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April 23, 1948

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SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

1. The May 10 Election in Korea: Preparations and Prospects. (p.1)

The election of May 10, 1948 will mark the conclusion of the first phase of United Nations' handling of the Korean problem and will serve as the foundation for future relations between Korea and the UN. When the USSR refused to permit the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea to enter the Soviet Zone, the Commission was directed to proceed with elections in the southern zone. Preparations for the elections have been hampered by the continued opposition of the USSR, the North Korean regime, and the South Korean Communists and by dissension within the Commission itself, all of which has fostered political confusion in South Korea. With the proposal by the North Korean authorities that a conference be held in Pyongyang between the North Korean parties and the South Korean parties opposed to the election, a definite breach developed among the South Korean parties. The moderate moderates were subverted into opposition to the election, and KIM Ku, a leader of the extreme-right, also expressed opposition to the election. However, RINEF Syngman succeeded in reuniting the major groups of the extreme-right in support of the election and even consolidated them more closely. With the support of this dominant political group, intensive governmental publicity, and the natural desire of the Korean people to participate in their first free election, the election now appears to have general popular support. It is reported that 93 percent of the eligible voters have registered for the election, and a large popular vote is therefore expected. Irregularities will undoubtedly arise because of the complexity of the election system and the Communist bloc may stage demonstrations and incite violence and rioting, but the safeguards set up in the election system should prevent such developments from becoming sufficiently widespread to constitute a basis for challenging the validity of the election as a whole. Party participation other than from the extreme-rightists will be weak, however, and the one-sided composition of the resultant National Assembly will probably have the effect of increasing the tension between the two zones of occupation.

2. Discord Within the Democratic Party. (p.6)

The formation of the Democratic-led Ashida coalition cabinet intensified discord within the Democratic Party, which may portend the collapse of that party's national organization. Since the April 1947 elections the Democrats have lost forty lower house members, and there is increasing evidence that many of the local party branches have been alienated from national party headquarters. It is apparent that Democratic leadership has been concerned primarily with obtaining for the party a place in the cabinet even at the expense of party unity.

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THE MAY 10 ELECTION IN KOREA : PREPARATIONS AND PROSPECTS

The election of May 10, 1948 will mark the conclusion of the first phase of international consideration of the problem of Korea and will serve as the foundation for future relations between that country and the United States. After the failure of the Joint (US-USSR) Commission, the US sought to achieve the unification and independence of Korea through the United Nations. Over the opposition of the USSR, the US succeeded in securing UN consideration of the problem. The United Nations' solution was to create a United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea to observe elections to be held as a prelude to the establishment of a Korean National Government. When the USSR refused to permit the Commission to enter the Soviet zone, the Commission was instructed to proceed with elections in South Korea. If the election proves successful, it will give international support and the stamp of legitimacy to the government formed in South Korea. This accolade may prove important in a future contest between northern and southern zones for paramouny of ideology and governmental institutions throughout the peninsula.

Factors Conditioning the Election

Consulting with the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea, the American authorities drew up a special election law, based upon Public Act Number Five of the Korean Interim Legislative Assembly, with modifications to suit the recommendations of the Commission. The resultant election system is a generally sound one, providing for every contingency and endeavoring to insure complete fairness and full participation in the election. Approximately two hundred representatives are to be elected from single-member districts on the basis of universal suffrage and a secret ballot. Several unusual provisions of the law endeavor to make possible intelligent participation by even an inexperienced electorate. For the benefit of illiterates, for example, pictures of the candidates are to be posted at the polling place, each marked with a simple symbol that is also used on the ballot with the candidate's name. Provisions have also been directed toward reducing police interference to a minimum and restricting the participation of administrative officials in the election process. The political inexperience of the Koreans and the backward condition of the country will, however, inevitably limit the effectiveness of the new election system. The structure of the electoral machinery is complex;

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the time schedules are very closely drawn; and many of the minor provisions are unrealistic in application to local conditions. Especially unrealistic in view of Korean physical conditions and the existence of an acute paper shortage are provisions regarding polling places and stocks and types of paper to be used for publicity and balloting. These faults will inevitably lead to election irregularities, but these irregularities are not likely to be sufficiently widespread to constitute a basis for challenging the validity of the election as a whole.

The major impediments to the election lie, however, not in the election system and the political immaturity of the people but in the impact of external forces upon the Korean domestic scene. The major external force is the combined Soviet and North Korean opposition, extended into South Korea through the South Korean Communist bloc. The USSR and its Korean supporters have opposed the administration in South Korea step by step. They have frustrated efforts to secure agreement in the Joint Commission, opposed action by the United Nations, attempted to render the UN Temporary Commission on Korea ineffective, and attempted to prevent the participation of South Korean parties in the election. They have played upon the basic Korean desire for unification, endeavoring to convince the people and, indirectly, some members of the UN Temporary Commission that unification can never be achieved through elections held over USSR opposition. Under this external pressure, the Commission at first refused to take a decisive position with regard to the election, thus contributing to a degeneration of the internal political situation to the point of confusion.

Against the totalitarian front, the groups in the south have appeared uncertain and vacillating, and there was for a time intense political confusion and instability. This condition was further aggravated by the proposal of the North Korean regime that a conference be held in Pyongyang between the political leaders of the south who are opposed to the "separate" election and the Communist leaders of the north. The Communist bloc in South Korea ardently supported the proposal, and the weak moderate factions were induced to announce their opposition to the election in the hope of finding a middle path. Even KIM Ku, considered the second strongest of the extreme-rightist leaders, accepted the conference proposal, thus driving a wedge between his own faction and that of RHEE Syngman and dividing the extreme-right, the strongest political grouping in South Korea, into two parts.

