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NEW ZEALAND'S RESPONSE TO THE

KOREAN CRISIS:

JUNE-JULY 1950

A study in official Government policy.

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A long essay submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the
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PREFACE

On 25 June 1950, the armed forces of the People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) invaded the Republic of Korea (South Korea). Four days later, on 29 June 1950, New Zealand decided to assist in defending the territorial integrity of South Korea and despatched two Naval vessels to serve in Korean waters. On 26 July 1950, the Government decided to extend this assistance by providing an artillery battalion to serve on the ground in Korea. Once again, New Zealand had become embroiled in a war in a foreign country many thousands of miles away, and in which it had no immediate interests at stake. This essay attempts to examine the circumstances and reasons behind the Government's decision to make these commitments.

In preparing this essay, I would like to thank Dr Anne Trotter for her invaluable comments, criticisms and guidance, and Dr Erik Olssen in preparing the ground work for researching this subject. I am indebted to Mr Ian Muir of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in granting me access to the Ministry's files, and to Mr Ian MacGibbon of the Ministry of Defence for providing similar access to Defence files and for bringing to my attention valuable documents available at the National Archives which would have otherwise been overlooked. A note of thanks also goes to Linda and Paul for their encouragement.
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CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND

Before the outbreak of the crisis of June 1950, Korea had already found itself "in the cockpit of modern Far Eastern power politics".¹ By the turn of the twentieth century, it had been the occasion of two Far Eastern conflicts, the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 and the Russo-Japanese War of 1905. As a result of the latter, Korean sovereignty was formally transferred to Japan by treaty and Korea became a dependency of the Japanese Empire in August 1910.

It was not until the end of the Second World War with the Allied defeat of Japan that this status of Korea was altered. Earlier in the Cairo and Potsdam Declarations of December 1943 and July 1945, respectively, the governments of the United States, China, Great Britain and the Soviet Union agreed that "in due course Korea should become free and independent". However, 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 the 38th parallel should surrender to the Soviet Commander, while those south of that line should surrender to the American Commander. The Allied Chiefs accepted this arrangement and accordingly, the

Russian forces occupied the northern half of the peninsula and some weeks later American troops landed in the South.²

The dividing of the peninsula at the 38th parallel was envisaged by the United States merely as an arbitrary demarcation for the purpose of facilitating an easy transfer of authority, but the Soviet Commander's interpretation of the move soon converted the surrender line into a frontier between North and South. A conflict of interest between the two powers soon developed and the original hope of bringing about the economic, social and administrative unification of Korea by direct military negotiation was abandoned in favour of taking it up at governmental level. The resulting Moscow Conference of December 1945 produced an agreement to consult with the Koreans and work towards the establishment of a provincial all-Korean Government. The Joint Commission, however, in the course of almost two years of negotiation, failed to reach agreement; and during this time the 38th parallel took on a more permanent character, as a political boundary with the American forces reconstructing and preparing its zone for self-government, and the Soviet authorities consolidating their position in the North.³

Finally convinced that further direct negotiations with the Soviet Union would be futile, the United States on 17 September 1947, laid the issue before the second regular session of the United Nations General Assembly.⁴ This American move was not entirely due to their concern


⁴ Clemow, pp. 4-8.
for Korean unity. In part it was the recognition that both the United States and the Soviet Union were "intent on prosecuting policies designed most effectively to safeguard or further national interests and reduce security and ideological anxieties." Neither party was prepared to let the other bring all of Korea within its sphere of influence. Furthermore the United States could count on a sympathetic majority in the United Nations which might produce enough pressure on the Soviets to accept the American approach to solving the problem.

The move was also based on a further consideration. While the United States desired a pro-western Korea, it also wanted to disengage itself from a military commitment which was proving to be inconvenient, embarrassing and costly and believed to be unjustified in terms of the overall requirements of American military security. In fact, the authorities in Washington had decided to withdraw the American occupation forces before they had actually brought the question before the United Nations. The logic behind this was that United States military forces could be withdrawn from Korea "only if the territorial integrity of South Korea was safeguarded by substituting the moral backing of the United Nations for the military backing of the United States".5

5 Ibid, pp.9. One commentator, L.M. Goodrich, believes that "the validity of the United States procedure of referring the matter to the General Assembly was doubtful. According to him, the United Nations resolutions in regard to Korea at this time were illegal. 'It was clear from the provisions of the Charter and the practice of the United Nations that the General Assembly had no authority to take any binding decision regarding Korea. Its functions and powers in dealing with such a matter were limited to investigation, discussions and recommendations'." L.M. Goodrich, Korea: A Study of United States Policy in the United Nations, Council on Foreign Relations, New York, 1966, pp. 38. Cited in Ibid, pp.10.
In taking the General Assembly to task over this question, the United States forced the participation of New Zealand in attempting to resolve the Korean issue because New Zealand was a member of the United Nations. Indeed, the Labour Government under the leadership of Peter Fraser had been quite vociferous in its support of this organisation, and Fraser himself was instrumental in bringing about a number of important modifications to the Charter during the formation of the body at San Francisco in 1945. The Government viewed the United Nations as a meeting ground where all nations would come together and learn to know each other in a mutual effort to promote understanding. It afforded the opportunity for lesser powers, like New Zealand, to act independently in a world dominated by great powers and the ever-increasing rigidity of power blocs and political alignments.  

By 1947, however, signs of political divisions within the organisation had emerged. The veto power provided for the five permanent members of the Security Council had already been extensively used by the United States and the Soviet Union over most issues which presented a conflict of interest between the two parties. This rendered the organisation impotent in most matters of great importance. 

When the problem of Korea was introduced to the General Assembly, therefore, New Zealand expressed a number of reservations. It feared that this move could permanently polarize political allegiances within the organization to the extent of threatening its actual capacity to function altogether. In view of this, Sir Carl Berendsen, 

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6 Ibid, pp.28.
7 United States, Soviet Union, Great Britain, France and Nationalist China.
New Zealand's chief delegate at the United Nations, stated that he favoured the solution of the Korean difficulties "by those who had created them; by the two Powers tackling the problem alone", and agreed with the Australian delegate Dr H.V. Evatt, that such questions should be brought before the General Assembly 'only as a last resort'.

Nevertheless, the question remained with the United Nations and on 14 November 1947 the General Assembly adopted, by a vote of 43 to none with six abstentions, a modified American resolution directing the occupying Powers to hold elections before 31 March 1948, under the observation of a nine-man United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (U.N.T.C.O.K.). These elections were to be carried out before the withdrawal of any occupation forces, the resolution declared, despite the Soviet demand for an immediate withdrawal followed by unsupervised elections throughout Korea.

Berendsen, while supporting the American proposal, rather than the Soviet demand, questioned the desirability of fixing a rigid time-limit for the holding of the elections. He considered that the matter should properly be considered in relation to the peace arrangements for Japan, but if that would occasion too much delay the Assembly should confine its action in the meantime to the establishment of a Commission whose sole task would be to ascertain the views of the Korean people.

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10 Consisting of representatives of Australia, Canada, China (Taiwan), El Salvador, France, India, Philippines, Syria and the Ukraine S.S.R. The Ukrainian representative, however, declared his country would not take part.
11 The Soviet representative demanded also that Korean representatives should take part in the Assembly's discussions.
Although the resolution was accepted it met with the immediate problem of whether it could be successfully carried out. Since the Soviet Union viewed the United Nations proposal as misrepresentative and U.N.T.C.O.K. as 'illegal', and therefore refused that body access to North Korea, consideration had to be given to the question of whether U.N.T.C.O.K. should proceed with the implementation of the November resolution in the South alone. The Chairman of U.N.T.C.O.K. gave the view of most of the members of the Commission that,

the formation of a separate sovereign government in South Korea would not facilitate either the establishment of Korean national independence or the withdrawal of the occupying troops.13

The United States, on the other hand, submitted a proposal embodying the view that the Commission should carry out the programme in such parts of Korea as were accessible to it. Both Australia and Canada were emphatic in their opposition to this American proposal, "lest it have dangerous consequences and intensify and perpetuate the division of Korea". The New Zealand representative, Mr J. Thorn, supported the American proposal, but considered that the resolution,

should be amended by the incorporation of the United States, pledges of co-operation in securing free elections and that the [South Korean] National Assembly would not necessarily be the definitive form of Korean Government, but would be free to consult with other groups regarding their participation.14

These suggestions, however, were not accepted, and the resolution was duly adopted by 31 votes, with two against and 11 abstentions.15

15 Ibid. Australia and Canada cast the negative votes.
On 10 May 1948, U.N.T.C.O.K. observed the elections in South Korea which it reported to be a "valid expression of the free will of the Southern electorate". On 15 August a government chosen by the elected 'National Assembly' with Syngman Rhee as President, proclaimed the Republic of Korea, claiming jurisdiction over the whole country. Shortly afterwards, elections in North Korea held without U.N.T.C.O.K. supervision, set the stage for a proclamation there of the 'Korean People's Democratic Republic', claiming similar jurisdiction. On 12 December, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution declaring that "there has been established a lawful government (the Government of the Republic of Korea) having effective control and jurisdiction over that part of Korea where the Temporary Commission was able to observe and consult and ... that this is the only such Government in Korea". In accordance with this resolution, the United States extended de jure recognition of the Southern government on 1 January 1949, and undertook preparations for the withdrawal of American troops. Soon afterwards 27 countries, including New Zealand, Australia, Canada, South Africa and the United Kingdom, took similar action in recognising the Southern regime.

