignores the actual nature and intent of American actions in that country. Truman and his advisors were still uncertain regarding the magnitude of the Soviet threat to international peace and stability. In addition, they wanted to limit the extent of the American commitment to use its power and prestige to counter the challenge. Through the use of economic aid and technical advice alone, Truman hoped the United States could confront and eliminate the threat of Communist expansion in Asia.<sup>2</sup>

Events in China largely determined the Administration's approach to American policy in Korea. Truman's strategy

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<sup>1</sup>  
Cho, Korea in World Politics, 244; Ferrell, George C. Marshall, 248-249; See also, Kim, Divided Korea.

<sup>2</sup>  
Norman A. Graebner, "Global Containment: The Truman Years," Current History, LVII, 336 (August 1969), 77-83; Athan Theoharis, "The Rhetoric of Politics," in Politics and Policies of the Truman Administration, 210-211.

depended upon the successful application of national self-determination and the emergence of substantial popular support for a government favorable to the policies of the United States. Chiang Kai-shek failed to maintain the support of the masses because of his unwillingness to respond to popular demands for reform. In Korea, on the other hand, Truman believed that the United States had a second chance in Asia to build a popular and democratic government worthy of emulation. Increasingly, the Administration came to view Korea as not only a bulwark of democracy but also the test case of containment in Asia.

South Korea's experiment in democracy experienced an inauspicious beginning. On May 14, the north Koreans shut off electrical power and Hodge immediately protested the action. After the Soviets refused to mediate, the USAFIK Commander insisted that Moscow could not divest itself of responsibility in its zone of occupation. He expressed willingness to fulfill American obligations for repayment, but only after the Soviets restored power.<sup>3</sup> The United States obviously expected the northern action. Two power barges<sup>4</sup> were on hand to meet the emergency.

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<sup>3</sup> Jacobs to Marshall, May 22, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1203-1204; "U.S. Urges Soviet Command to Resume Electric Power," June 16, 1948, DSB, XIX, 471 (July 11, 1948), 50-51; New York Times, May 14, 1948, 1:8 and June 16, 1948, 17:3.

<sup>4</sup> Wedemeyer Memorandum, May 4, 1948, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea, Section IV, Cases 50-65, Box 87, NA; Saltzman to Draper, April 24, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1181.

Bunce observed that the north Korean action was a clear political maneuver designed to embarrass the new southern government and force the United States to recognize the north Korean regime. In addition, the adverse effect on the south Korean economy would discredit the United States and facilitate a Communist seizure of power.<sup>5</sup> Clearly, the power termination benefited Syngman Rhee far more than the north Koreans or the Soviet Union. The average Korean in the south would now find it difficult to trust either Moscow or the northern regime. Perhaps more important, Kimm and Kim Koo had relied on Kim Il-sung's promise to maintain electrical power and the decision to terminate it destroyed the careers of Rhee's two main adversaries.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the power difficulty, the Korean leaders moved rapidly to form a separate government in the south. Several newly-elected representatives were members of the SKIG, which issued a statement just prior to the election denouncing Soviet obstructionism and domination in the north. Jacobs expressed agreement with the statement's accuracy, but questioned the logic of insulting Korea's "powerful and unforgiving neighbor." He went on to offer an extremely revealing observation:

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<sup>5</sup>  
Bunce to Marshall, May 15, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1198-1199; State Department, Korea 1945 to 1948, 35-36.

<sup>6</sup>  
New York Times, May 17, 1948, 18:2; Time, LI, 20 (May 17, 1948); Paige, "Korea," in Communism and Revolution, 225.

It is, however, characteristic of the historical protegee psychology of the Korean official, who is insecure in his office and condition and must cling to the skirts of the strong power which he determines will dominate the situation. . . . This psychology in the past and today unfortunately finds expression in egging on the protector against the rival so he will destroy the latter. It would be obtuse to deny that this Korean psychology has not entered into and obstructed a settlement of the Korean question or influenced local Soviet and American objectivity.

On May 29, 1948, the new legislature met secretly and overwhelmingly elected Rhee as chairman of the body. It was clear to all observers that the new Korean government would be decidedly anti-Soviet.<sup>7</sup>

Korea's new legislative assembly formally convened in its opening session on May 31, 1948. Hodge delivered an address appealing to the north Koreans to hold democratic elections and join the south. He suggested that the legislature leave one hundred seats vacant for the northern representatives and establish a liason with the UNTCOK to foster reunification. Finally, Hodge urged the legislature to be patient and devote sufficient time to the formulation of an effective constitution and governmental structure.<sup>8</sup>

It was difficult to voice optimism regarding the future of independence and democracy in the Republic of Korea (ROK). The extreme conservatives in control of the new legislature

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<sup>7</sup>  
Jacobs to Marshall, May 19, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1201-1202; New York Times, May 29, 1948, 4:4.

<sup>8</sup>  
Hodge, Address to the Korean Assembly, Released May 27, 1948, DSB, XVIII, 468 (June 20, 1948), 800.

had to be willing to seek a reconciliation with the moderates and institute genuine reforms. Still, Koreans now possessed their own leaders and some observers considered self-government an accomplishment in itself.<sup>9</sup> During private discussions, Rhee assured Jacobs that he would strive for a reconciliation with the left and seek reunification. He emphasized, however, that the ROK's success would depend upon the continuation of American assistance and support.<sup>10</sup>

Rhee acted quickly on Hodge's recommendations and appointed a five man liason for cooperation and coordination with the UNTCOK and the AMG. The Commission returned to Seoul on June 7 and voted three days later to make itself available for consultation.<sup>11</sup> Yet, the UNTCOK remained badly divided and unable to adopt a firm position on the most controversial issues. The necessity for constant compromise meant that the UNTCOK had little alternative other than to perform an essentially passive and negative role. A more active approach would only reveal the Commission's deep division.<sup>12</sup> Virtually all the UNTCOK members agreed, however, that the new Korean government was not national in character.

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<sup>9</sup> Weems, "Behind the Korean Elections," 146; New York Times, June 2, 1948, 28:2.

<sup>10</sup> Jacobs to Marshall, May 30, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1210.

<sup>11</sup> Jacobs to Marshall, June 9, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1217-1218; DSB, XVIII, 468 (June 20, 1948).

<sup>12</sup> Gordenker, The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea, 128-129.

Despite the legislature's protests, the UNTCOK would recognize the ROK's authority as legitimate only in south Korea.<sup>13</sup>

Hodge charged the Commission with vacillation and appeasement for its refusal to support the ROK without qualification. He predicted that the caution and timidity of a minority of Commission members was undermining the future of the ROK and increasing the likelihood of a delay in American withdrawal. If Washington did not exercise diplomatic pressure to alter the situation, Hodge warned that the United States would face a further deterioration of conditions. As a result, Marshall again expressed concern to the home governments of the Commission and urged recognition of the ROK as national in character. He denied any attempt to dictate policy to the UNTCOK, but stressed that failure to support the ROK would confirm the permanence of<sup>14</sup> partition and destroy past progress toward independence.

Marshall's diplomatic pressure again experienced a degree of success. Although the Commission refused to recognize the ROK as a national government, it decided to attend the next session of the legislature and announce support for the new Korean regime. In addition, the UNTCOK voted on June 25 that the elections were "a valid expression of the free

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Jacobs and Hodge to Marshall, June 11, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1218.

14

Hodge to Marshall, June 20, 1948 and Marshall to Indian Embassy, June 22, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1219 and 1223-1224.

will of the electorate in those parts of Korea which were accessible to the Commission . . . which . . . constituted approximately two-thirds of the people of Korea." <sup>15</sup> Canada, Australia, and Syria strongly opposed this judgment and Jackson even walked out of the meeting in protest. Despite such division, Salvadorian delegate Miguel Valle addressed the Korean legislature on June 30. He announced that the Commission considered the new Korean government legitimate and was ready for consultations. Rhee expressed appreciation for the UNTCOK's support. He also hoped that it would soon supervise elections in the north and that these representatives would then occupy their seats in the "National <sup>16</sup> Assembly."

Factionalism quickly emerged as the dominant characteristic of the Korean legislature. Although the vast majority of representatives were sympathetic toward Syngman Rhee, Kim Sung-soo controlled the votes of seventy-five delegates. As a result, if Kim Sung-soo disagreed with Rhee, the smaller factions would control events and force reliance on instable <sup>17</sup> and short-lived coalitions. Jacobs also observed that the

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<sup>15</sup> Hodge to Marshall, June 28, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1229; New York Times, June 27, 1948, 12:5.

<sup>16</sup> Jacobs to Marshall, June 30, 1948, and July 7, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1231 and 1234; New York Times, June 30, 1948, 13:4 and July 1, 1948, 22:3; Carl Berger lamely argues that "as the first genuine popular election in all of Korea's history, it is difficult to criticize the conclusions of the Commission," The Korean Knot, 81.

<sup>17</sup>

Jacobs to Marshall, May 22, 1948, RG 59, 895.00/

various party platforms revealed a considerable "lack of realism and of the 'eyes shut' idealism which characterizes Korean political and economic thinking and of Korean . . . fondness for the high-sounding written symbols of abstract virtue." Rhee's program, for example, appeared radical. He favored industrial nationalization, land redistribution, a planned economy, and heavy taxation of wealth. In view of Rhee's past history, it was difficult for most observers to accept his proposals at face value.<sup>18</sup>

Initial debate in the Korean Assembly centered on the nature of the governmental structure and constitution. Kim Sung-soo and his supporters favored a parliamentary system modeled after the governments of Western Europe. Since his party represented the interests of business and landowners, Kim Sung-soo envisioned a major influence in the Korean government through the control of powerful positions in the cabinet and the bureaucracy. Rhee, on the other hand, favored a strong executive and a governmental structure resembling that of the United States. Thus, from the outset, the lines of opposition between Rhee and Kim Sung-soo were clear and cooperation would be difficult.<sup>19</sup>

On July 12, the National Assembly completed work on the

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5-2248, NA.  
18

Jacobs to Marshall, July 8, 1948, RG 59, 895.00/  
7-848, NA; Time, LI, 21 (May 24, 1948), 36.  
19

Jacobs to Marshall, July 12, 1948, RG 59, 895.00/  
7-1248, NA; Kim, Divided Korea, 118.

constitution. On the surface, the Republic of Korea was a traditional democracy, based upon the popular election of representatives to a unicameral legislature for a two-year term. The Assembly in turn elected a President to serve for a four year period. The President appointed the Premier and a cabinet subject to the legislature's approval. The chief executive also selected judges to a Supreme Court, but the body did not possess the power of judicial review. Thus, the Korean system appeared to combine elements of both the American and European models of democracy.<sup>20</sup>

Several peculiarities existed in the scheme which posed a potential threat to democratic operation. For example, the legislature could not alter the provisions of the President's budget proposals; it could only approve or reject. More important, the constitution reflected the traditional Japanese tendency toward a powerful executive and a centralized bureaucracy. The President possessed extensive powers for the formulation and implementation of policies in the absence of coordination with the legislature. After declaring a state of national emergency, the chief executive could rule by decree, appropriating money and passing laws without the Assembly's approval. Thus, a single man or party could exploit the constitution and obtain complete control of

the Korean government. At the same time, the President could not dismiss the legislature if it disagreed with his policies. In the event that the executive and the legislature found cooperation impossible, prolonged deadlock and executive rule was a virtual certainty.<sup>21</sup>

## II

Korea's progress toward democracy and independence was a matter of extreme satisfaction for Truman. He emphasized that the United States was fulfilling its obligations in good faith, while Moscow was striving to impose its will on the Korean people. Soviet tactics, Truman explained, justified unilateral action. Stalin could terminate the Soviet boycott of the UNTCOK's activities at any time and thereby indicate his willingness to fulfill his commitments. Truman declared that Korea represented a test of Soviet intentions:

On its own initiative, the Soviet Union . . . can permit the people of North Korea to work with their compatriots in the south in creating an independent and democratic nation.

If the Soviet Union genuinely desires to make a contribution to peace and recovery in the world, it can prove it in Korea.<sup>22</sup>

Truman's expectation of a change in Soviet policy toward Korea was naive, since the creation of the ROK only reduced

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<sup>21</sup>

Jacobs to Marshall, July 27, 1948, RG 59, 895.01/7-2748, NA; Dull, "South Korean Constitution," 206-207.

<sup>22</sup>

Truman, Commencement Address at the University of California, June 12, 1948, Public Papers, Harry S. Truman, 1948, 339.

the likelihood that Moscow would permit reunification.

Truman and his advisors now began to consider a change of personnel in Korea. On April 27, Marshall recommended that the President appoint John J. Muccio of Rhode Island as Ambassador. A career Foreign Service Officer, Muccio obtained his experience in Latin America, Asia, and finally Berlin. Muccio later speculated that Truman chose him because of his experience in a divided Germany dealing with a military occupation. The argument seems cogent, since his principal task in Korea was to supervise the transfer of authority from the AMG to the new Korean government.<sup>23</sup>

American military leaders also decided to replace Hodge at the earliest practicable date. Upon his arrival in Korea in April, Draper realized that Rhee's electoral victory was inevitable. It was essential to have a USAFIK Commander able to cooperate with Rhee. Hodge's continued presence would produce tension and be awkward for the new government. The JCS chose Major General John B. Coulter, Hodge's executive officer, as the new USAFIK Commander, because Coulter had remained uninvolved in local politics. Yet, the JCS did not want the appearance of placating Rhee. Washington thus instructed MacArthur to delay the announcement until Hodge was ready to leave south Korea.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>  
Marshall to Truman, April 27, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1183-1184; John J. Muccio, Oral History Interview Transcript, February 10, 1971, HSTL, 5-6.

<sup>24</sup>  
Butterworth to Lovett, May 11, 1948, FRUS, 1948,

Washington also continued to implement "Crabapple" during the early summer of 1948. Royall ordered the shipment of a one-year supply of training ammunition for small arms to Korea and a six-month supply of ammunition, equipment, and replacement parts following American withdrawal. He then informed Marshall of these decisions and of Hodge's readiness to transfer the direct administration of American responsibilities to the State Department on September 2, 1948. Royall urged Marshall to organize a diplomatic mission capable of beginning effective operation at the earliest possible date.<sup>25</sup>

Army Department officials were clearly determined to withdraw from Korea on schedule, regardless of conditions in the peninsula at the time of departure. Lovett refused to submit to such pressure. While tentatively approving the Army schedule for withdrawal, he stressed that NSC-8 called for flexibility and coordination of American policy with the United Nations. The Army could begin to implement withdrawal but Lovett emphasized that it had to be prepared to suspend, adjust, or delay the operation on a moment's notice.<sup>26</sup>

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Vol. VIII, 1192-1194; Gilchrist Memorandum, May 13, 1948, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Section III, Cases 16-30, Box 22, NA.

<sup>25</sup>

Lawson Memorandum, June 9, 1948, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea, Section V, Case 66, Box 88, NA; Royall to Marshall, June 23, 1948, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Section III, Cases 3-15, Box 21, NA; Saltzman to Lovett, July 30, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1265.

<sup>26</sup>

Lovett to Royall, July 8, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1234-1235.

Reports from Seoul seemed to justify State Department caution, since Hodge complained that the Korean populace was not evidencing sufficient loyalty to the new legislature. He observed that the Korean leaders were not concerned with the general welfare of the nation, but with "personal and individual power, by fair means or foul." More important, in the event of an insurrection, the USAFIK would be too <sup>27</sup> understrength to prevent a Communist seizure of power.

Political competition in the legislature and the absence of complete UNTCOK support for the ROK convinced Jacobs that the United States should delay withdrawal. The legislature would not complete the formation of a government until July 30, but Army plans depended upon the completion of the ROK thirty days earlier. Jacobs urged Marshall to

bring this fact strongly to attention Dept /sic/ of Army so that its operational plans based on that date will be delayed accordingly /until September 15<sup>7</sup> and thus prevent this phase of our planning and operations from getting our /sic/ of line with political phases. By all means no action to implement William Day should be taken as resulting publicity will complicate if not jeopardize our hope that UNTCOK will give formal approval to new government.

Marshall complied with Jacobs' recommendations. He also began to exercise pressure on the Commission member's home governments to extend some form of recognition to the ROK. The Secretary of State emphasized that if the United Nations refused to support the ROK as a national government, Moscow

would create a separate regime in the north and thus render<sup>28</sup>  
the Korean partition permanent.

In Moscow, Smith realistically observed that the United Nations could not prevent the creation of a puppet regime in north Korea. Stalin would simply ignore the UNTCOK if it recognized the new south Korean government.<sup>29</sup> On July 11, Kim Il-sung announced that the People's Committee would sponsor elections throughout Korea on August 25. At the same time he indicated that work on the constitution was near completion. This document provided for a national government with its capital in Seoul. The north Koreans also exhibited a new national flag, complete with the "hammer and sickle." Kim Il-sung denounced the United States for creating a police state in the south and demanded immediate American withdrawal.<sup>30</sup> United Nations recognition of the ROK now assumed added importance.

North Korea's claim to legitimate rule throughout Korea alarmed Jacobs. He feared that Australia, Canada, and India would now recommend the abolition of the UNTCOK after the inauguration of the ROK.<sup>31</sup> His apprehension was certainly

<sup>28</sup>

Jacobs to Marshall, July 9, 1948, RG 59, 501BB Korea/7-948, NA; Marshall to Certain Embassies, July 10, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1235-1237.

<sup>29</sup>

Smith to Marshall, July 14, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1240.

<sup>30</sup>

Jacobs to Marshall, July 11, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1238-1239; New York Times, July 12, 1948, 10:3.

<sup>31</sup>

Jacobs to Marshall, July 16, 1948, FRUS, 1948,

warranted. During July, all three nations informed the United States that they would oppose recognition of the ROK prior to final United Nations action on the Commission's report. Aside from the questionable nature of the May elections, these governments pointed out that recognition of southern control over the north would be unrealistic. Unilateral and precipitate action would also alienate other United Nations members and detract from a sympathetic attitude toward the southern regime.<sup>32</sup> North Korean actions may have urged caution upon these nations, but the formation of a Communist regime in the north reinforced Chinese, Philippine, and Salvadorian support for American policy. Even France joined the advocates of recognition, arguing that it would be wise to view the ROK as national in character.<sup>33</sup>

Ambassador Jessup realized that it would be extremely difficult to obtain United Nations recognition of the ROK as a national government. He preferred instead to concentrate on gaining the cooperation of the UNTCOK in supervising the transfer of governmental power from the AMG to the new Korean government. American pressure for recognition would only alienate the United Nations and endanger policy objectives

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Vol. VIII, 1243-1245.

32

King to Marshall, July 13, 1948, Nielson to Marshall, July 14, 1948, Meminger to Marshall, July 14, 1948, Donovan to Marshall, July 19, 1948, and Douglas to Marshall, July 19, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1239-1242 and 1247-49.

33

Stuart to Marshall, July 15, 1948 and Lockett to Marshall, July 16, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1234 and 1245.

of the United States in other more important areas. State Department officials remained convinced, however, that the United States should press the United Nations to recognize the national character of the ROK. Washington decided to refer Jessup's recommendations to Jacobs for comment.<sup>34</sup>

Jacobs strongly disagreed with Jessup and urged action at the other extreme. He favored immediate American recognition of South Korea regardless of United Nations action. Any sign of American weakness or vacillation, Jacobs insisted, would undermine the sizable popular support that the Rhee government then enjoyed. Although Canada and Australia would object, Jacobs was confident that the Interim Committee would support the American action and even follow suit. Marshall decided to adopt a middle course. The United States would delay recognition, but would increase pressure on the UNTCOK to view the ROK as the national government of Korea. Marshall also approved Jacobs' recommendation that a representative of the new Korean government travel to the United Nations and attend sessions.<sup>35</sup>

Truman and his advisors were then sensitive to any action that might detract from United Nations support for the ROK. Truman thus appointed Muccio as "special

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<sup>34</sup> Jessup to Marshall, July 20, 1948 and Butterworth to Lovett, July 20, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1248-1249.

<sup>35</sup> Jacobs to Marshall, July 24, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1255-1257; Butterworth Memorandum, August 2, 1948, RG 59, 501BB/8-248, NA.

representative of the President," rather than ambassador. Muccio possessed full authority to negotiate agreements, but Washington withheld more extensive powers until the United Nations acted. Simultaneously, the American delegation at the United Nations formulated a letter from Hodge to the UNTCOK informing the Commission of the successful creation of a Korean government. Hodge would represent the United States at the inauguration of the new Korean government on August 15, the anniversary of Japan's surrender. The USAFIK Commander's departure and Muccio's arrival would then symbolize the restoration of Korean sovereignty.<sup>36</sup>

### III

While Washington attempted to increase international support for South Korea, Rhee's actions continued to embarrass the United States. Jacobs observed that the old patriot was assuming "more and more messiah pose and speaks in first person of what he will do." Rhee was sure to be the first President of South Korea and Americans in Seoul feared that he would exploit the constitution and the governmental structure to create a dictatorship. In addition, Rhee's "loose bombastic utterances" against the Soviet Union and Communism would have a disastrous effect on American policy in the

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Marshall to Jacobs, July 27, 1948, Lovett to Truman, July 28, 1948, and Jessup to Marshall, July 26, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1262-1264.

United Nations. Still, American leaders realized that the United States would eventually have to arrive at a suitable basis for cooperation with Rhee.<sup>37</sup>

Americans accurately predicted the Assembly's choice of a President. The legislature promulgated the constitution on July 17 and three days later it satisfied Rhee's life-long ambition and elected him President of the Republic of Korea. Rhee assumed office with an incredible degree of power. No one rivaled his prestige and political support.<sup>38</sup> Rhee also owed nothing to the United States, since Hodge had attempted to limit Rhee's rise to power.

Unfortunately, Rhee attempted to exploit his position and the bureaucracy for personal gain. He appointed only his close political supporters and trusted functionaries to government posts.<sup>39</sup> More important, Rhee completely ignored Kim Sung-soo and his supporters, as well as those individuals who served under the AMG. Kim Sung-soo felt betrayed and immediately organized a strong, stable, and cohesive party to oppose Rhee's strategy for domination. Its first act of defiance was to reject Rhee's choice for Premier, arguing that Kim Sung-soo deserved the appointment. Thus, personal

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Jacobs to Marshall, July 18, 1948, RG 59, 5013B/7-1848, NA; Seedlock Memorandum, July 27, 1948, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea, Section V, Case 65, Box 88, NA.

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New York Times, July 20, 1948, 12:2.

39

Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 160-161; Kim insists that Rhee's appointments produced skillful administrators who possessed broad support, Divided Korea, 119.

and political factionalism emerged at the outset to  
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 complicate South Korea's future.

On August 4, the legislature approved Rhee's cabinet selections, including the compromise candidate Lee Bum-suk as Premier. Two days later, Rhee informed Hodge that the newly-formed government was prepared to assume complete administrative control over southern Korea. He also appointed a liason to the UNTCOK for consultation and coordination regarding the transfer of authority. The ROK President expressed his wish for the continuation of  
 41  
 "felicitous" relations with the United Nations.

Rhee now began to press the United States to delay withdrawal. He insisted that the United States could not leave until the ROK possessed the military capability for  
 42  
 self-defense. Hodge and Jacobs agreed. They insisted that the announcement of departure would have a devastating effect on Korean morale and would sacrifice all previous gains in the southern zone. Washington could expect the Communists to renew agitation and subversion following American withdrawal in an attempt to seize control forcibly. Hodge stressed that "we should stand firm everywhere on

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 Muccio, Oral History Interview Transcript, HSTL, 7; Reeve, The Republic of Korea; Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 291; New York Times, July 27, 1948, 14:3.

41  
 Jacobs to Marshall, August 6 and 10, 1948, FRUS, Vol. VIII, 1948, 1266-1267 and 1270; New York Times, August 10, 1948, 12:1.

42  
New York Times, August 6, 1948, 4:2.

Soviet perimeter, including Korea, until we know more clearly what actions will be taken in General Assembly and what will be outcome of our present negotiations with respect to Berlin . . . ."<sup>43</sup>

Such advice convinced the State Department that premature withdrawal was unwise. In response, the Army Department complained that indecision and confusion in the State Department indicated its refusal to accept responsibility for American policy in Korea. Military leaders demanded that the State Department comply with NSC-8 and cease hampering American withdrawal.<sup>44</sup> The Army Department also complained that the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) refused to exhibit any interest in Korea whatsoever. It strongly urged Truman to appoint an experienced and capable administrator for the Korean aid program possessing long-range instructions. If the Administration permitted military government in Korea to continue, such a course would embarrass the new Korean government and substantiate Soviet charges of American imperialism.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Jacobs to Marshall, August 12, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1272; Hodge to JCS, August 12, 1948, RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea, Section 16, NA.

<sup>44</sup> Schuyler to Wedemeyer, July 28, 1948, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Section IV, Cases 16-30, NA.

<sup>45</sup> Memorandum for the Secretary of the Army, July 16, 1948, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Section IV, Cases 16-30, NA; Saltzman later argued that the Army was not anxious to transfer authority in Korea to the State Department. He was obviously in error, Saltzman, Oral History Interview Transcript, June 28, 1974, HSTL, 9.

Significantly, the Army Department was far more confident than the State Department over the probable success of containment in Korea. During Muccio's orientation, military leaders stressed that Stalin would not instigate an open invasion of South Korea, but would pursue instead a strategy of subversion and indirect aggression. Since American actions in Korea had placed Moscow on the defensive, the Army Department believed that there was reason for considerable optimism:

Syngman Rhee was, as a result of the Army's substantial effort in training and equipping the South Korean Forces, in a strong bargaining position to talk with the North Koreans on unification. Mr. Muccio was appraised of the latest intelligence estimate, which placed the North Korean forces at approximately 50,000 . . . and that this meant that parity had now been achieved between the two forces in general terms as a result of the undoubted superiority of the U.S. arms in the possession of the South Koreans, when compared to the ones in the possession of the North Koreans.

American military officials thus encouraged Muccio to assume complete control over the responsibilities of the United States in Korea, since occupation was no longer essential. <sup>46</sup>

Muccio's response confirmed Army suspicions that the State Department was dragging its heels. Muccio explained that the diplomatic branch was being dilatory "owing to a feeling that the Congress did not want State to handle programs of this nature." He agreed, however, to support a

wider role for the State Department in supervising Korean economic recovery. Draper rejected the validity of this argument and charged the State Department with attempting to shun its responsibilities. If State's attitude of indifference continued, the Army threatened to remove all military equipment from Korea intended for the Constabulary army. The Army argued logically that if the State Department did not consider Korea sufficiently important to generate any interest in its political and economic stability it would be foolish to place a substantial military investment in jeopardy.<sup>47</sup>

Truman was apparently aware of the dispute. On August 16, he ordered the departments involved to decide which agency was best able to manage Korean rehabilitation.<sup>48</sup> During subsequent discussions, the Army insisted upon the rapid elimination of its responsibilities in Korea. Lovett, on the other hand, insisted that the State Department did not possess enough trained personnel to supervise the program. He also reiterated that Congress wanted to exclude the diplomatic branch from involvement in economic assistance programs. Paul G. Hoffman, ECA Director, expressed sympathy for Lovett's position, but strongly supported the Army's contention that the military should not administer an

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Schuyler Memorandum, August 9, 1948, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Section V, Case 31, Box 22, NA.

<sup>48</sup>

Truman to Lawton, August 16, 1948, Truman Papers, OF 471, HSTL.

49  
aid program.

Hoffman soon realized that the ECA was the logical candidate to supervise the Korean assistance program. He emphasized that a small-scale operation would be a waste of time and money. Yet, he doubted whether Congress would "continue to pour money into Korea, which was a rather questionable investment." Nevertheless, he agreed to accept responsibility for Korean aid, provided that the Budget Bureau approved the decision. Thus, Hoffman broke the deadlock between the Army and State Departments. On August 25, Truman issued orders that the Army was to transfer its responsibilities to the ECA as of January 1, 1949. Hoffman thus began to gather personnel and organize an aid mission for Korea. He also ordered the formulation of a definitive aid program for inclusion in the 1950 budget.<sup>50</sup>

#### IV

On August 12, 1948, the United States announced formally the appointment of Muccio as presidential representative to Korea. The statement emphasized that the Truman Administration considered the Rhee government as the political

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C.V.R.S. to Schuyler, August 20, 1948, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Section V, Case 31, Box 22, NA.

50  
Lawton to Truman, Undated, Truman Papers, OF 471, HSTL; Truman to Marshall, August 25, 1948, Truman Papers, White House Central Files, Confidential, Box 35, State Department Correspondence, 1948-1949, Folder 13, HSTL.

authority envisioned in the November 14 resolution. Few observers failed to discern that the United States had extended defacto recognition to the ROK and was attempting to seize the initiative from the Soviet Union on the Korean issue in the United Nations.<sup>51</sup> Several commentators expressed extreme optimism over the progress of American policy in Korea. U.S. News even argued that Rhee's prestige and able leadership would now allow the United States "to pull out of Korea as the victor on this battle-front of the 'cold war.'" The editorial speculated that "in due course" the north Koreans would obtain control over their own affairs and join the south Koreans to form a united nation.<sup>52</sup>

American military government officially ended on August 15 with the inauguration of the Republic of Korea. Truman was delighted and credited Hodge with the "out-standing success" of bringing freedom to the downtrodden Korean people. "By your skill, initiative, and diplomacy," Truman explained, "you have overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles and you have earned the gratitude of the people, both of the United States and of Korea."<sup>53</sup> At

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<sup>51</sup> "Policy Toward New Korean Government," August 12, 1948, DSB, XIX, 477 (August 22, 1948), 242; New York Times, August 13, 1948, 1:2.

<sup>52</sup> U.S. News, XXV, 6 (August 6, 1948), 20; Time, LII, 8 (August 23, 1948), 24.

<sup>53</sup> Truman to Hodge, June 23, 1948, Truman Papers, PPF 3920, HSTL.

least on the surface, national self-determination had triumphed and Koreans could now determine their own destiny. MacArthur attended the inauguration and delivered a speech emphasizing that the 38th parallel "must and will be torn down. Nothing shall prevent the ultimate unity of your people as free men of a free nation." American foreign policy had seemingly produced a broadly-based government that enjoyed international support. Korea would illustrate the benefits of peace and democracy not only to the Communists in the north, but to the rest of Asia as well.<sup>54</sup>

Rhee's government commenced operations, however, under the worst possible circumstances. Despite Truman's optimistic comments, the AMG had been largely a failure and few Koreans appeared completely satisfied with the American performance. Although health, education, and the food supply had improved, Hodge's administration had not built political and social unity, but fostered instead a splintered nation under rightist control. Police tactics and youth gangsterism dominated everyday affairs and prevented the emergence of real democracy. America's Korea policy lacked competent officials and long-term plans.<sup>55</sup>

Perhaps more important, the United States had been

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<sup>54</sup>  
New York Times, August 15, 1948, 1:2 and August 15, 1948, IV, 8:2.

<sup>55</sup>  
 Channing Liem, "United States Rule in Korea," Far Eastern Survey, XVIII, 7 (April 6, 1949), 77-80; New York Times, August 24, 1948, 6:1.

unable to remove the 38th parallel and actually solidified the partition. In an effort to counter the northern military threat, the United States organized the Provisional Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG) on August 15 to train the Constabulary army. Composed of two hundred forty men, the Provisional KMAG attempted to create and equip a military force of sufficient strength to deter an invasion from the north.<sup>56</sup> The ROK also confronted the more serious and immediate problems of power deficiencies, overpopulation, and a limited industrial capacity.<sup>57</sup> Korea's future, much like its past, presented a bleak picture.

Truman's strategy at the United Nations also experienced difficulties. The UNTCOK submitted its report on July 25, which indicated that a "reasonably free atmosphere" existed in Korea during the May elections. Yet, the Commission recommended that the United Nations not extend its presence or expand its role in Korea. While it approved the American creation of a Constabulary army, the UNTCOK strongly urged termination of the United Nations involvement after the United States withdrew. Jacobs quickly cabled Washington that only the UNTCOK's presence would deter and restrain the Soviet "stooges" to the north and inside South Korea.<sup>58</sup>

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Sawyer and Hermes, Military Advisors in Korea, 35.

<sup>57</sup>

U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Review of the Republic of Korea, International Reference Service, VI, 42 (June 1949), 1-5.

<sup>58</sup>

Jacobs to Marshall, August 18, 1948, FRUS, 1948,

Marshall thus instructed Austin to urge the United Nations to authorize the extension of the Commission's tenure in Korea. The United States believed that the UNTCOK would contribute to the ROK's prestige, stabilize relations with the north, and facilitate political stability and social improvement throughout the peninsula.<sup>59</sup>

Rhee's first crisis revolved around the nature of the agreement with the United States for the transfer of governmental authority. The Premier and Foreign Minister both threatened to resign if the USAFIK remained in control of the police and the Constabulary until the completion of withdrawal.<sup>60</sup> Rhee blamed Hodge for including this provision in the transfer agreement intentionally just to "devil him." Hodge observed that "Rhee and his Austrian wife, . . . , retain all of the bitter hate fixation for me personally that they have ever had." Hodge strongly urged that Muccio arrive no later than August 23, even if a transfer agreement remained unsigned. Once in Seoul, Muccio could then inform Rhee that the United States would not extend economic or military assistance until the Korean government approved the terms of the agreement. The State Department accepted Hodge's recommendations and immediately dispatched

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Vol. VIII, 1279-1281.

