

Government agreed. But the Chairman of the NNRC, Lieutenant-General K. S. Thimayya of India, on January 14 informed the UNC of a different view: that since the conference had not met and since the explanation procedures provided for had not been fully implemented, an integral part of the pattern set in its terms of reference was missing and the Commission was accordingly not competent to release the prisoners to civilian status. He therefore proposed to restore to the UNC on January 20, the prisoners formerly held by it. Unilateral action by the UNC to release the prisoners he would consider not in accord with the Armistice Agreement. General Hull of the UNC replied that his Command would arrange for the accommodation and disposition of the prisoners and on January 23, 1954 would regard them as fully entitled to their freedom as civilians. The return of the prisoners was carried out without incident, and the NNRC by a majority vote declared its dissolution with effect from February 21. Meanwhile, India had requested that the General Assembly be reconvened before the NNRC dissolved, but a majority of members, including Canada, did not consider this advisable, and the session was not reopened.

The next development was the announcement made on February 18 in Berlin by the Foreign Ministers of France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States that they had agreed to call a conference in Geneva to be attended by the Big Four, Communist China, North and South Korea and those of the countries participating in the military effort in Korea which wished to be represented. All the countries invited to attend, with the exception of South Africa, accepted. Prince Wan of Thailand served as Chairman of the first meeting and Mr. Molotov and Mr. Eden followed thereafter in rotation.

On April 23, several days before the Conference began, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, when asked what specific points Canada would try to press for, replied:

Our whole approach to the Korean problem is a United Nations one. . . . It is because of our United Nations obligations that Canada has participated in the efforts to check aggression in Korea. The objectives that we will press for at Geneva are, therefore, as you would expect, United Nations objectives. . . . What the United Nations seeks is a unified, independent, and democratic Korea under a representative form of government. This is our ultimate objective, and our Delegation will, of course, press for it. If we can't make much progress now toward its achievement at Geneva, then we will at least do everything we can to maintain the present armistice agreement, and to leave the opportunity open for further negotiations later on. We must prevent, if we can, any retreat to renewed fighting.

The North Korean Delegation tabled the first proposals at the Conference, supported by Mr. Molotov and Mr. Chou En-lai. They called for the election by the legislatures of North and South Korea of a joint commission, including representatives from "democratic social organizations", which would take action to ensure free elections throughout the peninsula for a national assembly. All foreign troops would be withdrawn within six months and the peaceful development of the unified Korea would be guaranteed by the countries primarily concerned with peace in the Far East. All three Communist Delega-