17 A.J.H.R., 1950, J-3, pp.12. The resolution also recommended that a permanent United Nations Commission on Korea (U.N.C.O.K.) be established with much the same scope as the original Temporary Commission.
18 American troops were withdrawn in March 1949, three months after the Soviet Union had withdrawn its troops from North Korea.
Up until late 1948 the New Zealand Government's approach to the Korean problem was circumspect. It was not as outwardly opposed to aspects of United Nations measures as Australia and Canada had been, nevertheless it had qualified its support by voicing reservations about the objectives of certain resolutions. From the beginning of 1949, however, this attitude changed.

Although the New Zealand representatives\(^{19}\) had never "entertained any illusions in regard to the character of the northern regime", what had been, up till then, relatively mild censure of this government changed to "violent condemnation".\(^{20}\) On the basis of information the General Assembly received from U.N.T.C.O.K., Berendsen endorsed the Commission's conclusion that the northern regime "was a creature of a military occupation, ruling by right of transference of power from the Soviet Union".\(^{21}\) The consistent refusal of the authorities in the North to co-operate with the United Nations by inviting impartial international observation of the situation, Foss Shanahan claimed, could not but raise doubts as to the truth of the Soviet claim that the Northern Government was truly representative of all the people. "There was, in fact, no objective evidence", he said "to show that it was democratic, and all the available impartial evidence tended to show that it had no popular basis whatever."\(^{22}\)

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\(^{19}\) Berendsen, Foss Shanahan, Frank Corner, Charles Craw.

\(^{20}\) Clemow, pp. 39.


\(^{22}\) Ibid, pp.38.
In contrast to this condemnation of the Northern government, the New Zealand delegation went out of its way to whitewash the Southern regime, which was depicted as a product of free elections and an expression of the peoples' will. Although the Commission had criticized certain aspects of the policy of the Southern government, these inconsistencies were blamed on "the machinations of the North." 23 In fact, it was argued that the activities of the North had actually compelled the Republic, "psychologically, if not materially, to place itself on a war footing, and that it was this spiritual mobilization which had blighted the conduct of the Rhee regime." 24

As to the source of these difficulties regarding the Korean problem, Shanahan was convinced that it was the result of Soviet intransigence. He stated emphatically that, while the United States had done everything in its power to ensure the successful settlement of the Korean question by the fullest co-operation with the Commission,

all efforts had been completely nullified by the Soviet Union's boycott of the Commission and by its refusal to implement two resolutions adopted by overwhelming majorities in the General Assembly. 25

Taking this further, Berendsen denounced the Soviet proposals as "phony resolutions presented with no intention or expectation that they should be acted upon, but purely for propaganda purposes." 26

23 Clemow, pp. 40.
The explanation of this sudden change in policy, it has been argued, seems to lie in the political effects of deepening cold war tensions. The Berlin blockade which was instituted in June 1948, and continued until January 1949, appeared to have finally convinced the authorities in Wellington of the 'true' objectives of Soviet policy. The hardening of cold war tensions also made it "increasingly difficult to maintain an independent attitude in the glare of world publicity". Consistent with this shift was the change in emphasis of public statements made in New Zealand. By this time, Fraser's speeches were characterized by "whole-hearted support of the West and opposition to Soviet obstructionism, and had the flavour of cold war orations".

When the Labour Government was defeated in the November 1949 elections and Sidney Holland's National Government took office, this changing outlook in foreign policy was continued and, in fact, intensified. Whereas the Labour Government had intentionally avoided appraising the international political situation along the lines of rigid power blocs or political 'camps' during the greater part of its post war term in office, the National Government tended to view international politics in this way. Whereas Labour viewed the political world as a multi-polar structure, National saw it on a strictly bi-polar basis; communist and non-communist.

27 Clemow, pp.39.

But in the context of the Korean problem, the new Government did not make any noticeable alteration to its predecessor's policy. Berendsen continued his dual role of chief delegate to the United Nations and Ambassador to Washington. It was not until the outbreak of hostilities in Korea that the Government's interpretation of the international situation and its corresponding foreign and defence policies were proved to be too restrictive, especially when it was called on to provide military assistance to the South Korean Government.
CHAPTER II

PRIOR COMMITMENTS: NOVEMBER 1949 TO JUNE 1950

The immediate post-war foreign policy of New Zealand was based on three firm guidelines: commitment to Britain and the Commonwealth; realisation that, in any Pacific conflict, American power was predominant; and loyalty to the principle of collective security, now represented by the United Nations. This outlook was maintained until the deepening of cold war tensions forced a re-appraisal of New Zealand's defence and security requirements.

By 1948 the Government realised that hopes for a world-wide collective security system under the auspices of the United Nations were fading and concentrated instead on regional security arrangements consistent with the United Nations Charter. In recognizing that the military strength and geographical proximity of the United States made closer relations, if not formal ties with that country, desirable from the viewpoint of New Zealand's security, New Zealand along with Australia made approaches to Washington about the formation of some formal defence or security treaty. These initial overtures met with a cool response. The United States was not prepared to extend its commitments outside those areas which it considered to be of immediate importance to American national interests.

In spite of this lack of response there was no great concern in New Zealand at American unwillingness to be drawn immediately into a formal commitment to the security of the Pacific. After all the United States had, in effect, complete control of the Pacific area. Japan had been crushed and her navy no longer existed, the Soviet Union had not been a major naval power since 1905, and China was weak and torn by civil war. In short, the United States Navy was overwhelmingly superior to any potential rival. In these circumstances, Fraser was convinced that New Zealand was for the time being "safer than ever", and although he considered such a commitment as important, it was not urgent. In any case, New Zealand, he said, "could not expect to compel a huge country like America to act, she must await a change in the United States attitude."  

With the threat to Pacific security unlikely in the immediate future, the Government became more involved with the development of Commonwealth defence arrangements. The role New Zealand would play within this framework was discussed in detail by Fraser during Commonwealth meetings in London late in 1948 and again early the following year. As a result of these discussions it was decided that any military commitment from New Zealand should be directed towards making the maximum possible contribution in the common effort of maintaining Commonwealth security. 'New Zealand', Fraser asserted, is in the position where her frontiers are the frontiers of the British Commonwealth. The frontiers of the British Commonwealth are the frontiers of democracy. Nothing is to be gained by shirking our duty and not facing up to the facts.  

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While accepting that limited local responsibilities in the Pacific had to be met in an emergency, by 1949 the events which affected the major issues of war and peace lay outside that region.

The uncertainties in Europe, created by the post-war power vacuum on the continent, led Western governments to believe that the Soviet Union would capitalise on this situation and embark on an aggressive policy of political aggrandizement. Recent events in Europe seemed to confirm this expansionist orientation of Soviet policy: Czechoslovakia fell to a communist coup; Berlin was blockaded by deliberate Soviet action, and there was no indication that Soviet occupation forces would be withdrawn from Austria. In view of this situation Fraser came to the conclusion that

the Western nations of Europe are threatened, that among the Western nations is the United Kingdom, that the United Kingdom is the centre, focus, and force of the British Commonwealth of Nations, and that she is also threatened.5

With the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), on 4 April 1949, to serve as a deterrent to this perceived challenge from the Soviet Union, Commonwealth anxiety regarding the security of Britain was reduced. But the basis of Commonwealth defence strategy was not solely dependent on the security of the United Kingdom. In conjunction with this, the strategic value of the Middle East was of great importance and the defence of this region was considered vital. The Middle East had traditionally been the focal point of Commonwealth trade and communications, and after 1945 the importance of oil made this region even more valuable.