<sup>59</sup>  
Marshall to Austin, August 20, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1284.

<sup>60</sup>  
Jacobs to Marshall, August 18, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1282.

Muccio to Korea. Hodge could now transfer authority to Muccio and Coulter, thus ending three years of personal<sup>61</sup> frustration and failure.

Muccio's first remarks indicated his belief that the delay in Korean independence was not the result of Korean actions or those of Korea's "real friends." He hoped that, under its new constitution and the leadership of Syngman Rhee, Korea would achieve rapid reunification, sovereignty,<sup>62</sup> independence, and admission to the United Nations. Evidently, Hodge's strategy succeeded, since Rhee signed the transfer agreement the day after Muccio arrived. The United States would permit the ROK to assume control over the police on September 3, but would maintain control of the Constabulary. The USAFIK would simultaneously transfer surplus equipment to arm a force that would be small, mobile, and well-trained for the maintenance of internal security. Finally, the United States would begin withdrawal at "the<sup>63</sup> earliest practicable time."

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61

Hodge to Marshall, August 18, 1948, RG 319, Leahy Papers, Korea 1948, NA; Hodge to JCS, August 21, 1948, RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45), Section 16, NA; New York Times, August 24, 1948, 6:1, 7:1, 7:2.

62

Jacobs to Marshall, August 23, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1286-1287.

63

"Military and Security Measures Effective Until Completion of Withdrawal of United States Forces from Korea," Treaties and Other International Acts Series, No. 1918 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1949); Jacobs to Marshall, August 24, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1287; New York Times, August 25, 1948, 14:3.

As indicated earlier, American leaders rescheduled withdrawal from August 15 to September 15, 1948. The State Department refused, however, to approve orders authorizing departure even at this later date, insisting that NSC-8 provided for flexibility and did not preclude further delay. More important, Butterworth argued that the American public now favored a strong stand in Korea rather than precipitate withdrawal. In addition, Hodge and Jacobs had urged delay until the United Nations acted on the UNTCOK report and received a Soviet response. The Army Department remained adamant and refused to permit indefinite prolongation of military occupation in Korea.

American officials finally arrived at a compromise. The USAFIK would commence withdrawal on September 15, but would remain ready to halt the operation at any point during implementation. Washington ordered Hodge not to refer to the imminence of American disengagement upon his own departure from Korea. Instead, he would merely announce that the realization of Korean self-government now permitted the United States to "regroup" in preparation for a reduction of force levels in Korea. The Army Department agreed to these instructions reluctantly, since the Chinese Communists had just achieved complete control in Manchuria. American military leaders believed that the United States

position in Korea was now untenable. Despite such fears, Hodge left Korea expressing superficial optimism and predicting that a working democracy in South Korea would weaken Soviet dominance in the north.<sup>65</sup>

Having reached agreement on withdrawal, Hoffman, Saltzman, and Draper now turned their attention to formulating plans for the economic aid mission to Korea. Initiation of withdrawal obviously pleased Draper. He pledged his complete support for the ECA's efforts. Hoffman, however, was far from satisfied and questioned the logic of the entire venture:

The whole problem is one of State Department foreign policy. It has no economic justification. He would hold out hope that Korea would offer any kind of economic bulwark. He gathers that it has no strategic importance from a military point of view. ECA will look to the State Department for leadership in the program to be carried out. He regards the operation as a holding one—making good on pledges to Korea.

Administration officials decided that the State Department and the ECA would formulate a plan for aid to Korea and jointly submit it to Congress for approval. Thus, Congress would have to decide whether the expenditure was justified. In the meantime, financial support for American operations

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JCS to MacArthur for Hodge, August 27, 1948, RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45), NA; Wedemeyer to Secretary of Defense, August 30, 1948, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Section I, Case 1, NA; New York Times, August 29, 1948, 7:5.

66

Truman to Marshall, August 25, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1288-1289; Claxton Memorandum, September 1, 1948, RG 59, 895.50 Recovery/9-148, NA.

in Korea would continue under a recent Congressional appropriation bill for Government Aid and Relief in Occupied Areas (GARIO).<sup>67</sup>

## V

Rhee clearly recognized that the survival of his regime depended upon American economic assistance. He formally requested such aid on September 3, as well as military assistance. Muccio favored granting the request, but insisted that any technicians or advisors serving in Korea possess complete freedom of action to ensure the efficient utilization of the aid. It was doubtful, however, if the legislature would accept any conditions for the reception of American aid. The Assembly already indicated opposition to the "Korean-American Financial and Property Settlement" because it contained provisions for Korean payment of the costs of American occupation.<sup>68</sup> In all probability, Rhee would not be able to obtain the legislature's support for anything less than complete autonomy. As Muccio explained, the "President has an all-too-ready tendency of ignoring the National Assembly instead of taking the bull by the

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Public Law 793, U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Appropriations, Background Information on Korea, H. Rept. 2495 pursuant to H.R. 206, 81st Cong., 2nd sess., (July 11, 1950). The bill carried an expiration date of June 30, 1949.

68

Muccio to Marshall, September 3, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1289; Muccio to Marshall, October 18, 1948, RG 59, 895.00/10-1848, NA.

horns and leading it."<sup>69</sup>

Economic deterioration continued to plague South Korea. Deficit spending and blackmarket prices produced high inflation that would hamper economic development. The widespread popular belief that trouble with North Korea was inevitable also contributed to an atmosphere of uncertainty regarding the ROK's future.<sup>70</sup> Relations between the executive and the legislature were entirely unsatisfactory. The Assembly passed the National Traitors Act and began to order the arrest of any individual suspected of prior collaboration with the Japanese. The legislature concentrated on prosecuting those bureaucrats and policemen loyal to Syngman Rhee, thus restricting further the opportunities for cooperation between the executive and the legislature.<sup>71</sup>

Rhee immediately retaliated against the recalcitrant Assembly and anyone attempting to limit his powers. The police inaugurated a campaign of political repression waged in the name of national security and anti-Communism. Rhee's functionaries closed down newspapers and imprisoned political leaders critical of the government. In particular, Rhee concentrated on eliminating all vestiges of overt leftist

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Muccio to MacArthur, September 6, 1948, MacArthur Papers, Correspondence, Box 7, VIP File, John J. Muccio, DMML.

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Jones to Marshall, September 15, 1948, RG 59, 895.01/9-1548, NA.

71

Jacobs to Marshall, August 25, 1948, RG 59, 895.00/8-2548, NA; Kim, Divided Korea, 123.

activity in South Korea. Thus, the ROK rapidly assumed the appearance of a police state that bore little resemblance to the liberal democracy Truman and his advisors were striving<sup>72</sup> to create in South Korea.

Events in North Korea during the fall of 1948 presented another threat to the success of the test case of containment. On August 25, North Korea sponsored elections, allegedly nationwide, for delegates to a "Supreme Korean People's Assembly." During the first week in September, this body met in Pyongyang and promulgated a constitution. The Assembly then "elected" a "Supreme People's Council" and chose Kim Tu-bong as chairman. Kim Tu-bong then called upon Kim Il-sung to form a cabinet which would constitute the ruling authority of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The new North Korean government claimed to represent the entire nation and indicated its intention to<sup>73</sup> send delegates to the United Nations.

Kim Il-sung's first act was to address letters to both Truman and Stalin requesting recognition and the withdrawal of foreign troops. On September 19, Stalin expressed Soviet support for the new government and recognized it as the national government of Korea. He also indicated that Moscow

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Muccio to Marshall, September 14, 1948, RG 59, 895.00/9-1448, NA; Mitchell, Second Failure in Asia, 29-30.

73

New York Times, September 1, 1948, 7:1 and September 11, 1948, 4:5; Kim, Divided Korea, 107-108 and 166-168; Jacobs to Marshall, August 7, 1947, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/8-747, NA; Berger, The Korean Knot, 82-83.

would comply with Kim's request and withdraw from the north before the end of 1948. Stalin then urged the United States to follow suit.<sup>74</sup> Apparently, these events caught Truman completely off guard. Stalin's maneuver had, however, placed the United States in a particularly precarious position. North Korea was clearly stronger than South Korea militarily, economically, and politically and the Soviets could withdraw without hesitation. Truman could not act with such alacrity. American withdrawal would place the existence of the ROK in serious jeopardy. The southern reliance on American military protection would not contribute to international recognition of the ROK as the legitimate ruler of the entire nation.<sup>75</sup>

Muccio immediately recommended that Washington ignore the request, arguing that only the Soviet Union possessed the authority to propose withdrawal. The United States should avoid any indication that it considered the DPRK a legitimate government.<sup>76</sup> Truman accepted Muccio's advice. He addressed a letter to Stalin taking note of the Soviet decision to recognize the DPRK and withdraw from Korea. The President went on to observe that these matters were an integral part of the larger issue of Korean reunification

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<sup>74</sup> Kohler to Marshall, September 19, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1306; "Position on Withdrawal of Troops From Korea," September 30, 1948, DSB, XIX, 484 (October 10, 1948), 456; Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, 328.

<sup>75</sup> New York Times, September 20, 1948, 1:5, 24:1.

<sup>76</sup> Muccio to Marshall, September 18, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1305-1306.

and independence. The United Nations would have to supervise both withdrawal and the determination of Korea's legitimate ruler.<sup>77</sup> In Seoul, Muccio assured Rhee that the United States would not abandon the ROK and would continue to supply military and economic assistance.<sup>78</sup>

Rhee now sought to postpone America's departure from Korea indefinitely. He dispatched Chough Pyong-ok to Washington to urge the Truman Administration not to abandon Korea "when the battle was only half won." While in the United States, Chough stressed that American withdrawal would only invite a Communist invasion from the north.<sup>79</sup> During September, John Myung Chang, the new Korean Ambassador to the United States, joined Chough in Washington and also pressed Truman to delay withdrawal. Chang argued that the ROK could withstand a northern invasion and Communist subversion with American assistance and advice. He then expressed apprehension regarding the United Nations. The anticipated attendance of the northern representatives at the next United Nations session would endanger the ROK's chances for recognition and subsequent admission to the international

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Lovett to Muccio, September 20, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1307-1308; "Position on Withdrawing Occupying Forces from Korea," September 20, 1948, DSB, XIX, 483 (October 3, 1948), 440; New York Times, September 21, 1948, 16:3.

78

Muccio to Marshall, September 21, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1308-1309.

79

Lovett Memorandum, September 23, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1309-1311.

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organization.

Washington clearly recognized that South Korea was in grave danger. The Army thus instructed Coulter to minimize all equipment removals from Korea during withdrawal. Although it was still desirable to "button it up as soon as practical," disengagement should not occur without providing the ROK with the ability to survive. Such action would not satisfy Rhee. Muccio reported from Seoul that the ROK President intended to exert heavy pressure on the United Nations to request the United States to remain in military occupation of South Korea.<sup>81</sup>

Few observers failed to perceive the significance of what had transpired. Two governments now existed in Korea committed to the destruction of its rival. Soviet-American withdrawal was imminent and civil war seemed inevitable. Neither side would tolerate compromise and conciliation, thus precluding negotiations. The Soviet and American clients were committed from the outset to forcible imposition of their own political and economic system on the entire peninsula. Unfortunately for the United States, the superiority of the DPRK army meant that American

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Lovett Memorandum, October 13, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1314-1315; Truman approved Chang's appointment based upon Lovett's recommendation, Truman to Lovett, August 24, 1948, Truman Papers, White House Central Files, Confidential, Box 35, Correspondence 1947-48, Folder 13, HSTL.

81

Hodge to Coulter, September 17, 1948, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea, Section V, Case 65, Box 88, NA; Muccio to Marshall, November 9, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1323.

withdrawal would be fatal to South Korea. The Soviet puppet, a Time article observed, was like "a cat smiling at a canary." The New York Times insisted that the United States could not disengage until the new government had developed<sup>82</sup> adequate means for self-defense.

## VI

Events inside South Korea went from bad to worse during the fall of 1948. On the night of October 19, a small group of Communists, who had infiltrated the Constabulary army, staged an uprising in Cholla Namdo, a province in the southern-most portion of Korea. Approximately two hundred soldiers joined the rebellion in protest over alleged officer abuse. Peasants and workers responded favorably to the uprising because of dissatisfaction with economic deterioration and police corruption. The force quickly swelled to three thousand and proceeded to seize control in the town of Yosu, setting up "people's courts" to try and execute<sup>83</sup> policemen, army officers, and government officials.

The Yosu Rebellion soon spread to Suchon, as rebels seized ammunition centers and burned police stations. Many

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Yoo, The Korean War and the United Nations, 22; Time, LII, 13 (September 27, 1948), 32; New York Times, September 25, 1948, 16:1; Simmons, The Strained Alliance.

83

New York Times, October 21, 1948, 1:6; Muccio to Marshall, October 28, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1317-1318; O'Byrne Memorandum, November 15, 1948, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea, Section V, Case 65, Box 88, NA.

Koreans joined the insurgency in anticipation of an imminent North Korean invasion. The rebels released all political prisoners and punished anyone suspected of supporting the Rhee regime. They raised the North Korean flag in Suchon and pledged support for the DPRK. The Communists thus obtained control over a sizable portion of South Korea, seizing a number of banks, schools, and food distribution centers. American officials in Seoul feared that civil war had entered its first phase.<sup>84</sup>

Coulter was determined to remain uninvolved in the Yosu rebellion. The Provisional KMAG acted quickly, however, to mobilize loyal Constabulary forces and move against the insurgent strongholds. Terrain conditions, and the fact that rebels wore American uniforms and used American equipment, made the Constabulary's task extremely difficult. On October 27, government forces began to counter-attack and an incredible bloodbath ensued. House-to-house fighting in Yosu spared few individuals and the ROK army's retaliation against the rebels was merciless. Government forces either beat to death or executed anyone even suspected of sympathy toward the insurgents. The Constabulary successfully quelled the revolt and gained valuable experience in conducting anti-guerilla operations.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>

New York Times, October 25, 1948, 12:2; Life, XXV, 20 (November 15, 1948), 55-58; O'Byrne Memorandum.

<sup>85</sup>

New York Times, October 27, 1948, 26:3; Time, LII, 19 (November 8, 1948), 32-33; O'Byrne Memorandum.

The Yosu Rebellion shocked the Truman Administration, since a considerable portion of the general public reacted favorably to the uprising. Most of the rioters were not Communist sympathizers, but responded to agitative speeches focusing attention on legitimate popular grievances. More important, the incident revealed the ease with which the Communists could infiltrate the Constabulary and exploit dissatisfaction. Although loyal Korean military units operated well, it was clear that it would be some time before complete law and order prevailed.<sup>86</sup> Muccio noted the nature of the crisis confronting the newborn regime:

If the government and nation arose to the occasion, the Rebellion would become the spark which drew all but the Communist elements in the nation together. . . . If, on the other hand, no firm stand were taken for reform, if efforts at change were virtually branded "treason", if a new spirit of patriotism were not infused into the people, the situation could rapidly deteriorate into mass uncertainty, discontent and anarchy.

Most knowledgeable observers perceived that the Rhee government was at an early crossroads. Only political unity and meaningful reforms could increase popular confidence in the ROK and combat propaganda from the north.<sup>87</sup>

North Korea's obvious ability to exploit such disturbances as the Yosu Rebellion increased the possibility of

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<sup>86</sup>

New York Times, October 25, 1948, 12:2; Early in November, another rebellion broke out near Taegu, Berger, The Korean Knot, 86.

<sup>87</sup>

Muccio to Marshall, November 16, 1948, RG 59, 895.00/11-1648, NA.

an invasion. As Muccio explained, it was "more than probable that if the internal South Korean situation worsens to the extent likely under continuous North Korean-inspired disturbances, the North Korean army would intervene under the banner of restoring order and aiding 'democratic' elements of the population."<sup>88</sup> Rhee recognized the possibility of such an occurrence and immediately instituted a policy designed to eliminate all political opposition to his regime. In cooperation with American advisors, the government purged the Constabulary of all suspected leftists.

Far more important, the Assembly passed the National Security Act which in essence established martial law in South Korea. The ROK dismissed school teachers and government administrators suspected of disloyalty, while it censored newspapers and imprisoned dissident editors. Thus, the Yosu Rebellion seriously weakened popular confidence in the young and inexperienced regime. In an atmosphere of suspicion, insecurity, and fear, it would with difficulty achieve political stability. The ROK's future was in serious doubt.<sup>89</sup>

Rhee's problems increased the pressure on Truman to expand American support for South Korea. In the absence of

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<sup>88</sup>

Muccio to Marshall, November, 4, 1948, RG 59, 895.00/11-448, NA.

<sup>89</sup>

Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 162-164; U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Conditions in South Korea, 1947, International Reference Service, V, 131 (December 1948), 6; New York Times, October 21, 1948, 26:3.

large-scale economic and military assistance, few individuals believed that the ROK could withstand Communist internal and external challenges. Both Muccio and Coulter now began to have second thoughts about the logic of American assistance to the Rhee regime. Rhee's inability to manifest any administrative skill or governmental competence produced fears that the ROK would squander American aid after withdrawal.<sup>90</sup>

Early in November, Muccio finally concluded that only continued American military protection could forestall the ROK's demise. The domestic situation was "grave" and he predicted a northern invasion in the spring of 1949. The United States had to remain in occupation to provide South Korea with a "period of grace" for the development of economic rehabilitation and political stability.<sup>91</sup> Coulter was uncertain regarding the wisdom of delayed withdrawal. He stressed the possibility of an invasion even if the United States did not disengage and

should it occur . . . US troop involvement would have international repercussions. Presence of US troops would have a stabilizing effect. However, a token force could be overrun with consequent loss of face here and throughout the world. Retention of US troops in Korea beyond present schedule must be weighed as to its effect on the overall policy of the US Government. Therefore, decision must be made by higher authority in light of

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Muccio to Marshall, October 26, 1948, RG 59, 895.01/10-2648, NA; Sawyer and Hermes, Military Advisors in Korea, 40-41.

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Muccio to Marshall, November 12, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1325-1327.

all factors.<sup>92</sup>

Truman thus faced an extremely difficult problem. The necessity for withdrawal was obvious, but the subsequent collapse of the South Korean government after America's departure seemed unacceptable.

Communist successes in China added another element to the forces impelling the United States to delay withdrawal. The Nationalist Chinese never ceased warning the Koreans that the United States was preparing to abandon the ROK to the Soviet Union.<sup>93</sup> Rhee thus addressed a letter to Truman appealing for the continuation of American occupation until the Constabulary achieved enough strength for self-defense. In addition, an unequivocal statement of America's commitment to defend South Korea would reassure Koreans and prevent the loss of hope. Rhee also wrote to MacArthur pleading for tanks, patrol boats, combat aircraft, and machine guns to assist South Korea in its fight against Communism. Rhee insisted that "the mere appearance of their existence at our disposal will give the people assurance of their security."<sup>94</sup>

Representatives in the Assembly now joined Rhee in

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Coulter to JCS, November 1, 1948, RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45), Section 18, NA.

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Jacobs to Bond, October 22 and 27, 1948, RG 59, 501BB/10-2748, NA; New York Times, November 10, 1948, 15:2; Jacobs to Marshall, October 18, 1948, RG 59, 501BB/10-1848, NA.

94

Muccio to Marshall, November 19, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1331-1332; Rhee to MacArthur, November 29, 1948, MacArthur Papers, Box 8, Correspondence, VIP File, DMML.

requesting that the United States delay withdrawal. The legislature voted overwhelmingly to appeal for continued American military occupation of the peninsula. Lee Bum-suk strongly criticized the United States for stripping its forces down to an unacceptable level in order to permit withdrawal at a moment's notice. Thus, the South Koreans were able to unite in demands for American military protection. They stressed that the United States should not permit a repetition of its China policy that acquiesced in the face of Soviet expansionism.<sup>95</sup>

## VII

Saltzman completed preliminary work on the State Department aid proposal for Korea on September 7, 1948. The program focused attention on the necessity for a multi-year plan to develop economic stability and self-sufficient growth, rather than continued reliance on annual relief appropriations. The aid program would begin early in 1949 and envisioned one hundred eighty million dollars in economic assistance for fiscal 1950. Saltzman stressed that NSC-8 respected the need to prevent the fall of Korea to the Soviet Union, if it entailed a serious loss to American prestige. Hoffman supported Saltzman's proposal, arguing that implementation would permit American withdrawal and

at the same time eliminate the wasteful expenditure on relief rather than self-sufficiency<sup>96</sup>

Draper clearly favored the program, since it indicated the State Department's apparent willingness to deal directly with the Korean issue. Yet, he was dubious over Congressional willingness to accept such a program. Even Lovett considered the plan "too rich for my blood at the moment." He feared that Korean aid and other such programs would place an excessive strain on the American economy. On the other hand, Lovett recognized that the United States could not abandon Korea and therefore approved the Saltzman program. He pledged full support to Hoffman and the two leaders agreed to cooperate in the formulation of a Congressional proposal emphasizing the political justification for Korean aid. The program also provided for flexibility and periodic review, reserving the American right to terminate assistance at any time.<sup>97</sup>

Truman clearly believed that despite the formation of a rival Communist regime in north Korea the United States could successfully achieve its policy objectives in that area. America's Korea policy would require only a limited program of economic assistance and not the application of

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<sup>96</sup>  
Saltzman Memorandum, September 7, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1292-1297.

<sup>97</sup>  
Hoffman to Lovett, October 1, 1948 and Lovett to Hoffman, September 17, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1304-1305 and 1312-1313.

military power. Truman's approach was the reflection of the President's persistent vision of a limited American role in postwar international affairs. Despite the Berlin Crisis, he concluded during the fall of 1948 that the international situation did not preclude a further reduction in the size of the armed forces and the defense budget. Despite strong objections from Forrestal, Truman and Marshall both insisted that the United States should concentrate its efforts on financial aid and arms for Europe.<sup>98</sup>

On December 9, 1948, Truman and his advisors decided to cut the defense budget for fiscal 1950 and also reduce the ceiling on military expenditures for the following year. Truman made this decision despite warnings from the JCS that such limitations would preclude the preservation of American national security.<sup>99</sup> Thus, after 1947, the trend toward decreased military commitments was clear and unmistakable. Truman's attitude toward defense spending corresponded perfectly with his expectations regarding the promise of containment. Through the application of economic and financial assistance, rather than American military power,

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Millis (ed.), The Forrestal Diaries, 497-498 and 508-512; Schilling, "The Politics of National Defense," in Strategy, Politics, and Defense Budgets, 191-193; Cochran, Truman and the Crisis Presidency, 286-287; Hancock, "The Impact of the Korean War on American Military Strategy," 67.

99

Vandenberg to Forrestal, October 7, 1948, Vandenberg Papers, Subject File, Box 40, LOC; Leahy Diary Entry, November 4, 1948, Leahy Papers, Diaries 1948-1950, Box 6, LOC; Schilling, "The Politics of National Defense," 62-63; Millis (ed.), The Forrestal Diaries, 536.

the United States could help other nations to develop the internal strength necessary for self-defense. It was not until the Korean War shattered the logic and assumptions of containment that Truman established a powerful American military capability and deployed it on a global basis.<sup>100</sup>

Truman had every intention to reduce the American military commitment in Korea. Unfortunately, in the wake of the Yosu Rebellion, Muccio's recommendations and Korean appeals forced the Administration to delay. Marshall, Lovett, and Saltzman all voiced opposition in November, 1948, to fixing a specific date for the completion of withdrawal. In addition, they argued that the absence of United Nations action meant that the January 15 deadline was unrealistic.<sup>101</sup> Lovett and Marshall urged postponement because complete disengagement at that time would be premature and prejudicial to American security interests. Thus, Washington ordered MacArthur to halt disengagement and maintain one regimental combat team of seventy-five hundred men in Korea until the United Nations recommended withdrawal.<sup>102</sup>

Muccio and Coulter were then able to reassure Rhee that the United States did not intend to abandon the ROK.

<sup>100</sup>

Millis (ed.), The Forrestal Diaries, 538.

<sup>101</sup>

Saltzman to Wedemeyer, November 4, 1948, RG 59, 501BB/11-448, NA.

<sup>102</sup>

Lovett to Marshall, November 5, 1948, and Saltzman to Wedemeyer, November 9, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1319 and 1324; JCS to MacArthur, November 15, 1948, RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45), Section 18, NA.

On November 17, Muccio publicly announced that the United States would not leave Korea until the United Nations assumed responsibility for the future welfare of South Korea. Under no circumstances, the American Ambassador emphasized, would the United States permit North Korea to conquer the ROK.<sup>103</sup> In his private cables, however, Muccio expressed little optimism over the chances for South Korea's survival. Only internal economic stability and political unity would ensure a viable government. The ROK's chronic economic problems coupled with Rhee's dictatorial tactics prevented the development of these necessary ingredients. Thus, American military power alone could prevent an eventual Communist victory.<sup>104</sup>

Coulter added credence to Muccio's conclusions, arguing that only popular support would guarantee the success of the ROK. The United States had provided sufficient military aid and advice for South Korea to withstand a northern invasion, but only the Koreans themselves could develop the will to fight for their own freedom. Coulter believed Rhee was responsible for an atmosphere of nervousness and a lack of self-confidence that hampered self-defense. Both he and Muccio hoped that the delay in withdrawal would provide enough additional time for South Korea to develop the

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103

Muccio to Marshall, November 18, 1948, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/11-1848, NA.

104

Muccio to Marshall, November 19, 1948, RG 59, 895.00/11-1948, NA.

internal strength requisite for survival.<sup>105</sup>

In the meantime, the Administration completed work on the economic assistance agreement. Significantly, both the Army and the ECA focused attention on limiting the scope and nature of the commitment to aid Korea. Military leaders, for example, opposed a categorical statement that aid to Korea was vital to American national interests. Such a justification would have serious "psychological implications" on the Koreans and might decrease self-reliance because:

An oriental mind would literally interpret and readily misconstrue this statement as an unconditional guarantee of continued full support. Future circumstances may not warrant such a construction. It would be difficult then to repudiate.<sup>106</sup>

State Department officials were also tepid in their appraisal of the extent of success that the United States could anticipate from economic assistance. Rusk doubted whether American aid would produce political independence, basic civil liberties, economic self-sufficiency, and a stable financial structure. He emphasized that, since the United States was "using economic assistance as a political prop, . . . we should have language that will enable us to play by ear without embarrassment."<sup>107</sup>

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Coulter to JCS, November 12, 1948, RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45), Section 18, NA.

106

MacNamara Memorandum, November 8, 1948, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea, Section V, Case 65, Box 88, NA.

107

Eichholz to Claxton, November 15, 1948, RG 59, FW 895.50 Recovery/11-1548, NA.

Despite such hesitancy, the United States negotiated an economic aid agreement with South Korea on December 11, 1948. In all probability, Truman believed that an indication of continued American support would reassure the United Nations and silence charges of abandonment. That same month, Paul Hoffman and the ECA mission arrived in Korea to determine the extent of Korea's needs. Press reports indicated that the United States would seek Congressional approval for three hundred million dollars over a three year period. Interestingly enough, Hoffman suggested publicly that more aid would be available in the event of reunification. Thus, the Administration clearly anticipated that the promise of economic benefits in the south would stimulate popular demands in the north to join the ROK and end the partition. Hoffman expressed confidence that Congress would approve the Korean aid bill.<sup>108</sup>

American aid to Korea was ostensibly a response to Rhee's request for economic assistance. The Korean-American agreement provided that Truman would determine the amount of such aid and appoint a representative to advise Koreans on how to maximize the positive impact of American assistance on the Korean economy. In return, Rhee agreed to achieve a balanced budget, a stable currency, a favorable balance of trade, and maximum productivity. He would also remove all

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<sup>108</sup>

New York Times, December 11, 1948, 1:4, December 14, 1948, 25:1, and December 17, 1948, 10:7.

public and private barriers to trade. The United States would enjoy "most favored nation" status and priority in the allocation of raw materials. In the event of any abuses, the United States reserved the right to terminate aid to Korea without notice. Thus, Truman followed closely the recommendations of his advisors and tied the promise of aid to Korean performance.<sup>109</sup>

### VIII

At the United Nations, the American delegation endeavored to mobilize international support for recognition of the ROK as the government envisaged in the November 14 resolution. The American proposal provided for Soviet-American withdrawal and reunification under the authority of the Rhee regime. It also insisted upon the complete support of the United Nations for the southern regime as the only legitimate government in Korea. Britain quickly informed the United States that it could not support the American proposal. London opposed recognition of either North or South Korea as a national government and favored only the acceptance of the UNTCOK's report without any further action. Such an approach would at least result in United Nations support for the ROK as the legal government

south of the 38th parallel and non-recognition of the Soviet-sponsored regime in the north. Canada supported the British proposal. Yet, Patterson expressed the hope that qualified support for the ROK would not preclude continued American assistance to the Rhee government.

America's final position paper on Korea, however, stood firmly behind the ROK as the only legitimate government in the peninsula. The United States insisted that the ROK representatives were eligible for participation in the United Nations debate. The proposal also favored rapid Soviet-American withdrawal, but only after the United Nations verified the dissolution of all non-ROK military and administrative organizations in the peninsula. It provided for a new United Nations Commission on Korea (UNCOK) to supervise the incorporation of north Korea into the Republic of Korea and to report on the progress of reunification to the General Assembly. The UNCOK would not include Canada, Syria, or hopefully India, since each of these nations had indicated disinterest in Korea's future. Finally, the United States intended to express support for the UNCOK's recommendations and not oppose the appearance of representatives from the DPRK.

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Rusk to Lovett, September 10, 1948, Bliss to Marshall, September 11, 1948, and Bond Memorandum, September 14, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1300-1302.

111

Jacobs to Bond, October 18, 1948, RG 59, 50133/10-1848, NA; U.S. United Nations Position Paper, October 22, 1948 and Butterworth to Lovett, November 5, 1948, FRUS,

On October 30, the United Nations Political and Security Committee began to consider the UNTCOK report. The Commission's findings stressed that, in the absence of a negotiated settlement, a civil war and forcible reunification would follow Soviet-American withdrawal. While the UNTCOK noted American cooperation and Soviet obdurance, it indicated that both nations and the prevailing atmosphere of international tension had produced the Korean impasse. Only reunification would ensure Korean political, social, and economic progress, but the Commission offered no plan for achieving this result. The United Nations now faced a serious dilemma. An attempt to fulfill its moral obligation to the ROK would probably increase Soviet-American tensions, lead to involvement in a civil war, and not contribute to the peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula.<sup>112</sup>

While the United Nations Committee studied the UNTCOK report, both the ROK and the DPRK applied for membership in the international organization as the legitimate representative of all Korea.<sup>113</sup> In conjunction with Australia and China, the United States formulated a resolution recognizing the Rhee government as the legal representative of Korea. The new Commission would also observe the growth of democracy

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1948, Vol. VIII, 1315-1316 and 1319.

<sup>112</sup>

"Korea: Commission's Report," DSB, XIX, 488 (November 7, 1948), 576.

<sup>113</sup>

New York Times, November 13, 1948, 6:6.

in a reunified Korea and provide a vehicle for consultation. Within ninety days after the approval of the resolution, the UNCOK would observe and verify Soviet-American withdrawal from Korea.<sup>114</sup> To obtain Australian support, the Truman Administration abandoned its claim that the ROK was the national government of Korea. The United States also agreed to support the findings of the UNTCOK, although Truman was hardly satisfied with the Commission's attempt at impartiality.<sup>115</sup>

Ultimately, the United Nations Committee rewarded the American policy of patience and diplomacy when it voted unanimously to reject the Soviet proposal to invite the DPRK to participate in debate. Some American commentators did not appreciate the extent of the American success and demanded United Nations recognition of the national character of the Rhee government.<sup>116</sup> The American delegation realized, however, that any United Nations support for the Rhee regime would be of considerable value. If the United States adopted an extreme position and held to it intransigently, a sizable number of nations would react unfavorably and place even minimal progress for American aims in jeopardy. Even Rhee understood that partial United Nations support

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<sup>114</sup>

Marshall to Lovett, November 16, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1327-1328.

<sup>115</sup>

Marshall to Lovett, November 16, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1329-1330.

