

# NEW ZEALAND AND THE KOREAN CRISIS

## BACKGROUND TO KOREAN PROBLEM

KOREA, a nation of 30,000,000 people with an ancient and proud civilization, lost its status as an independent kingdom when it was annexed by Japan in 1910.

In December, 1943, the heads of Government of the United States, the United Kingdom, and China, meeting at Cairo, announced their determination that in due course Korea should become free and independent. The Potsdam Declaration of 26 July, 1945, to which the Soviet Union subscribed when it declared war against Japan on 8 August, 1945, reaffirmed that the terms of the Cairo Declaration should be carried out.

After Japan's first offer of surrender on 10 August, 1945, when the nearest American forces were in Okinawa and Soviet troops were already in Korea, the United States proposed that Japanese forces north of 38° north latitude should surrender to the Soviet Commander, while those south of that line should surrender to the American Commander. This arrangement was accepted by Marshal Stalin and the United Kingdom Government and was incorporated in the first General Order issued on 2 September, 1945, by General MacArthur, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers.

The forces of the U.S.S.R. occupied the northern half of the peninsula and some weeks later American troops landed in the south. The thirty-eighth parallel was established as the line of demarcation between the two zones solely for the purpose of administering the Japanese surrender. It was a purely artificial boundary, corresponding to no geographical or ethnical division, and was not intended to be in any way permanent.

## JOINT UNITED STATES - SOVIET COMMISSION

At Moscow in December, 1945, the Foreign Ministers of the United States, Soviet Union, and Great Britain decided to establish a joint United States - Soviet Commission to consult with the Koreans and work out methods for the formation of a provisional Government which, for a period of five years, would be subject to a Four-Power Trusteeship by the three Powers and China. The Joint Commission, however, in the course of almost two years of negotiation, failed to reach agreement. During this time, Korea's arbitrary dismemberment along the parallel took on a more permanent character and the just and urgent claims of the Korean people to unity and independence remained unsatisfied. While the United States Military Government concentrated its efforts on the reconstruction of the shattered economy and on preparing the Koreans in its zone for self-government, the Soviet authorities in the north, with the