

VII EAST ASIA

1. Korea

Korea is still divided, and early unification appears unlikely. The cease-fire established by the Armistice Agreement, however, has been maintained. Canada's military commitment in Korea was cut during the year by about two-thirds; this reduction corresponded with those planned by other Commonwealth participants in the Korean conflict, and by the United States.

The first matter of importance to come up in 1954 was the disposition by the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC) of the 22,000 prisoners of war in its custody who had not elected to be repatriated. Of this number, 21,700 had refused repatriation to the People's Republic of China or to North Korea. According to the United Nations Command's interpretation of the terms of reference of the NNRC, in which Canada concurred, the Commission was obliged to declare their relief from prisoner of war to civilian status on January 23. The Indian Chairman considered that the Commission was not competent to do this, and that the Armistice Agreement would not permit the UNC to free prisoners unilaterally. The UNC would not accept custody of the prisoners on such terms, but accommodated them after they left NNRC control and from January 23 considered them civilians. The NNRC declared its dissolution by majority vote, effective February 21.

India's request that the eighth session of the General Assembly be reconvened before the NNRC was dissolved did not receive the support of a majority of the Commission. The Canadian position was that while the desire of India to report to the General Assembly concerning its responsibilities as Chairman of the NNRC was appreciated, it would be undesirable to convene the session in the circumstances then prevailing.

On February 18 at Berlin the Foreign Ministers of the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union announced that they had agreed to convene a conference in Geneva to settle peacefully the Korean problem. The conference was to be attended by the four countries above named, the People's Republic of China, North and South Korea, and those countries which had participated in the Korean hostilities and which desired to attend. Of the countries concerned, only South Africa declined an invitation.

The Canadian delegation to the conference, which convened on April 26, was headed by the Secretary of State for External Affairs. It soon became evident that the Communist countries were prepared neither to recognize the legitimacy of the United Nations mission in Korea nor to agree to acceptable proposals for uniting the peninsula in freedom. Their plan called for elections throughout Korea, conducted by an all-Korean commission on which North and South would have equal representation,