<sup>116</sup>

New York Times, November 30, 1948, 26:2.

was preferable to impartiality. Further delay at Lake Success only benefited the DPRK plan for subversion and seizure of power. Rapid action was preferable to a dilatory approach even if the support was qualified and ambiguous.<sup>117</sup>

On December 6, 1948, the United Nations Committee voted to support the ROK as the only legal government in Korea and reject the DPRK's claim to legitimacy. At the same time, it decided not to recognize the national character of the Rhee regime, since it only controlled half of the peninsula. Each nation would have to decide individually the nature and extent of its policy on recognition. The Committee then amended the American proposal to provide for withdrawal "as soon as practicable" of foreign troops from Korea after the General Assembly approved the resolution.<sup>118</sup>

John Foster Dulles delivered a strong speech on December 7 appealing for United Nations approval of the resolution and arguing that it would be "unthinkable that the United Nations should in any way disown the consequences of its own creative program." He stressed that the prestige of the United Nations was at stake in Korea and only the moral solidarity of the peaceful nations could ensure the viability of the international organization. If the United Nations continued its involvement in Korean affairs, the

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<sup>117</sup>

Dulles to Marshall, December 6, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1335.

<sup>118</sup>

New York Times, December 6, 1948, 2:2.

strategy of violence and subversion would fail and peaceful  
 119  
 reunification would occur.

Again, American diplomatic pressure was effective. The United Nations Committee voted approval for the American resolution with only six nations in opposition and two abstentions. The approval of the General Assembly quickly followed on December 12, despite the strong opposition of the Soviet Union. The United Nations thus overwhelmingly rejected Moscow's proposal to disband the Commission on Korea and passed instead the American-Australian-Chinese proposal. The vast majority of the United Nations members thereby recognized a moral obligation to South Korea and considered inaction to be an unpalatable demonstration of  
 120  
 impotence and insensitivity.

Dulles immediately expressed his pleasure over the action of the General Assembly. The United Nations, he explained, had thus rejected the northern strategy of intimidation in favor of reliance on the ROK and peaceful negotiations. The new Commission on Korea would be smaller than its predecessor, excluding both Canada and the Ukraine. It would arrive in Korea within thirty days and begin to cooperate with South Korea for the achievement of peaceful

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Dulles Address, December 7, 1948, DSB, XIX, 494 (December 19, 1948), 758-760; New York Times, December 8, 1948, 22:3.

120

Dulles to Marshall, December 9, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1336; New York Times, December 8, 1948, 30:2.

reunification. The United States hoped that the UNCOK would be able to foster the realization of an equitable and democratic solution. With an end to the unnatural division of the peninsula, the maintenance of two large, costly and dangerous military establishments across the parallel would no longer be necessary.<sup>121</sup>

American observers were jubilant over the United Nations decision to support the Republic of Korea. As a result of the action, the United States could shift responsibility for Korea's security to the United Nations and withdraw its troops from the peninsula with complete international support. At the same time Truman could embark upon a plan for economic rehabilitation and military strength in South Korea and thus enable the infant regime to survive.<sup>122</sup> For Dulles, the international acceptance of the American strategy possessed far wider significance:

Overwhelming Assembly vote on Korea starts South Korea off with as much political and moral backing as can be mobilized through UN. Apart from Korea, believe Korean case in Assembly has contributed to more friendly relations between Far Eastern peoples and the US.<sup>123</sup>

Clearly, the event constituted an American diplomatic victory

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121

"U.N. Recognizes Republic of Korea," DSB, XIX, 493 (December 12, 1948), 728; Dulles to Marshall, December 12, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1336; State Department, Korea 1945 to 1948, 2.

122

Department of State, The Record on Korean Unification, 13; New York Times, December 13, 1948, 3:1.

123

Dulles to Marshall, December 13, 1948, RG 59, 501BB/12-1348, NA.

over the Soviet Union in the Cold War. The international community judged the American client as legitimate, while dismissing North Korea as a Soviet puppet.<sup>124</sup> Success in Korea might even initiate a series of similar advances elsewhere in Asia and thereby prove containment's value as a liberating force.

America's success in obtaining United Nations support for the Rhee regime obviously displeased the Soviet Union. Stalin had, however, prepared for such an eventuality. The Soviets now instituted a campaign stressing the significance of their departure from Korea before the end of 1948. Both Pravda and Izvestia emphasized that the United States also had to end military occupation of Korea or reunification would be impossible. Reports from Pyongyang indicated that the Red Army was rapidly transferring its arms and housing facilities to the DPRK army in preparation for departure. Thus, Moscow could focus on the independence and strength of North Korea in contrast to a South Korea requiring American military protection for its very existence.<sup>125</sup>

## IX

Truman formally recognized the Republic of Korea on

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124

New York Times, December 10, 1948, 24:2.

125

Berger, The Korean Knot, 84 and 88-89; Muccio to Marshall, December 13, 1948, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/12-1248, NA.

January 1, 1949, as the legitimate government of all Korea. While pledging complete support for the activities of the UNCOK, the President declared that the United States would not withdraw from South Korea until Rhee possessed enough strength for self-defense.<sup>126</sup> Events in the United States and at the United Nations obviously pleased Rhee. Nevertheless, Chough Pyong-ok expressed concern to Butterworth and Bond that Communist successes in China would leave the ROK surrounded. In responding to Chough, Butterworth emphasized that South Korea had to develop internal unity and pursue a dynamic policy of progressive reform, thus achieving strong popular support. Chough countered that the implementation of such an enlightened program was difficult when a nation was fighting for its very existence. Butterworth insisted that popular needs and desires had to come first or the ROK would find itself in the same predicament as Nationalist China.<sup>127</sup> Thus, the State Department conveyed to Korea in clear and unmistakable terms that popular support, not military power, was the key to developing internal strength and the ability to resist Communism.

Communist successes in China had a decisive impact on American attitudes toward Korea at the outset of 1949. As

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126

Press Release, January 1, 1949, DSB, XX, 497 (January 9, 1949), 59-60; New York Times, January 2, 1949, 1:7.

127

Memorandum of Conversation, January 5, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII: The Far East and Australasia, Part II (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976), 940-941.

early as December, 1948, the State Department concluded that withdrawal from Korea was ill-advised, if the operation resulted in a Communist invasion of the POK. Such an event would greatly advance the Soviet drive to conquer Japan, "a target of prime importance to world communism." To abandon Korea would not only undermine the security of Japan, but destroy the confidence and morale of all Asian nations. The Ambassador to China, J. Leighton Stuart, stressed that some decisive American action was imperative to counter the loss of prestige that the United States would suffer with the collapse of Chiang. He urged the Administration to seize the initiative diplomatically and even militarily in Korea.<sup>128</sup>

Predictably, the Army Department did not agree, since it was aware of the limitations on American capabilities. On November 8, Royall rejected Marshall's request for a two-year supply of maintenance and replacement equipment. In view of the budgetary limitations on the Department of the Army, Royall explained, only a new Congressional appropriations bill could supply such equipment.<sup>129</sup> The Army was also unhappy over the postponement of withdrawal—now code-named "Twinborn." In the wake of United Nations action, the Army once again requested final authorization to execute the plan

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128

Bishop to Butterworth, December 17, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1337-1340; Stuart to Marshall, December 29, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VII: The Far East: China (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), 695.

129

Guthrie Memorandum, December 22, 1948, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Section I, Case 1, NA.

for withdrawal at the earliest possible moment. Royall found consolation in the knowledge that Truman would announce the transfer of authority in Korea from the USAFIK to the ECA in January, 1949, regardless of American disengagement. In Korea, plans progressed for development of a viable security force. On December 15, Rhee announced the creation of a new National Department of Defense to coordinate police,<sup>130</sup> military, and coast guard operations.

On December 22, Draper again approached the State Department, reminding it that NSC-8 required American withdrawal from Korea as early as practicable. Since the peninsula was not worth a major war, the USAFIK would be a liability in the event of a major conflict. Even MacArthur, Draper explained, had indicated that in the event of a major war the Soviet Union would destroy the USAFIK with ease. He recommended that Washington approve MacArthur's proposal<sup>131</sup> to withdraw no later than March 31, 1949.

MacArthur now added his voice to those actively urging American disengagement from Korea. He informed Washington that although he would order a delay in withdrawal in accordance with instructions he did not consider it a requirement of his assigned mission "to secure or to make

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<sup>130</sup>

Lawson Memorandum, December 2, 1948, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea, Section IV, Cases 50-65, Box 87, NA; Sawyer and Hermes, Military Advisors in Korea, 41.

<sup>131</sup>

Draper to Saltzman, December 22, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VIII, 1341-1343; Zierath Memorandum, January 6, 1949, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Section V, Case 31, Box 22, NA.

plans to secure Southern Korea." MacArthur's attitude disturbed Butterworth, who expressed concern to the Army Department that premature withdrawal from Korea would have a disastrous effect on the morale of the Japanese. He urged a redefinition of American objectives in Korea under NSC-8. The Administration thus decided to request MacArthur's comments on the broad military, political, and psychological aspects related to withdrawal. Truman's Korea policy was on the verge of a significant alteration.<sup>132</sup>

On January 17, Lovett referred the Korean matter to the National Security Council for reconsideration. The State Department placed great stress on Muccio's request for a delay in withdrawal of "several months" to eliminate the certainty that invasion would follow American departure from Korea. Only continued American military presence would provide the "breathing space" necessary for Rhee to create political stability and economic rehabilitation. After Korea resolved its manifold problems, the United States could withdraw safely and without fear of a Communist conquest of the ROK. Rhee's request to delay American military withdrawal permitted Muccio to argue that the United States could justify its actions to the international community.<sup>133</sup>

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132

Butterworth to Lovett, January 10, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 942-944; Army Department Memorandum, January 10, 1949, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Section I, Cases 5-16, Box 162, NA.

133

Saltzman to Draper, January 25, 1949, FRUS, 1949 Vol. VII, Part 2, 944-945; Acheson did not even want to

MacArthur's judgment played a crucial role in the Administration's reevaluation of its Korea policy. Subsequently, commentators strongly criticized Truman for ignoring MacArthur's views and authorizing withdrawal. In reality, the Administration requested MacArthur's advice and delayed withdrawal in defiance of the General's recommendations.<sup>134</sup> On January 19, MacArthur cabled Washington his view that the United States should withdraw from Korea no later than May 10, 1949—the anniversary of the first Korean election. He emphasized that "in event of any serious threat to the security of Korea, strategic and military considerations will force abandonment of any pretence of active military support with consequent irreparable damage to US prestige." Not only could the United States not protect South Korea, but it was unlikely that it could sufficiently train and equip the ROK army to ensure the government's survival.<sup>135</sup>

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discuss withdrawal, but only the political and military aspects of formulating a new position on Korea, Acheson to Royall, January 25, 1949, Truman Papers, Korean War Documents File, Box 1, Department of State, Background, HSTL.

134

MacArthur testified in 1951 before the Senate Committees investigating his dismissal that Washington had decided upon withdrawal alone and he had not participated in the decision because he had no responsibility for that area. He stated that he did not even remember if he concurred in the decision. Clearly, MacArthur was distorting the truth. MacArthur Testimony, Military Situation in the Far East, Vol. I, 37 and 243.

135

MacArthur to JCS, January 19, 1949, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Section V, Case 31, Box 22, NA; Schnabel, Policy and Direction, 30; Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, 329; Collins, War in Peacetime, 28.

By early 1949, MacArthur had also concluded that Soviet control over the Asian mainland was inevitable. He thus favored establishing a defensive position on those islands circling the Asian continent. The United States should supply only "economic aid and indirect military assistance" to those friendly governments on the mainland still resisting Soviet domination. The General made public his arguments early in March, 1949, during an interview with British journalist G. Ward Price. At that time, MacArthur made the following observation:

Now the Pacific has become an Anglo-Saxon lake and our line of defense runs through the chain of islands fringing the coast of Asia.

It starts from the Philippines and continues through the Ryukyu Archipelago, which includes its main bastion, Okinawa. Then it bends back through Japan and the Aleutian Island chain to Alaska.

Despite the fall of China, MacArthur believed that Japan was secure; but he apparently accepted the eventual loss of Korea as well.<sup>136</sup>

Diplomatic factors contributed to the military reasons in bolstering the argument for withdrawal. After all, the United Nations had recommended departure, and defiance of the resolution would undermine American international prestige. The United States could also expect Moscow to use American presence as a propaganda device to discredit the ROK as a tool of American imperialism. On December 30,

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<sup>136</sup>

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.; New York Times, March 2, 1949, 22:2; Time, LIII, 2 (January 10, 1949), 19.

1948, the Soviets announced the completion of withdrawal and called upon the United States to comply with the United Nations resolution as well. Moscow denounced continued American occupation and plans for economic aid as tools of foreign subjugation and exploitation of Korea. If Truman authorized a delay in withdrawal, he risked a major propaganda victory for the Soviet Union.<sup>137</sup>

Truman and his advisors addressed attention to a reconsideration of America's Korea policy at the 36th meeting of the National Security Council on March 22, 1949. After recapitulating events of the previous year, the State Department reappraisal emphasized the new Korean government's lack of sufficient military and economic strength to defend itself from the challenge of the Soviet puppet regime in the north. It reasoned that Moscow sought complete domination over the entire peninsula in order to undermine the strategic and political position of the United States in China and Japan. If the United States withdrew abruptly, this "disengagement would be interpreted as a betrayal by the U.S. of its friends and allies in the Far East and might contribute substantially to a fundamental realignment of forces in favor of the USSR throughout that part of the world." Such an event would also mean a Communist conquest of the ROK, which would destroy the prestige and influence

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137

Muccio to Acheson, January 6, 1949, 895.00/1-649, NA; McGeorge Bundy (ed.), The Pattern of Responsibility (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952), 287.

of the United Nations and force smaller nations to seek  
an accommodation with the Soviets.<sup>138</sup>

NSC-8/1 thus concluded that despite the absence of guaranteed success American national interest demanded continued economic, technical, military, and diplomatic support for the Republic of Korea. Withdrawal would remain a basic objective, since the United Nations had called for the removal of all foreign troops. Both MacArthur and Muccio supported American withdrawal, if the United States met certain conditions. First, the United States had to train, equip, and supply a security force in Korea sufficiently powerful to act as a deterrent to attack and able to maintain internal order. Second, the ECA had to implement a three-year program of technical and economic aid for development. Third, the United Nations had to continue political support as a boost to Korean morale. Such a plan would not preclude the possibility of invasion, but further postponement of withdrawal would not diminish the risk of attack either. In fact, NSC-8/1 observed that further delay would "perpetuate the additional risk that U.S. occupation forces remaining in Korea might be either destroyed or obliged to abandon Korea in the event of a major hostile attack, with serious damage to U.S. prestige . . . ."<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup>

NSC-8/1, March 16, 1949, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea, Section I-A, NA.

<sup>139</sup>

Ibid.; Royall to Acheson, January 25, 1949, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Box 163, NA; See also, U.S. Department

Truman approved a revised form of NSC-8/1 on March 23. The United States thus adopted a policy of continued support for the creation of self-government throughout Korea based upon freedom of choice. The Administration undertook a more positive commitment to provide assistance for the emergence of economic strength in three years and military security prior to withdrawal. The United States would supply enough arms and equipment for a security force of over one hundred thousand men. The American Ambassador would possess central control over all activities in Korea and strive for cooperation with the UNCOK. The United States would withdraw its troops from Korea no later than June 30, 1949. America's departure would in no way imply any lessening of interest in the fate of Korea.

American military leaders were determined to effect withdrawal without delay. The modifications in NSC-8/1 reflected such an attitude. For example, the State Department favored withdrawal only after the United States had consulted the UNCOK and the ROK and transferred all necessary military equipment to the Constabulary army. In final form, however, Truman's plan provided for departure by June 30 regardless of any other contingency. In addition, the final

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of State, The Fight Against Aggression in Korea, Far Eastern Series #37 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, Autumn 1950), 6.

140

NSC-8/2, March 22, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 969-978.

plan set specific limits on the size of the army (65,000), coast guard (4,000), and police (35,000). The United States would equip these forces with light weapons alone. NSC-8/2 explicitly precluded the creation of a Korean navy. Quite obviously, the Army Department feared Rhee's potential for seeking forcible reunification and thereby instigating a casus belli. On April 2, 1949, Washington issued orders for<sup>141</sup> the final withdrawal of the USAFIK.

Truman's action regarding NSC-8 represented a compromise between the conflicting views of his diplomatic and military advisors. The Army Department strongly believed that withdrawal from Korea was imperative at the earliest possible date. Even MacArthur urged disengagement, arguing that such action would not undermine Japan's security because "our only possible adversary on the Asiatic Continent does not possess an industrial base near enough to<sup>142</sup> supply an amphibious attacking force." Muccio, on the other hand, recognized that the ROK was too weak to survive without American protection. He strongly advocated occupation "through June 1949, by which time it expected Korean security forces will be sufficiently organized and trained to cope with internal subversion and any act of

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<sup>141</sup>

NSC-8/2; Sawyer and Hermes, Military Advisors in Korea, 38; Maddocks to Chief of Staff, March 7, 1949 and Maddocks to Secretary of Army, March 22, 1949, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Sections I-A and I-C, Book 1, Box 163, NA.

<sup>142</sup>

Muccio, Oral History Interview Transcript, HSTL, 9-11; New York Times, March 2, 1949, 22:2.

aggression from north exclusive of overt Soviet or Manchurian involvement."<sup>143</sup> Truman insisted in his memoirs that the United States had provided enough training and equipment to the Constabulary army to ensure self-defense and permit withdrawal. Wedemeyer later offered a more cogent explanation when he frankly observed that "it was just a question of not having enough bodies to go around."<sup>144</sup>

American leaders in Washington and Seoul were mildly optimistic regarding South Korea's future during the first months of 1949. The ROK army had operated successfully against Communist guerillas, while Rhee had dismissed two cabinet ministers particularly distasteful to the Assembly and the United States. American military aid and economic assistance could only foster further internal strength. Truman also considered success in Korea of increased importance after the American failure in China. Perhaps more significant, Truman and his advisors hoped a strong Korea would "convince other wavering Asiatic nations that there is more to be gained by embracing the ideologies of the West than those of the East."<sup>145</sup> Thus, South Korea remained Truman's test case of containment in Asia.

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<sup>143</sup>

Muccio to Acheson, January 27, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 947-952.

<sup>144</sup>

Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, 329; Military Situation in the Far East, Vol. IV, 2326-2327.

<sup>145</sup>

Muccio to Acheson, January 10, 1949, RG 59, 895.00/1-1049, NA; Colliers, CXXVIII, 3 (February 19, 1949), 20-21.

Chapter VIII:

Prelude to Civil War

Korea emerged in 1949 as a microcosm of the Soviet-American confrontation. Although the United States had fostered the realization of Korean self-government and obtained international support for the ROK, Truman and his advisors could not have been completely satisfied with the situation. Korea possessed all the ingredients necessary for a bloody civil war. Both North and South Korea were determined to achieve reunification at any price and only American and Soviet troops, neither of whom desired a military conflict, prevented the outbreak of hostilities.<sup>1</sup> Soviet-American withdrawal would eventually open the way to a costly struggle for control. Unfortunately, for the United States, the DPRK was stronger and would certainly emerge victorious in any armed clash.

International support, American economic aid, and the successful defeat of the Yosu Rebellion all contributed to an increase of self-confidence in the Rhee government as 1948 came to a close. A series of aggressive government statements during December were indicative of this newly

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<sup>1</sup> Andre Fontaine, History of the Cold War, Vol. II (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969), 74.

emergent optimism. For example, Foreign Minister Chang Taik-sang announced on December 18 that the DPRK constituted "lost territory" and the ROK intended to recover it at the earliest possible moment and at all costs. If the Communists prevented the people from fulfilling their desire for reunion Chang explained that South Korea would turn to military conquest to achieve reunification. Finally, the ROK would not tolerate any negotiations with the illegitimate Communist regime in the north.<sup>2</sup>

Both Muccio and Coulter strongly opposed such statements as overly aggressive and unnecessarily provocative. The American Ambassador expressed his dissatisfaction to Rhee immediately, stressing that such pronouncements were ill-advised and contrary to the American policy of peaceful reunification. Still, Chang was certainly expressing the views of the ROK President. Rhee had requested a large number of combat planes and coast guard ships with maintenance supplies for six months. Coulter forwarded the plan to Washington, but urged disapproval of the aircraft provision probably because of its primarily offensive military character.<sup>3</sup>

Rhee quickly realized that aggressive statements would jeopardize all American aid to Korea and thus diminish the

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<sup>2</sup> Christian Century, LXVI, 2 (January 12, 1949), 36; New York Times, December 19, 1948, 12:3.

<sup>3</sup> Folk Memorandum, December 24, 1948, RG 319, P&O 092, Section X, Case 139, NA.

the chances for eventual achievement of his objectives. He thus decided to dismiss his foreign minister in an effort to reassure the United States. Nevertheless, the incident had a profound and lasting impact on the Truman Administration. Under no circumstances would the United States provide the ROK with sufficient military power to stage an offensive into northern Korea. At the same time Moscow proceeded to ensure that the DPRK maintained a position of military superiority. The event was then an early indication that, while the major powers were satisfied with half a loaf in Korea, the Koreans themselves were not.<sup>4</sup>

Rhee and his cohorts now intensified their campaign to increase American military assistance to the ROK. During February, 1949, Royall and Wedemeyer visited Korea on a fact-finding mission, holding extensive discussions with Korean leaders. Prime Minister Lee Bum-suk stressed that, as the situation in China deteriorated, "Korea should be increasingly important as a stepping stone for offensive action." He therefore recommended strongly an increase in American military assistance to the ROK to overcome the temporary superiority of the DPRK. In response, Wedemeyer recited the central theme of Truman's containment policy, emphasizing that "the greatest contribution that the Koreans could make to the overall world situation would be

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<sup>4</sup>  
New York Times, December 25, 1948, 2:5; Coulter to Marshall for Muccio, December 20, 1948, RG 59, 501BB/12-2048, NA.

to establish stability in their homeland, to develop a happy, industrious people; a strong government along democratic lines." He stressed that Korea's highest priority was the creation of economic strength, not a large military establishment that "would make a disproportionate drain on the country's economy."<sup>5</sup>

Rhee refused to accept such arguments and expressed his intention to attempt forcible reunification at the earliest possible date. The ROK President informed Royall that he would favor withdrawal of American troops only if the United States enlarged the military advisory group and increased the amount of military assistance. Rhee insisted that "if North Korea were invaded by South Korea, a large proportion of the North Korean Army would desert . . . ." He concluded that Korea's principal difficulties were the product of vacillation in the State Department, which had already "played a strong part in the loss of China."<sup>6</sup>

These comments convinced Royall that American withdrawal was imperative. Muccio disagreed, arguing that the United States could not disengage until it had convinced South Korea that it did not intend to abandon the infant regime. If the South Koreans felt secure and confident,

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<sup>5</sup>  
Army Department Memorandum, February 8, 1949, RG 319, CSA 091 Korea TS, NA; New York Times, February 9, 1949, 15:2.

<sup>6</sup>  
Royall Memorandum, February 8, 1949 and Muccio Memorandum, February 25, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 956-959.

the ROK would achieve economic self-sufficiency and popular support. The Provisional KWAG Commander, Brigadier General William L. Roberts, substantiated Muccio's analysis. He insisted that the ROK warranted American support because its soldiers were loyal to the government and would fight to defend the nation.<sup>7</sup>

Muccio harbored mixed emotions regarding Rhee. While recognizing his wide popularity, the American Ambassador observed that Rhee possessed limited administrative talent. Perhaps worse, the old patriot was aristocratic and "very obstinate." Rhee's main concern was to ensure his own political survival and to discredit anyone who threatened his authority. During January, 1949, Rhee began a campaign to foster political unity under his complete control. The ROK President appealed to the National Youth Movement and Kim Sung-seo's Democratic Party to forsake their independent existence and join his party. Such political pressure disturbed Muccio, who observed that "the President has intimated that the unification of non-Communist political parties which he has been urging is only to be desired if the net result is a coalition supporting him as President."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.; Muccio wrongly recollects that Royall and Wedemeyer visited Korea late in 1948, Oral History Interview Transcript, HSTL, 9-12; Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, 329; Army Department Memorandum, February 8, 1949, RG 319, CSA 091 Korea TS, NA.

<sup>8</sup> Muccio, Oral History Interview Transcript, HSTL, 11-14; New York Times, December 28, 1948, 11:2; Muccio to Acheson, January 24, 1949, RG 59, 895.01/1-2449, NA.

A powerful opposition party now emerged to challenge Rhee. Embassy Charge Everett F. Drumright referred to the faction as the "Young Group" and stressed the extreme nationalism of its leaders. It demanded American withdrawal because of its strong hostility toward foreign domination. The "Young Group" also opposed the ECA program, the Korean-American Financial and Property Settlement, and Rhee's desire to give the United States the Banto Hotel for its embassy. Ultimately, the faction expected to achieve reunification peacefully. Drumright viewed these leaders as extremely unrealistic, being

inclined to apportion blame equally upon friend and enemy. . . . While strongly non-Communist themselves, they do not clearly recognize the nature of Sovietism. They ascribe to it decent, self-sacrificing intentions of furthering democracy and true independence. They do not know the real facts of life concerning Soviet satellite states the world over, and the impossibility of compromise with the Soviets, without complete loss of independence, democracy, and, perhaps, life itself.

Drumright expressed hope that eventually these critics of American policy would recognize the magnitude of the Soviet threat and agree to cooperate with Rhee.<sup>9</sup>

American diplomatic representatives in Seoul attempted to foster Korean political unity and support for Rhee. Vice Consuls David Mark and Gregory Henderson conferred with the leaders of the "Young Group" and stressed Soviet refusal to

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<sup>9</sup> Drumright to Acheson, February 11, 1949, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/2-1149, NA.

permit democracy in the north. Quite logically, the Korean Assemblymen then observed that if a negotiated reunification was impossible, then civil war was inevitable. In response, Mark and Henderson indicated that the ultimate objective of containment in Korea was liberation:

Korea was a miniature of the world. As Korea was split, so was the world. However, it was not certain at all that war between Russia and America was the inevitable outcome of this. Many Americans felt that after a number of years of tension, the Soviet Union might come to its senses, compromise, and change toward peaceful paths. That was the hope on which American foreign policy was based.

Mark and Henderson agreed with the "Young Group" that Korea was an area of tension, but insisted that civil war was not unavoidable. When Moscow abandoned its attitude of  
10  
obdurance, Korean reunification would occur.

## II

American leaders were still interested in maintaining international support for the Republic of Korea. The UNCOK chairman Egon Rantshofen-Wertheimer was dubious regarding the wisdom of continued United Nations action in Korea in view of Soviet intransigence. Muccio immediately exerted pressure on the Commission to support American policy and assist the ROK. He stressed that the mere presence of the UNCOK bolstered the morale of the Rhee regime, while

detering a DPRK attack.<sup>11</sup> Evidently, Muccio's actions were effective, since the UNCOK on February 12 recognized the legitimacy of the ROK and declared its commitment to promote Korean reunification.<sup>12</sup>

Rhee made it quite clear, however, that he would not tolerate international scrutiny of or interference in South Korea's domestic political affairs. The UNCOK was to provide moral and diplomatic support for the ROK and investigate the undemocratic nature of the DPRK, but ignore criticism of Rhee and evidence of political repression in the south.<sup>13</sup> Thus, antipathy between the ROK and the UNCOK emerged almost immediately. In February, 1949, Rhee announced his complete opposition to any UNCOK attempt to contact the northern regime. Such action, he argued, would constitute tacit recognition of the Communists and an affront to the ROK.<sup>14</sup> The UNCOK was obviously in a quandry, since Moscow had made it clear that the DPRK was in control of its own affairs. The Commission decided nevertheless to accept Rhee's interpretation and address an appeal for cooperation directly to

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11

Muccio to Acheson, February 9, 1949, RG 59, 501BB/2-949, NA; Memorandum of Conversation, February 7, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 953-955.

12

New York Times, February 13, 1949, 47:5.

13

Muccio to Marshall, December 7, 1948, RG 59, 895.00/12-748, NA; Gordenker, The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea, 148-153.

14

Muccio to Acheson, February 15, 1949, RG 59, 501BB/2-1549, NA; New York Times, February 19, 1949, 4:3.

the Soviet Union, offering its good offices for settlement  
 of the Korean dispute.<sup>15</sup> At the same time the UNCOK  
 indicated that it would remain in South Korea to verify  
 American withdrawal.

Rhee's aggressive tendencies concerned the Commission  
 as much as North Korean belligerence. Upon arrival, the  
 French delegate inquired as to the American attitude toward  
 forcible reunification under Rhee. Muccio assured him that  
 any such attempt was contrary to American policy. Yet,  
 Muccio was clearly aware of the danger of a southern-initi-  
 ated attack. On February 18, Rhee appointed five governors  
 for rule in the north after reunification. He argued that  
 his action would bolster morale in the south and improve  
 the ROK's claim to be a national government. Muccio scoffed  
 privately at Rhee's naivete in thinking that it would be  
 easy to conquer the north. He observed that the Korean  
 division was no different from the partition of Germany.<sup>16</sup>

Rhee also refused to permit non-government approved  
 Korean citizens from engaging in contacts with the UNCOK.  
 He stationed police outside the Commission headquarters to  
 monitor all visitors. Rantshofen-Wertheimer strongly pro-  
 tested such interference in the Commission's activities.  
 He reminded the United States that the UNCOK's job was not

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<sup>15</sup>

Muccio to Acheson, February 18, 1949, RG 59, 5013B/  
 2-1849, NA; New York Times, February 22, 1949, 3:6.

<sup>16</sup>

Muccio to Acheson, February 26, 1949, RG 59,  
 895.01/2-2649, NA.

only to foster reunification, but also to supervise the development of Korean democracy. The UNCOK sought broad consultations with Koreans to ensure the emergence of democratic institutions.<sup>17</sup> Drumright conveyed these complaints to Rhee, but the ROK President was unmoved. Rhee insisted that divisive elements would only weaken his government. Drumright argued that the ROK should attempt to hide nothing and permit full freedom for investigations. Rhee agreed to strive for cooperation, but stressed that the Chinese experience proved it was impossible to attempt compromise<sup>18</sup> and reconciliation with Communism.

America's Korea policy fared much better at the United Nations. In February, 1949, both the ROK and the DPRK applied for admission to the international organization. The United States registered a major diplomatic victory when the Security Council voted to reject the DPRK's application in favor of referring the ROK's claim to the Membership Committee. Soviet delegate Jacob Malik immediately denounced the vote as an example of Anglo-American dictation. The United Nations majority decided nevertheless that Soviet defiance of the UNCOK's actions precluded support for the Soviet client. On February 24, the Membership Committee

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<sup>17</sup>

Mark and Henderson Memorandum, March 7, 1949, RG 59, 501BB/3-749, NA.

<sup>18</sup>

Drumright to Acheson, February 24, 1949, RG 59, 501BB/2-2449, NA; Drumright to Acheson, February 12 and 23, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 960-961 and 964-965.

forwarded the ROK's application to the Security Council with its recommendation for approval. Drumright expected a Soviet veto, but explained that such action would "have advantageous effect of further alienating Korean people from Soviets and rendering more difficult Soviet attempts attain hegemony whole country." To no one's surprise, Moscow did veto the resolution for admission on April 18. Washington immediately charged the Soviet Union with again blocking progress toward Korean independence.<sup>19</sup>

In the meantime, North Korea intensified its campaign of border violence and guerilla action.<sup>20</sup> Rhee believed that only American military assistance, not the presence of the UNCOK, would provide security from a potential invasion. As a result, he again dispatched Chough Pyong-ok to Washington to press Truman for the equipment necessary to arm a larger defense force. Drumright strongly disapproved of Rhee's reliance on military power as the key to Korean survival. He observed that Communist guerillas had been able to survive regardless of military operations:

Despite the efforts of overwhelming superior opposing forces of men and equipment in the Korean police and army, they could knock out provinces of South Korea one by one, at their

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"Korean Membership in the United Nations," DSB, XX, 503 (February 20, 1949), 227; DSB, XX, 511 (April 17, 1949); New York Times, February 3, 1949, 12:4 and February 17, 1949, 3:3; Drumright to Acheson, March 17, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 967; See also, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 943-944.

20

New York Times, February 5, 1949, 5:2.

leisure. All the speeches, political jockeying, ECA imports and brave plans of Koreans and Americans in Seoul would not cancel the reality of a country gradually moving toward increasing turmoil.

Only the development of internal economic and political strength, Drumright argued, could remove threats to Korean national security.<sup>21</sup>

Drumright's arguments hardly convinced Rhee. In March, Ambassador Chang provided Acheson with a memorandum outlining the nature and objectives of Chough's mission to the United States. The Rhee government would request sufficient military assistance to attain "military parity" with North Korea. This was an indispensable ingredient, Chang argued, for creating a "psychology of safety." The memorandum went on to discuss two historic Korean goals; unification, without which complete economic and political independence was impossible, and strength "to contribute our due share as a bastion of democracy in the Far East in combatting the over-expanding Communist forces." The ROK insisted that only a program of extensive military aid, similar to the American approach in Greece, would permit the South Koreans to fulfill these objectives.<sup>22</sup>

Washington finally decided to impress upon Rhee the limited nature of the military aid program contemplated for

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21

Drumright to Acheson, March 14, 1949, RG 59, 895.00/3-1449, NA.

