

Yalu River

Or Rubicon?

The most difficult thing about the Asian crisis now is to see it clearly. Below are the roots embedded in irretrievable history. Above is a jungle of tangled peoples and purposes through which we find we have to travel in order to survive. Awareness of our stake in the history made on the Rhine and the Po and on the Volga came late enough. On top of it, kaleidoscopically, came the impress of Japan, of China, of unlikely war on tiny Pacific islands and in the Burma forests. Now, without pause, history crowds us not only in the far valley of the Yalu River in Korea but on the Tonkin Delta and up on the spaces of the Tibetan plateau. We discover that even a palace coup in a place called Katmandu in a country called Nepal on the Himalayan slopes can have something to do with the order of things in Ohio and Maryland.

As armies move and clash in remote places and lines are spoken by propagandists, politicians, and diplomats, more and more of it sounds like another mordant chapter in a satire written by George Orwell. The grimmest kind of realities become obscure. What is light here is shadow there. What appears to be the most resolute and decisive kind of action turns out to be a groping gesture that remains incomplete. In the fighting this side of the Yalu River in Korea, the issue may be power dams or the fate of the world, and the astounding fact is that we cannot be sure which it is.

This recession of objective fact was illustrated in a small but demonstrative way when the U.N. Security Council invited Communist China to answer charges that it had intervened in Korea. Upon voting for the invitation (he insisted that it was really a "summons"), U.S. Delegate Warren Austin explained that he recognized no such



entity as the "Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China." After him, Jacob Malik, likewise voting for the invitation, formally announced that the Soviet Union did not recognize the existence of the U.N. Command under General MacArthur, on whose report the charges of intervention were brought.

Thus, taking both views and affirmative votes together, it appeared that the representatives of a nonexistent government had been asked to come to Lake Success to answer charges made by a nonexistent military command. It was a study in silhouettes, like a Chinese shadow play. Then the Peking Government refused the invitation to discuss *its* intervention in Korea, agreeing only to come to discuss *American* intervention in Korea, along with the supposedly coupled issue of Formosa.

It was all about the same real war,

costing the lives of real men, going on in the real mountain passes and valleys of a country running with real wounds. Men, not ectoplasmic substitutes, would face each other at Lake Success, each looking at the other in his own mirror, and the whole issue of world peace was going to depend on what the mirrors showed and what was said. It is not easy to maintain the detachment needed to see how monumentally ironic this really all is.

Consider another set of juxtaposed cross-purposes. Whatever else is involved, it is unquestionably a fact that the Chinese Communists really fear an American attack on China through Manchuria. They see the advance of a predominantly American army up the Korean peninsula much as we would view a Russian Army moving up toward the Rio Grande. They are shifting whole armies, moving indus-

trial plants, girding cities, and preparing their people for blows. Yet an American war in China is most earnestly unwanted, particularly by Americans whose business is the planning of war. Moral, social, and political considerations apart, such a war would be an unmitigated disaster.

That is why the American military did not want large American forces committed in Korea in the first place, and more recently had happily planned to get them out. From the Chinese view, the American advance through Korea was a threat of aggression that had to be countered by intervention. From the American view, the Chinese intervention prevented a withdrawal that had already been prepared and, in the case of some air units, had actually already begun.

The threat of Chinese-Russian intervention hung over the Korean venture from the beginning. Just before the crossing of the 38th parallel, Peking explicitly warned that it would move if the line was crossed. The gamble was taken, largely on the calculation that the Chinese Communists would have moved much earlier if they had really wanted to save their North Korean allies from rout and destruction. But it developed that the Chinese threat was not a bluff. As U.N. forces approached the Manchurian border, they ran into Chinese Communist troops deployed around the big Yalu dams. American forces, which were supposed to have been held farther south, were moved up. American air units began hitting the river crossings to check the movement of men and supplies from Manchuria. On the ground obscure clashes and maneuvers followed. But the whole situation had clearly been transformed. What had seemed like the final days of a successful "small" war suddenly began to look like the first days of a much bigger war, heavy with the threat of disaster.

At worst, the new situation opened the prospect of a major war with China, broadening irresistibly into a new world war. This was certainly unwanted by the U.S. and the U.N. and, from every indication, seemed probably unintended by the Chinese. Amid a mounting ferocious propaganda campaign, they continued to speak of a "peaceful settlement" in Korea. Short of immediately touching off the big war, however, the Chinese move

threatened to prolong the Korean conflict indefinitely. The effect would be the slow bleeding of the bulk of American combat ground forces in a narrow peninsula, fruitlessly draining away a mounting measure of American lives and resources, and leaving Kremlin-guided forces freer to operate elsewhere. It was easy to foresee that this would lead to American military pressure either to retaliate against the Chinese beyond the border or to pull out of an impossible situation.

Finding a way out of this new impasse is not going to be solely up to the present makers of American policy. For one thing, circumstances are quite capable of forcing the issue toward solutions that nobody wants; the rational choices tend to become the least possible. For another thing, too great an area of decision is occupied by others.