5 Ibid.
In planning New Zealand's contribution to a Commonwealth war effort, attention was given to the likely course of a Soviet campaign and to the most effective use of the forces that New Zealand intended to raise. It was decided, therefore, that the Middle East seemed the logical focus of her effort. Accordingly, in the event of war with the Soviet Union, New Zealand agreed to make available an infantry division, augmented with additional major armoured and artillery formations, and a large proportion of the New Zealand Air Force, which would be employed in a fighter/ground attack role. Surplus vessels of the New Zealand Navy would also be sent to Middle Eastern waters.  

When the National Government took office in November, 1949, it inherited a defence policy which "incorporated New Zealand's limited forces fully into the collective Commonwealth (and, through it, the wider Western) defence system". While consciously carrying on the main lines of this policy, the National Government subtly altered its emphasis. There was even less stress placed on the role of the United Nations in maintaining world-wide peace and security and more emphasis placed on securing some guarantee from the United States for New Zealand's security. Up until the outbreak of the Korean conflict, F.W. Doidge, National's Minister of External Affairs, had been strongly in favour of a treaty arrangement with the United States as the fundamental basis of New Zealand's security.

6 MacGibbon, pp. 154-155.
7 Ibid, pp. 156.
An explanation for this attitude seems to lie with Doidge's reaction to an American statement concerning United States policy in the Pacific region. On 12 January 1950, the American Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, spoke before the National Press Club in Washington, outlining United States policy in Asia and the Pacific.

The cornerstone of this new policy centred on American appreciation of existing military security requirements in the Pacific and accordingly, the limit of United States assistance to be extended to the region. Acheson spoke of a 'defensive perimeter' which incorporated those areas considered vital to American national interests. "This defensive perimeter", he said,

runs along the Aleutians to Japan and then goes to the Ryukyus; and from the Ryukyus to the Philippine Islands... So far as the military security of other areas in the Pacific is concerned, it must be clear that no person can guarantee these areas against military attack ... Should such an attack occur - one hesitates to say where such an armed attack could come from - the initial reliance must be on the people attacked to resist it and then upon the commitments of the entire civilized world under the Charter of the United Nations. 8

This statement had two important implications. In the context of the Korean crisis, both South Korea and Formosa were not included in this 'defensive perimeter'. This omission led to criticism, later levelled at Acheson, that this probably suggested to Soviet planners the unwillingness of the United States to make a serious commitment in Korea, and they may well have concluded that they had an opportunity, by the forceful unification of that country, to gain substantial strategic advantages cheaply and without serious risk.

The fact that New Zealand was also excluded from this defence perimeter was no doubt viewed with some concern by Doidge. Moreover, he considered the American alternative of relying upon the United Nations to guarantee the military security of those areas outside the perimeter, in the event of a Pacific conflict, as unsatisfactory since there was little in the record of the United Nations up to 1950 which indicated that its support would be effective. He saw, therefore, the need to secure some form of guarantee from the United States, as more urgent than it had been viewed by the Labour Government.

To relieve the anxiety regarding New Zealand's security requirements in the Pacific, Doidge envisaged the formation of an informal pact, including both Asian and Pacific countries, the foundation of which lay with the participation of the United States. This was in contrast to the previous Government's attitude which was "uneasy about too close an association with Asian nations", preferring instead to "cling to the 'old' Commonwealth and to New Zealand's European traditions." 9

Communications received from Berendsen during June and July, however, indicate that instructions were sent from Wellington directing Berendsen to probe American attitudes concerning such a pact. On 12 July, Berendsen informed Doidge that the

House Committee on Foreign Affairs, (though less influential than the Senate) in approving the Military Assistance Bill [on 11 July], again went on record as favouring the negotiation of a Pacific pact, on similar lines to the Atlantic pact, and the participation therein of the United States. 10

9 Wood, pp. 104.
10 Berendsen to Doidge, 12 July 1950, Inward Telegram (I.T.) No. 96, NA 08/11/26 part(i) (Ministry of Defence)
Later, when considering the provision of ground forces from New Zealand to assist in Korea, Berendsen was also quick to point out that such a commitment would be beneficial to New Zealand in the context of a defence pact. He told Doidge that the Americans,

show signs of regarding this as a test for those who might, at the proper time in the future, form the foundation of a Pacific region defence pact. 11

By this time, however, Doidge's attitude towards a defence pact had lost its urgency. He thought that, as a result of the Korean crisis, the United States was so firmly committed to act as policeman in the Pacific that a pact was scarcely necessary. 12 The Australian Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, it would appear, favoured a similar arrangement when he said, in regard to the benefits of sending ground forces to Korea, that such a move would be valuable in solidifying American support for us in an emergency. He was satisfied that the development of an understanding on this basis would yield better dividends than would a Pacific Pact. We did not want formal agreements. 13

One aspect of the Labour Government's foreign policy was, however, followed to the letter by the new National Government; that was New Zealand's commitment to Commonwealth defence.

The importance of this commitment was underlined in consultations held between the Government and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Field Marshal Sir William Slim, in Wellington on 23 June, two days before

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11 Berendsen to Doidge, 17 July 1950. I.T. No. 74, PM 324/2/7 part (i) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs).


13 Record of a discussion at a meeting of Cabinet on Tuesday, 22 August 1950, with the Rt. Hon. R. G. Menzies, Prime Minister of Australia. CM (50), 40-88 (National Archives).
the outbreak of hostilities in Korea. During these discussions, Slim explained the foundations of Commonwealth security. He stated that there were three main pillars in the Commonwealth strategy. First, the security of the United Kingdom which was of paramount interest to the whole Allied cause. This itself, he said, entailed the security of a great part of Europe and the object, therefore, must be to retain and defend this area.

The second pillar of this strategy, was the defence of essential sea communications, and the third pillar, the defence of the Middle East, which was most important. A basic fact to be appreciated, he pointed out, was that,

even if, in the event of war, we won the battle in Europe and lost in the Middle East, the war would not have been won - there would only be an Armistice.14

Due to the fact that the British were "thin on the ground" in the Middle East, the most useful contribution from New Zealand should be directed at augmenting the British Forces in this region in an emergency.

In examining the other likely theatres of conflict in a war, he believed that,

the Security of the Far East was important, but not absolutely vital. He emphasized that the Allies could not lose or win the war in the Far East. The fate of Australia and New Zealand, therefore, would be decided in Europe and the Middle East.15

14 Discussions with Field Marshal Slim held on Friday 23 June 1950, CAB 222/2/2 part (i), pp.2. (National Archives).
15 Ibid, pp.3.
Slim concluded by stating that,

in preparing for the hot war, Europe and the Middle East were the priority areas and it was in the Middle East that contributions from Australia and New Zealand were required and would be welcome.16

In accepting the position that New Zealand's main contribution would be in that area, the Prime Minister, Sidney Holland, stated that he regarded this as

more than an understanding - an obligation in fact. He assured Slim that New Zealand's position was the same as that of the United Kingdom and invited him to convey this statement to the United Kingdom authorities on his return.17

This stance, however, presented two problems. The first was that this exclusive commitment to Commonwealth security requirements might be viewed as a jettisoning of American considerations in New Zealand's foreign policy formulation. Fortunately, this was not the case. When Menzies held discussions with the New Zealand Government in Wellington on 22 August, outlining the results of his recent visits to Britain and the United States, he informed the Cabinet that,

American authorities did not wish Australia or New Zealand to make any contribution to Pacific defence that would prejudice their ability, in a hot war to participate in the defence of the Middle East, which they regarded as Australia's and New Zealand's proper theatre, and in which connection they 'agreed entirely with Slim'." 18

16 Ibid, pp. 4.
17 Ibid.
18 CM (50) 40-88, Above.
The United States, in fact, regarded this commitment to the Middle East as an extension of NATO. They saw this region as the 'soft underbelly of Europe', and although the North Atlantic Treaty was a safeguard for Europe, the United States did not have the resources to guarantee the Middle East.