22

Acheson Memorandum, March 24, 1949, RG 59, 895.20 Missions/3-2449, NA.

Korea, as well as America's determination to withdraw. In part, Washington feared that the American administrative and logistical preparations would constitute a premature announcement of America's departure. Acheson believed that the cooperation and support for withdrawal of the ROK and the UNCOK was vital to the success of the operation. Thus, he instructed Muccio to inform Rhee and the UNCOK of American intentions to disengage within the "next few months." The Secretary of State stressed that it was vital to avoid any embarrassment resulting from rumors prior to the official announcement. At the same time it was essential to avoid any indication of forced departure in the face of Korean opposition.<sup>23</sup>

On April 4, Muccio informed Rhee that the Truman Administration had adopted a new policy in regard to Korea. After realizing the defensive nature of the ROK army envisioned in NSC-8/2, Rhee expressed dissatisfaction. He insisted that reunification would require a more extensive commitment of power. The majority of northerners, Rhee explained, despised Communist rule. Even the army would join a revolt when Rhee "gave the signal." The ROK needed airplanes and combat ships to guarantee victory, while continued vacillation would cause the North Koreans to lose faith in the ROK's commitment to liberation. Muccio

assured Rhee that the United States intended to provide military equipment, but would no longer delay withdrawal. The Constabulary army had achieved an adequate level of training and efficiency to permit American departure within a few months without fear of a DPRK invasion.<sup>24</sup>

Muccio met with Rantshofen-Wertheimer the same day and expressed hope that the UNCOK would observe American withdrawal and verify compliance with the December 12 resolution. The UNCOK chairman favored instead that the United Nations dispatch a military observation team to serve the desired purpose. Other Commission members opposed American disengagement entirely and advocated continued occupation for an additional five years. The UNCOK's reaction must have pleased Syngman Rhee.<sup>25</sup>

Aware that American withdrawal was certain, Chough and Chang demanded the immediate implementation of an economic and military aid program. Butterworth and Bond assured the two Koreans that the United States did not intend to either overlook or neglect Korea's interests and needs. However, the demands on American foreign aid were indeed great and few nations were satisfied with their portion. Butterworth

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24

Muccio to Acheson, April 5, 1949, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/4-549, NA.

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Memorandum of Conversation, April 8, 1949, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/4-849, NA; New York Times, April 19, 1949, 1:6; Rantshofen-Wertheimer made this proposal in February and Washington approved it in March, Drumright to Acheson, February 18, 1949 and Acheson to Muccio, March 22, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 963 and 969.

pointed out that the United States was far more concerned with the "necessity of preventing the Korean Government, in its struggle against Communism, from losing the support of the people by becoming static and anti-progressive."<sup>26</sup> The ROK continued to insist that only military power, or dis-<sup>27</sup>armament of the DPRK army, would ensure Korean security.

Rhee now formally requested arms from the United States sufficient to equip an additional one hundred thousand troops and five hundred more American military advisors. Acheson was hesitant to grant such a request. He approved instead the formal establishment of KMAG as a means to boost Korean morale. Roberts informed Rhee that he would choose the best members of the USAFIK to staff the permanent advisory group. In the published announcement, the United States emphasized the tremendous success of previous American aid and advice in the creation of a Korean security force. The Provisional KMAG had fostered Korean security and this justified its continued existence after withdrawal. As KMAG Commander, Roberts expressed his determination to successfully prepare the Constabulary army for self-defense, thus permitting the<sup>28</sup> United States to withdraw safely.

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Memorandum of Conversation, April 11, 1949, RG 59, 895.20 Missions/4-1149, NA.

27

Muccio to Acheson, April 18, 1949, RG 59, 895.00/4-1849, NA.

28

Memorandum of Conversation, May 4, 1949, RG 59, 895.20 Missions/5-449, NA; "Korean Military Advisory Group Established," DSB, XX, 520 (June 19, 1949), 786-787.

## III

Muccio was initially successful in his attempts to convince Rhee to support withdrawal. At a press conference, the ROK President expressed agreement that the Constabulary army was sufficiently powerful to repel any attack from the

<sup>29</sup>north. Events in China obviously alarmed Rhee. With the Communist offensive across the Yangtze River in April, 1949, Rhee developed second thoughts regarding the wisdom of American withdrawal. He inaugurated a public campaign to force the United States to guarantee South Korea's protection in the event of attack. Rhee sought a reaffirmation of the Korean-American Treaty of 1882, as well as supplies and equipment for a navy and airforce.<sup>30</sup>

In a frantic letter to MacArthur, Rhee predicted a DPRK invasion in the very near future and appealed for more military assistance. He warned that South Korea was engaged in a "fight for its life" in blocking the spread of Communism for the rest of the free world. At the United Nations Chouh proposed American occupation for an additional year until the ROK possessed enough strength and stability to forestall invasion.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Butterworth to Acheson, April 18, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 992-993.

<sup>30</sup> Muccio Memorandum, May 2, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 1003-1005; Muccio to Acheson, May 7, 1949, RG 59, 50133/5-749, NA; New York Times, May 7, 1949, 4:7.

<sup>31</sup> Rhee to MacArthur, May 22, 1949, MacArthur Papers, Correspondence, Box 8, VIP File, DNML; Ross to Acheson, June

Rhee's change of heart severely undermined the ability of the United States to withdraw. Muccio concluded that Washington would have to authorize additional military aid for an airforce and navy if it expected to obtain Rhee's consent to departure. He began to press the Administration to grant these requests.<sup>32</sup> Muccio's apparent refusal to support withdrawal without this supplementary assistance dismayed American military leaders. The Army Department emphasized that withdrawal on schedule was impossible unless the State Department agreed to the preliminary implementation of "Twinborn." Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson addressed a letter to Acheson complaining that previous postponements "have already created serious logistical and budgetary problems." He urged the State Department to support withdrawal and avoid "further delay and indecision in this matter."<sup>33</sup> In response, the State Department approved the reduction of "Twinborn's" security classification to "restricted" and MacArthur instructed Seoul to implement

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1, 1949, RG 59, 501BB/6-149, NA; New York Times, May 8, 1949, 29:4.

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Muccio to Acheson, April 22 and 26, 1949 and May 3 and 6, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 994-997 and 1005-1006 and 1008-1009.

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Lawson to Royall, April 29, 1949 and May 13, 1949, P&O 091 Korea TS, Section I-A, Book 2, Box 163, NA; Folk Memorandum, May 26, 1949, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea, Section II, Cases 21-40, Box 548, NA; Gray to Acheson, April 29, 1949 and Johnson to Acheson, May 4, 1949. Truman Papers, Korean War File, Box 1, Background, Folder on Withdrawal, HSTL; Muccio to Acheson, April 29, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 998-999.

the final stage of the withdrawal operation.<sup>34</sup>

In the meantime, the South Korean press began to openly criticize the United States for its determination to leave and to demand an American pledge of protection for the ROK. Editorials even blamed Washington for the 38th parallel and the existence of a Communist regime in the north.<sup>35</sup> These reports incensed Acheson, who instructed Muccio to convey his "deep concern" to Rhee. The United States considered such public pressure "not only as grave breach ordinary diplomatic courtesy but also as sharply inconsistent with spirit mutual friendliness and good faith . . . ." Acheson also warned that such action "may well have serious adverse consequences in terms pending requests economic and military aid for Korea." If Rhee continued to make "ill-considered" statements and "unrealistic" aid requests, the United States might decide to terminate all assistance to the ROK.<sup>36</sup>

Muccio had already told Rhee that he was "disturbed and even shocked" at the "tone and content" of recent press statements. During subsequent discussions, Rhee agreed that it was perhaps a mistake to try to force Washington's hand,

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Acheson to Muccio, May 9, 1949, Acheson to Johnson, May 10, 1949, Muccio to Acheson, May 11, 1949, and Butterworth to Maddocks, May 13, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 1014-1016, 1018-1019, and 1022-1023.

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Muccio to Acheson, May 7, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 1011-1012.

36

Acheson to Muccio, May 9, 1949, Truman Papers, Korean War File, Box 1, Background, Folder on Withdrawal, HSTL.

but "he did not think it wrong make Korean position clear to American people."<sup>37</sup> On May 21, Muccio expressed consternation regarding publicity surrounding an emerging Korean-American dispute on withdrawal. When Rhee called his Foreign Minister in for comment, Ben Limb, "in a shrill voice," charged the United States with "selling China down the river." He insisted upon the right to comment and publicize American policy failures in repeating the mistakes made in China. Muccio suggested that if this was Rhee's attitude then perhaps the American Embassy should close and he should leave Seoul. The Defense Minister later apologized for Limb, but the incident revealed clearly the correlation<sup>38</sup> between American policy in China and Korea for the ROK.

Yet, Mao's victory in China obviously placed South Korea in a precarious position. On the anniversary of Korean elections, a hostile enemy confronted the ROK and was dedicated to its extinction. Battle-hardened Koreans were beginning to return from China to North Korea and it was impossible to ignore the growing likelihood of invasion. Delaying American withdrawal had added to the success of the KMAC in training the Constabulary, but the United States refused to postpone departure any longer. The New York Times opposed Truman's approach and recommended positive

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<sup>37</sup> Muccio to Acheson, May 12, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 1021-1022.

<sup>38</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, May 21, 1949, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/5-2149, NA.

guarantees for South Korea's military protection. <sup>39</sup>

Truman and his advisors preferred to increase the commitment of the United Nations to defend the ROK's security. On May 4, 1949, Acheson informed the American delegation at the United Nations of the decision to withdraw no later than June 30. He argued that technical, economic, and limited military assistance to South Korea would provide adequately for the ROK's self-defense. Disengagement was merely in compliance with the December 12 resolution and constituted no lessening of American interest in Korea's future. The ECA program and KWAG, Acheson observed, were indicative of the firmness of American commitments. At the same time the United States endeavored to improve relations between the ROK and the UNCOK. Austin spoke to Chough and stressed the diplomatic power and prestige involved in maintaining support in the United Nations. Since the United States could not interfere with the Commission's interpretation of its duties and responsibilities, Rhee had to accept the <sup>40</sup> UNCOK's approach to ensure amicable relations.

On May 19, 1949, the Commission approached Moscow for the final time, requesting transportation and assistance to enter the northern zone. In the absence of a response, the

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<sup>39</sup> New York Times, May 8, 1949, IV, 10:2 and May 12, 1949, 18:1.

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<sup>40</sup> Acheson to American Delegation at the United Nations, May 4, 1949, RG 59, 501BB/5-449, NA; Webb to Seoul, May 4, 1949, RG 59, 501BB/5-449, NA.

UNCOK attempted to terminate its role in Korea while it<sup>41</sup> ensured America's continued presence in the peninsula.

At a Korean State dinner on May 21, Rufino Luna, delegate from the Philippines, publicly announced his government's opposition to American withdrawal. The Commission had been unable to verify Soviet departure; nor had it been able to foster democracy in North Korea. Luna concluded that the United States was under no obligation to terminate its occupation, since the United Nations had not fulfilled its<sup>42</sup> December 12 resolution. Two days later, the UNCOK voted not to be responsible for the timing of American withdrawal, since it had played no role in Soviet departure. The Salvadorian delegate even opposed observation and favored the immediate termination of the Commission's role in Korea. On June 3, in accordance with Trygve Lie's instructions, the UNCOK voted to cease consideration of the use of military observers, thus effecting the complete frustration of<sup>43</sup> American policy objectives in Korea.

May, 1949, was tragic for America's Korea policy. As

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Muccio to Acheson, May 20, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 1031-1032; New York Times, May 20, 1949, 10:5.

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Austin to Acheson, May 4, 1949 and Acheson to Austin, May 5, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 1006-1008; Muccio to Acheson, May 23, 1949, RG 59, 501BB/5-2349, NA; New York Times, May 23, 1949, 9:6.

<sup>43</sup>

New York Times, May 24, 1949, 17:5; Memorandum of Conversation, June 2, 1949, RG 59, 501BB/6-249, NA; Gardiner Memorandum, May 6, 1949 and Muccio to Acheson, May 20, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 1010-1011 and 1033; Muccio to Acheson, June 3, 1949, RG 59, 501BB/6-349, NA.

Muccio explained, the fall of China and American withdrawal had created incredible insecurity in the Rhee government. While engaging in "inept and anxious" attempts to force American guarantees of protection, Rhee had instituted a campaign of political repression. Despite such problems, the United States continued to stress the success of United States policy in Korea. Popular support for Rhee and the effectiveness of self-government represented "a substantial<sup>44</sup> gain for the good cause of democracy."

## IV

Despite difficulties with the ROK and the UNCOK, it was clear that American withdrawal was irreversable. The United States had transferred the remaining arms, ammunition, communication equipment, jeeps, trucks, machinery, and spare parts of the USAFIK to the Constabulary army. The New York Times predicted that the last American troops would leave Korea at the end of July in defiance of the wishes of the ROK.<sup>45</sup> Faced with the inevitable, Limb held a press conference and in a surprising reversal of opinion observed that the Constabulary army possessed enough strength "to conquer North Korea within three days." Muccio observed that such remarks were "a refreshing contrast to the steady stream of

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<sup>44</sup>

Muccio to Acheson, June 13, 1949, RG 59, 895.00/6-1349, NA; New York Times, May 12, 1949, 30:3.

<sup>45</sup>

New York Times, May 29, 1949, 17:2.

official comment of late" which focused attention on Korean weakness. In private, however, the Rhee regime continued to press the United States to delay withdrawal. Limb appealed to Embassy Secretary J.P. Gardiner for delay, arguing that the United States had not given enough advance notice.<sup>46</sup>

Washington now expressed concern that Rhee's efforts to delay withdrawal were undermining South Korea's security. On June 2, Acting Secretary of State James E. Webb handed Chough an aide memoire protesting the ROK's distribution of erroneous information deprecating the extent of American military assistance and the size of the Constabulary. Rhee's derogatory posture, Webb explained, called into question America's good faith while it undermined Korean morale. Emphasis on Korea's weakness only served Communist purposes and invited disaster. The United States was determined to withdraw and believed that no amount of military aid could protect South Korea unless the people were determined to resist Communist expansion.<sup>47</sup>

Muccio discussed the contents of Webb's protest with Rhee on June 6. The ROK President informed Muccio that he no longer opposed American withdrawal because the retention

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Muccio to Acheson, June 3, 1949, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/6-349, NA; Memorandum of Conversation, June 4, 1949, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/6-449, NA; Muccio to Acheson, May 26, 1949 and May 31, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 1034-1036.

47

Webb to Muccio, June 3, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 1037-1038.

of a large "US military force Korea did not 'mean much' and that statement committing US 'stand by' Korea would be more effective and preferable." During subsequent discussions, Rhee proposed the formation of a "Pacific Pact" similar to NATO and dedicated to halting Communist expansion.<sup>48</sup> It was clear, however, that the Truman Administration would never adopt such a course. The United States did not anticipate a North Korean attack and was confident that the development of South Korean political and economic strength alone would produce reunification. Truman was committed to the realization of Korean independence, but his strategy precluded reliance on American military power.<sup>49</sup>

Yet, the threat of civil war remained real. During the UNCOK's visit to the parallel in June, the North Korean security force fired on the Commission, removing any hope that the Commission would be able to enter the northern zone. Rantshofen-Wertheimer informed Gardiner that the UNCOK should withdraw after it observed and verified American departure.<sup>50</sup> The "Young Group" urged the UNCOK to remain, fearing that the absence of reunification would lead to civil war after the Commission departed. Kim Yak-soo and

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Muccio to Acheson, June 6, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 1039; Muccio to Acheson, June 7, 1949, RG 59, 501BB/6-749, NA.

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Memorandum of Conversation, June 2, 1949, RG 59, 501BB/6-249, NA.

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Gardiner to Acheson, June 20, 1949, RG 59, 501BB/6-2049, NA; New York Times, June 16, 1949, 4:6.

his supporters argued that the United States and the Soviet Union should remove all military advisors, since only this would permit reunification. As a result, the Commission agreed to appeal again to the DPRK for an end to its intransigence. The UNCOK proposed internationally supervised elections throughout Korea for a unified government.<sup>51</sup>

These attempts at reconciliation infuriated Rhee. Even the Assembly denounced the UNCOK as a "Communist fifth column" whose presence in Korea was contrary to the national interest. In response, the "Young Group" expressed strong opposition to American economic and military aid, arguing that only international action would remove the partition. On June 21, Rhee ordered police to arrest six members of the "Young Group" on a charge of conspiracy to overthrow the government. The following day, police arrested Kim Yak-soo and alleged that he was attempting to foster a Communist seizure of power.<sup>52</sup> On June 26, an army officer assassinated Kim Koo in an apparent attempt to demonstrate the price of dissent. Rhee denied complicity in the killing, since the assassin was a previous supporter of Kim Koo. Yet, anyone supporting a negotiated settlement with the north could not fail to grasp the significance of the trend of events.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> New York Times, June 19, 1949, 12:5 and June 30, 1949, 9:4; Gordenker, The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea, 164-165.

<sup>52</sup> New York Times, June 22, 1949, 3:4.

<sup>53</sup> New York Times, June 23, 1949, 3:6, June 26, 1949,

Muccio immediately complained to Rhee that such strong-armed tactics detracted from Korea's image in the international community. The ROK President responded that arrests were unfortunate but necessary because Korea was "fighting for life against Communist menace." The government had to eliminate any potential source of rebellion or succumb to a Communist seizure of power. Drumright questioned Rhee's logic, arguing that Kim Yak-soo had contributed a great deal to the strengthening of the ROK. Although the "Young Group" was not acting to deter a Communist takeover, "their criticisms, if over-emotional, generally had a plausible basis; and their support of such popular measures as the local administration and land reform bills, against the conservatives, was instrumental in passing the legislation." Rhee refused to listen to the American representatives in Seoul. In July, police arrested seven more Assemblymen in another attempt to stifle criticism. Drumright now believed<sup>54</sup> that Rhee was in complete control of the legislature.

North Korea's threat to South Korea justified a degree of dictatorial rule. In anticipation of American withdrawal, the DPRK accelerated its campaign to weaken the ROK. On June

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3:6, June 27, 1949, 1:2, and June 28, 1949, 10:2; Henderson to Acheson, June 29, 1949, RG 59, 895.00/6-2949, NA; Muccio to Acheson, June 27, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, 1045-1046.

<sup>54</sup>

Muccio to Acheson, June 25, 1949, RG 59, 895.00B/6-2549, NA; Drumright to Acheson, July 11, 1949, RG 59, 895.00/7-1149, NA; Drumright to Acheson, July 8, 1949, RG 59, 895.00B/7-849, NA; Henderson to Acheson, July 9, 1949, RG 59, 895.00/7-949, NA.

28, 1949, the DPRK announced the formation of the "Democratic Fatherland Front" which was dedicated to the forcible reunification of Korea under Communist control. In addition, the Communists in North and South Korea joined forces in a new "Worker's Party" with Kim Il-sung as Chairman and Pak Heun-yong as Vice-Chairman. On July 7, the DPRK called for national elections no later than September 15, 1949. North Korea also urged South Koreans to revolt and oust Rhee from power as the necessary precursor for reunification. Rhee quickly denounced these Communist appeals and termed them ridiculous.<sup>55</sup> American commentators speculated that the North Koreans expected to use elections as a device to obtain complete control over the peninsula without military action. After riots, subversion, and bloodshed weakened the ROK, the vastly superior North Korean army could invade and conquer South Korea with relative ease.<sup>56</sup>

American military leaders were definitely aware of the possibility of invasion. The JCS had given detailed consideration to the matter in a paper formulated just prior to withdrawal. The paper reaffirmed that Korea was of little strategic value and American occupation was impractical and ill-advised.<sup>57</sup> Besides, the Truman Administration did not

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<sup>55</sup> Kim, Divided Korea, 169-170; New York Times, July 8, 1949, 1:7 and July 9, 1949, 5:8.

<sup>56</sup> New York Times, July 10, 1949, IV, 8:3.

<sup>57</sup> JCS to CSA, June 23, 1949, RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45), Section 20, NA; Schnabel, Policy and

believe that the Communists contemplated open military aggression across an established boundary.

A comprehensive study of alternative courses of future action in Korea accompanied the final JCS authorization for withdrawal. The study considered three "immediate" proposals of possible action. First, it rejected direct negotiations between the ROK and the DPRK for a settlement as useless. Second, it dismissed the option of organizing a Korean underground task force to operate in the north and exploit Communist weakness through instigating a popular rebellion. North Korea might use the operation to justify not only continued subversion in the south, but also an open invasion. American military leaders could agree only on the third alternative, which provided for American warships to make periodic visits to Korea. Muccio had already supported such action as an indication of American concern. On July 8, an American cruiser and two destroyers arrived at Pusan for a three-day "good will visit."<sup>58</sup>

The remainder of the report discussed a variety of options open to the United States in the event of an overt North Korean attack. Significantly, the JCS assumed that the DPRK did not possess "the capability of sustained and comprehensive military operations without Chinese Communist

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Direction, 50.

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Army Department Memorandum, June 27, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 1046-1057; Bolte Memorandum, June 23, 1949, RG 319, CSA 091 Korea TS, NA.

and Soviet-Manchurian aid and support." In the event of such a full-scale Communist assault, the United States would have to react or lose the entire peninsula by default. The JCS recognized that the international community would criticize the United States if it refused to defend the ROK. In addition, the fall of Korea would mean that American rehabilitation attempts had been futile and wasteful. Thus, the report outlined a series of actions that the United States would implement if the Communists launched a major assault.

America's first action would be the immediate evacuation of American nationals and military advisors from Korea. The United States would then refer the matter immediately to the United Nations and request an emergency session of the Security Council. Such action would emphasize the international character of the situation and avoid the onus of unilateral American action. Despite the probability of delay, inaction, and a Soviet veto, the United States could ignore the United Nations only at the risk of destroying the international organization. More important, referral of the matter to the United Nations would force Moscow to publicly declare its intentions.

Military leaders opposed, however, any more positive course of action. The JCS dismissed the alternative of undertaking a "police action" with United Nations sanction and multinational participation. Although such a course would certainly bolster the United Nations and might even

deter future aggression, the JCS speculated that the necessity for Congressional approval would entail disastrous delays. American participation would also result in a serious depletion of manpower and material resources in Korea at a dangerous moment in European affairs. Thus, the JCS would sanction military participation in a "police action" as a last resort alone and only with "complete cooperation and full participation by other members."

Unilateral military action was the central feature of the entire paper. Such a "task force," the JCS observed, would command universal respect, inspire anti-Communist movements to resist totalitarian control, and, in addition, "might have sufficient deterrent effect to cause North Korean withdrawal to the 38th parallel and obviate police action engagement." On the other hand, American intervention would reestablish United States responsibility for Korea after the Truman Administration had struggled for five years to extricate itself. Perhaps worse, the JCS prophetically warned that American intervention might force Communist China to align itself openly with the DPRK and thus "lead to a long and costly involvement of U.S. forces in an undeclared war." Thus, the JCS determined that the reestablishment of an American military force in Korea would constitute unsound policy possessing serious military implications. Unilateral American action would justify Soviet charges of imperialism and might lead to a world war.

Finally, the JCS considered the logic of extending to Korea a positive guarantee of military protection. While such action might deter Moscow, the policy would require the conversion of indirect economic aid to direct supply of large amounts of military equipment. The JCS insisted that it would be "militarily undesirable and strategically unsound" to subtract military aid from areas with a higher priority than Korea. The United States would also be supporting a regime that appeared unable to maintain popular support. In conclusion, the JCS argued that, in contrast to Greece,

Korea is a liberated area which did not contribute to the victory and it is in the opinion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of little strategic value. To apply the Truman Doctrine to Korea would require prodigious effort and vast expenditure far out of proportion to the benefits to be expected.

If economic aid alone was insufficient to protect the ROK, it was not worth the cost of positive military defense.<sup>59</sup>

Rhee would have disagreed strenuously with the conclusions of the JCS. Throughout June, the Rhee regime sponsored mass demonstrations against American military withdrawal and stressing the value of the ROK as a bastion of democracy in Asia. By the end of the month, North Korean refugees in particular demanded more American military aid and a positive guarantee of protection, since these individuals believed that the Communists had marked them

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<sup>59</sup> The JCS report is located in RG 165, 091 Korea, 1949, NA.

for immediate execution.<sup>60</sup> Despite such action, the last American combat troops left Korea on June 29, 1949. The UNCOK observed and verified American withdrawal, but the DPRK denied the Commission's request to cross the parallel and certify Soviet departure as well. Drumright no doubt expressed the feelings of many Americans in Seoul when he observed that the Koreans now "shared the emotions of a second-string quarterback who suddenly finds himself carrying the ball after months of criticizing from the bench."<sup>61</sup>

## V

Truman's Korea policy depended for success upon Congressional willingness to finance his aid program. The 80th Congress had been willing to support Truman's foreign policies only when the President raised the spectre of Soviet expansionism.<sup>62</sup> As a result, Truman had increasingly come to rely on America's obligation to protect freedom throughout the world in the face of the Soviet Union as justification for his policies. Truman frequently injected large doses of moralistic rhetoric into clearly constructive programs to ensure passage. Anti-Communism was as important as Arthur

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<sup>60</sup> Drumright to Acheson, July 5, 1949, RG 59, 895.00/7-549, NA.

<sup>61</sup> New York Times, June 29, 1949, 11:3; DSB, XX, 522 (July 4, 1949), 842; Drumright to Acheson, July 11, 1949, RG 59, 895.00/7-1149, NA.

<sup>62</sup> Hartmann, Truman and the 80th Congress, 214-215.

H. Vandenberg to the future of Truman's bipartisan foreign policy.<sup>63</sup>

Truman's electoral victory in 1948 effectively ended bipartisanship in foreign affairs. During 1949, Truman's critics returned with increasing regularity to the China issue as a vehicle for discrediting the Administration. The Republican Party pointed to the victory of Communism in China as indicative of Truman's inability to halt Soviet advances. Republican criticism underlined the importance of containment in South Korea. Success in that area would constitute a refutation of Republican charges.<sup>64</sup>

American withdrawal from Korea and Truman's refusal to issue a firm statement of military protection appear logical only in the context of larger policy objectives. A positive military commitment was impossible, since the Truman Administration believed that the containment of Communism did not require the direct application of American military might. As Truman explained in his memoirs:

We knew that Rhee's government would be in grave danger if the military units of North Korea were to start a full-scale attack. For that reason, we wanted him to make his own area as stable as it could be made, and, in addition we wanted to bring a measure of prosperity to the peasants

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Hamby, Beyond the New Deal, 354; Theoharis, Seeds of Repression, 32.

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Michael Guhin, John Foster Dulles: A Statesman and His Times (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 56; Westerfield, Foreign Policy and Party Politics, 306-307 and 333; Adler, The Isolationist Impulse, 384; Tang Tsou, America's Failure in China, 489.

that would make them turn their back on the Communist agitators.<sup>65</sup>

Economic strength and popular support alone had to produce Korean security. Eventually, North Korea would rejoin the South because of its superior political and economic system. If Truman complied with Rhee's demands for "positive guarantees," on the other hand, Chiang's supporters could argue with complete justification that similar action in China would have prevented a Communist victory.

Truman's strategy was then extremely delicate, since it relied on the fragility of the DPRK and the unlikelihood of a Communist invasion. It also required the development of democracy in South Korea and policy-makers insisted upon progress despite the disparity between American expectations and Korean reality.<sup>66</sup> Congress recognized this and many representatives were loath to spend money in an area that appeared doomed to extinction. Supporters of Chiang also used the Korean issue as a bludgeon to score political points against Truman for his failure in China. The Administration completed work on its Korean Aid Bill in June, 1949, but quick approval seemed unlikely. In fact, Truman submitted the Korean proposal to Congress at the height of<sup>67</sup> the acrimonious debate over America's China policy.

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Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, 330.

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Goodrich, Korea, 80-81 and 94-95.

<sup>67</sup>

Westerfield, Foreign Policy and Party Politics, 353.

Truman's proposal provided for one hundred fifty million dollars in economic and technical assistance. In an accompanying press release, the Administration indicated that the United States possessed a special responsibility for Korea which justified the continuation of its aid program. The statement also represented the first official mention that American withdrawal would occur in the very near future.<sup>68</sup> Truman's decision to announce withdrawal simultaneously with a proposal for strengthening the Korean economic aid program was hardly accidental. The press release pointed to the plan as proof that "this withdrawal in no way indicates a lessening of United States interest in the Republic of Korea, but rather another step toward the normalization of relations with that republic and a compliance on the part of the United States with the . . . December 12 resolution of the General Assembly." The United States intended to rely on the UNCOCK for the eventual achievement of a free and united Korea.

American leaders recognized that Congress would not readily approve the Korean aid program and expected considerable criticism. As a result, Webb urged Truman to send a special message to Congress emphasizing the vital importance of aid to Korea and the necessity for immediate passage. The State Department had already drafted a statement and obtained the approval of the ECA and the Bureau of the

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 Budget. Truman complied and transmitted a personal appeal for the continuation of aid, arguing that such action was of vital importance to the successful achievement of American foreign policy aims. Without American assistance, Truman argued, the ROK would collapse "inevitably and rapidly."<sup>70</sup>

Truman's message emphasized that the United States would pursue economic recovery, rather than mere relief. Modeled after the Marshall Plan, the program would cost only slightly more than continued reliance on relief assistance alone and would eventually produce self-sufficiency. Truman then indicated the wider implications of his Korea policy in a remarkable statement that deserves quotation at length:

Korea has become a testing ground in which the validity and practical value of the ideals and principles of democracy which the Republic is putting into practice are being matched against the practices of communism which have been imposed upon the people of north Korea. The survival and progress of the Republic toward a self-supporting, stable economy will have an immense and far-reaching influence on the people of Asia. Such progress by the young Republic will encourage the people of southern and southeastern Asia and the islands of the Pacific to resist and reject the Communist propaganda with which they are besieged. Moreover, the Korean Republic, by demonstrating the success and tenacity of democracy in resisting communism, will stand as a beacon to the people of northern Asia in resisting the control of the communist forces which have overrun them.

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 Acheson to Kee, May 11, 1949, Acheson Papers, Box 65, Correspondence May-June 1949, HSTL; Webb to Truman, June 4, 1949, Murphy Papers, Memorandum-Congress-Korea File, June 7, 1949, HSTL.

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 Truman, Message to Congress, June 7, 1949, DSP, XX, 520 (June 19, 1949), 781.

Truman's statement provides an excellent example of the nature and objectives of containment in Asia. The Administration believed that all Asians, if given the choice, would select the American rather than the Soviet model of economic and political development.<sup>71</sup>

Congressional hearings on the Korean Aid Bill also demonstrated the nature of American expectations in Korea. On June 8, Webb appeared before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and explained that, in the absence of American assistance, a Communist victory was inevitable. The loss of this "outpost of freedom" would destroy worldwide faith in the superiority of democracy and confidence in American commitments.<sup>72</sup> Hoffman supported Webb's arguments and outlined the specifics of the Administration's three-year program. He insisted that it would be cheaper than mere relief over the "long haul." More important, Hoffman reasoned that "Union between the north and south of the country can be achieved on satisfactory terms only if the Government and economy of south Korea become so clearly vigorous and sound as to convince the people of north Korea that their best interests lie in union."<sup>73</sup> Thus, the Truman Administration promised not only to contain but also

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<sup>71</sup>

Ibid.; New York Times, June 8, 1949, 1:6.

<sup>72</sup>

Webb Testimony, U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Korean Aid, Hearings on H.R. 5330, 81st Cong., 1st sess., June 1949, 7-9.

<sup>73</sup>

Hoffman Testimony, Korean Aid, 9-20.

to defeat Communism in Korea.

Administration spokesmen portrayed Truman's Korea policy as a means to preserve American prestige in Asia and achieve Korean reunification at a relatively low cost. As Hoffman explained, "the way to get Korea and other countries . . . off our back is to get them on their feet."<sup>74</sup> Edgar A.J. Johnson, the ECA representative for Korea, observed that previous American aid had produced a sense of unity and purpose in Korea. Aside from economic improvement, the new Korean government also enjoyed increased political unity and stability because of such capable political leaders as Syngman Rhee and Kim Sung-soo. Johnson concluded that the Administration's policy would permit the United States "to get out of Korea as quickly as possible and as cheaply as possible and at the same time to insure the continuation of the new-born Korean Republic."<sup>75</sup>

Republican critics quickly seized upon the Korean Aid Bill as a means to attack Truman's China policy. These Congressmen insisted that China was as much a symbol of democracy in Asia as Korea, yet the Administration had done little to prevent the victory of Communism over Chiang. Walter Judd told Webb that "Korea is the first of the rat holes that we will have to pour money into all around China if we do not plug up the basic rat hole in China." Both

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Hoffman Testimony, Korean Aid, 26.

