

COLD WAR - The Korean War 1950-53

Source 2

No. 174
(102.94/106/50)

CONFIDENTIAL

BRITISH EMBASSY,
MOSCOW.

7th July, 1950

Sir,

Although the march of events in Korea is too swift and too uncertain to justify an attempt at this stage to draw any but the most tentative conclusions from them, I think that it may be not without interest to record the steps - or, rather, such of them as were visible to an observer in Moscow - which led up to the invasion of South Korea on the 25th June.

2. In retrospect the ideological preparation for the use of force can be detected clearly enough. It must be borne in mind, however, that Korea is only one of the numerous fields in which Soviet propagandists have, for many months past, claimed to see evidence of the aggressive intentions of the United States; so that, until the blow actually fell, there was no more reason to suspect the imminence of a Communist coup in Korea than in, say, Persia or Yugoslavia. Indeed, until

5. All these manoeuvres were faithfully reported by the Soviet press, in the form of Tass messages from the North Korean capital. Comment was carefully eschewed, but the agency reports were sufficient to prepare the Soviet reader for ready acceptance of the myth that the North Koreans, so far from attacking their southern neighbours, were themselves the victims of an unprincipled aggression launched under United States auspices. Even after the fighting had started, the Soviet propagandists were clearly concerned to maintain the rôle of interested but detached and impartial observers, reproducing in the Soviet press Western reports from the battlefield, from Lake Success and from the Western capitals as well as agency messages from North Korea and China. Indeed, it was not until the day

Extracts from a Foreign Office report on the Soviet government's management of media coverage of the Korean War July 7th 1950.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

FOR THE PRESS

JANUARY 29, 1951
NO. 73

Following is the text of remarks by the Honorable Dean Rusk, Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs, on the National Broadcasting Company Television show, "Battle Report," Sunday, January 28, 1951:

Today I wish to say a word to those who ask why we stay in Korea. It is a serious question -- because men's lives are at stake -- and it deserves a serious answer.

We are in Korea because we are trying to prevent a world war and the frightful destruction of life which such a war would produce.

The thousands who have died in Korea have sacrificed their lives in a struggle to prevent the millions of deaths which world war would surely bring.

The issue in Korea is aggression. We can face it, or we can run away from it. If we face it, we have a chance to organize the determination of the world against aggression, to show the aggressor that his crime will not be accepted and that his crime will not pay. If we succeed, the aggressor may hold his hand. If we run away from it, the aggressor will learn that there is great profit in crime, that he will not be resisted, and that his victims are weak and can be destroyed at will.

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Further, we cannot leave our friends in the Philippines and in Japan under the impression that we do not take our commitments seriously and that we might lack courage in the face of adversity.

Comments on the Korean war by US politician Dean Rusk on a US TV show, January 29th 1951.

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Korea 2. *The Foreign Secretary* said that on 1st May he had received a personal message from the United States Secretary of State dealing with a number of points of policy relating to the situation on Korea. In this message Mr Acheson had clarified his attitude towards the question of economic sanctions against China, Chinese membership of the United Nations, and the need for a further declaration of Allied aims in Korea. But the most urgent of the questions asked by Mr Acheson was that of retaliatory bombing if a major air attack on the United Nations forces in Korea was made from bases on Chinese territory. Mr Acheson suggested that, if such an air attack was launched, the decision to strike back must be taken by the United States Government, representing the unified command of the United Nations forces, since there would be no time for consultation with the other Governments concerned.

The Foreign Secretary said that, if it was clearly established that a major air attack had been made on the United Nations forces from Chinese bases, we could not challenge the view that this must be answered by retaliatory bombing of those bases. We must, however, seek to secure agreement that we should be consulted before such retaliatory action was authorised, and he proposed to take this line in his reply to Mr Acheson. At the same time, we must be able to promise to give an immediate reply when we were consulted; and he therefore suggested that the Cabinet should accept in principle the necessity of counter-attacking the Chinese bases if a substantial air attack was launched on the United Nations forces, and to delegate to the Prime Minister, in consultation with himself and the Minister of Defence, the responsibility of deciding whether to agree to a United States proposal that such retaliatory action should be taken. **Previous reference:**

CC (51) 27th Conclusions Minute 1.)

Extracts from the minutes of a meeting of the British Cabinet discussing the possible escalation of the war in Korea.

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S-E-C-R-E-T.

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PART II.

OBSERVATIONS ON LAND FIGHTING.

I. The Enemy.

(a). Morale.

Although outnumbered, using inferior equipment, and harassed night and day by aircraft and naval gunfire, the North Korean forces continued to fight stubbornly until United Nations troops were ordered to disengage and withdraw. Given the slightest chance the enemy attacked.

There is no doubt that propaganda had convinced the North Koreans of death by shooting when captured, nor did their officers treat disobedience of orders less leniently, but nevertheless their morale was good. "Why do they go on fighting" was continually asked in the K.M.A. Groups.

(d). Weapons.

The enemy had the following Russian-made weapons:-

(i). T-34 tanks, but so few that they were used as mobile artillery. The terrain was in any case difficult for tanks. (Photographs "A", "B", "C", "E", "F", "G", "H", "I").

(ii). 76 mm self-propelled guns. (Photographs "J", "K").

(iii). 45 mm anti-tank guns.

(iv). 120 mm mortars. A formidable weapon with a maximum range of 6240 yards and an excellent substitute for artillery in mountainous country. (Photograph "D").

(v). 81 mm mortars.

(e). Transport.

Apart from locally impressed ox-carts, the basic vehicle was the Russian 3-ton 4 X 4 truck. Many of these were captured by the R.O.K.'s, who found them excellent.

Many Russian made "Jeeps" were captured and used, but these are much inferior to the United States version.

(g). Administration.

The enemy were well supplied with arms and ammunition from 120 mm mortars downwards. All men had yellow quilted uniforms and arctic headgear.

Combat rations seemed to be rice-balls and rice-candy, both in good supply.

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Photograph showing Korean troops with a damaged tank.

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Source 5 page 3



Photograph showing Korean troops with an abandoned tank

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Source 5 page 4



Photograph showing a damaged tank.

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Source 6

United Kingdom Liaison Mission in Japan,

TOKYO.

*1. A. J. ... 10.6.
2. ... (1 ...
initiated)*

7th January, 1952.

W/S

SECRET
(1020/1/52.)

FK 1079/22

As far as an armistice is concerned it has always seemed to me that we shall get one if the Communists want one but not otherwise. We have thought in the past that for their own good reasons they do want one, but the slowness of the negotiations has surely demonstrated that they are in no great hurry.

4. It is easy to criticise the conduct of the armistice negotiations, but in fairness to the Americans I think it must be said that they have done as well as might have been expected given their temperament and the circumstances. On occasion it has seemed to me that they have been at least as much responsible for delay as the Communists, and it/

R. H. Scott, Esq., C.M.G., C.B.E.,
Foreign Office.

it is a pity that the American-inspired press here should take the uncompromisingly hostile attitude it does, since I have no doubt this is known in Peking. Given this attitude, it would hardly be surprising if the Communists are as suspicious of us as we rightly are of them.

Extract from a report from British officials in Tokyo on problems of achieving a peace settlement, January 1952.