

Canada and the United Nations

The Korean Negotiations

One of the recommendations contained in the General Assembly resolution of August 28, the declared purpose of which was to implement on the United Nations side the recommendation of the Armistice Agreement that a political conference be convened to settle the Korean problem, was that the United States, after consultation with those states primarily concerned with Korea, should arrange with the other side for the conference to be held not later than October 28, 1953, at a time and place satisfactory to both sides.

Beginning in September, the United States sent a number of messages to the Peking and North Korean regimes concerning the time and place for the Conference. At first the Communists did not choose to reply. Then on September 13, Chou En-lai, in a message to the United Nations' Secretary-General obviously timed to coincide with the opening of the eighth session of the General Assembly on September 15, called on the Assembly to provide for a conference which would include not only the belligerents on both sides but also the Soviet Union, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and Burma as neutral nations. He said that when agreement had been reached on the composition of the conference, the two sides should consult concerning its time and place of meeting. The Assembly refused the Soviet demand to place this message on its agenda. The majority view seemed to be that the Assembly had taken its decision concerning the composition of the United Nations side of the conference and that it was now up to the Communist side to designate its representatives and express its views regarding a time and place for the Conference.

Agreement on Time and Place

On October 10 the Peking Government and North Korea accepted a United States proposal that their emissaries meet with a United States representative to discuss arrangements for the conference. Both sides agreed on Panmunjom as the place, and meetings began there on October 26. At first, the representatives were unable to agree on an agenda for the talks. The Communists wished first to have the question of composition of the Conference discussed and settled. The United States representative, Mr. Arthur Dean, however, wanted to obtain agreement on the time and place of the conference. The difficulty concerning agenda was circumvented when the Communists agreed to a United States proposal that the representatives refer the question to a committee of advisors from each side, who should attempt to reach a solution. The advisors suggested that a composite agenda be accepted, according to which the questions of time, place and composition would be discussed simultaneously by sub-committees. The plenary meeting of representatives endorsed this suggestion.

In subsequent meetings, two main points of issue arose. The first concerned the status of Soviet participation in the Conference. The Communists insisted that the Soviet Union take its place as a neutral and not as a member of their side. The United States emissary held that the Soviet Union could not be regarded as a neutral and would have to register its vote with the Communist side on every substantive agreement reached by the conference. The second