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Johnson Testimony, Korean Aid, 75 and 126.

Judd and Lawrence Smith of Wisconsin stated their opposition to the Korean aid program unless the State Department clarified its policy throughout Asia.

On June 16, Webb admitted that the failure of democracy in China was indeed unfortunate, but insisted that the result was not the product of insufficient American aid. Chiang had refused to reform his government and thus lost the confidence of his people. In Korea, on the other hand, the United States could contribute to the spread of democracy, while supporting the activities of the United Nations. The best weapon against Soviet expansionism, Webb argued, was American attempts to foster economic development and self-government in the underdeveloped areas of the world.<sup>76</sup>

Republican critics of the Administration rejected the arguments of the Administration. Congressman John D. Lodge insisted that it was meaningless to "talk simply about how economic aid will help them to resist communism and then make up our minds that we intend to diminish our forces . . . ." Two days later, Lodge referred to an article in Time magazine which placed the size of the North Korean army at two hundred thousand troops. This Communist military threat coupled with internal political division in the ROK meant that the "anti-communist position was flimsier than the grass roof of a Korean house." An American military leader responded that the Time report exaggerated the

seriousness of the situation and insisted that South Korea was capable of self-defense. Congressman Judd vehemently disagreed. He charged Truman with attempting to use the Korean Aid Bill as a cover for abandoning Korea.<sup>77</sup>

## VI

Congressional refusal to pass the Korean Aid Bill greatly disturbed Truman. His power to provide funds to Korea under GARIO would terminate on June 30 and the President thus issued an urgent request for action. On June 20, Truman met with Congressional leaders to convince them that passage was an absolute necessity. Korea was the last "foothold of democracy" in northeast Asia and the people throughout Asia would be less willing to resist Soviet pressure if the ROK collapsed. "Its survival as an independent, democratic country or its collapse and submission to Communism," Truman explained, "will make a very great difference in the way in which the people of areas now overrun by Communism resist or submit to it." Congressional Democrats emerged from the conference expressing determined support for the bill. Truman had convinced these leaders that Korea was the last symbol of democracy in Asia and thus crucial to the success of American policy in that area.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Time, LIII, 25 (June 20, 1949), 31-32; Korean Aid, 124, 137, and 180-181.

<sup>78</sup> Memorandum for Truman, June 18, 1949, RG 59,

Acheson appeared before the Congressional Committee on June 23, 1949, in a final attempt to win Republican support. He emphasized that Korea could resist Communist pressure without positive guarantees of military protection. American troops could not ensure Korean independence unless the Koreans themselves acted vigorously to create economic self-sufficiency. If the United States abandoned Korea and refused to continue economic and military aid, the ROK would collapse in two to three months. Acheson reiterated Truman's argument that the will of Asian peoples to resist Communist expansion depended upon the survival of Korea. If Congress did not pass the Korean Aid Bill before June 30, South Korea and the rest of Asia would confront an "almost insuperable task in maintaining freedom and independence."<sup>79</sup>

Despite Acheson's appeal, it was clear that Congress would not act prior to the deadline. As a result, Acting Budget Director Lawton suggested that Truman request twenty-five million dollars in supplemental assistance for two months. The "stopgap" measure would ensure continued assistance to Korea until Congress authorized the entire package.<sup>80</sup> On June 30, both Houses approved a joint resolution embodying Truman's plan, but for only one month. On

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895.50 Recovery/6-1849; New York Times, June 21, 1949, 13:1.

<sup>79</sup>

New York Times, June 24, 1949, 2:6.

<sup>80</sup>

Lawton to Truman, June 28, 1949, Frederick J. Lawton Papers, Box 6, Correspondence, White House, HSTL.

August 1, Congress extended the bill to October 15; it appropriated another thirty million dollars on October 28<sup>81</sup> to finance aid to Korea through February 15, 1950. It was clear that Truman's aid program for Korea was in serious trouble.

Truman's intense political pressure produced some early successes. Despite Republican opposition, the House Foreign Affairs Committee approved the Korean Aid Bill on July 1, 1949. In its report, the Committee stressed that the program was precise and "tightly knit," focusing on recovery rather than relief. More important, the United States could terminate assistance at any time if the Koreans misused American aid. The Committee emphasized that a "crisis of freedom" confronted not only Europe, but Korea as well. At the 38th parallel in Korea "as no where else the contest has been clearly drawn between two mutually exclusive viewpoints about the relation between<sup>82</sup> people and their government."

Significantly, the five Republican members of the Committee remained hostile to the Korean Aid Bill and issued a revealing minority report. Although their motives were

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<sup>81</sup>

U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Background Information on Korea, H. Rept. 2495 pursuant to H.R. 206, 81st Cong., 2nd sess., February-March 1950, 27-29.

<sup>82</sup>

New York Times, July 1, 1949, 6:7; U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Aid to Korea, 2 Parts, H. Rept. 962 on H.R. 5330, 81st Cong., 1st sess., July 1, 1949, 47.

clearly partisan, their rationale for opposition represented a valid and realistic critique of Truman's Korea policy.

The Republicans stressed that Korean political factionalism and domestic violence meant that a program of economic aid was "foredoomed to failure." Truman's advisors had admitted that South Korea would be incapable of self-defense if the Communists launched a major assault. Yet, American troops had withdrawn from the peninsula "at the very instant when logic and common sense both demanded no retreat . . ."

"Unless this nation is prepared to meet force with comparable force," the report declared, "economic assistance cannot of itself insure the safety or the integrity of South Korea."

In fact, the Korean Aid Bill would "only enhance the prize to be taken by force of arms and internal intrigue."<sup>83</sup>

Republican critics went on to stress that the conditions responsible for the success of the Marshall Plan were totally absent in Korea. In contrast to Europe, the United States and Asia possessed no "strong interlocking national interests and economic destinies." While Korea would be the "logical 'showcase' for the wares of democracy in the Orient," the minority report argued that the Koreans would be unable to withstand the aggressive political tactics of Moscow because of the "surrounding climate of rampant Communism." The Truman Administration had to develop a comprehensive Asian

policy and cease its reliance on "piecemeal and stopgap legislation." The Republicans emphasized that the construction of a "dike of sand" in Korea would not stem the "tides which threaten to wash away the foundations of every constitutional government in Asia . . . ." If Congress approved the bill and Truman's gamble failed Korea's demise<sup>84</sup> would inflict monumental damage on American prestige.

Truman and his advisors clearly anticipated Republican criticism. Clark Clifford informed Truman that strong leadership alone would counter the Republican strategy of exploiting the Korean issue for the purpose of attacking the Administration's China policy. He recommended that the President meet with Congressional Democrats and impress upon them the importance of aid to Korea. Affirmative action had become "a rather urgent matter" in view of the rising Republican opposition to the bill. Democrats in the House agreed with Clifford's analysis and warned Truman that the floor debate would be intense and the final vote<sup>85</sup> extremely close.

Rhee endeavored to foster Congressional support for aid to Korea. In public statements the ROK President pledged that Koreans would fight "to the last man" in defense of

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<sup>84</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>

Clifford to Truman, July 8, 1949, "Support for the Korean Aid Program," Clark M. Clifford Papers, Official File: Economic Assistance to Korea, HSTL; New York Times, July 2, 1949, 1:2.

their liberty. Rhee also promised never to permit a Communist to join his cabinet, since the House altered the aid bill to provide for termination of assistance if Korea obtained a coalition government. Muccio explained that the "ROK warmly welcomes amendment" because it removed Rhee's "abiding fear" that Truman would force a "coalition with<sup>86</sup> North Korean regime in order bring about unification."

Rhee also indicated his intention to reduce Communist-inspired subversion and terrorism in South Korea. Too often, however, his vigorous anti-Communism coincided with political motivations. In July, Rhee ordered the arrest of several newsmen who had cooperated with the UNCOK and allegedly<sup>87</sup> expressed opinions following "the Communist line." Such political repression infuriated Acheson. The Secretary of State immediately instructed Muccio to confer with Rhee and stress the damage that these arrests were inflicting on Korea's image in the United Nations. Perhaps more important, Acheson complained to Muccio that "such arbitrary action serves to strengthen hands opponents pending Korean aid pro-<sup>88</sup>gram and make final approval . . . much more difficult."

Quite obviously, Congressional support for Korean aid

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<sup>86</sup>  
New York Times, July 2, 1949, 4:3; Muccio to Acheson, July 2, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 1057-1058.

<sup>87</sup>  
New York Times, July 19, 1949, 8:1; Muccio to Acheson, July 18 and 19, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 1062-1063.

<sup>88</sup>  
 Acheson to Muccio, July 18, 1949, RG 59, 5013B/7-1849, NA; New York Times, July 23, 1949, 4:5.

was unlikely unless the Administration proved that South Korea was capable of survival. In an effort to bolster his position regarding Asian policy, Truman decided to release the famous "White Paper" on China. Not only did the "White Paper" attempt to demonstrate that Chiang's fall was beyond American control, but Acheson also expressed hope that the Chinese people would eventually reject their new Communist leaders. American strategy assumed that free people would choose leaders who were best able to vocalize their beliefs and care for their needs. Significantly, the Wedemeyer Report of 1947 did not provide a strong recommendation for Rhee and his cohorts. Not surprisingly, the Administration suppressed the portion of the report pertaining to Korea because of its "comments upon the situation in Korea and upon certain aspects of the Korean leaders' activities

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 . . . ." Truman and his advisors clearly wanted to minimize the information available to the American public indicating similarities between the Chinese and Korean situations.

## VII

Fighting at the 38th parallel intensified during the summer of 1949. The New York Times concluded that North

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 Clifford to Truman, May 17, 1949, Truman Papers, PSF 32 (Foreign Affairs-China 1949), HSTL; Acheson to Truman, May 12, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. IX: The Far East: China (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1974), 1367; See also, Clifford Papers, Box 3, (China), HSTL; Memorandum of Conversation, August 31, 1949, Acheson Papers, Box 65, HSTL.

Korea was probing southern defenses in search of a weakness.<sup>90</sup> Rhee anticipated an invasion at any moment. The ROK thus increased its pressure on Truman to expand America's commitment to defend South Korea. Chough conferred with Acheson in July and requested sufficient military assistance to increase the size of the Constabulary army to one hundred thousand men. He also sought "a specific assurance that the United States would come to the defense of the Republic of Korea in the event of an armed attack against it." In Seoul, Rhee became more outspoken in demanding a "Pacific Pact" and invited Chiang and the President of the Philippines to visit Korea and discuss the matter.<sup>91</sup> Chiang arrived on August 6 and after discussions the two leaders expressed support for an anti-Communist alliance in Asia. Rhee was engaged in an obvious attempt to force Truman to increase the American commitment to defend Korea rather than exposing himself to<sup>92</sup> Republican charges of inconsistency.

Truman resisted Rhee's demands, since he recognized that American interests in Korea were not as important as

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Muccio to Acheson, July 29, 1949, RG 59, 50133/7-2949, NA; New York Times, August 4, 1949, 11:2 and August 5, 1949, 2:6, 18:2.

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New York Times, July 12, 1949, 3:2 and July 26, 1949, 16:7; Acheson Memorandum, July 11, 1949 and Rhee to Truman, August 20, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 1058-1059 and 1075-1076.

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Drumright to Acheson, August 10, 1949, RG 59, 895.00/8-1049, NA; Muccio to Acheson, August 16, 1949, RG 59, 895.00 Rhee/8-1649, NA; Reitzel, Kaplan, and Coblenz, United States Foreign Policy, 225.

those in Europe. At a press conference in August, Truman refused to comment on the logic of Rhee's scheme.<sup>93</sup> The President clearly believed that such Asian states as Korea and the Philippines possessed limited military power and less political strength. American military advisors argued that the ROK had to reduce the size of its army to a force level that its economy could support. Truman addressed a personal letter to Rhee stressing that "the security of the Republic of Korea can best be served by the development of an efficient, compact Korean force rather than by amassing large military forces which would be an insupportable burden on the economy of the country."<sup>94</sup>

Washington did not, however, ignore Korea's basic military needs. On July 25, Truman requested military assistance for several nations, including South Korea. In his message to Congress, the President explained that the ROK confronted a serious threat of invasion and required American equipment for its survival. The Administration's program envisioned "a small force to protect Korean internal security and defend it against outside aggression short of full-scale war."<sup>95</sup> Truman based his recommendations on a

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<sup>93</sup> Truman Press Conference Remarks, August 11, 1949, Public Papers, Harry S. Truman, 1949, 421.

<sup>94</sup> Tsou, America's Failure in China, 507; Roberts to Bolte, July 4, 1949, RG 319, P20 091 Korea, Section III, Cases 41-60, Box 548, NA; Truman to Rhee, September 26, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 1084-1085.

<sup>95</sup> Special Message to Congress, July 25, 1949, Public

number of considerations contained in a private Army Department memorandum. First, if the United States limited Korea's supply of reserve military equipment, Rhee would be unable to launch an invasion of the north. Second, the Constabulary army had been wasteful in its use of military supplies and would now have to exercise restraint. Finally, in the event of a North Korean attack, the United States would lose less equipment to the Communists.<sup>96</sup>

Truman remained committed to an essentially non-military approach to the Soviet challenge in Asia. In July, 1949, the Administration rejected Kennan's proposal to form a small, unified task force, highly qualified, mobile, and well-trained for dealing with "brushfire wars."<sup>97</sup> American leaders did not anticipate a full-scale Soviet-sponsored invasion of Korea. MacArthur shared Washington's judgment. During conversations with several American Congressmen in September, he offered the following observation:

South Korea is in no danger of being overrun by North Korea. . . . However, if South Korea tries to take over North Korea retaliatory measures could certainly be expected. If the United States by default fails to support South Korea the consequences will be

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Papers, Harry S. Truman, 1949, 398; Also in, ESB, XXI, 527 (August 8, 1949), 188.

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Lawson Memorandum, July 19, 1949, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea TS, Section I, Cases 5-15, Box 162, NA.

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Graebner, "Global Containment," 78-80; Paul Y. Hammond, "NSC-68: Prologue to Rearmament," in Strategy, Politics, and Defense Budgets, 287; Rostow, The United States in the World Arena, 229.

most devastating to the United States interests. MacArthur doubted that Moscow would instigate open warfare in Korea as long as its control over North Korea and Manchuria remained unchallenged. The Soviet Union would not benefit from conquest of the entire peninsula, since control over the north alone preserved its security.<sup>98</sup>

American leaders in Seoul were clearly afraid of Rhee's aggressive attitude toward reunification. During August, Roberts reported that South Korea was responsible for recent border incidents, because the army had established salients north of the parallel. He warned Rhee that if the ROK launched an offensive "all advisors will pull out and the ECA spigot will be turned off." Roberts strongly opposed any expansion of the American military aid program to Korea. In September, he vigorously opposed the ROK's request for tanks, heavy artillery, and more ammunition. Such action would be costly and would not contribute to a measurable increase in Korean security. More important, Roberts urged rejection "so as not to encourage an invasion of North Korea by South Korean armed forces."<sup>99</sup>

Roberts offered other reasons in support of his position. For example, the ROK wanted tanks weighing forty-six

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<sup>98</sup> Moreland Memorandum, September 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. IX, 545-546.

<sup>99</sup> Roberts to Bolte, August 19, 1949, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea, Section III, Cases 41-60, Box 548, NA; Duff for Bolte to Royall, September 12, 1949, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea, TS, Section I-E, Box 163, NA.

tons, but Korean bridge capacity was thirty tons. At a June press conference, Roberts went into more detail:

Mechanization is unnecessary in this country as it is too hilly, too many mountains, and rice fields. Tanks could only be used on roads. . . . They can be stopped by obstacles, mines, bazookas and AT guns. . . . Gadgets do not win wars. Good solid infantry training under good officers will adequately defend [Korea].<sup>100</sup>

Thus, the United States rejected the Korean request for heavy military equipment. It was determined instead to produce a relatively small, efficient force, well-schooled in American military techniques. The Administration would support only essential military assistance for the maintenance of internal security and an effective deterrent. The policy relied on the principle of self-help, which precluded "the idea that any particular nation has a vested right in any portion of that assistance."<sup>101</sup>

Rhee's economic problems soon overshadowed the threat of a North Korean invasion. His obsession with national security placed a heavy strain on the nation's financial resources. Increasingly, Rhee turned to expanding the currency and borrowing heavily to finance anti-subversive operations. Deficit spending inevitably produced incredible

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Roberts to Bolte, September 13, 1949, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea, Section III, Cases 41-60, Box 548, NA; Roberts Press Conference Comments, June 16, 1949, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control Korea)/6-1649, NA.

101

Gray to Secretary of Defense, September 13, 1949, RG 319, CSA 091 Korea TS, NA; Sawyer and Hermes, Military Advisers in Korea, 100; Schnabel, Policy and Direction, 36.

inflation and extreme financial instability.<sup>102</sup> At the same time Rhee refused to expand the government's tax base and permitted many wealthy individuals to avoid paying taxes altogether. By the end of 1949, the ROK's indebtedness to the Bank of Korea was sixty-five percent higher than the law allowed. Despite increased food production, South Korea's trade remained badly imbalanced. Insufficient power and inadequate managerial skill magnified Korea's already serious economic crisis.<sup>103</sup>

Economic deterioration and unprecedented inflation disturbed Butterworth, who observed that reports from Korea "read like China 1948!" Unless Rhee instituted major fiscal reforms, disaster was inevitable. Butterworth instructed Muccio to apply "continuing and effective pressure" on the ROK to institute determined measures of reform in the area of taxation and public finance. He recognized that Rhee would not be receptive to American pressure, but hoped that Muccio could realize some measure of success.<sup>104</sup>

Evidently, Muccio immediately informed Rhee of American

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"Economic Developments in South Korea," Far East Economic Review, VII, 16 (October 20, 1949), 519-521; "Review of the Economy of the Republic of Korea," Far East Economic Review, X, 2 (January 11, 1951), 41-47.

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New York Times, January 1, 1950, 74:3; U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Review of the Republic of Korea, 1949, International Reference Service, MIT, 56 (July 1950).

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Butterworth to Muccio, December 13, 1949, RG 59, 895.51/12-1349, NA; Acheson to Muccio, December 30, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 1112-1114.

concern. During late December, the ECA reported that Rhee had ordered some restrictions on government spending and promised to tighten the tax collection system. Yet, the ECA observed that more extensive reform was necessary. Unless the ROK balanced the budget, controlled spending, and restricted currency and credit, the United States would have to terminate aid.<sup>105</sup> Truman's test case of containment was on the verge of a serious crisis at the outset of 1950. The ROK had to develop a sound and realistic fiscal policy or mounting inflation would destroy South Korea's economic stability. In the absence of reform, only a vast increase in American aid would prevent political chaos and a repetition of the China debacle.<sup>106</sup> All of Truman's efforts in Korea had sought to avert just such a situation.

## VIII

Truman and Acheson were quite specific regarding American policy in Asia during January, 1950. The Administration had decided that the mainland Chinese would invade Taiwan in the near future and destroy the last remnants of the Chiang regime.<sup>107</sup> Truman announced his

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<sup>105</sup>

ECA Report, December 31, 1949, RG 59, 895.51/12-3149, NA.

<sup>106</sup>

Ernest R. May, "The Nature of Foreign Policy: The Calculated Versus the Axiomatic," *Daedalus*, XCI, 4 (1962), 658; *New York Times*, January 4, 1950, 74:3.

<sup>107</sup>

Acheson, Wedemeyer, and Johnson Testimony,

determination to remain uninvolved in the Chinese civil war on January 5, 1950. Although the United States would continue economic aid to Taiwan, American military aid and advice would cease. Such an approach proved that the United States possessed no predatory designs on Chinese territory and sought no special privileges or military bases. Acheson denied that the statement constituted any reversal of American policy. The United States, he explained, had recognized Taiwan as Chinese territory during the war and would not violate its past agreements. Far more important, Acheson insisted that military aid would not help the Nationalists. The United States could not give "a will to resist and a purpose for resistance to those who must provide it for themselves."<sup>108</sup>

Acheson's remarks on China were but a prelude to his now famous—an much maligned—speech before the National Press Club on January 12, 1950. Subsequently, scholars have too often focused attention on Acheson's reference in the speech to the American "defense perimeter." With the benefit of hindsight, observers argued that the exclusion of South Korea invited a Communist attack.<sup>109</sup> Such an

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Military Situation in the Far East, 1672-1675, 2296, and 2573-2579; Bundy, The Pattern of Responsibility, 185.

<sup>108</sup>

Truman Statement and Acheson Clarification, January 5, 1950, DSB, XX, 550 (January 16, 1950), 79-81; Time, XXVIII, 2 (January 13, 1950), 23-24; Hamby, Beyond the New Deal, 368.

<sup>109</sup>

Spanier, The Truman-MacArthur Controversy and

analysis diverts attention from the fact that the speech represents one of the most significant statements of American policy in Asia ever delivered. It defines in unmistakable terms the nature of American expectations in Korea and their relationship to the central thrust of Truman's Asia policy at the outset of 1950. The Press Club Speech defines in detail the essence of containment as a liberating force.

In his speech, Acheson contends that the principle issue in Asia was the struggle against economic privation and foreign domination. Asians considered national independence and self-government as the indispensable ingredients in the resolution of these two problems. Acheson argued that the United States had always sought to foster Asian independence while the Soviet Union had attempted to rob Asians of control over their own affairs. The United States opposed Communism not for any selfish reason but because it was the spearhead of Russian imperialism and the Soviet strategy of domination. Acheson stressed that American efforts had to concentrate on avoiding any action that obscured the nature of Soviet tactics.<sup>110</sup>

Acheson's attitude toward the military capabilities of

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the Korean War, 21; Berger, The Korean Knot, 97; Richard Rovere and Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., The General and the President and the Future of American Foreign Policy (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Young, 1951), 101; Rees, Korea, 14; Phillips, The Truman Presidency, 293.

110

Acheson Address, "Crisis in Asia—An Examination of United States Policy," January 12, 1950, DSB, XXII, 550 (January 16, 1950), 111-118.

the United States in Asia was eminently realistic. Beyond Japan, the Ryukyus, and the Philippines, "it must be clear that no person can guarantee these areas against military attack." In the event of open aggression, Acheson observed, "the initial reliance must be on the people attacked to resist it and then upon . . . the United Nations which so far has not proved a weak reed to lean on by any people who are determined to protect their independence against outside aggression." Acheson then insisted that the military threat was not as immediate as the challenge of "subversion and penetration." Communism exploited conditions of economic dislocation and social upheaval to advance the Soviet design of world domination.

Thus, Acheson stressed that economic stability alone would permit Asian nations to withstand the Soviet challenge. Through American economic aid, technical skill, and administrative advice, Asian nations could develop democratic institutions capable of fulfilling popular wants and desires. But American assistance alone was not enough, since the Asian leaders themselves had to demonstrate the will to improve conditions. In China, for example, Chiang had not fostered the improvement of political and economic conditions and the Chinese people had brushed him aside.

For Acheson, his strategy in Asia was the only logical alternative. He pointed to Korea as an area where the United States could utilize economic assistance and foster the

development of democracy. In Korea, "a very good chance" existed for successful resistance to Communist expansion. To refuse such aid to Korea would be "utter defeatism and utter madness." Acheson's Asian strategy would succeed in Korea because, in contrast to China, the ROK wanted American aid and would use it effectively. The Secretary of State concluded that "we have a greater opportunity to be effective" in Korea than anywhere else on the Asian mainland.<sup>111</sup>

Acheson's speech represented a realistic approach to American problems in Asia. It was also cautious and judicious in its analysis of the relationship between Communism and nationalism. As Tang Tsou explains, Acheson's policy "seemed to avoid any immediate risk of war, drew an easily defensible line to protect America's vital interests, and contained a long-term program for Asia which could be implemented by peaceful means."<sup>112</sup> It made little sense to advocate intervention in Asia's internal affairs when such a policy would only alienate people hostile to imperialism. The United States could, however, extend an offer of friendship and assistance. Acheson reasoned that Asian nationalism would defeat Russian imperialism with American aid and then reward the United States with its political support.

America's Asian strategy was unquestionably constructive

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111.

See also, Acheson Comments, February 13, 1954. Princeton Seminars, Acheson Papers, Reel 1, Tape 2, HSTL, 2.

112

May, "The Nature of Foreign Policy," 661-666; Tsou, America's Failure in China, 536.

but also naive and excessively optimistic. As Alonzo Hamby explains, Truman and his advisors

were less perceptive in their belief that liberal democracy could eventually dominate or exercise a substantial influence within the region. Liberal democracy was essentially a Western concept tied to capitalism and not easily grafted on to Asian nationalism. . . . The progressive solutions of conciliation and economic aid were more realistic than blind anti-communism, but hardly likely to produce the happy results which so many seemed to think possible.<sup>113</sup>

Perhaps worse, Truman's naivete prevented a clear understanding of the domestic nature of the emerging civil war in Korea. Both Rhee and Kim Il-sung were dedicated to forcible reunification for personal political reasons. The victory of either leader would not ensure the emergence of democracy in the reunited Korean nation.<sup>114</sup>

In outlining the "defense perimeter," Acheson also revealed his concern that Rhee might instigate military aggression against the north in an effort to speed the process of reunification. The Secretary of State was attempting in part to caution the South Koreans that the United States would not absolutely guarantee the military security of the ROK.<sup>115</sup> Yet, Acheson's Press Club Speech represented only

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<sup>113</sup>

Hamby, Beyond the New Deal, 370.

<sup>114</sup>

Gordenker, The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea, 213; Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 569.

<sup>115</sup>

May, "Lessons" of the Past, 65; Gardner, Introduction, The Korean War (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1972), 17; Collins, War in Peacetime, 31; Spanier, The Truman-

the public enunciation of a strategy that Truman had pursued in Korea with varying degrees of intensity since 1946. As Muccio later explained, Acheson's remarks were not a major policy departure. Truman had always stressed economic assistance in Asia, rather than military power.<sup>116</sup>

Philip Jessup conveyed Acheson's warning directly to the Koreans in an address to the Assembly on the very day of the Press Club Speech. Drumright argued that it was "the most candid speech made by an American official since the end of the occupation." The American Ambassador emphasized that progress toward an improved standard of living required an atmosphere of personal freedom and guaranteed civil liberties. In addition, he stressed that the ROK did not require an increased military capability because

strength is not simply a matter of arms and force. It is a matter of economic growth and social health and vigorous institutions, public and private.

South Korea had to inaugurate a vigorous program to increase political freedom and economic stability if it hoped to survive in the face of the Communist challenge.<sup>117</sup>

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MacArthur Controversy and the Korean War, 17-19; Kennan Comments, February 13, 1954, Princeton Seminars, Acheson Papers, Reel 1, Tape 1, HSTL, 2.

116

Muccio, Oral History Interview Transcript, February 10, 1971, HSTL, 16; Reitzel, Kaplan, and Coblentz, United States Foreign Policy, 2.

117

Drumright to Acheson, January 28, 1950, FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII: Korea (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975), 18-23; New York Times, January 13, 1950, 3:8 and January 14, 1950, 1:6.

Rhee was quick to criticize Acheson's public pronouncements and Jessup's warning. The ROK President denied that Korea faced an economic crisis or that the ROK did not enjoy full popular support. During private discussions, Jessup informed Rhee that the United States was concerned about the high rate of inflation in South Korea. He indicated his expectation that upon his return to Washington "we would have reports from Ambassador Muccio that . . . all of the major problems confronting Korea would have moved forward to a solution." Jessup also reiterated America's refusal to participate in a "Pacific Pact." Apparently, Jessup was successful in reassuring the Koreans of American concern despite the absence of positive guarantees. Rhee promised the American Ambassador that "he was going to take active steps to control" inflation.

## IX

Republican politicians quickly recognized that they could exploit the issue of aid to Korea as a means of focusing public attention on Truman's failure in China. On January 6, 1950, Dulles wrote Vandenberg criticizing Truman's decision to forswear involvement in the Chinese civil war. He emphasized that Acheson's precipitate action was ill-advised, since "there is not left any chance for constructive

action." Dulles argued that the Republicans had to abandon bipartisanship and "must cry over spilled milk!"<sup>119</sup> For Dulles and other Republicans, the situation in Korea was identical to that in China. Since Soviet Communism was monolithic and global in proportions, Truman had to rely on more than mere economic aid to combat the threat.

Republican opposition to Truman's foreign policy reached a peak with the emergence of McCarthyism. Concern over national security and loyalty in the government rendered avid support for Acheson's Press Club strategy impossible. Republicans recognized the political power of the China issue and pressed their advantage.<sup>120</sup> On January 19, 1950, the House defeated its version of the Korean aid bill by one vote, dealing an apparently fatal blow to the chances for successful application of containment in Korea. The New York Times termed the action "unexpected" and "stunning," correctly noting the connection between the vote and Republican dissatisfaction with Truman's China policy.<sup>121</sup>

House action to defeat the Korean Aid Bill shocked Rhee and his advisors. The ROK President insisted that the

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Dulles to Vandenberg, January 6, 1950, Dulles Papers, China 1950, PUL.

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Westerfield, Foreign Policy and Party Politics, 366; Tsou, America's Failure in China, 523-524; Druks, Harry S. Truman and the Russians, 201.

121

Mitchell, Second Failure in Asia, 34; Glenn Paige, The Korean Decision June 24-30, 1950 (New York: The Free Press, 1968), 35; New York Times, January 20, 1950, 1:4.

bill was vital to the survival of Korea as a "bastion of anti-communism." American officials in Seoul also expressed disappointment. Bunce observed that aid would continue for the immediate future, but the "pipeline" would soon "run dry" and force the termination of several vital programs. In Washington, Ambassador Chang expressed concern to Butterworth that the defeat of the aid bill coupled with the Press Club Speech constituted an American decision to abandon South Korea. Butterworth assured Chang that the Administration remained dedicated to support for the ROK and intended to press Congress to reverse its position.<sup>122</sup>

Truman acted immediately and issued a public statement expressing "concern and dismay" at the rejection of aid to Korea. In addition, he authorized a personal letter from Acheson to Congress appealing for speedy rectification of the damage done to American national interest in refusing to approve the Korean Aid Bill. Acheson stressed that a fundamental aspect of American policy was "that in those areas where a reasonable amount of American aid can make the difference between the maintenance of national independence and its collapse under totalitarian pressure, we should extend such aid within prudent assessment of our capabilities." Acheson insisted that Korea was a test of American intentions and the international community would interpret "our conduct

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122

New York Times, January 20, 1950, 4:7 and January 21, 1950, 5:3; Williams Memorandum, January 20, 1950, FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII, 11-14.

in Korea as a measure of the seriousness of our concern with the freedom and welfare of peoples maintaining their independence . . . ." To withhold aid to Korea, Acheson warned, would guarantee the collapse of the ROK, producing disastrous effects throughout Asia and elsewhere.<sup>123</sup>

Congressional leaders responded quickly to Truman's and Acheson's arguments. Tom Connally, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, announced that Congressional leaders would utilize the Senate authorization bill on Korean assistance to resubmit the plan, but with provisions for aid to China as well. He stressed that Korea was a "testing ground for democracy," badly in need of a psychological lift. Even Republican Senators agreed that the House action was counter-productive. Knowland, Smith and Vandenberg all expressed support for Senate action in favor of aid to Korea.<sup>124</sup>

On February 1, 1950, the House Appropriations Committee reported favorably on an amended version of the Senate aid bill for Korea. Despite Acheson's strenuous opposition, the House Republicans forced the inclusion of a provision for aid to China. In addition, the act provided for complete termination on June 30, 1950 of all assistance. Still, the

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BSB, XII, 552 (February 6, 1950), 212; New York Times, January 22, 1950, 1:1.

124

New York Times, January 22, 1950, 1:1 and January 21, 1950, 1:2; Vandenberg to Acheson, January 21, 1950, Acheson Papers, Box 65, Memorandum of Conversations, January-February 1950, HSTL.

Senate had achieved a compromise with the recalcitrant House Republicans and produced a bill permitting Truman to spend the remainder of the aid requested for Korea in June, 1949. Truman and several Democrats were unhappy about the need to include aid to China in the Korean Aid Bill, but they had no other choice but to accept the provision.<sup>125</sup>

On February 9, 1950, Republican critics reversed their position and voted support for the compromise. The following day, the Senate passed the measure unanimously and without comment. There remained, however, a residue of opposition to the Administration's program. Many Congressmen argued that the United States could not implement containment without creating fiscal insolvency. In addition, these critics charged that Truman was not pursuing a uniform and complete program in Asia. In the end, however, most American political leaders agreed with Jacob Javits that the United States had a commitment to aid Korea, since all "Asia is watching this test case." The United States had reversed its policy of indifference, but the extent of its determination to support the ROK remained a matter of doubt.<sup>126</sup>

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New York Times, January 25, 1950, 1:3, January 31, 1950, 2:5, February 1, 1950, 13:2, and February 2, 1950, 26:2; "Economic Assistance to Certain Areas of the Far East," DSB, XXII, 558 (March 13, 1950), 405; U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Appropriations, Economic Assistance to Certain Areas in the Far East, H. Rept. 1571 to accompany S. 2319, 81st Cong., 2nd sess., February 1, 1950; Tsou, America's Failure in China, 538.