The outcome of this division served to substantiate the estimates of large extreme-rightist strength and of Rhee's domination of that group. KIM Ku was able to rally to his view only the Korean Independence Party, the National Congress Party, and the Great Korean Laborers and Farmers' Party. None of these groups is supported by extensive

local organization. Rhee held the National Society for Acceleration of Korean Independence firmly and developed it even more definitely into the major party of the extreme right by integrating into it five of the major youth groups, in this act drawing KIM Ku's lieutenant, LEE Ch'on Ch'on, and the powerful Dai Dong Youth Corps (or United Young Men's Party) into support of the election. The influential Hankook Democratic Party joined with the National Society in supporting the election. At this same time, the American authorities and the South Korean Interim Government were carrying on a large-scale informational program concerning the elections. With the postponement of and uncertainty regarding the north-south conference, the political movement opposing the election has lost much of its impetus. Political activity has approached relative stability, solidifying in general support of the election behind the Rhee organization.

This political trend revealed itself in the events preceding the election. After an inauspicious beginning -- with dissension in the UN Temporary Commission over announcement of the elections -- and a period of uncertainty during which the Commission laid plans for observation and the American authorities took measures to create a free atmosphere, the new attitude of the people showed itself in a surprisingly large registration of voters -- 93 percent of an eligible electorate estimated at almost 9 million. The prospects for a generally successful election have now become much brighter.

Probable Outcome and Consequences of the Election

It is apparent that the supporters of RHEE Syngman will emerge as the dominant group in the elected National Assembly. Through the National Society for Acceleration of Korean Independence and the youth groups, they will undoubtedly secure a decisive majority in almost all of the electoral districts.

Rhee's consequent dominance may be lessened slightly if, as seems probable, he accepts a coalition with influential candidates not formally affiliated with any party and with the rightist Hankook Democratic Party, which, although inclined to assert its independence of Rhee, is bitterly hostile to KIM Ku.

Nevertheless, the election is another definite step toward the emergence of a one-party government system under the control of the National Society for Acceleration of Korean Independence. There is, therefore, a possibility of conflict within the extreme right, between the Hankook Democratic Party and the National Society; the appearance of a "rigged election"; and surface substantiation of the charge of

4

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"separate" government, since the Rhee faction has long featured advocacy of a separate election and separate government.

Judging from the registration, the vote cast will be very large. The National Society for Acceleration of Korean Independence and the youth groups will continue to whip up support of the election and of their faction in almost all of the local settlements of South Korea. Efforts of political factions opposed to the election to secure a popular boycott of the election should have little effect because of this political campaigning, the government publicity programs, and the natural desire of the people to participate in this first free election. However, some areas in which Communist control is strong -- e.g., P'ohang, Kyongsang-pukto, rural settlements near Naju, Chollanamdo, Cheju-do, and the southwestern coastal areas of Kyongsang-namdo -- may boycott the election. Coercion will probably be exerted in areas remote from observation, primarily to effect universal participation in rightist areas but possibly also to intimidate the minority settlements. It is likely, therefore, that some coerced voters may deposit blank ballots.

Except for the National Society and the Hankook Democratic Party, party participation in the election will be weak. The Communists apparently will remain firm in their boycott of the elections. Even if the moderates join in the election, their numbers outside of Seoul are negligible and they would be entering the election arena too late to have much effect. The KIM Ku candidates are reported to be running as individuals, without party participation. In general, therefore, the election will be a contest among the National Society, the Hankook Democratic Party, and the independents, with the attitude of the National Society and the Hankook toward such independents playing a major part in their hopes of election and participation in the new government. This means, at best, that the National Assembly will be politically unbalanced in that it will not contain representatives of all political groups.

Irregularities are certain to develop, but it is not likely that they will be sufficiently widespread to invalidate the election of more than a few individuals. The election machinery is too complex and the time schedule too closely drawn to permit strict compliance. Some of the electoral district election committees will probably be unable to handle the number of appeals brought before them. The irregularities that do develop will probably take place at the local level, beyond the observation of the UN Temporary Commission and American authorities. The Military Governor and the Election Review Board will

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undoubtedly be pressed by litigations over the elections. Some of the individual elections, particularly those in strong leftist areas, will almost certainly be declared invalid. The election as a whole, however, should be successful, and the machinery set up for handling litigations concerning particular electoral districts should prove strong enough to handle the situation, particularly if the Military Governor takes a strong hand in the matter. In any case, of course, the Military Governor is more likely to rule an election in a particular electoral district invalid than is the Election Review Board, since the Election Review Board apparently will not be set up until some time after the National Assembly convenes, its personnel will be Korean, and two of its members are to be chosen by the National Assembly itself.

There is almost certain to be violence and rioting on the election day. In strong Communist areas this activity may be extensive enough to disrupt the electoral process completely. The following areas fall into this category: the coastal area east of Taegu, Kyongsang-pukto; the region around Sanch'onpo, Kosong, and T'ongyong, Kyongsang-namdo; rural settlements around Naju, Cholla-namdo; and Cheju-do. Elsewhere, there may be violence, confined to a small area, if rightists attempt to repress completely a settlement within the area opposed to their viewpoint or if organized Communists make raids upon the polling places or try to steal or destroy the ballots. Registration places have already been attacked in Seoul and Cholla-namdo. Strong countermeasures will probably reduce violence to a minimum. It is unlikely that the North Korean regime or the USSR will issue an open call for violence to the South Korean Communists. Instead, the South Korean Communists will probably stage "spontaneous" demonstrations in protest against the separate election and separate government.