Cabinet conclusions on China’s intervention in the Korean War, 29 November 1950

SECRET

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[…]

On the other hand it was argued that in the last resort it would be difficult to decline to support a United States resolution condemning Chinese aggression. If we were to withdraw our support for United States strategy in the Far East, the United States Government would be less willing to continue their policy of supporting the defence of Western Europe; and, without their full assistance in Europe, we had little chance of withstanding a Russian aggression there. The wisest choice would probably be to continue to resist the Chinese forces in Korea, but to seek to limit hostilities to Korea and refrain from any attacks beyond the Manchurian frontier. In that event there was perhaps some prospect that fighting in Korea would gradually come to an end if, as seemed likely, China’s intervention was based mainly on considerations of self-defence and did not form part of Russia’s world strategy.

(d) Unless the military operations could be limited in this way, it was difficult to see how a long-term solution could be found. Negotiations must be undertaken with the Chinese People’s Government at some stage. Was it not time to exchange views with the United States Government about a long-term settlement with China?

(e) One of the main objectives of Russian policy was to provoke divergences of policy between the United Kingdom and United States. We should be playing into Russian hands if we allowed this adverse turn of events in Korea to be a cause of ill-feeling between ourselves and the Americans. We could not afford to lose America’s support in Europe; and on that account we must be prepared, if necessary, to accept American leadership in the Far East.

The Cabinet –

Invited the Foreign Secretary to consider, in the light of their discussion, what representations he should make to the United States Government regarding the conduct of the discussions in the Security Council on China’s intervention in Korea.

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