126

New York Times, February 11, 1950, 6:8, 14:2, February 8, 1950, 11:5, and February 10, 1950, 1:4.

Despite Truman's efforts in support of the ROK, conditions in South Korea continued to deteriorate. The Assembly exploited the rejection of the aid bill in the United States to resume its criticism of Rhee. Critics alleged that only an end to dictatorial and undemocratic tendencies in Korea would bring popular support and ensure continued American aid. They focused attention on corruption in the government and the absence of freedom in Korea's educational institutions. The Assembly now turned in earnest to a constitutional amendment to limit Rhee's power. In February, the legislature began to consider an amendment making the cabinet subject to its own control. Rhee opposed the plan, arguing that it would unjustifiably weaken the executive and produce chaotic changes in the Korean administrative apparatus. The deadlock between Rhee and the Assembly on this issue prevented cooperation in any other area.<sup>127</sup>

During the second week in March, the legislature voted on the amendment. At the same time the government waged an intense campaign of threats and propaganda to defeat the measure. Rhee ordered the police to disband the Assembly if it passed the amendment. Fighting broke out on the floor of the legislature as opponents of the amendment attempted to close debate. On March 13, the measure failed to obtain the necessary two-thirds support, but only one hundred

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<sup>127</sup>

New York Times, January 24, 1950, 8:3, February 1, 1950, 13:4, February 2, 1950, 3:7, 3:5, and February 3, 1950, 12:4.

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twelve delegates cast votes.

Rhee now counterattacked. The ROK President proposed the creation of a second house in the legislature, arguing that a unicameral assembly was "extraordinarily dangerous." He also urged an amendment to the constitution to permit popular election of the president. Finally, Rhee recommended a postponement of legislature elections scheduled for May, 1950, until the Assembly passed his budget and tax proposals. Holding elections at that time, Rhee observed, would divert attention from more vital matters.<sup>129</sup> The UNCOK immediately indicated its opposition to these recommendations. It urged Rhee to hold elections on schedule, fearing that a prolonged delay would produce a violent popular reaction.<sup>130</sup>

Simultaneously, Washington decided that it could no longer tolerate the deterioration of the economic situation in South Korea. On March 23, Hoffman informed Rhee that, unless he restored Korean economic stability, the United States might terminate further economic aid. In response, Rhee formally announced on April 1, 1950, that he was postponing elections until November. Only if the Assembly

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New York Times, March 10, 1950, 14:1 and March 12, 1950, 17:4; Department of State, The Conflict in Korea, Far Eastern Series #45, 22.

129

New York Times, March 15, 1950, 16:5 and March 31, 1950, 4:7; Gordenker, The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea, 170.

130

New York Times, March 27, 1950, 7:4; Gordenker, The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea, 172-173.

approved his budget would conditions improve and American  
aid continue.<sup>131</sup>

Acheson favored economic reforms, but not at the expense of the appearance of democracy. As a result, he acted quickly to force Rhee to implement reforms without postponing elections. On April 3, Dean Rusk presented Ambassador Chang with what amounted to an ultimatum. Unless the ROK instituted "drastic measures required to curb inflation," it could expect no further American assistance. In view of Korea's economic crisis, Acheson explained, the ECA program was not effective. The message also deplored Rhee's decision to postpone elections since "United States aid, both military and economic, to the Republic of Korea has been predicated upon the existence and growth of democratic institutions within the Republic."<sup>132</sup> Washington clearly recognized that continued political and economic deterioration would destroy Truman's strategy for Korean reunification.

Rhee recognized immediately that he could not defy the United States. On April 11, his Home Minister announced that the government would sponsor elections on schedule.

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<sup>131</sup>

New York Times, April 1, 1950, 5:4 and April 4, 1950, 26:4; Foster to Seoul, March 27, 1950, FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII, 36-37.

<sup>132</sup>

Press Release, April 7, 1950, "U.S. Concerned Over Korea's Mounting Inflation," DSB, XXII, 563 (April 17, 1950), 602; Muccio recommended the inclusion of the section demanding elections, April 1, 1950, FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII, 39-40.

Rhee also indicated his intention to act vigorously to increase taxation and balance the budget. Muccio expressed pleasure at the ROK's decision to comply with American desires and predicted improved conditions. The Assembly also manifested a conciliatory attitude. It approved Rhee's budget which contained provisions for a sharp increase in taxes and prices in state monopolies.<sup>133</sup> The New York Times commended the ROK for its courageous action, arguing that reform justified the continuation of assistance in 1951.<sup>134</sup>

Tragically, Korea appeared in April, 1950, to be a miniature China of three years earlier. Economic and political deterioration seemed to be only the prelude to invasion and civil war. In contrast to Truman's expectations, the ROK had become a "situation of weakness" and such areas provided "an irresistible invitation for the Soviet Government to fish in . . . troubled waters."<sup>135</sup> Perhaps more important, Administration critics and the general public never comprehended the nature of Truman's strategy in Korea and elsewhere in Asia. Even if the nation understood the policy, it is doubtful whether it possessed sufficient patience to support the policy long enough to ensure success.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup>

New York Times, April 12, 1950, 3:1, April 16, 1950, 36:2, and April 22, 1950, 2:4.

<sup>134</sup>

New York Times, April 27, 1950, 28:1.

<sup>135</sup>

Bundy (ed.), The Pattern of Responsibility, 30; Kolko and Kolko, The Limits of Power, 509.

<sup>136</sup>

Smith, Dean Acheson, 137.

Chapter IX:

America's Reluctant Crusade

American leaders expressed a degree of optimism in the spring of 1950. Although the Soviet Union had demonstrated atomic capabilities and Communism had triumphed in China during 1949, the United States anticipated an improvement in international affairs. Truman and his advisors had begun to consolidate a wide range of piecemeal measures implemented in the years following 1946 into an integrated response to the Soviet challenge. The Administration remained committed to containment both in Europe and in Asia as the heart of postwar American foreign policy. More important, Truman still believed that containment would act as a liberating force, particularly in Korea.

Truman's foreign policy rested upon three assumptions. First, although still somewhat imprecise, the Administration perceived Soviet foreign policy as tied to a firm and sweeping aggressiveness. Second, the United States believed that the international Communist movement was "at the service of the Russian State." Finally, and most important, it assumed that "Communism as a force in the domestic politics of all countries, feeds on economic, social and national insecurities; fades as these lessen." To deal with such a threat, the Truman Administration concentrated on improving

the economic and social well-being of the non-Communist peoples to reduce the danger of Communist subversion. The United States thus deemphasized military techniques and remained committed to the creation of worldwide economic and social stability as the most effective method for ensuring American security.<sup>1</sup>

By the spring of 1950, the United States still sought to limit the extent of the nation's commitment to act positively in international affairs. Truman and his advisors believed that only strength—moral, economic, political, and military—could deter Soviet aggression. Yet, such State Department officials as James E. Webb also argued that no single nation could provide unilaterally the strength required to counter Soviet thrusts. Such an effort to neutralize Soviet power would lead inevitably to economic suicide. The "free world" could create such strength only "if all nations which have an identity of interests contribute as best they can through self-help and mutual aid, to the common strength of the whole group." Webb emphasized that economic strength and social progress were the crucial ingredients in the Western security quotient. An effective military force was important, but possible only "without excessive strain on our productive forces."<sup>2</sup>

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Richard E. Neustadt to Stephen J. Spingarn, June 8, 1950, Stephen J. Spingarn Papers, Box 18, International Affairs: Foreign Policy Folder, HSTL.

2

Webb Comments, May 15, 1950, "Freedom Budget Panel,"

After the outbreak of the Korean War, many observers criticized Louis Johnson for cutting the "muscle" rather than the "fat" from the defense budget.<sup>3</sup> Yet, as Westerfield explains, "the basic decisions were made in the White House by presidential advisors who were struggling in a relatively peaceful international climate to balance defense and foreign aid requirements against politically profitable welfare measures without raising taxes or seriously unbalancing the budget." Containment, with its reliance on local self-defense and limited American aid, suited the capabilities of the United States, as well as Truman's priority on domestic affairs in his deliberations during 1950.<sup>4</sup>

"New Left" historians err when they argue that Truman was pursuing a strategy of forcible reunification in the spring of 1950. The United States lacked the power and the will to pursue such an objective. In addition, Truman and his advisors did not expect the Soviet Union to instigate an attack in Korea or anywhere else. Truman actually permitted American military forces to remain decidedly under-strength. Scholars have stressed how wrong the Administration

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Frank Pace Papers, Speech File, HSTL.

<sup>3</sup>  
Charles S. Murphy, Oral History Interview Transcript, May 19, 1970, HSTL, 186; David Bell, Oral History Interview Transcript, September 12, 1968, HSTL, 132-133.

<sup>4</sup>  
Westerfield, Foreign Policy and Party Politics, 340; Johnson Testimony, Military Situation in the Far East, Vol. IV, 2607; Hammond, "NSC-68," in Strategy, Politics, and Defense Budgets, 293.

was,<sup>5</sup> but offer little other than stupidity to explain this underestimation of the danger. In reality, the Truman Administration was convinced that economic aid was sufficient to build "situations of strength" and contain Soviet power.

Some scholars have stressed that the fall of China and the Soviet acquisition of atomic power in 1949 altered the American appraisal of its foreign policy.<sup>6</sup> Actually, little changed regarding the strategy of containment prior to the Korean War. In January, 1950, Truman approved the building of a hydrogen bomb and the formulation of a reappraisal of American foreign policy. These decisions represented an escalation in rhetoric and concern, but not in policy.<sup>7</sup> The now famous NSC-68 did, however, provide the basis for believing that it was necessary to increase military capabilities. The document argued that the Soviet threat was global, because local Communist movements were the main tools of Soviet expansionism. If Truman approved a fifty billion dollar defense budget, American military capabilities<sup>8</sup> would match this perception of the Soviet challenge. Yet,

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<sup>5</sup> Appleman, South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu, 49; Schnabel, Policy and Direction, 43.

<sup>6</sup> Reitzel, Kaplan, and Coblenz, United States Foreign Policy, 259; Cochran, Truman and the Crisis Presidency, 307; Rostow, The United States in the World Arena, 224-225; Paige, The Korean Decision, 57.

<sup>7</sup> Hammond, "NSC-68," in Strategy, Politics, and Defense Budgets, 289-292; Bell, Negotiation From Strength, 33.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.; Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, 311-312;

Truman never implemented NSC-68 until the Korean War confirmed his suspicions.

American military strategy remained unchanged in the spring of 1950. Truman and his advisors were unable to arrive at a consensus on the nature and objectives of Soviet foreign policy. The President even encouraged his advisors to question the assumptions of NSC-68, stressing that the program "definitely was not as large in scope as some of the people seem to think."<sup>9</sup> Quite clearly, there was an absence of certainty among American leaders as to whether Soviet aims were global. Refusing to act on its suspicions, the Truman Administration did not take positive steps to produce the power required to meet such a challenge. The rhetoric of globalism remained, but, in the absence of the Korean War, the importance of NSC-68 would "have been only historical, to mark, but not to effect, a change in the climate of opinion in Washington . . . ."<sup>10</sup>

Political factors also prevented Truman from abandoning his devotion to containment as a liberating force. Not only did the Administration perceive the Soviet challenge, but the Republicans never ceased reminding Truman that his

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Gaddis, "Was the Truman Doctrine a Real Turning Point?," 396; Murphy, Oral History Interview Transcript, May 19, 1970, 184.

<sup>9</sup>

Truman to Lawton, May 23, 1950, Lawton Papers, Memoranda to HST, Agenda and Notes, Box 6, HSTL.

<sup>10</sup>

Hammond, "NSC-68," in Strategy, Politics, and Defense Budgets, 370.

failures in China proved the need for strong action. In an effort to foster some degree of bipartisanship, Truman decided in April, 1950, to appoint John Foster Dulles as "special counsel" to the President on foreign affairs.<sup>11</sup>

Dulles met with Truman on April 28 to discuss his new assignment. At that time, Dulles warned the President that his presence would not shelter the Administration from criticism. He went on to observe

that there should be some early affirmative action in the field of foreign affairs which would restore the confidence of the American people that the Government had a capacity to deal with the Communist menace. . . . If we could really get going, the American people would fall in behind that leadership and attacks like McCarthy's would be forgotten.

Dulles records that Truman expressed sympathy and agreement with this position and assured him that he would inform Acheson of these views.<sup>12</sup>

There can be little doubt that Dulles was referring to Truman's China policy when he spoke of "affirmative action." Dulles believed that Truman's approach had greatly undermined popular confidence and left the Soviet Union with the initiative. He strongly believed that a series of such "disasters can probably be prevented if at some doubtful

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Louis L. Gerson, John Foster Dulles, Vol. XVII: American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy, edited by Samuel Flagg Bemis and Robert H. Ferrell (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1967), 62.

12

Dulles Memorandum, April 28, 1950, Dulles Papers, HST-1950, PUL; Gerson, John Foster Dulles, 61; Druks, Harry S. Truman and the Russians, 227.

point we quickly take a dramatic and strong stand that shows our confidence and resolution." Taiwan possessed certain strategic advantages that would permit the United States to demonstrate its resolution without resorting to a major war. Dulles favored "neutralization" of the island in the event of a Communist attack.<sup>13</sup>

By the spring of 1950, the United States was prepared to react firmly to any challenge to the status quo. Truman's words and Republican criticism permitted no other response. American leaders suspected that Soviet intentions were global, but lacked positive proof. Thus, Washington refused to implement a program of military defense that such an evaluation demanded.<sup>14</sup> Truman remained tied to containment as a liberating force and South Korea, despite its problems, was the test case of this policy in Asia.

## II

America's Korea policy benefited greatly from the continued involvement of the United Nations in the peninsula. During late September, 1949, the United States had formally proposed the continuation of the UNCOK, but with broader powers. The new Commission would observe conditions in Korea and report any developments "which might lead to or

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<sup>13</sup>  
Dulles Memorandum, May 18, 1950, Dulles Papers, China-1950, PUL.

<sup>14</sup>  
Bell, Negotiation From Strength, 17.

otherwise involve military conflict . . . ." Rather than merely being available for consultation, the UNCOK would formally offer its "good offices" to both sides for the achievement of reunification. Within one week, the United Nations Political Committee approved the American plan. It also rejected a Soviet proposal to abolish the UNCOK and declare its prior activities in Korea an illegal interference in internal affairs.<sup>15</sup>

Muccio clearly recognized that the UNCOK's mission was doomed to failure. "A miracle would be in order," he admitted, "to remove the 38th parallel and unify the country at the stroke of a pen." Washington apparently did not share these misgivings. The Truman Administration believed that the UNCOK would have a deterrent and stabilizing effect. If war broke out, the Commission would report who was responsible for the conflict.<sup>16</sup> On October 21, 1949, the General Assembly voted overwhelmingly in favor of the American proposal to continue the UNCOK.<sup>17</sup> Once again, the United Nations had chosen to support American foreign policy and view South Korea as legitimate and not an

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Charles Fahy, "The Position of Korea in International Affairs Today," September 29, 1949, DSB, XXI, 538 (October 24, 1949), 625-626; New York Times, September 30, 1949, 5:7 and October 4, 1949, 5:5.

16

Muccio to Acheson, October 7, 1949, RG 59, 895.00/10-749, NA; New York Times, October 1, 1949, 12:2.

17

DSB, XXI, 540 (November 7, 1949), 695; New York Times, October 22, 1949, 6:1; FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 1090-1092; On the second UNCOK, Turkey replaced Syria.

unpopular regime depending upon the United States for its existence.

After its arrival in South Korea, the UNCOK became increasingly concerned about the intensification of the guerilla war in the ROK. In February, the DPRK fired on the Commission during its visit to the 38th parallel. The UNCOK Chairman Kasim Gulek urged Trygve Lie to send trained military observers to watch developments in view of the threat of invasion. Lie complied, dispatching a team of eight observers.<sup>18</sup> This decision obviously pleased the United States. By March, 1950, however, Washington began to seek the Commission's cooperation in supervising the May elections for the ROK Assembly.

On April 24, Rhee's government invited the UNCOK to observe the upcoming elections. Despite the Chinese delegate's initial hesitancy, the Commission ultimately agreed to supervise the balloting, much to the satisfaction of the United States.<sup>19</sup> Yet, the Commission possessed fewer men and less adequate facilities for observation than it did in 1948; its activities were cursory at best. Rhee also instituted a campaign of political repression to weaken his opponents. During May, police arrested over one thousand suspected subversives, including fifty candidates and one

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<sup>18</sup>  
<sup>18</sup> New York Times, February 17, 1950, 13:5, February 26, 1950, 32:1, and March 3, 1950, 10:5.

<sup>19</sup>  
<sup>19</sup> New York Times, May 12, 1950, 3:6.

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 Assemblyman. Rhee urged voters not to support candidates sympathetic with the Communists. On election day, an atmosphere of law and order prevailed, permitting the UNCOK to certify the legitimacy of the results.<sup>21</sup>

Korean elections in May, 1950, encouraged the United States, since the event gave the appearance of democracy in the nation. In some respects, there was reason for optimism. Rhee's campaign of violence and intimidation had alienated the people and voters elected only forty-eight supporters of the President. Those candidates who experienced police repression received the most support. The persistence of political unrest and economic dislocation, however, were the primary factors determining the outcome. Of two hundred Assemblymen, only thirty-one gained reelection.<sup>22</sup> In the main, Korean political moderates emerged as the victors. The United States could claim that the outcome indicated "a significant refutation of the charge that South Korea was a completely intimidated state, at the mercy of Rhee's police and strong-arm squads." While the atmosphere was hardly one

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 Gordenker, The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea, 179-181; New York Times, May 26, 1950, 9:2 and May 27, 1950, 4:4; Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 258; Walter Lafeber, America, Russia, and the Cold War (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1967), 96.

21  
New York Times, May 30, 1950, 18:5; DSB, XXII, 572 (June 19, 1950), 1021.

22  
New York Times, June 1, 1950, 10:5 and May 31, 1950, 8:3; Allen, Korea's Syngman Rhee, 118; U.S. Department of the Army, Korea-1950 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1952), 8.

of freedom, it was true that Rhee had permitted elections and an unfavorable outcome at that. The New York Times judged the elections a step in the direction of genuine<sup>23</sup> democracy.

Korean elections certainly had a favorable impact on the United States Congress. On May 7, the House and Senate approved by wide margins the Korean aid program for 1951. Not only was aid to Korea "a moral must," but Congress agreed that the ROK was crucial to American security interests in the Pacific. Success in Korea would lead to similar advances for democracy elsewhere in Asia. Truman drew extreme pleasure from Congressional willingness to support the Korean Aid Bill. He explained that such aid indicated American support and friendship for newly independent nations. American economic aid to Korea, Truman argued, would constitute "a blow for freedom" and a setback<sup>24</sup> for Communist expansionism.

Steadily improving conditions in South Korea encouraged the Administration. Speaking before the Senate Appropriations Committee, John W. Foster of the ECA pointed to the May elections as evidence of a healthy trend toward political

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<sup>23</sup>  
New York Times, June 2, 1950, 22:3 and June 4, 1950, IV, 2:3; Gunther, The Riddle of MacArthur, 188-189; Rees, Korea, 20; Berger, The Korean Knot, 99; Caldwell, The Korea Story, 40.

<sup>24</sup>  
New York Times, May 7, 1950, IV, 12:2, May 23, 1950, 2:2, and May 26, 1950, 1:8; Truman, Message to Congress, June 5, 1950, Public Papers, Harry S. Truman, 1950, 453-455.

freedom and democracy in South Korea. In addition, the Rhee government had acted "honestly and courageously" to meet the inflation crisis, implementing policies designed to reduce government spending, increase taxes, contract the money supply, and eventually balance the budget. Foster noted a dramatic increase in industrial and agricultural productivity particularly in the areas of rice, fish, coal, textile, railroad, and electricity production. The new anti-Rhee legislature appeared committed to reform, giving hope for a more stable, efficient, and popular government. By 1952, the United States anticipated the emergence of a stable political system and a virtually self-sufficient economy.<sup>25</sup>

### III

Truman and his advisors believed that South Korea was making a positive contribution to the American defense strategy. Although the ROK was not vital to American national security, the Administration recognized that a Communist conquest of the entire peninsula would threaten

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Foster Testimony, June 13, 1950, U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Appropriations, Foreign Aid Appropriations for 1951, Hearings on Making Appropriations for Foreign Aid for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 1951 and for Other Purposes, 81st Cong., 1st sess., 1950, 305-306; Department of State, The Record on Korean Unification, 14; Department of State, A Historical Summary, 20; See also, Marguerite Higgins, War in Korea (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1951), 132; William Steuck, "Cold War Revisionism and the Origins of the Korean Conflict: The Kolko Thesis," Pacific Historical Review, XLII, 4 (November 1973), 547.

Japan. On January 26, 1950, the Administration announced the signing of a Korean-American military aid agreement, which also authorized the permanent existence of KMAC. American military assistance to Korea was ostensibly designed to relieve the threat of military aggression from the north and foster a sense of security in the south.<sup>26</sup> Such action received general public approval, since most observers recognized that South Korea needed reassurance of American support in the wake of the defeat of the Korean Aid Bill. Time magazine emphasized that the moral obligation of the United States to the ROK precluded any thought of "tossing Rhee and his associates to the Communist wolves . . . ."<sup>27</sup>

Under the Mutual Defense Appropriations Act, Truman had dispatched a survey team to Korea in late December, 1949, to determine South Korea's needs. Muccio had been strongly urging the Administration to increase the ROK's military capabilities to include a navy and airforce. Evidently, the American Ambassador convinced the survey team which returned with a recommendation to increase assistance from ten to twenty-seven million dollars. Yet, the survey team noted that unless the ROK acted to foster economic recovery

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Sawyer and Hermes, Military Advisors in Korea, 102; New York Times, January 27, 1950, 7:2; U.S. Department of State, "Mutual Defense Assistance: Agreement Between the United States of America and Korea," Treaties and Other International Acts Series, No. 219 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1950).

27

Time, LV, 6 (February 6, 1950), 17; Christian Century, LXVII, 5 (February 1, 1950), 132.

an increase in military aid was pointless.

After Congress passed the Korean Aid Bill, American leaders turned attention toward acquiring an increase in military aid for South Korea. Early in May, the State Department proposed the extension of an additional six million dollars in military aid to the Korean army and coast guard. Muccio and Roberts had already formulated a specific plan covering Korean needs and intended allocation of the funds to supplement the survey team's report. The Secretary of Defense requested that the JCS comment on the plan. In response, the JCS reminded Johnson that it would be difficult to justify additional funds on military grounds because "Korea is of little strategic value to the United States." Yet, the JCS would accept the proposal "if political considerations are overriding." Thus, on the eve of the Korean attack, American military advisors agreed to additional military aid for the ROK only as a means of bolstering morale and improving internal stability.<sup>29</sup>

Truman clearly demonstrated a desire to supply the South Koreans with military supplies sufficient for self-defense. On June 1, 1950, he requested Congressional

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Acheson to Muccio, December 9, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, Part 2, 1107; MDAP Survey Team Report, February 6, 1950, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea, Section IV, Cases 60-, Box 549, NA.

29

Leven C. Allen to JCS, May 26, 1950, RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea, Section 21, NA; Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, Undated, RG 218, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45), Section 21, NA.

approval of a military aid appropriation for 1951, which included a provision for several million dollars in military equipment for Korea. Truman stressed that American aid was vital to the achievement of local self-defense against Soviet expansionism. Moscow's determination to dominate the entire globe, he argued, was clear. Thus, Truman again employed global phraseology to justify support for an essentially limited policy designed to avert the direct application of American military power.<sup>30</sup>

Increasing border violence between North and South Korea seemed to justify more military aid to the ROK. Yet, the United States was in an extremely difficult position. As Muccio later explained, "if we gave Rhee and his cohorts what they wanted, they could have started to move north the same as the north started to move south." American leaders had then decided to limit Korea's military capabilities and thus reduce the chances of an attack northward. In the spring of 1950, the ROK possessed no tanks, combat planes, or heavy artillery. In addition, the United States limited its stock of ammunition to reduce defense spending.<sup>31</sup> In

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U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Appropriations, First Semiannual Report on Mutual Defense Assistance Program, H. Doc. 613, 81st Cong., 2nd sess., June 1, 1950, 1-3.

31

Muccio, Oral History Interview Transcript, December 27, 1973, HSTL; Senator Green Comments, Military Situation in the Far East, Vol. III, 2115; John Dille, Substitute for Victory (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1954), 18-19. Yoo, The Korean War and the United Nations, 27; Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 341; Robert T. Oliver, Why War Came in Korea (New York: Fordham University Press, 1950), 144;

April, Roberts ordered the gradual curtailment of advisory functions in Korea. He and many of the other KMAG officers were near the end of their tours of duty and would soon leave Korea. Thus, the future of KMAG was in doubt, but American military leaders believed the ROK army was sufficiently trained and equipped to withstand a North Korean attack.<sup>32</sup> Upon leaving Korea in June, 1950, Roberts described the South Korean army as the "best damn army outside the United States."<sup>33</sup>

Subsequently, many observers argued that the United States did not assign enough importance to Korea's protection in American security planning. As a result, the Administration ignored warnings of an imminent invasion and, in fact, provided the "green light" for the northern attack. The evidence is, however, overwhelming that the American policy of caution was wise.<sup>34</sup> If Rhee possessed enough military power, there can be no doubt that he would have

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Robert Leckie, Conflict: The History of the Korean War 1950-1953 (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1962), 36-37; Hermes, Truce Tent and Fighting Front, 8; Rovere and Schlesinger, The General and the President, 110.

<sup>32</sup> Sawyer and Hermes, Military Advisors in Korea, 112; Collins, War in Peacetime, 43; Bolte to Roberts, December 28, 1949, RG 319, P&O 091 Korea, Section IV, Cases 61-, Box 549, NA.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Robert D. Heinl, Victory at High Tide: The Inchon Campaign (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1960), 12.

<sup>34</sup> Paige, The Korean Decision, 351; Courtney Whitney, MacArthur: His Rendezvous With History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), 318; Yoo, The Korean War, 27.

launched an assault for forcible reunification. During March, 1950, he declared that the ROK would not long ignore the "pleas" of its "northern brothers" for "liberation." Rhee's appeals for additional military assistance to counter the danger of a northern invasion always appeared to mask his aggressive intentions.<sup>35</sup>

Truman and his advisors clearly were concerned about the danger of a North Korean attack. The Administration's request for additional military assistance indicated its determination to increase the ROK's ability for self-defense, although the program would require from six to nine months for implementation. Ironically, America's decision to strengthen South Korea's military establishment probably created considerable alarm in Pyongyang. Rhee's statements and actions reinforced the belief that delay only reduced the likelihood of a successful invasion for reunification.<sup>36</sup> Yet, North Korea's fears were hardly justified. The United States had no intention of supporting an ROK adventure. Edgar A.J. Johnson indicated as much when he agreed with one Senator's observation that American policy sought to

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New York Times, March 2, 1950, 20:4; Rhee to MacArthur, December 2, 1949, MacArthur Papers, Box 8, Correspondence, VIP File, DMML.

36

Revisionist historians rightly observe that Rhee's aggressive attitude created fears in North Korea, Kolko and Kolko, The Limits of Power; See also, Karunakar Gupta, "How Did the Korean War Begin?," The China Quarterly (October-December 1972), 714; Although this provides a viable explanation for the attack, it does not justify the DPRK's blatant aggression.

"set up a government controlled economy until the Soviet problem is solved and hope against hope it will hold out." <sup>37</sup>

North Korea's military capability was unquestionably superior to that of South Korea in June, 1950. The ROK army possessed approximately one hundred thousand men, but equipment and arms for a force only two-thirds that size. Much of the equipment in South Korea's possession was unserviceable and lacked replacement parts. The DPRK, on the other hand, possessed approximately one hundred thirty-five thousand well-trained and highly-organized infantry troops. In addition, the DPRK army benefited from over two hundred tanks, an equal number of combat planes, and a large supply of heavy artillery. Overall, the South Korean military establishment was larger in numbers, but only with the inclusion of the police force—numbering over fifty thousand men. In terms of war-making capabilities, however, North <sup>38</sup> Korea's superiority was beyond question.

Several other factors contributed to North Korea's advantageous position in the spring of 1950. In July, 1949, ten thousand seasoned and experienced Korean soldiers returned from China after helping the Communists defeat the

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<sup>37</sup>

Johnson Testimony, June 13, 1950, Foreign Aid Appropriations for 1951, 34-35; Department of State, The Fight Against Aggression in Korea, 8.

<sup>38</sup>

Appleman, South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu, 10-18; Henderson, Politics of the Vortex, 149; Heintz, Victory at High Tide, 12-13; DeWeerd, "Strategic Surprise in Korea," Orbis, VI, 3 (Fall 1962), 438; Simmons, The Strained Alliance, 114.

forces of Chiang Kai-shek.<sup>39</sup> More important, during April and May, 1950, the Soviet Union had shipped to the DPRK an ample supply of trucks to make the North Korean fighting force extremely mobile. In addition, Moscow shipped the tanks and heavy guns—which the DPRK had not possessed previously—that would provide the edge over South Korea in a military engagement. North Korea also experienced success in its propaganda assault to increase opposition and hostility in South Korea toward the Rhee regime.<sup>40</sup>

During his appearance before Congressional Committees in June, Muccio urged that the United States maintain South Korea's military capability "on an effective defensive level of equality, in manpower, equipment, and training, in relation to those which immediately threaten it." He emphasized that the ROK confronted "an aggressive Soviet-dominated Communist regime which is publicly committed to the destruction of the Republic, by force of arms if necessary." The Rhee government was both willing and able to forestall a Communist seizure of power. Muccio noted that the ROK had virtually eliminated Communist operations in the south. Continued success internally and effective

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<sup>39</sup> Drumright to Acheson, May 11, 1950, FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII, 83-84; Schnabel, Policy and Direction, 37; Department of State, North Korea, 115-116; Lafeber, America, Russia, and the Cold War, 95.

<sup>40</sup> Department of State, North Korea, 17 and 114; Allen S. Whiting, China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to enter the Korean War (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), 43.

deterrence externally demanded a sizable increase in South Korean military power and parity with the North.<sup>41</sup>

Quite obviously, Truman and his advisors would never provide Rhee with the military power that Muccio considered essential for Korean self-defense. One must assume that the American Ambassador was acting without Truman's knowledge and approval—or asking for more than was necessary in an effort to ensure the achievement of minimum needs. A large-scale military aid program for Korea was impossible in view of the limitations Truman had placed on defense spending in January, 1950. Perhaps more important, American strategy focused attention on the pursuit of international stability through economic aid, reliance on the United Nations, and the development of local military capabilities for self-defense.<sup>42</sup>

#### IV

Muccio recognized that Rhee's faith in American support was crucial to the success of containment. He wrote to MacArthur in June, 1950, complaining that Secretary of Defense Johnson's refusal to visit Korea during the spring had caused considerable bitterness in Seoul. He urged

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<sup>41</sup>

Muccio Statement, June 9, 1950, "Military Aid to Korean Security Forces," DSB, XXII, 573 (June 26, 1950), 1048.

<sup>42</sup>

Truman, Message to Congress, June 1, 1950, Public Papers, Harry S. Truman, 1950, 445-446.

MacArthur to convince Johnson that a visit of only one day, while the Secretary was in Tokyo for consultations, would greatly contribute to assuaging Rhee's fears of American indifference to Korea's fate. In a letter to Rusk, Muccio observed that the "visits of the five Senators and ten Representatives to Korea last autumn, and that of Dr. Jessup last January, . . ., had an excellent effect both in informing the visitors and in affecting Korean judgment about United States intentions and in raising Korean morale." Evidence of "strong continued interest" was as crucial as economic<sup>43</sup> and military aid to the survival of South Korea.

Evidently, the Truman Administration accepted Muccio's arguments, for Washington dispatched John Foster Dulles on a fact-finding mission to the ROK. Dulles left the United States on June 14 and four days later surveyed the situation personally at the 38th parallel. He expressed admiration for the "great strides" that the ROK had made toward democracy and economic prosperity.<sup>44</sup> The following day, Dulles addressed the Korean legislature and stated that Korea was "in the front line of freedom." South Korea's success in building a representative democracy proved that the task of opposing Soviet expansionism was not hopeless. Dulles then

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<sup>43</sup>  
Muccio to MacArthur, June 4, 1950, MacArthur Papers, Box 7, Correspondence, VIP File, DMML; Muccio to Rusk, June 1, 1950, FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII, 96-97.