The second problem was the question of New Zealand's ability to provide military assistance outside the 'Commonwealth Strategy', in the event of a war. The outbreak of the Korean War on 25 June 1950, faced New Zealand with just this dilemma, especially when New Zealand was called on to lend assistance to South Korea.
CHAPTER III

THE OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES AND NEW ZEALAND'S RESPONSE:

THE FIRST DECISION

The deadlock in finding a solution to the Korean problem increased the antagonism between the two rival camps on the peninsula. The situation in Korea by mid-1950 indicated that a confrontation between the North and the South was likely at some time. However, the scale and the timing of the North's attack had taken the Western world completely by surprise, and had caught the United States especially, off guard. To the extent which New Zealand had concerned itself with the recent developments in Korea, it too, was surprised by the timing and strength of the offensive. It was unknown by Government what the likely reaction, especially the American response, would be to this new development.

At an informal meeting held on the afternoon of 26 June between selected Cabinet Ministers, military and government officials, and Field Marshal Slim, Doidge asked the Field Marshal whether he was able to comment upon reports from Korea about the invasion. In reply, Slim stated that he had no advice from the United Kingdom Government. Korea was primarily a United States responsibility and the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff had not concerned themselves in details with it. He emphasized that, although he could not speak with authority on this point, he believed from earlier discussions with the United States Chiefs of Staff, the United States would not commit their forces to Assist the Government of Korea. He felt, however, that they would give every kind of help short of armed assistance.1

1 CAB 222/2/2 (i) pp.3.
The same measure of uncertainty in regard to possible United States reaction was conveyed in Berendsen's first report from Washington since the invasion, when he wrote,

At present there is nothing to report as a result of discussions today with the State Department ... It may well be that there never will be much to report because what, if anything, the Americans intend to do they will no doubt and properly keep to themselves.2

Both Berendsen and Slim, in doubting the likelihood of concrete action by the United States, appeared resigned to the fact that the North would be successful in its campaign. Slim considered that "the capacity of the forces in South Korea to resist was doubtful,"3 and Berendsen's opinion was that Southern Korea had from its inception been fated to absorption by Northern Korea, either on this occasion or subsequently, "unless the United Nations and/or the United States took physical steps to ensure the contrary."4

The issue was, in fact, taken to the United Nations when the United States Government requested an immediate meeting of the Security Council to censure the North Korean aggression on 25 June. On the same day, the Council adopted a resolution sponsored by the United States by a vote of nine to none with one abstention (Yugoslavia), declaring the North Korean action a breach of the peace and calling for a cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of North Korean forces to the 38th parallel. Furthermore, it called upon all members to "render every assistance to the United Nations in the execution of this

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3 CAB 22/2/2 pp.3.
resolution and to refrain from giving assistance to the North Korean authorities.\textsuperscript{5}

But even this measure was considered a 'token gesture' by Berendsen who wrote,

\begin{quote}
The first reaction here to the Security Council's resolution has been a sense of relief and satisfaction at the 'instant action' of the United Nations. This of course is nonsense; instant it was, and a welcome moral judgement, but action it is not, and I fear there will not and cannot be effective action.\textsuperscript{6}
\end{quote}

What information or opinion the Government was receiving from the outset of the conflict appeared completely in accord with established policy concerning the Far East. South Korea was an area of exclusive American concern, and American 'Korean Policy' had been summarized in Acheson's speech before the National Press Club on January 12, 1950.\textsuperscript{7}

The initial New Zealand response, therefore, was to adopt a position of 'wait and see'. Korea was, after all, "thousands of miles from New Zealand, and the direct, immediate threat to her security was non-existent". Any consideration New Zealand, and for that matter Britain and the rest of the Commonwealth, might make concerning Korea

\begin{footnotes}
\item[7] See above pp. 16-17.
\end{footnotes}
was dependent upon a lead from the United States. Commitment "without American participation, even if not American dominance, would hardly have made military or political sense ..." \(^8\)

This 'lead', however, was not long in coming. At noon on 27 June, the President of the United States issued a statement pointing out that the northern troops, in defiance of the Security Council, were pressing their attack. In view of this, Mr Truman "ordered United States air and sea forces to give the Korean Government troops cover and support". He did not stop there. The attack upon Korea, he claimed,

makes it plain beyond all doubt that Communism has passed beyond the use of subversion to conquer independent nations and will now used armed invasion and war ... In these circumstances the occupation of Formosa by Communist forces would be a direct threat to the security of the Pacific area and to United States forces performing their lawful and necessary function in that area.

Accordingly the United States Seventh Fleet was ordered to the Formosa Straits "to prevent any attack on Formosa". At the same time, Truman ordered that military assistance to the Philippines Government and the forces of France and Associated States in Indo-China be accelerated. \(^9\) Truman added that the United States representative to the Security Council, Warren Austin, was to advise the Council of these steps.

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\(^{10}\) Ibid.
What initial doubts and speculations the New Zealand Government may have had about the implications of the North's invasion were cast aside after Truman's announcement. It was now clear that the United States would make a firm commitment to assist South Korea. Moreover, it became equally apparent that the United States would capitalize on the Soviet absence from the Security Council, to make any subsequent initiative or action appear as a United Nation's directive. This was first illustrated on 27 June, when the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, Patrick Gordon-Walker, told Doidge that the British Government had been informed by Washington of a further United States sponsored resolution to be introduced at a meeting of the Security Council at 3 p.m. that day. The resolution, after an appropriate preamble would contain the following operative paragraph:

The United Nations Security Council recommends that the members of the United Nations furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security to the area.11

Attached to the message was a request to "advise the Foreign Office to telephone instructions to its Security Council representative to support this resolution."12 However, much as this move was welcomed as positive action on the part of the Americans, the United Kingdom Government believed that the purpose of this resolution was "no doubt not only to secure assistance from other countries, but to validate action being taken by the United States."13 The New Zealand Government was in full agreement.14

12 Ibid.
It was difficult not to consider the proposed resolution in tandem with Truman's statement earlier that day. Although the Government considered "that there was complete moral and, it believed, also adequate legal justification for the course of action which the United States' resolution envisaged", and accordingly instructed Berendsen to give his support to it, the measures undertaken by the Americans outlined in the President's speech created reservations in Doidge's mind. "The United States decision to insulate Formosa", he said, "was not based on Security Council resolutions. Any resultant action between American and Chinese Communist units [therefore], could lead to the invocation of the Sino-Soviet Treaty (of February 1950) and hence very probably to World War III". Berendsen too, was sceptical about the motives behind the American moves. "With regard to the new intentions to Formosa", he told Doidge, the United States' interpretation that "the attack on South Korea sheds new light on the intentions of the Communists does not seem to me to be a particularly valid one."17

The British authorities were more specific in their apprehension about these American initiatives. "You should give this resolution your support", the Foreign Office instructed the United Kingdom representative at the United Nations. However, Cabinet are particularly

15 N.Z. 08/11/26 (i) O.T. No. 70 Above.
16 P.M. 324/2/3 (ii) Doidge to Defence Committee, 24 July, 1950.
17 P.M. 324/2/3 (ii) Memorandum from Berendsen to Doidge, 4 July, 1950.
anxious that,

the preamble to any resolution should confine itself to the Korean situation and not introduce wider issues as those treated in [Truman's] statement. Cabinet also feel that the United States representative would be wise, when introducing his draft resolution, to base his argument exclusively on United Nations considerations and not on the wider issue of Communist Imperialism. 18

This point was further elaborated in instructions despatched simultaneously to the British Ambassador in Washington, Sir Oliver Franks. Mindful of a possible Great Power confrontation developing from the crisis, the British Government strongly urged that Austin's statement be so worded as to omit any reference to Soviet responsibility for the attack, which however obvious, is not susceptible to proof. It seems essential [therefore], to give the Russians an opportunity of beating a retreat when confronted with this welcome manifestation of American power and determination.

In this context, the British felt that the steps outlined in the Truman speech "should be allowed to speak for themselves", and emphasized again that any statement to be made in the United Nations should omit any reference to the situation in terms of "centrally directed Communist imperialism". 20 Again the New Zealand Government was in full agreement with this assessment of the latest developments. 21

When the Security Council convened at 3 p.m. on 27 June, it noted from the report of the United Nations' Commission on Korea that the North Korean forces had not complied with the earlier U.N. resolution.

18 N.A. 08/11/26 (i) I.T. A91 above.
20 Ibid.
21 N.A. 08/11/26 (i), O.T. No. 70. Above.
The continuing aggression was, Secretary-General Trygve Lie claimed, "war against the United Nations itself". Accordingly, the United States representative introduced the draft resolution calling on U.N. members to give Korea such help as might be needed to repel the armed attack and restore peace in the area. This second resolution was duly adopted, in the continued absence of the Soviet Union, by seven votes to one (Yugoslavia), with two abstentions (India and Egypt.)