There is, first and above all, the matter of what the Russians and Chinese intend. They are in a position to determine the shape of things in northeastern Asia, especially in the small corner of it where the fighting is actually going on. They are militarily quite capable of reconquering Korea. They are also capable, by more limited action, of keeping the whole Korean issue unresolved. Assuming that their objectives fall short of precipitating a major war, they still have a wide area of maneuver and an extremely strong bargaining position.



Mao Tse-tung

In assessing the position of the Moscow-Peking axis, it is tempting to attribute to them a super-Machiavellian strategic design and to concede to them a consistency in action which we never seem able to achieve. We have to remember that they too act expediently and opportunistically, are capable of the grossest errors of judgment, and have aims which are by no means free of internal contradictions and conflicts. For the Russians, however, the present situation seems to serve the following purposes:

1. Embroils China with the U.S., a consummation Moscow has devoutly wished for and long sedulously sought.
2. Retrieves what looked like a bad error of Russian judgment made at Korean expense and turns a loss into a gain by pinning down large American forces.
3. Welds the Chinese Communists more closely to the Kremlin by involving them in commitments they can pursue successfully only with major Russian aid.
4. Provides, possibly, the elements of a new peace offensive based upon the offer of a settlement in Korea.

The Chinese Communists, their rule barely established, are driven at an accelerated pace into external adventures. They act in part under Russian dictation, in part under the dictation of their own circumstances. They are driven by that complex of power and fear, common to Russia and similarly situated countries, which makes every contiguous area a zone they must control. Part defensive mania, part expansionist pressure, it keeps all mutual relations with neighboring countries basically insecure. Applied now in Korea and Tibet, this factor will govern China's future relations with Indo-China, Burma, Thailand, and India. However far below the present surface it may be, it applies in Chinese-Russian relations as well. With these elements in mind, it can be said that for the Chinese Communists the military intervention in Korea serves these purposes:

1. Puts them, most concretely and immediately, in a position to keep the Yalu power system out of hostile hands.
2. Enables them to react beyond their own borders to what they consider an actual American threat to them.
3. Puts them in a position to bargain

effectively on both Korea and Formosa.

4. Gives them the chance to strengthen their own grip on Manchuria and make it less directly subject to Russian control.

5. Puts Peking in the position of bailing the North Korean Communists out of the well into which the Russians drove them.

Governed obscurely or deliberately by any or all of these aims and impulses, the Moscow-Peking axis exerts the major power of decision in Korea right now, and the course of events will depend primarily upon what they do there.

The area of decision occupied by the United States and its friends in the present issue is more limited and more clearly segmented. This does not mean in the least that in the face of mortal crisis this country is helpless and doomed. It does mean that there are facts and realities that have to be viewed unblinkingly.

The U.N. is a stronger entity than it was, thanks to the Acheson-sponsored changes that transformed the Assembly into a body with power to act. But it is still a conglomeration of particular national interests that have hardly found their way as yet to any firm common ground. The nearest thing in it to an allied entity is the North Atlantic Community, but in a military sense at least this is still a plan on paper, not a force in being. In face of the onset of a major war in Asia, the nations of western Europe would regard themselves as disastrously exposed, as indeed they would be. Their pressure on the United States to avert the prospect of a general war beginning in Asia now will be insistent.

Beyond Europe, the outlook is even dimmer. The Middle Eastern Arabs will in almost any eventuality stand complacently aside. The non-Communist countries of South Asia, which so reluctantly joined in supporting U.N. initiative in the narrow issue of North Korean aggression, will unquestionably want to stand apart from any bigger issue that may now be joined. They will be fragmented by their mistrust of the United States and the alternating repulsion and attraction of the new Russian-Chinese colossus of the Asian north. Taken all together, these attitudes mean that in the worst eventuality of an intercontinental war, the

United States would have to depend primarily upon itself.

America's own power of decision in Asia has been steadily whittled down by the events of the last five years. Now it has been reduced further by the outcome of the November 7 election. We enter upon one of the most critical junctures in our history with forces represented by the neo-isolationist Taft and the Know-Nothing McCarthy in a position to backseat-drive the Congress. New power, if not decisive influence, has fallen to a group of politicians who have played on popular fears and confusion by the most irresponsible kind of demagoguery over precisely the issue of American policy and action in Asia. Their use of this new power will be one of the decisive elements in American policy in the dangerous times ahead.

Playing fast and loose with the world crisis for opportunist partisan-political purposes is a dangerous game in any circumstances. If the same procedure is followed now that these people have been given added power and responsibility by a bewildered electorate, the results can be baleful indeed. This group holds a basically isolationist at-



titude toward Europe and a super-interventionist attitude toward Asia, the latter not because they have thought through any of the problems but because it is a handy means of embarrassing the Administration. It was one thing to win votes by arguing that the chief pillars of American policy in Asia have to be Chiang Kai-shek and Douglas MacArthur. It will be another thing to try to impose a policy actually based on that premise. One can classify as

pessimistic the view that this is exactly what they intend to do, and that they will act on the assumption that it is more important to determine the party label of the President elected two years from now than to keep the country secure between now and then. The optimistic view is that the new weight of responsibility and the gravity of the crisis will sober them up.

