FAR EAST

INVASION OF REPUBLIC OF KOREA

At 4 a.m. on the morning of June 25th (Korean time), the Army of North Korea launched a completely unprovoked general invasion into the Republic of Korea. At 6 a.m., North Korean infantry began to cross the 38th parallel in the Ongjin Peninsula area, near the cities of Kaesong and Chunchon while amphibious landings were made on the eastern coast, south of Kangnung. Later in the morning, the Communist Radio at Pyongyang, setting the tone for the world’s Communist radio and press, charged that the Republic of Korea had initiated a surprise attack across the border into North Korea and that North Korean armed forces had been ordered to repulse the attackers. The broadcast also noted that North Korean tanks, planes and guns had scored successes south of the border. The invaders committed four divisions plus an estimated 90 tanks to the fight and, when the skies over Seoul cleared, made full use of their complete superiority in the air. The North Korean military forces consist of between 90,000 and 100,000 men organized into a picked Border Constabulary of more than 10,000 men and four to six divisions. The Republic of Korea’s armed forces number about 90,000 men in eight divisions. In terms of manpower, combat effectiveness, training and leadership the two forces are considered to be about equal. However, the North Koreans, besides possessing the tactical initiative in this operation, enjoyed the advantages of more and heavier artillery, a practically unopposed air force of more than 75 planes, including 35 Yak-9s or IL-10s and an armored force of more than 65 Soviet T-34 and larger tanks. The Republic of Korea had, at the time of the invasion, some 10 Harvard AT-6 trainer aircraft and 27 M-8 armored cars.

UN-sponsored Resolution Adopted by UNSC - We immediately asked our United Nations representative in New York to contact the Secretary-General, informing him that we view the North Korean aggression as a threat to the peace and asking him to call the Security Council into special session to consider the Korean situation. We asked that our representatives in countries which are in turn represented on the Security Council urge that prompt action be taken on this matter. The Security Council, meeting on the afternoon of the 25th, Washington time, approved 9-0--Yugoslavia abstaining--a resolution determining that the armed attack upon the Republic of Korea by forces from North Korea constitutes a breach of the peace and calling for immediate cessation of hostilities. The UN Korean Commission advised
the Secretary-General of the United Nations that the North Korean attack came as a complete surprise to both the Korean Army and the Korean Military Advisory Group and that the Pyongyang radio claim that the South Koreans had violated the border was entirely false. UNCOX drew the Secretary-General's attention to the fact that the situation was assuming the character of a full-scale war which might endanger the maintenance of international peace and security. In view of its past experiences, UNCOX stated it was convinced that North Korea would not heed the Security Council's resolution nor accept the good offices of UNCOX. There was a real danger, UNCOX observed, that the operations now in progress might end in a matter of days and that the question of a cease fire and the withdrawal of North Korean forces might well prove academic. Kim Il Sung, North Korean head, broadcasting on the Pyongyang radio, called on his forces to crush South Korea's military power, since that area of the country was being turned into an American colony. The forces of the North Korean Communists, aided by air support, armor and heavy artillery, continued their drive southward. After the South Koreans were able to temporarily stabilize the front on the evening of the 25th (Korean time) the northerners, bringing their overwhelming fire power to bear, broke through the defenses of the southerners in the Ojongbu sector and headed for Seoul against little opposition. South Korean President Rhee and his cabinet fled the city; dependents and non-essential personnel of US missions in Korea were taken to Japan by sea and air. An aura of defeatism and demoralization reportedly set in among the South Korean civil and military officials remaining in Seoul. They were making no plans to continue resistance further to the south if Seoul should fall. Army authorities estimated that Seoul would fall shortly and that, with the fall of Seoul, organized resistance by the Republic of Korea would collapse.

Tension in Foreign Capitals - Meanwhile, the events in Korea, especially following the cease fire resolution of the Security Council, were being watched with concern throughout the world. The future of the UN was believed in many parts of the world to be at stake, and intense interest was evidenced regarding the course the US would take in dealing with this blatant and irrefutable Communist aggression. Most government officials in the non-Communist world viewed the North Korean attack as a direct Soviet challenge to the US. The attack was fairly widely interpreted as an obvious probe by world communism at a soft spot in the non-Communist world which, if successful, would undoubtedly be followed by further action against other soft spots. The assault and the strategy
underlying it were likened to the Hitler tactics of 1938-1939. The Communist powers, in launching the attack, apparently judged that we would not send troops into Korea to throw back the invasion or that the world would be faced with an accomplished fact before the cumbersome machinery of the UN could swing into effective action. Countries under immediate threat by Soviet aggression, such as Turkey, Greece and Iran were waiting with intense interest for our reaction, and Germans were acutely aware of the implications the developments in Korea held for their own future.

President Truman’s Statement - About noon on June 27th President Truman communicated a statement of the US policy in Korea and elsewhere in the Far East to the public. The statement, which reflected a policy which had been decided upon the previous night, stressed that the Security Council had called upon all members of the UN to render every assistance to the UN in the execution of the SC resolution, and ordered "US air and sea forces to give the Korean Government troops cover and support." Mentioning that communism had by its action "passed beyond the use of subversion to conquer independent nations to the use of armed invasion and war," the President said that "under these circumstances the occupation of Formosa by Communist forces would be a direct threat to the security of the Pacific area and to United States forces performing their lawful and necessary functions in that area. Accordingly I have ordered the Seventh Fleet to prevent any attack on Formosa. As a corollary of this action I am calling upon the Chinese Government on Formosa to cease all air and sea operations against the mainland. The Seventh Fleet will see that this is done. The determination of the future status of Formosa must await the restoration of security in the Pacific, a peace settlement with Japan, or consideration by the UN." The President also directed that US forces in the Philippines be strengthened, that military assistance to the Philippine Government be accelerated, and that accelerated military assistance be furnished to the forces of France and the Associated States of Indochina. He concluded by saying: "I know that all members of the UN will consider carefully the consequences of this latest aggression in Korea in defiance of the Charter of the UN. A return to the rule of force in international affairs would have far reaching effects. The US will continue to uphold the rule of law."
Second UN Resolution - in accordance with the President's statement we offered a second resolution on Korea to the Security Council. In it we noted that North Korea had neither ceased hostilities nor withdrawn its armed forces to the 38th parallel and that the Republic of Korea had appealed to the UN for immediate and effective steps to secure peace and security in the area. We therefore recommended that the members of the UN furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel this armed attack. The Council voted seven to one in favor of the resolution, with India and Egypt failing to vote in the absence of instructions.

World Reaction to US Policy - Initial reports on the general reaction to our newly enunciated policy in the Far East has been overwhelmingly favorable. French Foreign Minister Schuman said that our action was the only proper course of action, stating that he did not believe the USSR was prepared to embark on a general war at this time. The Belgian Foreign Minister expressed satisfaction that the US proceeded within the framework of the UN and felt that the Belgian public would welcome our decision. British Prime Minister Attlee welcomed and supported the statement which was interrupted during its reading in the House of Commons by bursts of applause; it was very well received.

The Dutch Foreign Minister said that he was "mighty glad" that we had taken this position and promised all possible support in the United Nations. Luxembourg Foreign Minister Bech described the firmness of the President's statement as comforting and an incentive to the non-Communist world. Bech thought Soviets would be surprised at the vigor of our reaction. The Norwegian Foreign Minister said that we had made a breathtaking decision, which would prove correct if backed up with adequate force. Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama, Chile, Peru, and Colombia all approved the Presidential action. UN Secretary-General Liau also expressed approval of the President's stand on Korea.