

Canada and the Korean Crisis

The first purpose of the United Nations is to maintain international peace and security. For this purpose the members have bound themselves to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace and the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace when these occur. When, therefore, the United States Government informed the Secretary-General of the United Nations on June 25 that it considered the attack of the North Korean forces on the Republic of Korea constituted "a breach of the peace and an act of aggression" and urgently requested the calling of an immediate meeting of the Security Council, the whole machinery and the first purpose of the United Nations was put to the test.

When the Security Council met at 2.00 p.m. that same day there was placed before it a telegram* from the United Nations Commission on Korea in Seoul reporting that attacks had been launched in strength all along the 38th parallel in the early morning hours of June 25. The Commission drew attention to the serious situation developing which was assuming the character of full-scale war.

While this act of open aggression came as a surprise, the existence along the 38th parallel of a situation which constituted a threat to peace was known to the United Nations. For nearly three years the United Nations had tried to assist the Koreans to achieve their aspirations of national independence and unity under a freely elected government.† These efforts were frustrated by the Soviet Union in its unwillingness to accept the procedures to achieve the ends laid down by the General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolutions of November 14, 1947, December 12, 1948 and October 21, 1949. The Commission sent to Korea by the General Assembly was never permitted to cross the 38th parallel and was rebuffed in its repeated attempts to establish contact with the North Korean authorities. It was compelled, therefore, to confine its activities to South Korea where it supervised elections on May 10, 1948 and witnessed the establishment of the Republic of Korea. In its report for 1949 the Korean Commission noted that the new Republic of Korea

*See Appendix 2

†For further background information on United Nations efforts to deal with the problem of Korean independence, see the following publications of the Department of External Affairs: "Canada at the United Nations, 1947", pp. 31-35; "Canada and the United Nations, 1948", pp. 67-71; "Canada and the United Nations, 1949", pp. 73-75; "External Affairs", August, 1950, pp. 283-295.