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COMMUNISTS MAY AFFIRM READINESS FOR TRUCE WITH OR WITHOUT RHEE

The Communists at Panmunjom have called for a staff officers' meeting on 8 July. They may intend to affirm their willingness, previously suggested but never made explicit, to conclude a Korean truce either with or without South Korean acceptance of it, provided that the UN Command can implement its terms. They may also wish to make a statement on possible American-South Korean agreements.

The Communists in their 19 June letter implied willingness to conclude a truce with or without Rhee. They asked for assurances that the UN Command could implement the truce, and demanded that, if the truce were to include South Korea, the 27,000 Korean prisoners released by Rhee be recovered. On 4 July Peiping Radio again suggested readiness for a truce without Rhee.

The Communists may be expected, either at tomorrow's meeting or later, to seek much stronger assurances, in regard to implementation of a truce, than were given in General Clark's letter of 29 June. In that letter the UN Command suggested that a truce be signed despite an inability to recover the prisoners, and stated it would endeavor to secure South Korean cooperation in implementing it. On 30 June the Communists unofficially rejected Clark's proposal, Pyongyang Radio stating that Clark gave "no guarantee" as to Rhee's future conduct and reaffirming the demand for recovery of the prisoners.

The Communists' insistence on truce implementation has not made clear whether they desire a truce acceptable to Rhee or would prefer one which would be rejected by Rhee and physically opposed by South Korean forces. If the former, the Communists may be expected eventually if not immediately to withdraw their demand for recovery of all the released prisoners. If the latter, the Communists can persist in this demand in the hope of promoting American-South Korean discord.

Communist propaganda has shown awareness that American-South Korean agreements may be reached regarding a security pact and a joint walkout on the postarmistice political conference if no progress is being made. Assuming that the Communists do genuinely desire a truce, such American-South Korean agreements would not preclude the signing of a truce. Although the Communists have objected and probably will continue to object to such agreements, they are expected to settle for firm assurances that the United States will not support Rhee in violating an armistice and will not automatically resume hostilities if no early agreement is reached in the political conference.

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