All this means that the space in which we have to move right now is painfully small. If the Communist objective in Korea remains limited, it obviously becomes a matter of the terms, however fragile and unsatisfactory, which will give us time, at least to shift ground, at most to dissipate the worst of the present dangers. If Peking's short-term goal in Korea is to keep the Yalu power system and a North Korean buffer zone in "safe" hands and, perhaps, to strike a bargain on Formosa, at this writing it appears likely that such a deal can be packaged by the Peking delegates when they arrive at Lake Success. It remains to be seen whether they are ready to talk such terms, are determined to press for more, or are ready to push their advantage beyond the outermost limits of possible negotiation.

If the Russian intent proves in fact to be an all-out attack designed to drive U.N. forces from Korea, the issue becomes heavier and sharper. This country will have to weigh then the fate of its forces in Korea itself, the state of the West's defenses, and the relative positions of the United States and Russia in Europe and Asia. The chances are that, despite all the adverse circumstances, the pressure to carry the issue of war or peace directly to the Kremlin would in any case become irresistible.

The Kremlin will in that event have to decide whether it is ready to pay for a Korean retrieval with a world war or whether it will have to step back and settle for what it can get. This, at its baldest, is the way the issue is now posed. The most hopeful element in it is the continuing conviction that the Kremlin, ready enough to expend its satellites in risky maneuvers, is by no means ready to take the greatest risk of all upon itself. —HAROLD R. ISAACS

The Reporter's editorial views on the international implications of the present situation in North Korea will be found in "The Reporter's Notes" on page 1.

The Philippines: Liberty and License

"The difficulty," reads a weary sentence in the Bell Mission's recent report on the Philippines, "is not so much in knowing what to do as in getting it done." After all, economic, social, and political crises have been chronic in the Philippines since the end of the war. But their root causes, which Daniel W. Bell and his colleagues explored rather thoroughly this summer, have not changed greatly since 1945; nor have we been treated to any revolutionary new ideas for solving them. What we must cope with today is a new pressure on the United States to mend its fences in Asia—and the Philippine fence is in particular need of repair.

When it comes to appropriating money for the benefit of a foreign nation, the Washington pattern calls for a scare technique. We created Lend-Lease because we were scared. We put over the British loan of 1946 because we were scared. We established the Marshall Plan because we were scared. When the Communists in Korea threw a greater scare into us than ever before, we inevitably reacted by re-examining our responsibilities in the Far East.

This does not mean that the State Department was unaware of the Philippine crisis before June 25. The survey conducted by Bell and his colleagues had been planned in the spring. But had it not been for the Korean experience, the Bell Mission's recommendations would have attracted little more public attention than those of the Griffin Mission, which last spring covered the five other countries of Southeast Asia.

The problem itself has not changed. It is essentially a moral one. Before the war, the Philippines had advanced rapidly toward the goal of independence, set for 1946. Through the years, an adaptation of the American economic and political pattern—if not of our



social pattern—had been worked out to fit Filipino needs. A corps of pretty able, honest, and sophisticated public servants had been trained; heading the Commonwealth was the doughty, volatile, and highly competent Manuel L. Quezon. What Quezon gave the Filipinos, more than anything else, was a combination of personal leadership, which meant willingness to make decisions, and a political philosophy which, though it swung to extremes at times, never departed from a concept of continuing responsibility to the people. Unfortunately, Quezon died in 1944.

With war, Japanese occupation, and postwar chaos, the country disintegrated morally. The survivors who might have been expected to assume leadership after liberation had been spoiled or disillusioned. It became more important to make a financial killing, by fair means or foul, than to rebuild the country on stable foundations. The dreadful mix-up on what to do about the wartime collaborators ended in a virtual vindication of betrayal. American help, which was poured in to the extent of \$1.6 billion, was frittered away on novelties and junk from the United States. Prices

soared; wealth concentrated ever more rapidly on the corrupt or the already rich; and the real earnings of Juan de la Cruz, the John Doe of the islands, gave him a standard of living lower than it had been for many years before the war.

Today the finances of the government are near collapse. The Treasury has a large and mounting deficit. The government's credit is about gone. In some provincial areas, schoolteachers have not been paid for months. The country's dollar position in international trade is rapidly weakening—and will become worse now that the flow of American funds for war-damage compensation, veterans' payments, and military expenses is thinning out. The government's tax-collecting machinery has become a joke.

Under all this is a quagmire of incompetence and corruption. Too many key Filipino officials simply do not understand what is happening in their country. Of the remainder, too many do not care. A member of the Bell Mission, apparently new to the Far East, was shocked when he entered one government office to find no more than five or six of the thirty employees in the room at work. The rest were standing around talking or reading newspapers. One woman was busy with her embroidery. An embarrassed supervisor explained: "Most of them are political protégés. They will not accept discipline." Another official told him about the constant pressure from big-time politicians to find government jobs for friends and relatives "where they can make the most money"—and the reference was not to official salaries. In the Bureau of Customs, for instance, investigative and appraising jobs are much in demand because, "although the salaries are very low, they