<sup>44</sup>  
DSB, XIII, 572 (June 19, 1950), 998; New York Times, June 8, 1950, 13:5, June 15, 1950, and June 19, 1950, 3:8.

reaffirmed America's confidence in the power of containment as a liberating force:

As you establish here in South Korea a wholesome society of steadily expanding well-being, you will set up peaceful influences which will disintegrate the hold of Soviet Communism on your fellows in the north and irresistably draw them into unity with you.

As long as Korea continued to strive for political and economic strength, the United States would provide material and moral support for the "Great Korean Experiment." Dulles concluded his remarks with a pledge that "You are not alone."<sup>45</sup>

Dulles' observations convinced him that the Republic of Korea had made tremendous progress during the previous year. Later, he expressed dissatisfaction with those observers who stressed the imperfections in South Korea. He was particularly critical of George M. McCune's Korea Today, as the following comments delivered to William L. Holland of the Institute of Pacific Relations indicate:

The British Minister, who had had wide experience in eastern countries, told me on June 21st that in all his wide experiences he had never seen as encouraging an experiment in democracy. I think it was unfortunate that the book merely recorded the early frailties, and not the maturing growth.

McCune's portrayal of Korea's plight as the product of a power struggle between the major powers was especially open to question. Dulles believed that such an interpretation

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Dulles Address, "The Korean Experiment in Representative Government," June 19, 1950, DSB, XXIII, 574 (July 3, 1950), 12-13; New York Times, June 20, 1950, 20:3.

would not promote insight among the American people.<sup>46</sup>

Newspaperman William R. Matthews of the Arizona Daily Star was a close friend of Dulles and accompanied him on his Asian assignment. Matthews also expressed surprise that the Korean people possessed such a high degree of vitality and ambition. In addition, he noted the commitment of the Korean army to defend the ROK, predicting that "it could within the next year take the offensive and take over North Korea." After conferring with Rhee, Matthews expressed the rather startling conviction

that the Republic of Korea will within a year launch the offensive to take over North Korea and unite the country. The President as much as said so. He said it had to be done whether it provoked war or not. He thought it could be done within a few days, because the people of North Korea will rise up to help out, the minute they see liberation is under way . . . .

If he can do it without our help, he will do it. If he can do it with our help he will do it. The attempt is going to be made. . . . The President told about how the people of North Korea were getting impatient. He insisted that an attempt to unify his country was not aggression.

According to Matthews, the confidence of American diplomats in Seoul was indicative of this rising optimism throughout South Korea. Far from being a lost cause, Korea was successfully protecting itself against Soviet expansion.<sup>47</sup>

The Dulles Mission to Korea definitely reassured the

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<sup>46</sup>

Dulles to Holland, August 17, 1950, and September 7, 1950, Dulles Papers, Korea 1950, PUL.

<sup>47</sup>

Matthews to Dulles, June 20, 1950, Dulles Papers, Box 142, Correspondence, PUL.

48

Truman Administration. Despite the optimistic appraisal of Dulles, many commentators insisted that South Korea was near collapse in June, 1950.<sup>49</sup> After all, the Korean people had just repudiated Rhee at the polls and only the threat of termination of American aid had forced economic reforms. Perhaps more important, during early 1950 violent clashes at the 38th parallel had increased in number and intensity. The ROK repelled these thrusts only with great difficulty. Between June, 1949, and June, 1950, almost twelve hundred such incidents occurred.<sup>50</sup> Administration spokesmen insisted that the ROK army dealt effectively with these incursions. Yet, Rhee constantly pointed to the threat of invasion. By May, 1950, the Korean Defense Minister<sup>51</sup> warned that a DPRK attack was imminent.

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Revisionist historians have argued that the Dulles Mission witnessed the completion of plans for a South Korean attack on the North. There is absolutely no evidence to support such speculation. See I.F. Stone, The Hidden History of the Korean War (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1952), 27; Fleming, The Cold War and Its Origins, 596.

49

Kim, Divided Korea, 173; Mitchell, Second Failure in Asia, 9-10; Dorothy Woodman, "Korea, Formosa, and World Peace," Political Quarterly, XXI, 4 (October 1950), 368; Gupta, "How Did the Korean War Begin?," 714.

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Muccio, Oral History Interview Transcript, February 10, 1971, HSTL; Department of the Army, Korea-1950, 7; DeWeerd, "Strategic Surprise in the Korean War," 439; Adam B. Ulam, Expansion and Coexistence: The History of Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-1967 (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1968), 518; Berger, The Korean Knot, 94; Charles Willoughby and John Chamberlain, MacArthur 1941-1951 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954), 351; Oliver, Why War Came in Korea, 145.

51

Foreign Aid Appropriations Act for 1951, 317-318; Paige, "Korea," in Communism and Revolution, 226; Beloff,

In the spring of 1950, the DPRK did decide to achieve reunification, either peacefully or, if necessary, with force. One can argue that North Korea was pursuing a course of duplicity to mask its real intentions,<sup>52</sup> but the fact remains that the DPRK attempted to realize its objectives initially without resort to war. On June 7, 1950, the "Fatherland Front" issued a statement denouncing the May elections in South Korea and proposing nationwide elections on August 5 through 9, 1950. The North Korean proposal included provisions for the exclusion of Syngman Rhee and Lee Bum-suk from participation and the UNCOK from observation in the elections. The resultant national legislature would convene in Seoul on August 15, 1950—the anniversary of the end of World War II in Korea.<sup>53</sup> As one might expect, the ROK immediately denounced the plan and expressed its determination to boycott the proceedings. The UNCOK Chairman, A.B. Jamieson of Australia, greeted the proposal enthusiastically and recommended a meeting to discuss the proposal.<sup>54</sup>

On June 11, 1950, North Korean representatives met with

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Soviet Foreign Policy in the Far East, 179; New York Times, May 11, 1950, 14:5.

<sup>52</sup>

Berger, The Korean Knot, 100; Steuck, "Cold War Revisionism and the Origins of the Korean Conflict," 555.

<sup>53</sup>

Muccio to Acheson, June 9, 1950, FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII, 98-99; New York Times, June 9, 1950, 15:4.

<sup>54</sup>

Muccio to Acheson, June 10, 1950, FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII, 101-102; New York Times, June 10, 1950, 4:4.

the UNCOK at the 38th parallel. They presented the UNCOK with copies of the North Korean appeal, but they were not willing to discuss it in detail. After an exchange of gunfire and some confusion, the North Koreans expressed complete opposition to any United Nations participation in Korean reunification. Soon after the meeting concluded, three men crossed the 38th parallel and entered South Korea carrying a "Peace Manifesto." The ROK promptly arrested these representatives of the "Fatherland Front" and thus indicated Rhee's unswerving opposition to any DPRK plan to obtain a reconciliation.<sup>55</sup>

North Korea's strategy seemed to rest upon the assumption that the people of South Korea had become so frustrated with continued partition that they favored reunification even under Communist control. One widespread rumor alleged that, on June 3, 1950, a group of South Koreans submitted a petition to the ROK favoring reunification at all costs and supported with over five million signatures. The DPRK hoped to spark support for a reconciliation on their terms through reliance on these "peace overtures." As a final effort to prove its sincerity, the "Fatherland Front" proposed, on June 19, the merger of the two legislatures for the purpose of drawing up a new constitution. This plan

included provisions for the arrest of all "traitors"—an obvious reference to Rhee. The ROK would obviously never accept such a proposal.<sup>56</sup>

There can be no doubt that it was the North Koreans who initiated the Korean Civil War. On the morning of June 25, 1950, the DPRK army launched its assault along six invasion routes and the ROK could provide little resistance to the larger and better-equipped North Korean forces.<sup>57</sup> The final decision for war did not come until the last two weeks before the attack, when North Korea began to move its army into position. In all probability, the DPRK still anticipated the possibility that the "peace strategy" might succeed, since North Korea did not recall its military forces from weekend pass until the night before the attack. When the final assault came, North Korea was confident of victory because of its military superiority and its expectation of sympathetic popular reception.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Stone, The Hidden History of the Korean War, 18; Schnabel, Policy and Direction, 9; Beloff, Soviet Foreign Policy in the Far East, 182.

<sup>57</sup> Fontaine, History of the Cold War, Vol. II, 10; Gunther, The Riddle of MacArthur, 167; Spanier, The Truman-MacArthur Controversy and the Korean War, 15; Paige, The Korean Decision, 349; Edgar O'Ballance, Korea: 1950-1953 (Hamden Connecticut: Archon Books, 1969), 15; Rutherford M. Foats, Decision in Korea (New York: The MacBride Company, 1954), 8; This is, of course, only a short list.

<sup>58</sup> Appleman, South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu, 19-20; Steuck, "Cold War Revisionism and the Origins of the Korean Conflict," 556; Revisionists have argued that these hasty preparations prove North Korea did not initiate the assault, Stone, The Hidden History of the Korean War, 13;

Administration officials, interestingly enough, received reports in the spring of 1950 that a Communist attack was imminent, but were unsure of the location. American leaders in Washington and Seoul dismissed Korea as a probable target for invasion, believing that such a thrust was more likely

<sup>59</sup> in Indochina. At the MacArthur Hearings, Acheson explained that this was the product of America's confidence in the validity of the assumptions supporting containment:

The view was generally held that since the Communists had far from exhausted the potentialities for obtaining their objectives through guerilla and psychological warfare, political pressure and intimidation, such means would probably continue to be used rather than overt military aggression. . . . Now, the same situation that existed in Korea existed in a number of other places, where the possibility of attack existed, but it was not believed that the attack would take place at that time.<sup>60</sup>

Containment's logic meant that Moscow would never revert to open aggression to further its expansionist aims. Thus, the Korean War shattered the very foundation upon which the entire postwar American strategy rested. After June 25, 1950, American involvement in international affairs could

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Gupta contends that South Korea crossed the parallel and seized Haeju prior to any North Korean operations. The ROK had indicated its determination to invade the North and the town was on the shortest route to Pyongyang, "How Did the Korean War Begin?," 699-714.

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Kennan, Memoirs 1925-1950, 485; Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, 331; Schnabel, Policy and Direction, 64; Muccio to Acheson, June 9, 1950, FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII, 99-101.

<sup>60</sup>

Acheson Testimony, Military Situation in the Far East, Vol. III, 1991.

no longer remain limited to economic aid and technical advice. Since the Communist threat was now essentially military and far more aggressive, Truman had to alter American foreign policy accordingly.

## V

American leaders, as well as the general public, immediately concluded that the Soviet Union had ordered the attack. Adam B. Ulam summarizes well the judgment of later commentators when he observes that to believe "the North Koreans would have attacked on their own is inconceivable."<sup>61</sup> After all, North Korea had been a Soviet puppet ever since its creation in 1945.<sup>62</sup> Allen S. Whiting provides a more specific explanation for the logic of assuming that Stalin ordered the North Korean attack on South Korea:

Virtually no decisions, certainly not that of the June 1950 invasion, could be made without Soviet knowledge and, in all probability, Soviet advice. Some sectors of the economy, such as oil and shipping, came under direct Russian control through joint-stock companies.<sup>63</sup>

American policy-makers interpreted the Soviet-North Korean

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Ulam, Expansion and Coexistence, 518.

<sup>62</sup>

Department of State, North Korea, 5; O'Ballance, Korea, 27; James McGovern, To the Yalu (New York: William Morrow, 1972), 14; Philip A. Mosely, "Soviet Policy and the War," Journal of International Affairs, VI, 2 (Spring 1952), 107.

<sup>63</sup>

Whiting, China Crosses the Yalu, 42; See also, Edgar Snow, Red China Today: The Other Side of the River (New York: Random House, 1970), 618.

Agreement of March, 1949, as proof that the DPRK was subordinate to Moscow. By 1950, the North Koreans had modeled their political and economic system after the Soviet Union and Moscow controlled all foreign trade with North Korea. In addition, Soviet-trained Koreans dominated the government, the army, and the Communist party. Although the Soviet Union no longer maintained troops in North Korea, most observers believed that Stalin possessed complete control through covert means.<sup>64</sup>

There is abundant evidence available to support the conclusion that Moscow ordered the attack. The Soviet Union had provided technicians, military equipment, and various other supplies to North Korea during the postwar period. In the absence of continued aid, the DPRK could not hope to sustain an invasion and complete the conquest of the south.<sup>65</sup> Although the number of Soviet military advisors in North Korea had declined from one hundred fifty in 1948 to less than eight in 1950 per division, the Soviet Military Mission in Pyongyang remained in existence. The conclusion seemed inescapable that Soviet officers were at least aware of the operation and probably directed the attack.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Department of State, North Korea, 103, 114, and 120; Mosely, "Soviet Policy and the War," 107; Ulam, Expansion and Coexistence, 518; Paige, The Korean People's Democratic Republic, 34.

<sup>65</sup> Collins, War in Peacetime, 3-4; Kim, Divided Korea, 174; Rostow, The United States in the World Arena, 230.

<sup>66</sup> Department of State, North Korea, 114; Steuck,

Some scholars have relied on the Korean War to substantiate the argument that the Soviets always seize the initiative when presented with an opportunity to extend its area of control.<sup>67</sup> A somewhat more limited explanation focuses attention on Stalin's concern over American military power in Japan. The United States was then in the process of negotiating a peace treaty with Japan and Stalin allegedly hoped to forestall a Japanese-American defensive alliance. George F. Kennan speculates that a Communist victory in Korea might have created neutralist tendencies in Japan and thus denied the United States a military base of operations.<sup>68</sup> Korean unification under the DPRK, Ulam argues, "would lead many Japanese to conclude that Communism was indeed the wave of the future, at least in Asia."<sup>69</sup> Even if Japan decided to strengthen its alliance with the United States, the unification of Korea would provide substantial compensation. Soviet control over the entire Korean peninsula would offset the

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"Cold War Revisionism and the Origins of the Korean Conflict," 558; O'Ballance, Korea, 104-105.

<sup>67</sup> Osgood, Limited War, 164-165; Fehrenbach, This Kind of War, 53; Ulam, Expansion and Coexistence, 513; Rees, Korea, 18; Spanier, The Truman-MacArthur Controversy and the Korean War, 24.

<sup>68</sup> Kennan Comments, February 13, 1954, Princeton Seminars, Acheson Papers, Reel 1, Tape 2, HSTL, 7-8; Kennan, Memoirs 1925-1950, 395; George F. Kennan, Memoirs 1950-1963 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1972), 41-44.

<sup>69</sup> Ulam, Expansion and Coexistence, 520; See also, Steuck, "Cold War Revisionism and the Origins of the Korean Conflict," 558-559; Fontaine, History of the Cold War, Vol. II, 104; Phillips, The Truman Presidency, 293.

military advantages of a Japan firmly planted in the  
<sup>70</sup>  
 Western camp.

One serious problem complicated the easy and logical assumption of Soviet culpability. Moscow's representative at the United Nations was not present at the time of the Korean attack. William Steuck contends that the Soviet Union intentionally absented itself from the Security Council to prove with finality that the United Nations was impotent and not an effective means for collective  
<sup>71</sup>  
 security. Stalin did not expect the Security Council to adopt a positive plan of action. If the United Nations did act, Moscow's absence was cause for declaring any vote illegal. Others have pointed out that Moscow had enough time to react, but chose not to return to the United Nations until August 1, 1950. Either Stalin considered the United Nations disdainfully unimportant or he chose to avoid open  
<sup>72</sup>  
 criticism for Soviet aggression in the Security Council.

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 Lafeber, America, Russia, and the Cold War, 97; Feis, Contest Over Japan, 145; Louis J. Halle, The Cold War as History (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 203-204; Rees, Korea, 18; Marshall D. Shulman, Stalin's Foreign Policy Reappraised (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 144; Gunther, The Riddle of MacArthur, 174; Whiting, China Crosses the Yalu, 37; Mosely, "Soviet Policy and the War," 110; Alexander L. George, "American Policy-Making and the North Korean Aggression," in Korea: Cold War and Limited War, edited by Allen Guttman (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1972), 107-108.

<sup>71</sup>  
 Steuck, "Cold War Revisionism and the Origins of the Korean Conflict," 514.

<sup>72</sup>  
 Mosely, "Soviet Policy and the War," 111; Robert Leckie, Conflict, 48.

Another significant question involved in the Korean attack was the role of China. In December, 1949, Mao Tse-tung traveled to Moscow for the purpose of consolidating the Sino-Soviet alliance. Some observers insist that, during these discussions, the two Communist leaders agreed upon a strategy for the conquest of Korea and the rest of Asia.<sup>73</sup> China expert Allen S. Whiting observes that it was "highly unlikely" Mao was not aware of the Korean operation. Yet, he also notes that economic weakness and the continued existence of Chiang's regime on Taiwan meant that Mao must have harbored reservations regarding the logic of such a venture. Whiting concludes that China "lacked direct responsibility for its initiation or outcome," but agreed<sup>74</sup> reluctantly to support the operation.

Despite all this speculation, it remains extremely difficult to determine with any degree of certainty the precise nature of the coordination between Moscow, Peking, and Pyongyang. There is no proof that Moscow possessed foreknowledge of the DPRK invasion, let alone having ordered and directed the entire operation.<sup>75</sup> In the spring of 1950, only three to eight Soviet advisors remained with each unit

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<sup>73</sup> Rostow, The United States in the World Arena, 169; Leckie, Conflict, 28; Mosely, "Soviet Policy and the War," 108; Osgood, Limited War, 161; Even Whiting accepts these conclusions, China Crosses the Yalu, 29 and 36.

<sup>74</sup> Whiting, China Crosses the Yalu, 19 and 45-46.

<sup>75</sup> Beloff, Soviet Foreign Policy in the Far East, 183.

of the DPRK army. Perhaps more important, unless the North Koreans were determined to use force to reunify Korea, Stalin could never compel them to invade the south. The Korean conflict was more a civil war than an outside aggression.<sup>76</sup>

A considerable amount of information points to the improbability of Soviet active support for the North Korean invasion. First, if Stalin wanted to deter a strong Japanese-American alliance, overt aggression in Korea was certainly a foolish strategy for achieving this result. Such a flagrant attack on the status quo would only reinforce Japan's dependence on American protection and Truman's determination to defend the Japanese islands. As John Gunther observed shortly after the attack, "the Korean War proved that . . . the overwhelming majority of Japanese are loyal to the occupation."<sup>77</sup>

Moscow also suffered a serious loss of international prestige in the wake of the Korean invasion. The Soviet Union sacrificed a considerable degree of support and sympathy among neutral nations, who believed that the DPRK was acting under Stalin's orders. Stalin had been engaged in a "peace offensive" since 1949, carefully cultivating cordial relations with non-aligned nations. By the spring

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<sup>76</sup> Lloyd C. Gardner, "Truman Era Foreign Policy: Recent Historical Trends," in The Truman Period as a Research Field, edited by Kirkendall, 59.

<sup>77</sup> Gunther, The Riddle of MacArthur, 163.

of 1950, many states viewed NATO as provocative and considered a rearmed West Germany as a threat to international peace. The Korean invasion reversed a trend favorable to the Soviet Union and produced serious doubts regarding Stalin's sincerity.<sup>78</sup>

Outright invasion not only destroyed Stalin's postwar political strategy, but also contradicted the pattern of Soviet military action after 1945. Stalin had avoided adventurism in the Cold War, relying instead on the tactics of infiltration and subversion. The Korean attack represented a sharp contrast with Moscow's essentially cautious approach. It remains the only case in the postwar period of an overt use of Communist armies across an internationally recognized frontier.<sup>79</sup> More important, the invasion alarmed the West and caused the United States to embark on a large-scale and rapid program of rearmament. In view of the costs involved, one must question whether Stalin placed such a high priority on Korean unification.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Shulman, Stalin's Foreign Policy Reappraised, 140-144; Halle, The Cold War as History, 189; Wilbur W. Hitchcock, "North Korea Jumps the Gun," Current History, XX, 115 (March 20, 1951), 137-138; Bell, Negotiation From Strength, 213; Trygve Lie, In the Cause of Peace (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 329.

<sup>79</sup> Spanier, The Truman-MacArthur Controversy and the Korean War, 23-24; Kolko and Kolko, The Limits of Power, 585-586; Stone, The Hidden History of the Korean War, 43; Barnett, Intervention and Revolution, 66-67; Bell, Negotiation From Strength, 228.

<sup>80</sup> Hitchcock, "North Korea Jumps the Gun," 138-139; Bell, Negotiation From Strength, 228.

Events at the United Nations produced another unfavorable consequence of the Korean conflict for the Soviet Union. The international organization soon emerged as the staunch defender of South Korea against the northern aggression. Certainly Stalin could not have welcomed this turn of events, since the opportunity to discredit the United Nations would not compensate for the damage inflicted upon Moscow's image internationally. Perhaps worse, the Korean conflict transformed the United Nations, albeit temporarily, into an anti-Communist alliance. Assuming that Stalin desired Chinese representation in the international organization, the invasion virtually eliminated any chance of Peking's admission. There remains only one reasonable explanation for Moscow's failure to have its representative at the Security Council at the time of the attack—Stalin had no know-<sup>81</sup>ledge that the invasion was to occur on June 25, 1950.

## VI

Substantial evidence exists to support the conclusion that Kim Il-sung and his cohorts were responsible for the attack on South Korea. As Wilbur W. Hitchcock explained shortly after the assault, "the Soviet Union in fact did not initiate the war, [and], far from throwing the switch, was just as surprised as was the Western World when the

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<sup>81</sup>

Simmons, The Strained Alliance, 122-123; Hitchcock, "North Korea Jumps the Gun," 143.

North Koreans threw the switch!"<sup>82</sup> By 1950, certain events decreased the likelihood that the DPRK's reliance on subversion and infiltration alone would result in successful reunification. First, the elections in South Korea seemed to indicate progress toward democracy. Second, economic conditions were beginning to improve. Third, the United States had decided to increase military aid to South Korea. Finally, Acheson's Press Club Speech probably impressed Kim Il-sung far more than it did Stalin. The North Koreans did not think that the United States would defend South Korea in the aftermath of an invasion.<sup>83</sup>

Commentators who stress Soviet responsibility for the Korean conflict obscure the essentially domestic nature of the dispute. Both Koreas hated each other and were merely waiting for the first opportunity to engage in a war of liberation.<sup>84</sup> The North Korean attack was nothing more than a local decision to turn to force for the achievement of reunification after subversion failed. Both sides were determined to end the partition and were more than willing to use force to obtain this objective. One can hardly disagree with Denna Frank Fleming's conclusion that Syngman

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<sup>82</sup>

Hitchcock, "North Korea Jumps the Gun," 142.

<sup>83</sup>

Paige, "Korea," in Communism and Revolution, 227-228.

<sup>84</sup>

Hitchcock, "North Korea Jumps the Gun," 142; Fleming, The Cold War and Its Origins, Vol. II, 605-606; Gordenker, The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea, 241.

Rhee did not start the war "only because the Reds beat him<sup>85</sup> to it."

Mao's victory in China had a decided impact on Kim Il-sung and his cohorts. "To accuse the North Koreans of being unwilling to take the same risks as the Chinese Communists before them," Joungwon A. Kim observes, "would be tantamount to charging them with cowardice."<sup>86</sup> June, 1950, seemed a particularly good time for the invasion. Moscow had recently sent new military equipment and the elections<sup>87</sup> had weakened Rhee's political position. More important, there exists abundant evidence that the North Koreans expected the people of South Korea to welcome the assault and join in a rebellion against the Rhee regime. The North Korean army, for example, halted after crossing the parallel<sup>88</sup> and took three days to travel the fifty miles to Seoul. Clearly, Kim Il-sung was waiting for the southern populace to support his "war of liberation." Unfortunately, the surprise invasion, following talk of peaceful unification, bewildered and disillusioned many Koreans. In the wake of

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<sup>85</sup>

Fleming, The Cold War and Its Origins, 606.

<sup>86</sup>

Kim, Divided Korea, 173.

<sup>87</sup>

Hitchcock, "North Korea Jumps the Gun," 142;  
David Horowitz, Free World Colossus (New York: Hill and Wang, 1965), 121.

<sup>88</sup>

Barton J. Bernstein, Commentary, in The Truman Period as a Research Field, 180; Strobe Talbott, trans. and ed., Khrushchev Remembers, Vol. I (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1970), 369; Muccio, Oral History Interview Transcript, December 27, 1973, HSTL, 10-11.

the attack, virtually all sympathy and tolerance for Communism in South Korea vanished.<sup>89</sup>

Robert K. Simmons provides the most effective explanation for the North Korean attack of June 25, 1950. He argues that Stalin had agreed to support Kim Il-sung's attempt at forcible reunification, but had set the date for the thrust as August 7, 1950. At that time the Soviet Union would have returned to the United Nations and prepared an appropriate public response to the charge of aggression.<sup>90</sup> The DPRK attack was premature, coming six weeks before schedule, because of an internal political dispute between Kim Il-sung and Pak Heun-yong. After Rhee's campaign against the radicals forced Pak and his supporters to flee northward, the southern Communists began to press for an invasion of the ROK. Pak stressed that the task would be relatively easy, in view of popular unhappiness with Rhee, rising sympathy for the leftists, and the strong popular desire for some kind of a settlement.<sup>91</sup>

North Korea's leaders finally ordered an assault for one of two reasons. Kim may have sought to outflank Pak politically and receive credit for the anticipated

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<sup>89</sup>

Paige, "Korea," in Communism and Revolution, 239.

<sup>90</sup>

Simmons, The Strained Alliance, 103 and 128; See also, Robert K. Simmons, Comments, China Quarterly (April-June 1973), 356.

<sup>91</sup>

Simmons, The Strained Alliance, 104-106; Robert K. Simmons, "The Korean Civil War," in Without Parallel, edited by Baldwin, 149.

successful reunification. On the other hand, Pak may have forced a vote on the issue to undermine Kim's political position. If Kim opposed the decision for invasion, he would be guilty of vacillation and weakness after the attack succeeded.<sup>92</sup> In either case, the rather abrupt decision for war explains the North Korean army's lack of complete mobilization on June 25. This scenario also effectively explains Moscow's absence from the United Nations on the day of the attack.<sup>93</sup>

Stalin had little room to maneuver in the aftermath of the surprise attack in Korea. It is true that Moscow did not prevent the DPRK from attacking and supplied considerable amounts of military equipment for the operation. But, as Frank Baldwin explains, this fact does not prove "that the attack was conceived in Moscow as part of world communism's timetable to destroy the west."<sup>94</sup> In reality, the North Koreans were acting in their own interests in opting for forcible reunification. Political infighting in Pyongyang, not Stalin's orders, determined the timing of the operation. The Korean invasion was also not entirely unprovoked, since Rhee's rhetoric indicated his implacable

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<sup>92</sup>

Simmons, The Strained Alliance, 108; Simmons, "The Korean Civil War," in Without Parallel, 151.

<sup>93</sup>

Kenneth Ingram, History of the Cold War (London: Darwen Finlayson, 1955), 208; Stone, The Hidden History of the Korean War, 64; Department of State, North Korea, 113.

<sup>94</sup>

Baldwin, Introduction, in Without Parallel, 14-15.

hostility to the DPRK.<sup>95</sup> Although one cannot condone such a blatantly aggressive act, one can certainly understand the reasons for the North Korean invasion. Open warfare between the two Koreas was the logical and inevitable out-  
 growth of the Korean civil war.<sup>96</sup>

Nikita Khrushchev's memoirs, though hardly an incontrovertible source, provide substantiation for the Simmons' scenario. Khrushchev explains that Kim Il-sung came to Moscow in the fall of 1949 and applied heavy pressure on Stalin to approve an attack on South Korea. Kim stressed that at the "first poke" militarily, the South Korean people would instigate an internal rebellion against the Rhee regime. "Naturally," Khrushchev insists, "Stalin couldn't oppose this idea," without undermining Moscow's reputation as a staunch defender of revolutionary movements. Yet, Khrushchev notes, "Stalin had his doubts" and "was worried that the Americans would jump in, but we were inclined to think that if the war were fought swiftly—and Kim Il-sung was sure that it could be won swiftly—then  
 intervention by the USA could be avoided."<sup>97</sup>

If Khrushchev's account is accurate, Stalin agreed to

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<sup>95</sup> Paige, The Korean Decision, 349; Simmons, "The Korean Civil War," in Without Parallel, 144 and 150.

<sup>96</sup> H.A. DeWeerd, "Lessons of the Korean War," Yale Review, XL (Summer 1951), 593.

<sup>97</sup> Talbott, trans. and ed., Khrushchev Remembers, Vol. I, 367-368.

the Korean invasion only with a considerable degree of reluctance. He hoped that the international community would view the conflict as an internal dispute in which the DPRK was engaged in the liberation of its countrymen. If Stalin rejected Kim's plan, the possibility clearly existed that North Korea would launch an attack in defiance of the will of the Soviet Union.<sup>98</sup>

## VII

Truman and his advisors were unable to engage in a carefully measured and closely reasoned evaluation of the Korean conflict. The Administration viewed the attack in the context of the Soviet-American confrontation. Previously, Moscow appeared to be concentrating its efforts on expansion in Europe, but Stalin now evidently decided to shift his emphasis to Asia.<sup>99</sup> The use of direct military means, however, was by far the most disturbing aspect of the entire affair. In his initial response to the attack, Truman exclaimed that the invasion "makes it plain beyond all doubt that the international communist movement is prepared to use armed invasion to conquer independent nations."<sup>100</sup> For the Administration, the DPRK assault was

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<sup>98</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>

Graebner, "Global Containment," 77.

<sup>100</sup>

Truman Statement, June 27, 1950, DSB, XXIII, 574 (July 3, 1950), 5; See also, Bundy (ed.), The Pattern of

not aimed at the limited goal of reunification, but was nothing less than the first thrust in a Soviet-directed "Grand Design" for world conquest.<sup>101</sup>

American foreign policy operated under serious handicaps in June, 1950, which virtually precluded unemotional and coldly rational action. The attack was a complete surprise and only swift action would preserve the survival of South Korea.<sup>102</sup> Understandably, the Administration hastily accepted the most obvious assumptions and drew simplistic conclusions. Within a few days, Truman reversed Acheson's carefully considered Asian policy, divorced it from national security considerations, and adopted a global approach to the Soviet challenge.<sup>103</sup> Acheson, for example, began from the premise that "the Soviet Union has complete domination over the Government of North Korea." The Secretary of State considered the attack a dire threat to American security and world peace. Somewhat simplistically, he observed that Stalin's "dagger thrust pinned a warning notice to the wall which said: 'Give up or be conquered!'"<sup>104</sup>

Responsibility, 245.

<sup>101</sup> Smith, Dean Acheson, 189; Halle, The Cold War as History, 237.

<sup>102</sup> Paige, The Korean Decision, 4; Fehrenbach, This Kind of War, 162; Ridgway, The Korean War, 229-230.

<sup>103</sup> Kennan, Memoirs 1925-1950, 396; Fleming, The Cold War and Its Origins, Vol. II, 604.

<sup>104</sup> Acheson Testimony, Military Situation in the Far East, Vol. III, 1936 and 1715.

American leaders considered the Soviet challenge in Korea as largely symbolic in nature. After all, the protection of South Korea bore no direct relationship to the national security of the United States. Instead, the North Korean attack constituted a challenge to American prestige and credibility.<sup>105</sup> Truman could not permit the DPRK to overrun South Korea. Not only did the United States have a moral commitment to defend the ROK's sovereignty, but "the world regarded Korea as an American protege, and American prestige in Asia hung in the balance."<sup>106</sup> If the United States allowed the ROK to collapse, few nations would place confidence in American pledges of support. Thus, the issue in Korea was essentially political, rather than military.

For the Administration, the lessons of Manchuria, Ethiopia, and Munich were of paramount importance in determining America's reaction to the Korean crisis. If the United States did not halt Soviet expansionism in Korea, Stalin would merely continue to increase the area of Communist domination. As Acheson explained in June, 1951:

As a people we condemn aggression of any kind.

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Charles Lofgren, "Congress and the Korean Conflict," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Stanford University, 1966, 13; Spanier, The Truman-MacArthur Controversy and the Korean War, 28; Ronald J. Caridi, The Korean War and American Politics: The Republican Party as a Case Study (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), 26; Osgood, Limited War, 166; Berger, The Korean Knot, 108.

106

Fehrenbach, This Kind of War, 80; See also, Rovere and Schlesinger, The General and the President, 99; Kennan, Memoirs 1925-1950, 486.

We reject appeasement of any kind. If we stood with our arms folded while Korea was swallowed up, it would have meant abandoning our principles, and it would have meant defeat of the collective security system on which our safety ultimately depends.<sup>107</sup>

If the United States successfully repelled aggression in Korea, Stalin would respect the strength and determination of the "free world" and abandon further "aggressive moves."

Administration spokesmen focused a considerable amount of attention on the global nature of the Korean aggression. John Foster Dulles was perhaps most effective in expressing the Administration's appraisal of the meaning of Korea.