The initial feeling of authorities in Wellington was that the United States had over-reacted to the North Korean attack. There was some anxiety that the repercussions from Truman's measures could precipitate an escalation from what was essentially a localised civil war to a wider, general conflict. This belief was, however, based on interpretations made without the precise knowledge of American attitudes and policy concerning the crisis. As this information became available, Doidge was at least able to place these latest initiatives in the overall perspective of American objectives in Korea.

According to one report, a State Department official felt,

one reason for the invasion was to demonstrate to the Japanese that the Communists did have the ability to invade countries friendly with the United States and it was a warning to Japan that a separate peace treaty would put Japan in the firing line."

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22 A.J.H.R., 1950, J-3, pp. 6-15. The Indian and Egyptian delegates abstained because of lack of instructions, but India accepted the resolution two days later.

23 Green of the Japanese Desk

24 P.M. 324/2/3 (ii) N.Z. High Commissioner to Australia to McIntosh, 26 June 1950.
At the same time, another message added, "United States advisers did not consider that the Russians were preparing to enter the war. It was a reasonable assumption, therefore, that the Soviet Union was merely making an important probing".  

Berendsen informed Doidge of the results of a meeting he had had with the Assistant Secretary of State, George W. Perkins, on 27 June. Although he was unable to ascertain the motives behind the volte-face in American Korean Policy, two points of interest arose from the discussions. Perkins believed that the hero of the Second World War in the Pacific, General Douglas MacArthur was to be given command of the American forces to be engaged in Korea, which until then consisted of air and sea cover to the South Korean troops, and that the United States airforces had "specific instruction in no circumstances to fly north of the 38th parallel". This point no doubt lessened fears, in Wellington, of an escalated conflict by confining American military activity to South Korean territory.

Perhaps more significant, however, was information Doidge received from Gordon-Walker about the results of a discussion held between Sir Oliver Franks and George F. Kennan of the State Department. Kennan stated that the United States Government did not attach overwhelming importance to the strategic position of southern Korea. The symbolic significance of the preservation of the Republic was, however, tremendous for if the world should notice weakness in the handling of this problem, repercussions would be great, first in Japan and then all over Asia.


26 N.A. 08/11/26 (i) I.T. No. 89, Berendsen to Doidge, 27 June 1950.
In developing this argument, Kennan pointed out that

if Korea went, Formosa would be next on the list
and the Philippines were in too sensitive a position
to anything that might happen to Formosa.\textsuperscript{27}

This in effect, was an early expression of what later became
known as the 'domino theory', and it seems, was the logic behind
the American action regarding Formosa, the Philippines and Indo-China.
It also accounts for the direct reversal of previous United States
policy in taking armed action in Korea. Indeed, as the position of
the South Korean forces worsened, the United States intensified
this assistance. On 29 June, the order not to strike north of the
38th parallel by U.S. combat aircraft was reversed to permission to
hit enemy fields and bases in North Korea. At the same time, the
Americans extended air and sea cover to the committing of ground troops.

The very nature of this direct reversal in American policy did not
go unnoticed. Berendsen was somewhat critical of the moves. As he
told Doidge, they "gave cause to reflect once more the fact [sic] that
the foreign policy of the United States always had shown, and still
did show an astonishing and at times, a disturbing lack of continuity".\textsuperscript{28}
A similar sentiment was echoed at a meeting held between the Australian
Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, and the National Cabinet in New Zealand
on 24 August when Menzies, discussing the American position, stated,

In deciding to resist aggression in Korea, the
United States had to improvise defence in a position
which they regarded as militarily indefensible. If
foreign policy and defence diverge, you are bent on
suicide.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{27} P.M. 324/2/3 (ii) T. Q20, Above.
\textsuperscript{28} P.M. 324/2/3 (ii) Memorandum, Berendsen to Doidge, 4 July 1950
\textsuperscript{29} C.M. (50) 40-88. Discussion between Menzies and the Cabinet in
Wellington, 24 August 1950.
By now the position of the United States was clear. The decision to support South Korea would show the world the United States was determined not to let 'Communist aggression' go unchallenged. It showed also that the policy of 'containment' already established in Western Europe, was to be extended in this instance to the Far East. Uppermost on their minds, though, was the maintenance of the integrity of Japan, which in turn was considered vital to the very defence and security of the United States itself. If South Korea fell, it was believed in Washington, sooner or later Japan could meet a similar fate, and "at all costs Japan must not fall to the Soviets".\textsuperscript{30}

The decision to intervene under the aegis of the United Nations was, however, based on sound political motives rather than strategic necessity. It was an excellent opportunity to show the Soviet Union the United Nations could still function as an effective organisation despite the Russian boycott, although the strict legality of the subsequent action, taken in Russia's absence, was dubious. "In my opinion (and I am not alone in the belief)\textsuperscript{31}, Berendsen told Doidge, the Soviet Union are unquestionably right in their contention that the resolutions of the Security Council in this matter are \textit{invalid}, because they did not carry with them the 'concurring vote' of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the United States capitalized on the Soviet absence to give the appearance to actions being undertaken regarding Korea, as the

\textsuperscript{30} C.M. (50) 40-88. Acheson to Menzies referred to in discussions, footnote 29 above.

\textsuperscript{31} P.M. 324/2/3 (ii). Memo. Berendsen to Doidge, above.
concerted directives of an international organisation, actions which the Americans would have taken anyway, regardless of United Nations authorization. In any case, the Security Council in itself "could not defend South Korea against aggression; it was the decision of the United States Government that gave force to the action of the Council." 32

When the Government received official notification concerning the adoption of the 27 June resolution from Secretary General Lie, 33 it was aware of the broader implications behind the United Nations directive. Within the space of three days, the Korean situation had acquired a new significance, and it now demanded greater consideration from the Government.

New Zealand was able to make an immediate response when Trygve Lie informed the Government on 29 June of its obligations to the June 27 resolution, and requested the type of assistance likely to be forthcoming from New Zealand. 34 This was facilitated by what has been described as quick 'dynamic Commonwealth consultation.' 35 In fact, Lie was actually forestalled in his appeal by a similar request from the British authorities.

32 C.M. (50) 40-88. Discussions with Menzies above.
33 N.A. 08/11/26 (i) I.T. No. 103, Trygve Lie to Doidge, 27 June 1950
34 N.A. 08/11/26 (i) I.T. No. 104, Trygve Lie to Doidge, 29 June 1950
35 Clemow, pp.46.
On 28 June, Doidge was informed of a statement made by the British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, to the House of Commons that day, describing the action H.M. Government would be taking to furnish assistance to the Republic of Korea under the 27 June resolution. "We have decided", the statement read,

...to support United States action in Korea by immediately placing our Naval forces in Japanese waters at the disposal of the United States authorities to operate on behalf of the Security Council in support of South Korea.36

These 'naval forces' comprised one aircraft carrier, two cruisers, and a 'small number of destroyers'.37 Accompanying this telegram was another message requesting Commonwealth countries to inform the United Kingdom Government of their intentions.

If there are any ways in which the Commonwealth Governments feel that they can make a contribution in support of the Security Council resolution, we for our part, would naturally welcome this, and if they should wish, should be glad to arrange to discuss matters with them in whatever way is thought most convenient.38

By the time the New Zealand Government received Lie's appeal, it had already acted on the lead offered by Britain and decided that New Zealand, too, would make its contribution in the form of Naval forces. The deployment of these vessels, however, was bound by the availability of R.N.Z.N. units. Four of the Navy's six frigates were on tours of duty, the Bellona and Rotoiti in the Pacific, the Taupo and Hawea in the Mediterranean. Only the Tutira, which was due in Auckland on 29 June, and Pukaki already in Auckland, were available to sail at short notice.

