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POLITICAL AND SECURITY

Korea:

(A) The Armistice

The cease-fire negotiations which began between representatives of the opposing forces in Korea on July 10, 1951, had by the summer of 1952 resulted in the drawing up of a draft armistice agreement complete except for the provisions relating to the disposition of prisoners of war.¹ On this issue there was deadlock. The United Nations negotiators held fast to the basic position that they would not accept an obligation to force North Korean and Chinese prisoners in their hands to accept repatriation against their will, while the communist negotiators would not agree that prisoners were free to refuse to return to their own countries if they so wished. Finally, on September 28, General Harrison, on behalf of the United Nations Command (UNC), offered three new alternative proposals each of which, although designed to break the deadlock on the question, preserved the principle that there should be no forcible repatriation. The first was that all prisoners from both sides would be delivered to a demilitarized zone and there given the choice either of going home or returning to the side on which they were detained. The second and third alternatives both provided that all prisoners willing to go home would be exchanged at once, the remainder would be taken in small groups to the demilitarized zone and there freed from military control. Under the second alternative they would then be interviewed by neutral representatives agreed upon by both sides and thereafter be free to go to the side of their choice. Under the third alternative they would be permitted to go to the side of their choice without interviewing or screening. Any one of these procedures could, if desired, be supervised by the International Red Cross, by joint Red Cross teams, or by military observers from both sides.

On October 8, 1952, the communist negotiators rejected these proposals and introduced counter-proposals which reflected no change in their position that, in accordance with the Geneva Convention of 1949 as they interpreted it, all prisoners of war should be repatriated and that no prisoner might renounce his right to be repatriated. Thereupon General Harrison informed them that the United Nations Command did not wish any further meetings until they were ready to accept the UNC proposals, or until they made in writing constructive proposals of their own. Thus the armistice negotiations were in recess when the seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly convened on October 14.

Very early in the session it was agreed that the Korean question should be given priority in discussion. On October 23 debate on the problem began in the First Political Committee of the Assembly,

¹See *Canada and the United Nations 1951-52*, pp. 1-7.