

As the Commission's report to the Fourth Session of the General Assembly showed, most of the objectives assigned to the United Nations Commission on Korea were unattainable. The U.S.S.R. had maintained its refusal to have any dealings with the Commission, and efforts to make contact with the North Korean authorities had failed. The new Republic of Korea was being threatened by the increased incidence of insurgent uprisings and border clashes along the 38th parallel, dividing North from South Korea. Apart from its observation of the withdrawal of United States occupation forces in June 1949, the Commission thus had little to show for its year's work. In submitting its conclusions, the Commission refrained from recommending that its own mandate should be renewed, although it did record the request of the Republic of Korea that "the stay of the Commission in Korea be prolonged for another year". The final conclusion reflects the sense of the whole report in its admission that "the situation in Korea is now no better than it was at the beginning and that (the Commission) has not been able to facilitate the achievement of the objectives set by the General Assembly".

When the General Assembly considered this Report at its Fourth Session, the debates were marked by renewed expression of the long-standing differences between East and West on the Korean question. At the outset of the debate in the Ad Hoc Political Committee a representative of the Republic of Korea was invited to participate without vote in the Committee's discussion. A counter-proposal by the U.S.S.R. to extend a similar privilege to a spokesman for the authorities of Northern Korea was decisively rejected by the Committee. A detailed statement followed from the representative of the Korean Government, who outlined the major developments in the Republic since its inauguration, and asked that the Commission be continued with the assistance of military observers to report on border violations along the 38th parallel.

The remainder of the debate centred on two diametrically opposed resolutions dealing with the future of the Korean Commission. A proposal by the U.S.S.R. condemned the past activities of the Commission and urged its abolition. A joint resolution submitted by the United States, Australia, China, and the Philippines, recommended that the Commission should continue in being with authority to appoint at its discretion observers to assist it in reporting on "developments which might lead to or otherwise involve military conflict in Korea". The Soviet resolution received support only from the remaining five Communist delegations and was rejected by a heavy majority both in the Committee and in the full Assembly. The joint proposal, on the other hand, won wide support, and having been approved by the Committee, was adopted in the General Assembly by a vote of 48 in favour (including Canada), 6 against, and 3 abstentions.

Thus, although the Commission had been prevented from achieving its objectives, the great majority of the Assembly not only supported its continuation but endowed it with the increased authority to appoint observers. In supporting this decision, member states were undoubtedly prompted by a realization of the growing threat brought about by the border troubles along the frontier between North and South Korea. Furthermore, in a broader sense the Assembly's action would appear to represent an implied recognition of the stabilizing influence which United Nations commissions have exerted in such unsettled areas as the Balkans, Indonesia, and Kashmir.

Finally, the Assembly's decision may be interpreted as a recognition of the need for a stabilizing element in Korea which might, by its presence, exercise a restraining influence on the opposing factions and which could, in the event of an armed outbreak, keep the United Nations fully informed.