38 N.A. 08/11/26 (i) I.T. A95 above.
and consequently were to be prepared immediately to join the Far Eastern Forces. 39

The next day, 29 June, Doidge notified Gordon-Walker of the Government's reaction and intentions in regard to the British initiative. "For our part", he wrote,

we support this action and have been examining the measures that we also could take. The only form of assistance we could provide are Naval units. 40

A similar message was sent to Berendsen, "Government had decided the only practicable measure of support we could offer would be naval vessels." 41 The same day, Doidge was informed by the New Zealand High Commissioner to Australia of the Australian decision to back the United Nations resolution and place "Australian naval units in Japanese waters at the disposal of the U.N. through the American authorities." 42 Preferring to make the New Zealand offer part of a "concerted Anglo-Australasian move", Holland announced the Government's decision to the House of Representatives, also on 29 June. "The New Zealand Government", he said,

will do whatever lies within their power to fulfil the obligations they have incurred under the United Nations Charter. They are prepared to make available units of the Royal New Zealand Navy should this form of assistance be required. 43

41 P.M. 324/2/7 (ii) O.T. No. 172. Doidge to Berendson, 29 June 1950.
42 N.A. 08/11/26 (i) I.T. No. 146. N.Z. High Commissioner, Aust. to Doidge, 29 June 1950. This was extended the next day to 'place at the service of the U.N. through U.S. Authorities the RAAF Fighter Squadron then stationed in Japan'. I.T. No. 92, Minister of Foreign Affairs (Aust) to Doidge, 30 June 1950.
After further consultation with British authorities, it was decided that the exact form of naval assistance from New Zealand should be considered between the British Commander-in-Chief in the Far East, the New Zealand Naval Board and the American Commander. "As you know", Doidge was informed, "British and Australian naval units have been placed at the disposal of the United States Authorities and we hope, that if it is thought best that you should do likewise, you would agree to do so". The Government found this fully acceptable, and in giving effect to this, and for reasons of administrative convenience, "the New Zealand units would be attached to the Commander of the Royal Navy forces in the area."  

On 1 July, Holland issued a statement on the provision of naval vessels, giving orders to the two frigates H.M.N.Z.S. Pukaki and Tutira to sail for Hong Kong en route to the Korean area. These vessels left Auckland on Monday, 3 July.

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'The Tutira and Pukaki were replaced in April and May of 1951 by the Rotoiti and Hawea respectively. The Royal New Zealand Navy maintained two frigates continuously in Korean Waters and all six of New Zealand's frigates completed a tour of duty in the zone, steaming more than 300,000 miles. Among other tasks, they helped to cover the landing at Inchon which first broke up the Communist advances in South Korea. Patrol activity comprised the major part of their work. The frigates made their own commando landings, they clashed with pirates and repulsed an attempted invasion by a sampan fleet on friendly islands. Shortly before the ceasefire, they were engaged in inshore bombardment of hostile strong points and troop concentrations. Members of the Navy received 24 awards and only two ratings were lost.' Clemow, pp. 43 f.
CHAPTER IV

THE SECOND DECISION

In their pledge of naval support, New Zealand, Britain and Australia were soon joined by similar offers from Canada and the Netherlands, and the United States was quick to emphasize that this action was part of a "united and resolute move to put down lawless aggression". As a result of a further Security Council meeting on 7 July, a resolution recommending that 'all members providing military forces under the 25 and 27 June resolutions, make such forces and other assistance available to a Unified Command, under the United States,' was adopted. In response, the United States appointed General MacArthur Commander-in-Chief of the United Nations Command. These forces were to serve under the United Nations flag as a United Nations contingent.

Meanwhile the situation in Korea had rapidly deteriorated. The North Korean forces exploited to the full the complete tactical surprise their unexpected invasion had produced. They met only isolated resistance from the broken, retreating South Korean army and were making rapid progress down the peninsula. The first American expeditionary forces to enter the conflict had been soundly defeated, and were also making a hasty retreat. By the second week in July, the Northern troops had overrun Seoul, the Southern Korean capital, and were occupying almost half of South Korea.

2 'New Zealand and the Korean Crisis', Above, pp. 15-16.
On 12 July, Berendsen informed Doidge of increasing American agitation for more formal commitments by United Nations members. 'As the naivety of the original hope that air and sea cover would suffice becomes evident', he wrote,

Congressmen are deeming that other United Nations countries should share the burden of providing ground forces and not limit themselves to pious expressions of moral support.³

In view of this, and the increasing gravity of the situation, Secretary-General Lie issued a further appeal to all United Nations countries which supported the Security Council's resolutions, for the provision of more combat aid. On 14 July, Doidge was officially notified of this request by Lie who wrote,

I have been advised that there is an urgent need for additional effective assistance. I should be grateful, therefore, if your Government would examine its capacity to provide an increased volume of combat forces, particularly ground forces.⁴ [my italics]

However much the Government endorsed the action of the United Nations concerning the Korean situation, the call for New Zealand to provide ground forces raised far more serious considerations than the provision of naval units. Whereas the deployment of two frigates to the Korean theatre merely entailed resolving technical difficulties involved in making the commitment, the provision of ground forces necessitated a full examination of New Zealand's actual defence capabilities. The

³ N.A. 08/11/26 (i) I.T. No. 96, Berendsen to Doidge, 12 July 1950.
⁴ N.A. 08/11/26 (i) I.T. No. 72, Berendsen to Doidge, 14 July 1950.
main question when considering Lie's appeal, Doidge pointed out, was that "New Zealand had to consider what it could provide over and above its primary task of planning to provide in the global strategy", that is, what forces it could give without threatening the strength of its Middle East commitment. Nevertheless, in order to be prepared for any contingency, the Government undertook a thorough examination of New Zealand's capacity to extend further assistance to the United Nations Unified Command.

The first opportunity to discuss the problem came at a meeting of the Cabinet on 17 July, where the Minister of Defence, T.L. MacDonald, stated that he had discussed the question of ground forces with General Stewart, the Chief of the General Staff, who felt that, "on military grounds and because also, any force that could be provided would be too small to be self-supporting, we could not and should not provide any ground forces from New Zealand." It was decided, however, that before carrying the matter any further, it was essential to ascertain the reactions of the other Commonwealth Governments before New Zealand could reach any decision.

Earlier that day, messages were sent to Westminster, Ottawa and Canberra, stating that the Government had received a communication from the United Nations Secretary General about the possibility of more

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5 P.M. 324/2/3 (ii) Doidge to Defence Committee, 15 July 1950.
6 C.M. (50) 47 (National Archives) Minutes of Meeting held on Monday, 17 July 1950.
military assistance from New Zealand and was considering this proposal. To assist them in their deliberations, the Government asked for the views of other Commonwealth Governments.\(^7\) In addition, since the commitment of ground forces was the issue, the Government felt that information regarding the American position was important, although the success of such an enquiry seemed doubtful. Instructions were sent to Berendsen to establish some estimate - assuming always that New Zealand could not obtain precise views on this point from the United States Government - of the importance, on military and political grounds, which the United States Government attached to the provision of ground forces by other members of the United Nations.\(^8\)

While these attempts to obtain information through diplomatic channels were carried out, the Service Chiefs in Wellington had undertaken an examination of New Zealand's capacity to provide more combat forces.

"The basis of a decision by New Zealand to contribute ground forces", the report stated, "must be made primarily on political (sic) grounds." Accordingly, there were a number of political considerations and these constituted enough reason for 'examining sympathetically the provision of ground forces from New Zealand to assist in Korea.'

\(^7\) N.A. 08/11/26 (i), O.T. No. 79. Doidge to Gordon-Walker; O.T. No. 66, Doidge to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Canberra; O.T. No. 11, Doidge to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ottawa, 17 July 1950.

First was the 'importance of maintaining the prestige of the United Nations'. Failure to respond to the appeal might be seen as reflecting Government doubt about the effectiveness and the objectives of United Nations action. Certainly the image of 'united and resolute action' concerning Korea would probably lose its credibility. The second consideration was the "primary interest of New Zealand in the security of the Far East and Pacific region". Finally, and more significant, was the "importance of fostering close and friendly relations between New Zealand and the United States". Here was an opportunity for New Zealand to demonstrate its support of American policy by standing alongside the United States on the ground in Korea and to show that New Zealand was a dependable ally. A favourable impression of New Zealand by the United States was desirable because, as the report point out, "our security depends fundamentally upon the support of the United States of America". The Government, however, had no information as to the precise importance attached by the United States Government to the operation in Korea; neither did it know whether [the Americans] expected New Zealand to provide ground forces. The question, therefore, would almost certainly have to be answered without this information.9

These issues were of a secondary nature, however. The determining factor was the recognition that the Government should avoid any commitment which would prejudice the ability of New Zealand to make an early and effective contribution in the defence of the vital areas in the event of a major war (sic).

