

The Economic Weekly

A Journal of Current Economic and Political Affairs

(Established January 1949)

June 20, 1953

Volume V—No. 25

Eight annas

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India and Pakistan Rs 24/-
Foreign Rs 27/-

Syngman Rhee's Threat to Peace

DEVELOPMENT'S in Korea are not only dramatic. They are significant reminders of the obscure origin of the Korean war and of the mysterious series of events since then. South Korea's aged President is an ambitious politician, so is Chiang Kai-shek, and all the other reactionary regimes bolstered by America and the metropolitan Powers. What is more surprising is Syngman Rhee's daring action in defying the authority of the UN Command. There is no doubt that he has the full support of the South Korean Army. Worse still—because far graver in import-- is the circumstantial evidence which lends colour to the suspicion of direct or indirect connivance by UN Command's military men on the spot of South Korea's unilateral action in releasing North Korean war prisoners from their camps.

Many thinking persons throughout the world will endorse Sir Winston Churchill's anxiety that there may still be "a hope that the peace which is so nearly arranged will not be prevented". But the circumstances under which Syngman Rhee's Government succeeded in implementing their one-sided decision to release war prisoners disclose the absurd attitude of the UN Command to the dispute about war prisoners from the beginning. Since the start of the controversy the Communists have claimed that UN screening and interrogation of war prisoners had never been impartial. They have accused the UN Command of deliberately employing the South Korean forces in intimidating the war prisoners. MANY of these allegations were conceded long ago. There was a widespread demand for a thorough readjustment of the arrangements for guarding war prisoners' camps.

It is now apparent that the South Korean forces have been allowed to remain in charge of war prisoners' camps under the supervision of a skeleton staff of American officers. This fact will, of course, be emphasised by the UN Command in refuting any allegation about its connivance with Syngman Rhee in his action in releasing North Korean war prisoners. But the statements issued by General Mark Clark and Syngman Rhee are highly alarming. General Clark admits that the action has been "secretly planned and carefully co-ordinated at high levels in the Korean Government". Syngman Rhee has made no secret of his intentions to defy the authority of the United Nations in arranging the preliminary to an armistice in Korea. He had openly rejected the truce agreement. By declaring martial law, and by taking steps to mobilise his forces, he had left no room for doubt that he was determined to resist the truce, if necessary by force. Why, then, the UN Command did not take any precautionary measures in anticipation of any possible military action by Syngman Rhee?

Syngman Rhee had the courage of his convictions. He is honest in proclaiming to the world that he has ordered the release of North Korean war prisoners on "his own responsibility". This leaves General Mark Clark with a plausible excuse. America's Secretary of State has assured the world that, on behalf of the United Nations, America has conducted the negotiations "in good faith", and that America has acted, and is acting, "in good faith". Yet Syngman Rhee has let it be known

The Economic Weekly
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