

## THE KOREAN CRISIS

No major agreement was reached in the armistice negotiations during December but some progress was made. Discussion was confined to items 3 (supervision of the armistice) and 4 (prisoners of war) of the agenda agreed on July 26 (see *External Affairs*, volume 3, No. 8, p. 277).

### **Supervision of the Armistice**

After a month of wrangling, there was disagreement on one main point under item 3: the Communists wanted unrestricted freedom to rehabilitate and enlarge any airfields anywhere in Korea. The United Nations Command was willing to agree only to the rehabilitation of specified airfields for civilian use but not to include extension of runways. There remained disagreement also on the right to replenish equipment used up after the armistice, although there were indications that this would not be a major issue.

The Communists, during the month, conceded that there should be some rotation of military personnel and that there should be a certain amount of inspection in rear areas. The United Nations Command on the other hand made substantial concessions: it had agreed to give up its demand for the right of aerial observation by non-combattant observers anywhere in Korea; it had agreed to project the demarcation line out to sea on both sides of the Korean peninsula and to give up the islands it held north of the line so projected; it had abandoned its insistence that teams of neutral observers should be under the Military Armistice Commission rather than independent; it had agreed to the rehabilitation of some airfields for civilian use although its original position was that all airfields should be left as they were found when the armistice should be signed; and it had accepted the principle that there should be a limit of some sort on the rotation of personnel.

### **Prisoners of War**

As a result of requests by the United Nations Command, the Communists on December 10 agreed to discuss item 4 concurrently with item 3 and a second sub-committee met for this purpose on December 11. The Communist position was that there should simply be an all-for-all exchange on the signature of the armistice. The United Nations Command maintained that in accordance with international custom there should be an exchange of data on prisoners of war first and it also pressed for the right of the International Committee of the Red Cross to inspect prisoner-of-war camps. On December 18, the Communists suddenly handed over a list of 7,142 South Korean, 3,198 United States, 919 United Kingdom, 234 Turkish, 40 Filippino, 10 French, 6 Australian, 4 South African, 3 Japanese [sic], 1 Canadian, 1 Greek and 1 Netherlands prisoners. Estimates by the United Nations Command showed approximately 60,000 missing and still unaccounted for. The United Nations Command handed a much larger list of prisoners to the enemy. Since that time, discussion has centred on attempts to clarify the status of those not accounted for.

### **Military Demarcation Line**

Meanwhile the 30-day period for which the demarcation line was valid expired on December 27. After discussion on items 3, 4 and 5 is complete and before the armistice is signed it will, therefore, be necessary to redefine the line in accordance with the agreement on November 27 on item 2 (see *External Affairs*, volume 3, No. 12, p. 410).

### **Military Situation**

Enemy aerial activity continued at a high level during December. Although little change took place on the ground, the Communist forces made a few more attacks against islands north of the demarcation line occupied by troops under the Unified Command.