

It would be folly indeed to underestimate the strength of this movement, as it would be folly to misunderstand the basis of its inspiration. The tragedy for these countries and a danger to themselves, and indeed to world peace, lies in their blind refusal to recognize that, in their anxiety to gain full control of their affairs by the elimination of foreign influence, they are exposing themselves to the menace of communist penetration and absorption - absorption into the Soviet sphere.

Certainly there is no assurance that countries of the Middle East are capable of defending themselves from outside attack, and with their present stage of economic, political and social development, it is doubtful whether, without the support which the West is able and willing to give them, these countries are capable of maintaining a sufficient level of internal stability to resist the relentless pressure of international communism. On the contrary the unsatisfactory social and economic conditions which prevail throughout this area render that whole area a fertile ground in which communism, which has already succeeded in falsely identifying itself with nationalism, will thrive and eventually dominate, if allowed to grow unchecked.

Surely it must be abundantly clear that such a development would remove at one stroke the independence which the countries concerned claim to be their only objective. The Middle East is strategically far too important to the defence of the North Atlantic area to allow it to become a power vacuum or to pass into unfriendly hands.

It is therefore a matter of major importance to the security of the whole free world, and that includes us, and in the interest of the Middle Eastern states themselves, that the situation in the Mediterranean area be stabilized as quickly as possible, and that the principle of collective security and collective action be extended to embrace this vital area. And indeed a proposal to that effect, as I said last week in the House, had already been made to the Egyptian Government just before they took the action they did take. As we know in the North Atlantic pact, there is no incompatibility between responsible participation in such a collective system and the full exercise of national sovereignty.

The Situation in Korea

Now I turn for a moment to the Far East, to Korea, where a war sometimes called, but is not in our minds, the forgotten war, drags on its weary and bloody way. The aggressor there shows no disposition to cease his aggression. However, the United Nations forces, more broadly representative than when I spoke on the subject last, are showing at heavy cost to themselves, but far heavier cost to the enemy, that aggression does not pay.

The temporary optimism from the initiation of the cease-fire talks was not maintained for very long, but there has been better news in the last few days, and I hope that the period of delaying tactics by the communists may be now over, and that an armistice can be arranged. Certainly the United Nations are not rebuffing any move which might lead to the end of the war. But certainly we also have to be careful in how we deal with any such proposal made from the other side.

If I may adapt a quotation, our motto in that part of the world at the present time might well be: Trust in Kaesong but keep your powder dry. I think it is fair to say