

one could have been but impressed with the first-hand evidence given this Committee the other day by the Minister of State representing Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. The representative of China reminded us the other day of the evidence given to the world by Cardinal Spellman. We can repeat evidence of that character that has been given by many individuals whose honour and word we all recognize as being of the type that must be accepted. The United Nations Command will not use force to repatriate these individuals. Surely that is clear.

Both sides have recognized that every prisoner of war shall be entitled to release and repatriation. There can be no real argument on that score. That right is guaranteed by the Geneva Convention. Both sides agree that article 118 is binding. My delegation noted the Polish Foreign Minister's statement on Saturday that "repatriation should be carried out in accordance with international law" after an armistice, and we were encouraged — I wonder whether there is not some hope in his words — to hear him say that according to his understanding of the Geneva Convention, "the released war prisoner is returned to his home as a free agent". I should especially like to emphasize his words "as a free agent". I do not know whether that was a key or whether it was a suggestion to us. I do not know whether that was his answer vicariously to Mr. Lloyd's questions. But I hope he will not disillusion me when I express the hopeful view that in the words "as a free agent" he was suggesting to us that the situation on this score is not as hopeless as originally it seemed to be.

In our search for some new method of approach consistent with the basic principles of the Twenty-one Power draft resolution, might we not use the language of this article as a bridge on which we could build something that both sides could accept?

#### Arrangements for Exchange

There is no longer any disagreement that, in the event of an armistice, prisoners of war on both sides will be brought to agreed points in a demilitarized zone or zones. The two Commands have already agreed further that they will release the prisoners of war from the control of their respective military forces. All prisoners who would not resist the completion of their repatriation would be expeditiously exchanged.

The Unified Command has proposed that any of a number of impartial groups might be organized to interview prisoners of war who have indicated that they will forcibly resist the final stage of their repatriation. In the circumstances no use of force would be possible, for the prisoners would be in a demilitarized area under the control of an impartial protecting agency. So far the Com-

munist Command has failed to indicate why such a proposal is unacceptable. Perhaps the stumbling block is the composition of these suggested impartial protecting groups. Yet the Communist Command has been able to agree to other joint commissions. For example, they were able to agree to the composition of the commission provided for in article 37 of the draft armistice agreement. Agreement on similar lines might be possible for the task of interviewing the prisoners. If a protecting power were needed within the meaning of the terms of the Geneva Convention, consideration could be given to vesting the same group, or even another group of Powers, with this role. Those who refused to leave the neutral area would still retain the right to have their repatriation completed if and when they wished, and meanwhile they would be held by the protecting Powers in a manner to be determined.

The Unified Command is, I am convinced, prepared to discuss any new suggestions along these lines which might be made. If the idea of an observer group of any kind is unacceptable to the Communist Command, the Unified Command has offered to discuss the release of prisoners of war without question, interviewing or screening of any kind.

Such an operation, whatever form it takes, cannot be carried out over night, and time is a great healer. The protecting Power or Powers would continue their humanitarian tasks for as long as is required.

#### Small Area of Disagreement

It seems to me that if we look at the situation as we know it — but there might be some elements of which we are not aware — there is a small area of disagreement, and I sincerely believe that the Communist Command, if it truly desires an armistice, will consider every alternative as carefully as we do ourselves and as I am seeking to do in what I have to say here today.

We are all agreed that an armistice should be concluded as soon as possible and that there is but one issue which prevents the parties involved from agreeing on its terms, namely that of the treatment of the prisoners of war. Further, we are agreed that prisoners of war should be treated for all purposes, including that of release and repatriation, according to the principles of the Geneva Convention of 1949. We are not agreed as to whether prisoners unwilling to return should or should not be repatriated by force. We reject the use of force, and the Communists still have to pronounce themselves and we await their answer. We agree with Mr. Vyshinsky that there must be no forcible retention of prisoners of war for any purpose; does he agree that there must be no force used for any purpose in the completion of repatriation?

Lastly, we are all agreed, I think, that a political conference should be held to dis-