He stressed that "one thing is certain, they did not do this purely on their own but as part of the world strategy of international communism."<sup>108</sup> South Korea had been experiencing great strides toward political democracy and economic stability. The Rhee government, Dulles observed, had recently instituted land reforms and sponsored truly democratic elections. This "promising democracy" in Asia embarrassed Stalin and his cohorts, who "found that they could not destroy it by indirect aggression, because the political, economic, and social life of the Republic was so

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Acheson Testimony, Military Situation in the Far East, Vol. III, 1715; Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, 340; Paige, The Korean Decision, 174; Coral Bell, "Korea and the Balance of Power," The Political Quarterly, XXV, 1 (January-March 1954), 23; Bundy (ed.), The Pattern of Responsibility, 250-251.

108

Dulles, CBS Interview, "A Militaristic Experiment," DSB, XXIII, 575 (July 10, 1950), 49-50.

sound that subversive efforts, which had been tried, had  
<sup>109</sup>failed." The very success of containment in Korea, then,  
 compelled Stalin to alter his tactics and turn to overt  
 aggression.

Truman and his advisors suspected that Stalin would now  
 revert to open military invasion in other areas. If the  
 Soviets attacked South Korea because of its progress, there  
 was a strong "possibility Soviet application similar  
<sup>110</sup>reasoning to Western Europe" and Taiwan. This alteration  
 in Communist tactics appeared to demand a similar change in  
 American strategy. "Korea shows," Dulles explained, "that  
 Communism cannot be checked merely by building up sound  
 economies." The United States had to implement positive  
 measures to strengthen the "free world" militarily, as well  
<sup>111</sup>as economically. Dulles reasoned that "Since interna-  
 tional communism may not be deterred by moral principles  
 backed by potential might, we must back those principles  
 with military strength-in-being, and do so quickly." Since  
 Stalin had indicated his intention to use armed force to

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Dulles, July 31, 1950, "Korean Attack Opens New  
 Chapter in History," DSB, XXIII, 579 (August 6, 1950), 207-  
 210; Dulles, "A Militaristic Experiment," 49-50; Dulles,  
 "To Save Humanity from the Deep Abyss," New York Times  
Magazine, July 30, 1950, 34; See also, Theoharis, Seeds  
of Repression, 62.

<sup>110</sup>

Washington to Tokyo, June 27, 1950, MacArthur  
 Papers, RG 6, Korea File 1, DMMML.

<sup>111</sup>

Dulles, "Korean Attack Opens a New Chapter in  
 History," 207-210; Dulles, "U.S. Military Action in Korea,"  
 July 7, 1950, DSB, XXIII, 576 (July 7, 1950), 88-92.

destroy "wholesome" nations, the United States had to develop the capability to respond militarily and on a global basis in defense of the status quo.

Americans generally supported Truman's decision to defend South Korea. The public quickly accepted the Administration's argument that Communism was monolithic and Moscow directed its actions. The Cold War atmosphere facilitated a favorable reception even of the use of combat forces in

defense of the "free world."<sup>112</sup> Joseph and Stewart Alsop probably provided the best summary of the American response when they observed that Moscow's real "goal is to make the living death of the slave society the universal condition of mankind, from the shores of the Atlantic to the islands of Japan, from the icy cliffs of Spitsbergen to the bright sands of Cape Comorin."<sup>113</sup>

The Alsops concluded that the United States had to rearm quickly and strengthen its alliance structure or Stalin would seize all of Asia. In due course, Europe would fall as well and the very survival of the United States would be in doubt. Only if the United States was willing to take risks and make sacrifices would it be able to win the "titanic struggle for world domination."

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John E. Mueller, War, Presidents, and Public Opinion (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1973), 41-49; See also, Edward A. Suchman, Rose K. Goldsen, and Robin M. Williams Jr., "Attitudes Toward the Korean War," Public Opinion Quarterly, XVII, 2 (Summer 1953), 171-184.

<sup>113</sup>

Joseph and Stewart Alsop, "The Lessons of Korea," Saturday Evening Post, CCXXIII, 10 (September 2, 1950), 17-19+.

Other journalists quickly appropriated the Administration's analysis of the meaning of the Korean invasion. Time observed that there was "no doubt that Moscow's guiding hand was present."<sup>114</sup> Even The Nation declared that North Korea's attack was "in the fashion made memorable by Adolph Hitler." Most commentators believed that the United States faced a "new Munich" and had to take decisive action to forestall another world war.<sup>115</sup> If the United States remained inactive, Stalin would merely aggress again. "To let Korea go," Commonweal explained, "would be to encourage sorties against the other weak spots adjacent to Soviet territory and spur on Soviet aggressiveness and enslavement." If the "free world" threw back North Korean aggression, however, the international community would achieve renewed confidence in its ability to resist Soviet domination.<sup>116</sup>

Most American observers hailed Truman's rapid and decisive action in response to the Korean crisis. Life welcomed Truman's decision to intervene and fight Communist expansion.<sup>117</sup> It congratulated the President for his courage. Time

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Time, LVI, 1 (July 3, 1950), 14-15; See also, The New Republic, CXXIII, 1 (July 3, 1950), 5-6; Christian Century, LXVII, 27 (July 5, 1950), 811.

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The Nation, CLI, 1 (July 1, 1950), 15; See also, Business Week, 1081 (July 1, 1950), 73; Christian Century, LXVII, 28 (July 12, 1950), 837.

116

Commonweal, XLI, 13 (July 7, 1950), 307-308; See also, U.S. News, XXIX, 1 (July 7, 1950), 11-13; The Nation, CLXXI, 2 (July 8, 1950), 23-25.

117

Life, XXIX, 2 (July 10, 1950), 35.

noted that the "U.S. had dawdled, temporized, compromised in Asia. But the Red attack in Korea had at last shocked it into action."<sup>118</sup> Some columnists now demanded that Truman renounce containment and institute more positive measures to alter the balance in Asia. Commonweal aggressively supported a "policy which says bluntly to the Soviet Union that the time of legal fiction is passed and that the United States is at the head of a liberation movement, [which] may convince the Russian leaders that they have gone too far."<sup>119</sup>

American foreign policy assumptions in 1950 precluded a rational assessment of the Korean conflict. As a result, the Administration's public pronouncements on the war seriously misled the American public regarding the relationship between the war and the national security of the United States.<sup>120</sup>

Truman and his advisors ignored the domestic origins of the North Korean assault and concentrated instead on a globalist interpretation. As Philip Jessup observed in August, 1950:

America is facing the most dangerous period in its history. It is of utmost importance that Americans see clearly who and what are responsible for the dangers we face. Above all, the force of world communism and its leaders—the men in the Kremlin—are responsible.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup>

Time, LVI, 1 (July 3, 1950), 14-15; See also, Saturday Evening Post, CXXIII, 4 (July 22, 1950), 10.

<sup>119</sup>

Commonweal, LII, 15 (July 21, 1950), 359-362.

<sup>120</sup>

Michael S. Twedt, "The War Rhetoric of Harry S. Truman During the Korean Conflict," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Kansas, 1969.

<sup>121</sup>

Jessup Radio Interview, August 27, 1950, DSB,

All events in Korea prior to June, 1950, indicated that civil war was likely, if not inevitable. Yet, when war finally occurred, American leaders concluded that the Korean assault was a Soviet-directed challenge to international security and peace, rather than a limited threat to the status quo.

Truman attempted to limit direct involvement in the Korean civil war despite the fact that the logic of American assumptions demanded a more radical response. Only when North Korea threatened to overrun South Korea did Truman decide to use American troops to save the ROK. For the President, the global nature of the struggle was clear:

Right now, the battle in Korea is the front line in the struggle between freedom and tyranny. But the fighting there is part of a larger struggle to build a world in which a just and lasting peace can be maintained.<sup>122</sup>

Military strength alone, and the willingness to use it to resist Communist expansion, would preserve world peace and American security. As Acheson explained, "peace and security cannot be obtained by sacrificing the independence of nations to aggression."<sup>123</sup> Thus, the Korean War marked the beginning of America's reluctant crusade to defend the world militarily against the threat of Soviet domination.

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XXIII, 583 (September 4, 1950), 374-378.

<sup>122</sup>

Truman Radio Address, September 1, 1950, DSB, XXIII, 584 (September 11, 1950), 407-410.

<sup>123</sup>

Acheson Address, June 29, 1950, "Act of Aggression in Korea: Review of UN and US Action to Restore Peace," DSB, XXIII, 757 (July 3, 1950), 43-46.

## Conclusion

American foreign policy reached a watershed in June, 1950. Prior to that date, Truman and his advisors remained uncertain regarding the nature and magnitude of the Soviet threat to the national security of the United States. The North Korean attack on South Korea convinced American leaders that the Soviet challenge was global and would rely on open and armed aggression to expand the area of Communist control. As Truman explained in his memoirs:

In Korea, however, the world faced a new and bold communist challenge. Here for the first time since the end of World War II the Communists openly and defiantly embarked upon military force and invasion.<sup>1</sup>

Such a dire threat demanded an extreme response. In the wake of the Korean attack, globalism emerged as the central feature of America's approach to international affairs.

For nearly two centuries, the United States had sought to limit its obligations to act positively for the preservation of world peace. American diplomacy after World War II represented no major break with this tradition. Although Truman and his advisors recognized the challenge of Soviet ideology and power, they hoped that the United States could

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<sup>1</sup>

Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, 464; See also, Acheson Comments, October 11, 1953, Princeton Seminars, Acheson Papers, Reel 6, Tape 1, HSTL, 2.

rely on limited means to counter the threat. Containment was, in reality, an alternative to a complete commitment of American power and prestige in the struggle against the Soviet Union. Truman intended to rely primarily upon economic aid and technical advice in an effort to build "situations of strength." The ultimate objective was to create the capability for local self-defense and thus remove the necessity for using American military power. Such a policy was relatively inexpensive and demanded few obligations for positive action in defense of the status quo.

Truman's approach to postwar international affairs was aimed ultimately at the elimination of the Soviet threat, but without resort to military means. American policy in Korea provides an excellent example of the essence of Truman's program. From 1945 to 1950, the goal in Korea remained the creation of an independent, united, Western-oriented nation that would possess a progressive and democratic government. Truman had utilized various tactics and strategies for achieving this objective. He sought first to unilaterally liberate and occupy Korea, permitting the United States to reconstruct that nation without Soviet interference. When Stalin sent the Red Army into the peninsula, Truman had no choice but to seek a negotiated settlement. Unfortunately, Moscow refused to accept a trusteeship agreement on American terms and stalemate ensued.

After 1946, Truman decided that negotiations with the

Soviet Union would not remove the 38th parallel in Korea. He thus turned to containment as a liberating force. If the United States could create a prosperous South Korea, North Korea would realize the advantages of the American model of development and welcome reunification under South Korea's control. By June, 1950, the Administration's rhetoric portrayed South Korea as a successful test case for containment in Asia and "rollback" of the Soviet sphere of control seemed imminent. The North Korean invasion only confirmed Truman's belief that containment had been a success. The Communists had turned to outright aggression and military conquest only after subversion and infiltration failed.

Truman and his advisors drew other important conclusions from the North Korean attack. Policy Planning Staff member Paul Nitze effectively summarized the global nature of the Administration's reaction:

We rather looked at it as being a chess game, where if the other fellow took a pawn, this might very well then lead to the bishops and the knights being involved, and<sup>2</sup> eventually the rooks and the queen, . . . .

Many of the global assumptions that American policy-makers had raised in NSC-68 now seemed accurate. As Acheson later explained, "Korea moved a great many things from the realm of theory . . . into the realm of actuality and . . .

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Nitze Comments, October 11, 1953, Princeton Seminars, Acheson Papers, Reel 6, Tape 1, HSTL, 4; See also, Seyom Brown, "Korea and the Balance of Power," in Korea: Cold War and Limited War, edited by Guttman, 250; Fleming, The Cold War and Its Origins, 659.

urgency."<sup>3</sup> The Soviet Union now appeared determined to conquer the entire world militarily. If the United States did not respond effectively, its own national security would ultimately confront grave danger.

Korea also firmly established in the American mind the notion of the Communist monolith. Previously, the Administration believed that nationalism was stronger than Communism, as Acheson's Press Club Speech demonstrates.<sup>4</sup> Now, Truman and his advisors operated on the assumption that Moscow led "a powerful Communist bloc of nations . . . bent upon seizing every opportunity to extend its sphere of control."<sup>5</sup> Shortly after the outbreak of the Korean War, one State Department publication observed that "every single delegate in the United Nations knew that one gesture from Moscow, and the fighting in Korea would stop."<sup>6</sup> After 1950, the United States was consistently unable to view military challenges to the status quo as anything less than

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<sup>3</sup> Acheson Comments, October 11, 1953, Princeton Seminars, Acheson Papers, Reel 6, Tape 1, HSTL, 1; See also, Lafeber, "Crossing the 38th Parallel: The Cold War in Microcosm," in Reflections on the Cold War, 82; Gardner, Introduction, The Korean War, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Bundy (ed.), The Pattern of Responsibility, 148.

<sup>5</sup> Osgood, The Limited War, 4; See also, O'Ballance, Korea, 147; Simmons, "The Korean Civil War," in Without Parallel, 156; Adlai E. Stevenson, "Korea in Perspective," Foreign Affairs, XX, 3 (April 1952), 357.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of State, Guide to the U.N. in Korea, Far Eastern Series #47 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, August 1951), 16.

Communist-inspired aggression.

Truman and his advisors also assumed that Korea provided new validity for the Munich analogy. As Dean Rusk reasoned in August, 1950:

To leave this attack unopposed would mean acts of aggression in other places and would almost certainly mean general war. To prevent a general war it was essential that those who are flirting with the idea of aggression be told immediately that they would encounter the organized resistance of the entire world. The issue in Korea is world peace.<sup>7</sup>

Although American intervention in Korea was risky, inaction in the face of aggression would guarantee a worse situation. Small nations would lose faith in the United States and Stalin would instigate new adventures in search of further conquest.<sup>8</sup> In addition, appeasement in Korea would destroy the United Nations just as surely as Manchuria shattered the League of Nations.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, if the "free world" confronted a superior Communist adversary and defeated it, Stalin might refrain from challenging the status quo.

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<sup>7</sup> Rusk Statement, "Battle Report," August 20, 1950, Webb Papers, Box 23, HSTL; See also, Osgood, The Limited War, 166; Stevenson, "Korea in Perspective," 353.

<sup>8</sup> Acheson and Johnson Testimony, Military Situation in the Far East, Vols. III and IV, 1716 and 2585; Halle, The Cold War as History, 208; Brown, "Korea and the Balance of Power," in Korea: Cold War and Limited War, 250; William T.R. Fox, "Korea and the Struggle for Europe," Journal of International Affairs, VI, 2 (Spring 1952), 131; Druks, Harry S. Truman and the Russians, 270

<sup>9</sup> Arnold Wolfers, "Collective Security and the War in Korea," Yale Review, XLIII, 4 (Summer 1954), 495-496; Poats, The Korean War, 298; Mitchell, "Counter Strategies in the Cold War," 7; Stevenson, "Korea in Perspective," 349.

After the outbreak of war in Korea, American leaders concluded that only superior conventional military power would deter Soviet expansionism in the future. Truman's actions after June, 1950, constituted something of a revolution in American defense policy.<sup>10</sup> Acheson observed that the Korean conflict "was in part an opportunity to adopt openly a policy urgently recommended in private for some months previously."<sup>11</sup> NSC-68's adoption and implementation seemed not only logical, but imperative if the United States was to preserve its national security. Korea thus ushered in a new period of large defense budgets and high taxes. American foreign policy turned into a hard shell of military production and deployments and security diplomacy.<sup>12</sup>

American diplomacy developed decidedly militaristic attitudes after 1950. While military expenditures represented only ten percent of foreign aid in 1950, by 1953 this figure had risen to sixty-seven percent. The United States

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Vinacke, The United States and the Far East, 80-81; Druks, Harry S. Truman and the Russians, 267; Wolfers, "Collective Security and the War in Korea," 492; McGovern, To the Yalu, 198.

<sup>11</sup>

Bundy (ed.), The Pattern of Responsibility, 77.

<sup>12</sup>

Almond, The American People and Foreign Policy, xv; Frederick J. Lawton, Oral History Interview Transcript, July 9, 1963, HSTL, 20; Cochran, Harry Truman and the Crisis Presidency, 348-349; Bell, Negotiation From Strength, 54; Lafeber, America, Russia, and the Cold War, 104; Hancock, "The Impact of the Korean War on American Military Strategy," 30; Simmons, "The Korean Civil War," in Without Parallel, 157; Graebner, "Dean G. Acheson," in An Uncertain Tradition, 272; McLellan, Commentary, in The Truman Period as a Research Field, 156.

commitment to aid such Asian states as Indochina, Taiwan,  
 and the Philippines expanded greatly.<sup>13</sup> The change in American policy toward Europe was even more profound. Prior to 1950, NATO's development had been rather slow, casual, and inefficient.<sup>14</sup> Now, the United States dispatched American troops to Europe and created a unified command. In addition, the United States strongly advocated the rearmament of West Germany.<sup>15</sup> Previously, America had relied upon the creation of economic stability as the principal means for halting Soviet expansion in Europe. After 1950, Truman placed great reliance on military power and Congress supported this marked change in defense policy regardless of cost.<sup>16</sup>

Such a significant change in American foreign policy was the product of several factors. Most important, the Korean War constituted a major shock for American leaders. Few observers expected such an attack, but once it occurred

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Rostow, The United States in the World Arena, 257; Brown, "Korea and the Balance of Power," 249 and 258; Gardner, Introduction, in The Korean War, 11; Smith, Dean Acheson, 315-316; Bohlen, The Transformation of American Foreign Policy, 114.

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Bundy (ed.), The Pattern of Responsibility, 76.

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Steel, Pax Americana, 53 and 129; Lafeber, America, Russia, and the Cold War, 102; Rees, Korea, 445; Lafeber, "Crossing the 38th Parallel," in Reflections on the Cold War, 247; Kaner, "I.F. Stone and the Korean War," in Cold War Critics, 247.

16

Bundy (ed.), The Pattern of Responsibility, 77-80; Bell, Negotiation From Strength, 38-40; Bell, "Korea and the Balance of Power," 29; Gardner, Introduction, in The Korean War, 11-13; Bohlen, The Transformation of American Foreign Policy, 14.

American prestige and credibility hung in the balance.<sup>17</sup> As

John Foster Dulles explained shortly after the attack:

Of course, intervention implies a risk of war. But then that was surely a clear implication of the "Truman Doctrine" equivalent to a blank check for ONE WORLD WAR with date unspecified and left for the Russians to fill in. You cannot state that you will protect free peoples everywhere against unprovoked aggression and hope that no occasion will arise forcing you to honor your signature.<sup>18</sup>

American leaders believed that Stalin would continue to rely on the strategy of subversion. The outbreak of war in Korea shattered this assumption and "put in question whether the free world was bluffing in the threat to counter violence with violence."<sup>19</sup>

Truman responded quickly and decisively to the Soviet challenge in Korea. The President had demonstrated his preference for courageous and decisive action in the past and sought to avoid any hint of vacillation in the Korean affair. For Truman, Korea was a test of wills with Moscow<sup>20</sup> and he was determined to "hit them hard." Truman thus personalized the issues involved in Korea, which produced an extreme response. His reaction was quite typical. As Bert

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<sup>17</sup> Collins, War in Peacetime, 41; Rostow, The United States in the World Arena, 236.

<sup>18</sup> Dulles to Felix Morely, July 6, 1950, Dulles Papers, Korea File, PUL.

<sup>19</sup> Halle, The Cold War as History, 75-76.

<sup>20</sup> Cochran, Harry Truman and the Crisis Presidency, 313; Halle, The Cold War as History, 80; Rostow, The United States in the World Arena, 235.

Cochran observes, "There is no blinking the fact that when [Truman] was crossed or frustrated, his instinct was to lash out like a madcap bar room brawler."<sup>21</sup>

Political factors also played a role in determining the President's actions. The Republican Party had been highly critical of the Administration's foreign policy. Truman could not avoid positive action in Korea without inviting a storm of partisan protest.<sup>22</sup> Even after American intervention the political attack on the Administration intensified. In August, 1950, Republican critics denounced Truman for refusing to prosecute the war more vigorously.<sup>23</sup> Yet, Truman contributed to this breakdown of support with his global justification for American intervention. As Athan Theoharis observes, "to countenance military and political restraint . . . seemed to be either a misunderstanding of the seriousness of the Communist threat or a dereliction of duty."<sup>24</sup>

Republican criticism had a decided impact on the Administration's conduct of the war. By 1952, Acheson was under such heavy attack that he "had to spend most of his

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<sup>21</sup> Cochran, Harry Truman and the Crisis Presidency, 206.

<sup>22</sup> Koenig (ed.), The Truman Administration, 7; Samuel Lubell, The Future of American Politics (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 29; Gardner, Introduction, in The Korean War, 4.

<sup>23</sup> Druks, Harry S. Truman and the Russians, 219-220; Spanier, The Truman-MacArthur Controversy and the Korean War, 63; Caridi, The Korean War and American Politics, 54-55.

<sup>24</sup> Theoharis, Seeds of Repression, 65-66.

time demonstrating his anti-communism, and . . . had no room for any kind of flexibility in negotiation."<sup>25</sup> In addition, it hardened the American attitude and led directly to the decision to cross the 38th parallel. Truman's need to demonstrate his anti-Communist credentials precluded carefully measured and reasoned analysis and action.<sup>26</sup>

Truman's overreaction to the Korean conflict had a disastrous impact on the general American public. His emphasis on the global nature of the war meant that "without a study of the Korean Conflict itself, it was difficult to know . . . what was happening in Korea."<sup>27</sup> Rather than stressing Korea's importance to American national security and prestige, Truman focused attention instead on the high idealism of American aims.<sup>28</sup> Spanier notes the dangers involved in such an approach when he states:

Whereas interests can, however, be compromised principles cannot. Their integrity, indeed their survival, can be guaranteed only by the total destruction of the enemy and the complete elimination of the evil which threatens to

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<sup>25</sup>

Bell, Negotiation From Strength, 76; Graebner, "Dean G. Acheson," in An Uncertain Tradition, 285.

<sup>26</sup>

Theoharis, Seeds of Repression, 148; Halle, The Cold War as History, 212.

<sup>27</sup>

Twedt, "The War Rhetoric of Harry S. Truman During the Korean Conflict," 232.

<sup>28</sup>

Osgood, Limited War, 192; Twedt, "The War Rhetoric of Harry S. Truman During the Korean Conflict," 242; Almond, The American People and Foreign Policy, 79; Ernest B. Haas, "Types of Collective Security: An Examination of Operational Conceptions," American Political Science Review, XLIX, 1 (March 1955), 61-62.

contaminate, if not abolish them. Anything less than the full application of "righteous power," and the achievement of complete victory, creates an embarrassing discrepancy between expectations and reality, and leaves in its wake disillusionment.<sup>29</sup>

Yet, Truman's declining popularity and deteriorating political position almost required an idealistic appeal. In order to obtain public support, Truman oversold the importance of American intervention in Korea. In the process, the Administration misled and manipulated the American people.<sup>30</sup>

More important, Truman's rhetorical justification for Korean intervention again placed the United States in the vanguard of a worldwide crusade for the achievement of universal principles of law and justice.<sup>31</sup> The Administration considered the Korean incident as proof that Moscow was the essence of evil and determined to impose its political, economic, and social system in a piecemeal fashion on an unwilling world.<sup>32</sup> The United States reacted strongly to this threat, shrouding its justification in tones of crusading zeal. As Seyom Brown observes, Korea "marked a

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<sup>29</sup> Spanier, The Truman-MacArthur Controversy and the Korean War, 270.

<sup>30</sup> George M. Elsey, Oral History Interview Transcript, March 9, 1965, HSTL, 87-88; Barton J. Bernstein, Commentary, in The Truman Period as a Research Field, 177; Edwin C. Hoyt, "The United States Reaction to the Korean Attack," American Journal of International Law, LV, 1 (January 1961), 76; William Appleman Williams, The Tragedy of American Diplomacy (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1972), 273.

<sup>31</sup> Osgood, Limited War, 166.

<sup>32</sup> Paige, The Korean Decision, 352.

globalization of containment in terms of operational commitments as well as rhetoric."<sup>33</sup> Without Truman's global analysis of the nature of the Soviet threat, subsequent American leaders would have had difficulty justifying positive action in such places as Indochina and Taiwan. Globalists believed after Korea that the Soviet-American struggle would quite literally determine the fate of the world. In such a confrontation, all available means had to be used to halt the Soviet advance, including military power.<sup>34</sup>

Ernest R. May correctly emphasizes the crucial importance of the "lessons of the past" in determining Truman's actions. American leaders in 1950 had lived through the interwar period and remembered vividly Hitlerite aggression. For Truman and Acheson, Soviet expansionism was identical to Hitlerism and appeasement could not remove the threat.<sup>35</sup> "We have learned bitterly and tragically from two calamitous world wars," Truman explained in his memoirs, "that any other course would lead to yet another world war." Truman's

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Brown, "Korea and the Balance of Power," in Korea: Cold War and Limited War, 255; See also, Gardner, "Truman Era Foreign Policy: Recent Historical Trends," in The Truman Period as a Research Field; Middleton, The Compact History of the Korean War, 231-232.

34

Almond, The American People and Foreign Policy, 159; Steel, Pax Americana, 302; Lofgren wrongly blames Congress for failing to focus on the vital problems involved in Korea. In reality, Truman's globalism prevented clear understanding of the war, "Congress and the Korean Conflict," 232.

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May, "Lessons of the Past," 85-86.

reliance on history meant that the Administration's deliberations did not indicate any serious analysis of the alternatives. There was never any question that the United States would ensure the survival of South Korea. History and policy assumptions, rather than a realistic assessment of America's national interests, determined Truman's decision to inter-<sup>36</sup>vene.

A belief in the existence of a Communist monolith and the validity of the Munich analogy precluded an accurate assessment of the meaning of Korea. The North Korean assault was, in fact, a manifestation of Asian nationalism. Richard J. Barnet notes the relatively typical nature of the incident when he observes that "contemporary wars have been fights for the rights of various political groups with former colonial appendages of Europe to take political power and to exercise it on their own terms."<sup>37</sup> Both Koreas considered their counterparts an illegitimate usurper and were determined to establish control throughout the peninsula. Truman viewed North Korea's aspirations in the larger context of America's global competition with the Soviet Union.<sup>38</sup> In some respects,

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<sup>36</sup> Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, 464; May, "Lessons" of the Past, 83; Graebner, "Global Containment," 77.

<sup>37</sup> Barnet, Intervention and Revolution, 4; Although Barnet is a New Left historian, he accepts the traditional view that Moscow ordered the North Korean invasion.

<sup>38</sup> Barnet, Intervention and Revolution, 26; Baldwin, Introduction, in Without Parallel, 16; Halle, The Cold War as History, 190; Ambrose, Rise to Globalism, 307.

Korea represents an early example of the breakdown of the bipolar postwar international system. Both Koreas sought to draw the major powers into what was essentially a local dispute and exploit them for their own advantage.<sup>39</sup>

Another significant outgrowth of Korea was that the conflict delayed any attempt at a Soviet-American rapprochement for almost two decades. The "Truman Doctrine" started this process of hardening America's attitude toward the efficacy of negotiations, but the Korean War convinced policy-makers that Stalin did not want a diplomatic settlement. The framework of American foreign policy became increasingly rigid and the nation's policies and programs far more inflexible.<sup>40</sup> Norman A. Graebner perceptively summarizes this point when he states:

The administration's fundamental refusal to recognize the power revolutions of the forties, either in Europe or Asia, carried with it an illusion of omnipotence which seemed to guarantee the ultimate victory of the West over its Communist enemies. Yet, the nation could erect no force commensurate with the principles and pressures that determined its objectives abroad. . . . Unable to employ either its power or its diplomacy, the nation could escape its diplomatic and intellectual dilemma only by assuming a world of unrelenting hostility in which diplomacy had no place.<sup>41</sup>

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Bell, "Korea and the Balance of Power," 29.

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Hartmann, Truman and the 80th Congress, 216;  
Bell, "Korea and the Balance of Power," 29; Reitzel, Kaplan,  
and Coblenz, United States Foreign Policy, 302 and 323;  
Graebner, Ideas and Diplomacy, 721.

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Graebner, Cold War Diplomacy, 60; See also, Denis W. Brogan, "The Illusion of American Omnipotence," Harper's,

In the wake of Korea, American foreign policy moved far to the right. Only after several years would leaders emerge<sup>42</sup> who did not consider negotiations a waste of time.

Dean Acheson later explained that Korea proved the viability of collective security. Stalin's "Korean check" had not "bounced" on the "bank of collective security," but had been paid in full. The American Secretary insisted that as long as the United States accepted the challenge of Soviet aggression, world peace was secure.<sup>43</sup> If the Soviet Union was unable to expand, it would eventually become frustrated and either "mellow" or "wither away." "Time is on our side,"<sup>44</sup> Acheson argued, "if we make good use of it." Such an approach not only made negotiations superfluous, it also prevented the acceptance of any alternative to a continuation of the status quo. Forcible change would undermine the American security system. Yet, the very essence of diplomacy is the search for adjustment and compromise, but Truman rejected this maxim. Unfortunately, his analysis of Korea obscured the realities of power because it promised victory

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CCV, 1231 (December 1952), 21; Norman A. Graebner, The New Isolationism: A Study in Politics and Foreign Policy Since 1950 (New York: The Ronald Press, 1956), 21.

<sup>42</sup> Hamby, Beyond the New Deal, 429; Bell, Negotiation From Strength, 240-241; Graebner, "Dean C. Acheson," in An Uncertain Tradition, 278-279.

<sup>43</sup> See quotation cited at the outset of this study, Bundy (ed.), The Pattern of Responsibility, 253-254.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted in Spanier, The Truman-MacArthur Controversy and the Korean War, 256; Rees, Korea, 449.

through continued stalemate and inaction.<sup>45</sup>

At the same time, Korea poorly prepared the American people to confront and understand the actual nature of the Soviet-American confrontation. Truman's interpretation meant that the general public could not accept a limited view of Stalin's objectives nor the reality that the United States could not "wish" the Soviet Union out of existence. Kennan notes that this reaction finds its roots in American tradition:

Our adversaries, in the ingrained American way of looking at things, had always to be demonic, monstrous, incalculable, and inscrutable. It was unthinkable that we, by admitting that they sometimes reacted to what we did should confess to a share in the responsibility for their behavior.<sup>46</sup>

It was Truman's obligation to counter such notions and educate the American people to the impossibility of obtaining perfect security. Instead, Truman consistently refused to formulate goals that were rooted in historical national interests and within American power to achieve. American policy was, after 1950, even more tied to ideas of morality<sup>47</sup> and invincibility than before the outbreak of war in Korea.

In the final analysis, the Korean conflict destroyed all vestiges of uncertainty and vacillation in American foreign

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<sup>45</sup> Lippman, The Cold War, 50; Steel, Pax Americana, 310; Bell, "Korea and the Balance of Power," 17.

<sup>46</sup>

Kennan, Memoirs 1925-1950, 198.

<sup>47</sup>

Graebner, The New Isolationism, 4-5 and 248.

policy assumptions regarding Soviet intentions. After 1950, the United States believed that Stalin sought world conquest and this threat demanded an extension of American commitments to defend the status quo.<sup>48</sup> No longer would America withdraw from a world of turmoil or limit its involvement in international affairs. Ronald Steel reveals the essential disadvantage of such an approach when he states:

Every spot on the globe is not equally vital to American interests. . . . Like all great powers, we are interested in crises wherever they occur. But all crises are not equally important to our security, and it is on the basis of national security that an enlightened foreign policy must rest.<sup>49</sup>

Instead, Truman inaugurated a global approach to the problem of ensuring American national security. After Korea, every challenge to the status quo assumed the character of a new Soviet threat to world peace, which the United States could tolerate only at grave risk.

American intervention in the Korean conflict came after Truman had labored long and hard to extricate the United States from the peninsula. The action was not entirely ill-advised and inappropriate, since the destruction of the ROK would clearly undermine American prestige and credibility in the international community. Unfortunately, Truman decided to interpret and justify American policy in global

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Bohlen, The Transformation of American Foreign Policy, 124; Adler, The Isolationist Impulse, 455.

<sup>49</sup>

Steel, Pax Americana, 317; See also, Osgood, Limited War, 168.

terms and with disastrous consequences during later years. After 1950, the United States increasingly tied its national security to clients, agents, and satellites throughout the world. These "unassailable barriers" possessed inherent weaknesses and presented the United States with a series of insoluble dilemmas. American foreign policy, as Walter Lippman predicted, would frequently confront the distasteful choice of having "either to disown our puppet which would be tantamount to appeasement and defeat and the loss of face or must support them at an incalculable cost on an unintended, unforeseen and perhaps undesirable issue." Truman ignored the dangerous implications of his globalist approach. In the aftermath of the Korean attack, the United States rejected the necessity for balancing ends and means in foreign affairs and embarked reluctantly upon a global crusade to defend the status quo.<sup>50</sup>

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