9 P.M. 324/2/7 (i) 'Notes on Korea - Topic: Commitment of Ground Forces' Armed Services Chiefs Report, 17 July 1950.
It was felt that, when taking into account present United Nations objectives,

in a hot (sic) war Korea was not vital. Any contribution of forces to Korea, therefore, would have to be so limited so as not to affect the efficiency of New Zealand's effort in the vital theatre (i.e. the Middle East) in the event of a major war. 10

In maintaining this priority, commitment to the Middle East, the Government was restricted in extending military assistance to Korea by military necessity. There was simply no regular army force available which could be despatched to Korea. In these circumstances, the report concluded, the only possible way ground forces could be made available was the formation of a force consisting of volunteers. But even this would create a number of technical problems. Due to operational requirements, any force would have to be of at least battalion strength (about one thousand men). Whether an appeal for volunteers could attract enough suitable recruits was a moot point. In any event, it would take at least four months to have such a force prepared. Furthermore, any decision on the part of the Government, would be on the assumption that it would work as a part of another force, as the commitment the Government had in mind would result in a contingent which was not large enough to maintain itself. There would be no immediate practical advantage if it was to operate as part of the American organisation, it was pointed out, because of the 'difference in weapons, training, equipment, signals, uniforms and even language'. 11

It was desirable, therefore, to link a New Zealand force with those provided by other Commonwealth countries. 12

10 P.M. 324/2/7 (i) 'Notes on Korea: Commitment of Ground Forces'. Above.
11 P.M. 324/2/7 (i) I.T. No. 74, Berendsen to Doidge, 17 July 1950.
12 P.M. 324/2/7 (i): Discussions with Chiefs of General Staff, 17 July 1950.
This assessment was, however, merely a contingency plan formulated to prepare the Government for any eventuality. New Zealand continued to make "all defence plans on the basis of the British appreciation that the danger point would be the Middle East." Although the Government regarded the Korean situation as serious, its approach to the United Nations request was cautious. The main concentration on defence, Doidge stated,

would continue along the Middle East strategy, and in the present circumstances it was almost certain that ground troops would not be committed in Korea, although this attitude was still dependent on Commonwealth decisions.13

Berendsen, in reply to Doidge's telegram of 17 July, agreed that if the rest of the Commonwealth decided to respond to Lie's appeal, it would seem that "New Zealand would also have to endeavour to play its part". He pointed out, however, that there was a possibility that the conflict in Korea might only be a tactical diversion by the Soviet Union in preparation for attacks elsewhere, such as Germany, the Middle East or Indo-China.14 In view of this, he said.

I am becoming very much disturbed at the extent to which democratic forces are being demanded and committed for what could, after all, be merely a side-show. The extent to which we are committed in Korea will weaken ourselves elsewhere and that may be the primary Soviet objective.15

13 P.M. 324/2/7 (i). Cablegram No. 111, Doidge to N.Z. High Commissioner in Canberra, 18 July 1950.

14 The uncertainty over Soviet intentions was strongly felt by the American authorities, and on 25 June, a cable was sent out to every important American embassy and base around the world stating that it was "possible Korea was only the first of a series of co-ordinated actions on the part of the Soviets", and requested that they "maintain utmost vigilance and report immediately any positive or negative information". Cited in Gaddis Smith, Dean Acheson, Vol. XVI of American Secretaries of State and their Diplomacy. New York, 1972, pp. 184.

15 P.M. 324/2/7 (i) I.T. No. 74, Berendsen to Doidge, 17 July 1950.
A similar note of concern was voiced by the Australian Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, when he told the Cabinet at a meeting in Wellington that it was important to keep incidents such as Korea in proper perspective, not letting them divert us from the primary object of being strong and prepared to make a real contribution to the defence of our principal interests in the vital theatre in the event of a major war.16

This question, however, was based on hypothetical developments and more immediate political considerations had to be taken into account. When further information received from Berendsen, between 18 and 20 July, outlined American attitudes concerning a New Zealand commitment and indicated the desirable effects a positive response would have in the United States, a further dimension had to be considered seriously by the Government.

The American authorities "attach the utmost importance (sic) to all possible collaboration, both at headquarters and in the field, from other members of the United Nations", Berendsen told Doidge after consultations with the State Department. He reported that,

an early and firm undertaking on New Zealand's part to provide ground troops within our capacity, as and when and for what such purposes as may be required, would be greatly to our credit and would have an excellent effect here and elsewhere.17

Although the Americans had learned through their embassy in Wellington that it could take up to four months for the preparation of a contingent from New Zealand and while any reduction in this time would be welcome,

16 C.M. (50) 40-88. Discussions with Menzies, Above.
17 P.M. 324/2/7 (i) I.T. No. 74. Above.
"even if no reduction was possible, they would regard this as a very acceptable offer." In the same despatch, Berendsen wrote of a discussion he had had with the United Nations Secretary-General, Trygve Lie. Lie emphasized that he knew the United States "attached the same deep importance that he did to the association in this matter of Australia and particularly New Zealand, whose reputation made any decision by them so important." These comments gained new meaning when Berendsen was told that the request addressed to [Doidge] and other members of the United Nations was made on the firm and insistent initiative of the United States, who were stated to have read every communication despatched by the Secretary-General.19

There were both political and military reasons for emphasizing the need for assistance from other member countries of the United Nations and when a similar discussion was held with the Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, two days later on 19 July, the American anxiety for New Zealand to provide ground forces became apparent. Acheson was anxious to build up the United Nations aspect of the operation in Korea. Indeed, a circular was sent out to all government departments in Wellington stressing "the importance of maximising the United Nations role in this incident, through publicity."20 Also, the extending of military assistance would be a great morale builder in the United States by showing that other countries endorsed the American initiatives in Korea. On military grounds, this aid would help relieve the hardships with which

18 P.M. 324/2/7 (i) I.T. No. 74. Above.
19 Ibid.
20 P.M. 324/2/7 (i) Departmental Circular, 17 July 1950.
United States ground forces faced at that time. Acheson emphasized that

while the 'build-up' of American ground forces would be fast it could not in the immediate future be large because there was a lack of further troops that could be despatched to Korea.21

Little detailed working out of the matter of combined military co-operation had been done by the United States Services, Assistant Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, told Berendsen. Rusk thought that "anything less than a battalion would not be feasible as it would be very difficult to handle." He believed that the "broad base of infantry would be American", and in view of this brought attention to the "shortage of specialised units, such as medical, signals, transport and artillery". In concluding he said, curiously enough, "more than a dozen countries" had shown interest in terms of extending material assistance in accordance with the United Nations appeal and that "these responses were all the direct result of Lie's approach and quite unsought by the Americans".22 This was in effect, contradictory to Lie's comment to Berendsen made two days earlier. However, the evidence indicates that the Government accepted the Secretary-General's word and neither Berendsen nor the authorities in Wellington took the matter any further, concerning themselves instead with more immediate questions.

The Government had already recognised the minimum strength of a ground force commitment would be a battalion. It also believed that this would probably take the form of an artillery unit of about eight hundred men with a small administrative backing of two hundred

21 P.M. 324/2/7 (i) I.T. No. 99, Berendsen to Doidge, 19 July 1950.
22 P.M. 324/2/7 (i) I.T. No. 101, Berendsen to Doidge, 20 July 1950.
personnel, and were no doubt glad to learn that, should troops from New Zealand be sent to Korea, this form of assistance would be acceptable and practicable. 23 But agreement with the Americans over the substance of a New Zealand contribution did not alter the fact that it would still take at least four months to prepare such a contingent. One way of overcoming this problem, however, was suggested by Lie when he told Berendsen that in all probability the Americans would, in the first place, use any troops made available through the United Nations appeal for the relief of remaining American occupation forces in Japan, thereby enabling these troops to join forces already in action in Korea. 24

Under these circumstances the task of a New Zealand force would amount to little more than 'guard duty', therefore the period of preparation of a volunteer force would certainly be reduced, as it would entail at the most, basic military training and not the lengthy and specialised instruction required in training an artillery unit. But, in fact, this suggestion proved to be quite misleading. Acheson did not mention it and indeed gave Berendsen the impression that "he discounted the possibility of untrained troops relieving United States troops in Japan or elsewhere for combat duty in Korea." 25 Rusk endorsed this when he said, "no thought had been given to the idea of the relief of American troops in Japan." 26

By 21 July then, the Government had a good understanding of the American position regarding this issue. It was well aware of the probable desirable effect on the United States of an immediate and favourable

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23 P.M. 324/2/7 (i) 'Notes on Korea: Commitment of Ground Forces'. Above.
24 P.M. 324/2/7 (i) I.T. No. 74. Above.
25 P.M. 324/2/7 (i) I.T. No. 99. Above.
26 P.M. 324/2/7 (i) I.T. No. 101. Above.
response to the United Nations request. Yet in considering the provision of a ground force, the Government had the knowledge that these troops would see active service in Korea and that to attain their maximum operational efficiency they had to be linked with a larger Commonwealth force. In this situation, the Government was faced with a dilemma. A contribution which was feasible for New Zealand would be militarily impractical in Korea, but on the other hand, it would be beneficial 'on balance' to make an early commitment.

