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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 11 November 1955, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Sir Leslie MUNRO (New Zealand)

The Korean question /19/ (continued)

A statement was made in the general debate on the item by:
Sir Pierson Dixon (United Kingdom)

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THE KOREAN QUESTION Agenda item 19 (continued)

- (a) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION FOR THE UNIFICATION AND REHABILITATION OF KOREA
- (c) PROBLEM OF EX-PRISONERS OF THE KOREAN WAR

Sir Pierson DIXON (United Kingdom): Once again this year we are embarked on a discussion of the problem of Korea. The issues in this problem are, I think, well known to all the members of this Committee and I need not dwell on them at length. I feel sure that members of the Committee will agree that a contentious debate would serve no useful purpose.

At the outset of my remarks I should like to say something about point (c) of the item on our agenda, which deals with the ex-prisoners of the Korean war whose future remains unsettled. I feel sure that all members of the Committee will agree that this lingering problem should be solved as quickly as possible and as amicably as possible. It was therefore with much satisfaction that we learned from the representative of Brazil, in his speech during the general debate at the beginning of the session of the General Assembly, that his country was ready to welcome those ex-prisoners now under Indian care who had expressed the desire to live in Brazil. I would like to take this opportunity to express the appreciation of my delegation at the generous offer of the Government of Brazil, which has thus made a valuable contribution to the final settlement of this problem.

I would also like to pay a tribute to the part which the Government of India has played in this question. We must not forget that the main burden has hitherto been borne by that Government, whose efforts both in the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission and in the subsequent care of certain ex-prisoners of war, deserve the warm thanks of the United Nations. The conduct of the Indian custodial force in Korea, in the performance of what all members of this Committee will agree was an exacting and difficult task, deservedly won our admiration and enhanced the already high reputation of the Indian army.

I now turn to the question of Korea in its more general aspect. First, may I say that my delegation shares the very general disappointment that we seem this year still not to be in sight of attaining the objectives of the United Nations in Korea. I will explain why, in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, progress has not been possible. But before I do that, I should like to observe that we can at least give thanks for one thing -- the fact that there has been no fighting in Korea.

We cannot be complacent whilst Korea remains divided. Nevertheless, in accordance with paragraph 62 of the Armistice Agreement, the Agreement "...shall remain in effect until expressly superseded either by mutually acceptable amendments and additions or by provision in an appropriate agreement for a peaceful settlement at a political level between both sides."

I know that all members of this Committee will agree that any renewal of fighting could be disastrous. The maintenance of the Armistice is, therefore, of the first importance.

I regret, however, to say that the working of the Armistice Agreement has been far from satisfactory. The representative of the United States has already indicated the extent to which the Communist side has been able to frustrate the operation of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission in North Korea. Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom has obtained similar evidence of such evasion, evidence which clearly shows that the object of these evasions has been to build up the Communist strength to the grave disadvantage of the United Nations Command.

Some of the speakers in yesterday's debate seemed to suggest that what is at issue is simply a "dispute" between North and South Korea, and that if these two entities could be assisted to negotiate with each other, all other problems would be solved.

(Sir Pierson Dixon, United Kingdom)

This is far from an accurate presentation of the true situation. The United Nations is not concerned with the Korean question because the parties cannot agree. The United Nations is itself vitally and intimately involved and must maintain the responsibilities it assumed when, in response to an appeal from the Republic of Korea, it rallied to its support and, after a costly struggle, successfully repelled the aggressor.

I am not one to revive the past for the sake of raking up the past. I believe in looking forward. But the past is the inescapable perspective of the future. And it would be wrong and indeed dangerous to allow the historical perspective of this question to be distorted.

During the debate in this Committee last year, Mr. Nutting explained the attitude of Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to the Korean problem, and set forth the conditions under which a united, independent and peaceful Korea could be achieved. Subsequent debate showed that these aims enjoyed a wide measure of support.

Mr. Nutting stressed that two principles were at stake. The first of these was the question of the authority of the United Nations, and the second, the question of free all-Korean elections.

Last year the Soviet delegation, and other supporting it, argued that the United Nations had no right to act in the Korean question on the ground that it was a belligerent in the Korean conflict. It is the firm position of my Government, as stated by Sir Anthony Eden in Geneva in the summer of 1954 and reiterated by Mr. Nutting in this Committee last December, that the authority of the United Nations to act in Korea remains unimpaired.

On 11 July 1954 Sir Anthony Eden said:

"We can never agree that, by taking up arms to fulfil their obligations and resist aggression, the United Nations have thereby forfeited their **rights** and duties of a supreme international organization. On the contrary, we believe that they have strengthened their authority."

Is it going to be argued that because fifteen months have elapsed that proposition is dead, dead and buried? Is it going to be **argued** that because of the Geneva spirit the United Nations has forfeited its rights and duties?

(Sir Pierson Dixon, United Kingdom)

This, I must point out, is a point of principle, and principles have a quality of changelessness. They do not just fade away with the passage of time. What the passage of time does is to facilitate an evolution of policies. We all trust that with the passage of time there will be a helpful evolution in the policies of the North Korean authorities and those who support them.

I turn now to the second question of principle: the question of free all-Korean elections. The statements in last year's debate in the First Committee showed considerable agreement on the need for free elections. Unfortunately the debate also showed that not all delegations were in agreement as to the precise meaning of "free elections" nor on the question of how the elections should be internationally supervised.

In an attempt to reach a compromise with the Communist Powers, we suggested that the members of the international Supervisory Commission could, if necessary, be chosen from those nations which did not take part in the Korean war. But we stressed -- and from that position we do not intend to retreat -- that the Supervisory Commission should be truly impartial and composed in such a way as to be able to take effective decisions and to command the authority to carry out its decisions.

The plan proposed by the Soviet delegation, and its supporters, provided for a form of supervision which could only have served to paralyse any scheme for truly free elections. The Soviet Union and its supporters proposed -- and in the absence of any statement to the contrary I presume they still propose -- the setting up of an all-Korean commission on which the North and South would be equally represented, and which could only function by agreement between the two sides. Over this there was to be a neutral supervisory commission, on which Communist and non-Communist nations were to be equally represented, again functioning only by agreement between the two sides.

This is tantamount to subjecting the operation of the proposed machinery to a veto. We have had some experience of the way in which arrangements of this kind work, or rather fail to work. So long as this remains the position of the Soviet delegation, further consideration of this particular aspect of the problem would seem futile. We are always ready, indeed anxious, to talk, but in the absence of any apparent common ground between us, discussion would be academic.

As I said at the outset of my statement, we cannot be complacent. We cannot just remain content with the fact that the fighting has stopped. Korea must not remain divided forever, and we must not relax our efforts to bring about a peaceful solution. The question should be kept before the United Nations and the authority of this Organization must be maintained.

If we are to be realistic, as we must in this responsible Organization, we are bound to acknowledge that in present conditions there seems little prospect of progress. I feel sure, however, that in time, given good faith and Conciliation, the objectives of the United Nations can be achieved, so that finally the country where our Organization first demonstrated its will and resolve to resist aggression will be peacefully united as a truly democratic and independent State.

The CHAIRMAN: I have no other speakers on my list. As no other representative wishes to speak this afternoon, the Committee is adjourned until 10.30 a.m. on Monday next.

The meeting rose at 3.30 p.m.