Agenda item 24:
The Korean question: report of the United Nations Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea (continued)

General debate (continued) ........................................ 169

Chairman: Mr. Miguel Rafael UROQUIA (El Salvador).

AGENDA ITEM 24


GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. SCHURMANN (Netherlands) said that the report of the United Nations Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea (UNCURK) (A/3855) indicated clearly that the economic development of the Republic of Korea was still hampered by the division of the country and by the need for high defence expenditure, and that during the period under consideration no progress had been made towards the unification of the country.

2. At the beginning of the year, new hope might have seemed justified when the North Korean authorities had announced the evacuation of Chinese troops from Korean soil and had proposed free elections throughout Korea. That hope had vanished, however, when, in its reply to the Government of the United Kingdom, the spokesman for the countries which had contributed forces to the United Nations Command in Korea, the Government of the People’s Republic of China had failed to specify the principles on which the elections should be held. He was therefore forced to conclude that the authorities in North Korea had not changed their position on elections since 27 August 1957, when they had held elections in North Korea but had refused, as in the past, to offer facilities for United Nations observation of the elections.

3. In the exchange of notes with the United Kingdom, the communist authorities had reasserted that a complete withdrawal of all foreign troops from Korea would provide the necessary conditions for a peaceful settlement of the Korean question, including the holding of free elections (A/3865, para. 14). The same idea was again expressed, in less diplomatic language, in the statement by the North Korean authorities which had been reproduced in document A/C.1/810. The USSR representative (974th meeting) and others who had spoken after him had made an unjustified attack on the report of UNCURK, describing its authors as representatives of countries participating in aggressive blocs who had endeavoured to encourage the militarization of South Korea. There was no need to refute those statements again, since the members of the First Committee fully realized that, as the United States representative had pointed out (973rd meeting), once before foreign forces had been withdrawn from Korea, whereupon the communist authorities in North Korea had immediately started an aggression.

5. His delegation maintained the view that the United Nations forces could not be entirely withdrawn from Korea until the conditions for a lasting settlement, which had so often been specified by the General Assembly, had been fulfilled. In view of its responsibilities in Korea, the United Nations could not forsake the principles formulated at the Korean Political Conference, held at Geneva in 1954.

6. It was for those reasons that his delegation had joined the sponsors of the thirteen-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.217).

7. Mr. HOLMES (Canada) agreed with the representative of the USSR that the Korean problem could not be solved unless and until the wishes and interests of the Korean people were respected. In democratic societies, the method of consulting the wishes of the people was by free elections. The United Nations did not wish to impose a solution on the Korean people. On the contrary, it advocated genuinely free elections, the preparation and conduct of which would be subject to effective and impartial supervision and which would ensure representation proportionate to the population. The communist authorities in North Korea had so far failed to give their views on the principles which should govern the elections.

8. It was well to bear in mind that the United Nations had not been seized of the Korean question for the first time in 1950, when the southern part of the country had been invaded by the communists. It had long been striving to unify the country, but had never tried to impose its reunification. The purpose of its military effort had not been to impose reunification of the country by force, but to prevent its reunification by force.

9. Although it did not exaggerate the strategic significance of the withdrawal of the Chinese forces from North Korea, his delegation had welcomed it because those forces had never had any legitimate business there and had stood in the way of the realization of the peaceful objectives of the United Nations in that country.

10. The United Nations Command in Korea, however, was carrying out a task entrusted to it by the United Nations. The other side appeared to ignore that fact when it demanded the withdrawal of all outside forces as a prerequisite for negotiation of the Korean question. Moreover, those forces had for the most part long since left Korea and, as was indicated in the
thirteen-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.217), the Governments concerned were prepared to withdraw the remainder of their forces when the conditions for a lasting settlement had been fulfilled.

11. There were, it was true, two States in Korea, but no one could seriously put them on the same basis. The Republic of Korea had been recognized by the United Nations in 1948, following elections held under United Nations auspices, and since that time United Nations observers had been able to travel there at will. The so-called Democratic People's Republic of Korea, however, had been set up arbitrarily by the communist authorities and it had never allowed any outside observation. It was no use for the USSR representative to praise the living conditions in North Korea, when millions of people living there had expressed their views by escaping from North Korea at the risk of their lives.

12. The tragic history of Korea presented bewildering problems but there was one principle on which the United Nations had to insist: the principle of free choice. The methods for its application should always be open to discussion, but the other side would have to give proof of something other than intransigence.

13. His delegation would vote in favour of the thirteen-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.217).

14. Mr. NISOT (Belgium) said that his country, whose position on the Korean question remained unchanged, still advocated the holding of genuinely free elections under effective and impartial supervision. The aim was to make of Korea, by peaceful means, a unified country with a democratic organization and a representative form of government.

15. It was in that sense that the Governments, including the Government of Belgium, which had at the invitation of the General Assembly met at Geneva in 1954 for the Korean Political Conference, had expressed themselves in the report they had submitted to the United Nations (A/2786). The General Assembly had approved that report at its ninth session (resolution 811 (IX)).

16. Sixteen States had contributed to the forces which had fought in Korea under the United Nations Command. Belgium had been among those States. It was therefore natural for it to have co-sponsored the thirteen-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.217). That draft sought to apply the principles which had been recalled at Geneva in 1954, and confirmed by the General Assembly and which had their basis in the United Nations Charter itself.

The meeting rose at 3.40 p.m.