As was customary, however, New Zealand was reluctant to act independently of her Commonwealth partners and especially Britain. Resolving this dilemma, therefore, depended on a similar decision by the rest of the 'old' Commonwealth to commit ground forces, and the initial response to the appeal by these countries was cool. On 21 July the Government learned of Canada's decision not to send troops. "Having in mind other obligations for the employment of Canadian ground forces", Doidge was told that

the Cabinet has reached the conclusion that the despatch at this stage of existing first line elements of the Canadian Army to the Korean theatre would not (sic) be warranted. 27

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27 P.M. 324/2/7 (i) Press Bulletin No. 9, received from Canadian Embassy, 21 July 1950. The Canadian Government later reversed this attitude when, on 7 August, it announced its decision to recruit a special brigade to serve in Korea under the United Nations Unified Command. Clemow, pp. 62.
On 25 July, South Africa reported that it too could not send ground forces.

It is self evident, having regard to distance and other considerations, that it would be impractical and unrealistic for the Union Government to provide direct military assistance, however small. 28

Australia shared New Zealand's reluctance to make an immediate decision. Until Prime Minister Menzies, who at that time was in Britain, had had a chance to discuss the question fully with the British Authorities and report to his Government colleagues in Australia, no definite action would be taken even though the Minister of External Affairs, P.C.Spender, felt that it was important to maintain the extremely cordial relationship which had developed between Australia and the United States, since the outbreak of the conflict, by making an immediate response. 29

It was not until 20 July that the Government received information from the United Kingdom, and it seemed likely at first, that Britain might join the Canadian and South African position: The British Authorities, however, were cautious in considering the United Nations request, deciding that it would be "impossible to form a final view or to frame an answer until they had discussed the matter with the United States Government." 30

28 P.M. 324/2/7 (i) Memorandum 8/K-1, New Zealand High Commissioner in Canberra to Doidge, 25 July 1950. After consultations with the United States, the South African Government, on 4 August, 'reluctantly accepted the course of sending a fighter squadron to Korea.' Ibid, pp. 63.


30 P.M. 324/2/7 (i) Attlee to Holland, 21 July 1950.
In reply, Holland sent a personal message to the British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, stating that in considering the provision of a ground force from New Zealand, this would probably "take the form of a specialised unit such as a regiment of medium artillery", but he stressed that the Government was "not yet in a position to make any decision and, indeed, would appreciate general information regarding the plans of the British Government before making a move". In particular, Holland said,

I have noted that you are proceeding now to have consultations with the United States authorities and take it that you will inform me of any important points which arise therefrom.

The next day, 25 July, Holland received just this and more in two 'emergency circulars' containing advice from Attlee to Commonwealth Prime Ministers concerning the United Kingdom ground force commitment.

In an attempt to ascertain the importance to which the United States placed on a contribution from the United Kingdom, the British Ambassador in Washington, Sir Oliver Franks, and Air Marshal Lord Arthur Tedder met with Dr Philip Jessup, United States Ambassador at Large and General Omar Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the results of this meeting were outlined in the circulars.

During these discussions, Bradley stated that such reinforcement was of the utmost importance because, in the first place, the total forces required would be considerable not only to secure rapid and decisive results when the situation improved for the United Nations.

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31 P.M. 324/2/7 (i) Holland to Attlee, 24 July 1950.

32 Tedder had specially flown to Washington to augment the British delegation, 'because of the significance of the Korean situation.' Attlee to Holland, 20 July 1950.
forces and an advance became possible, but also to maintain very lengthy lines of communication which would be subject to and vulnerable to guerilla attacks.

Secondly, although recognising that there would be a delay until such forces would be despatched, Bradley was quick to emphasize that an early public announcement of the intention to commit ground forces would be of immense political value in illustrating "unity of purpose in the United Nations", and also as a morale builder to troops already engaged in Korea.\(^{33}\) Franks pointed out that it was clear that Bradley's statement was very carefully prepared and that it not only represented his personal views, nor the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but the views of the entire United States Administration.\(^{34}\)

Because the British Prime Minister and Cabinet realised that the question of a United Kingdom contribution of ground forces in Korea was at least in part, if not mainly political, it called on Franks to present his personal views, on the likely reaction of the American authorities to a favourable decision by Britain.

Franks reported that he knew the Americans saw the role of the United Nations in the Korean operation as fundamental, because the 'United Nations' character of American action was essential to their relations with the new nations of Asia as a "refutation of imperialism".\(^{35}\)

\(^{33}\) P.M. 324/2/7 (i) Emergency Circular Q No. 22, 25 July 1950.

\(^{34}\) P.M. 324/2/7 (i) Emergency Circular Q No. 23, 26 July 1950.

\(^{35}\) Apparently the United States saw no difficulty of compatibility in this attitude with its earlier decision to "reinforce" Formosa, the Philippines and Indo-China.
Accordingly, the United States believed it was essential that the operations in Korea should not be carried out solely by American forces. Continuing, he pointed out that the authorities in Washington shared the expectation of the American public that their allies would show they stood behind the United States in this issue. Despite the power and position of the United States,

the American people were not happy if they felt alone. They would not understand if they found themselves alone on the ground in Korea, and they would think it showed coolness to them or even disapproval of what they were doing.36

More important, however, the United States knew that many other nations would follow the British decision in this matter. They saw Britain as the "key to the situation" and hence awaited a British decision to contribute troops, considering it more important to them and their purposes than any other.

In concluding, Franks felt that the repercussions from a negative decision by Britain would endanger the long term relations between the United Kingdom and the United States.37

On political grounds, it was clear that a positive decision was required from Britain. From the military point of view, however, it was felt by the British authorities that it would be extremely hard for them to "provide even a token force". Nevertheless, having regard to the wider political considerations, Attlee informed Holland, the British Government had come to the conclusion that it would be desirable

37 P.M. 324/2/7 (i) Emergency Circular Q No. N23. Above.
for it to make an offer of ground forces. In making this decision, Attlee emphasized that he received no direct request from the United States Administration and his position was that he intended to make a "spontaneous offer in accordance with British obligations under the Security Council resolution". The composition of this force, he said, would be made up of three infantry battalions, one armoured regiment and a field artillery regiment.

Concluding the message, Attlee stated that a public announcement would be made in the House of Commons during the debate on defence, at 3 p.m. on Wednesday 26 July, and the Secretary-General of the United Nations will be notified the same day. It was noted in Wellington that the announcement would probably not be made before 2 a.m. 27 July, New Zealand time, which gave the New Zealand Government time to re-assess its position.38

"Our first announcement could be for an artillery unit as suggested", wrote the Minister of Defence, MacDonald, soon after the Government received the news of the British decision. "Later, after the United Kingdom offer has been made public, we should further suggest our artillery links up with a United Kingdom force and be under British command."39 This was examined further on the following day, 26 July, when the Defence Committee met at 5.30 p.m. During this meeting, Holland read the text of the telegrams he had received from Attlee, pointing out that "both Sir Oliver Franks and Air Chief Marshal Tedder had reported that the request for ground troops had indeed been initiated

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38 P.M. 324/2/7 (i) Emergency Circular Q No. 22. Above.
39 P.M. 324/2/7 (i) Memorandum, MacDonald to Holland, 25 July 1950.
by the Americans and not merely by Trygve Lie". In considering a New Zealand contribution, Holland said there was no requirement at the moment for further Naval forces and that, indeed, the Chief of Naval Staff had said at a previous meeting that he would prefer not to send any further naval units.

Holland, therefore, wished to know whether the Chief of General Staff's offer of an artillery regiment still stood, and General Stewart replied that it did. The Government now had the necessary lead from Britain and the capability of fulfilling a military obligation. With this established, Holland said he wished to make a statement at 7.30 p.m. that evening, both because he did not want to be behind the United Kingdom Government and because he wanted to forestall Australia should that country also consider sending ground forces.

The proposed statement was discussed and amended by the Committee which then reached general agreement upon it. It was then necessary to obtain the consent of cabinet, caucus and, if possible, the Leader of the Opposition, Peter Fraser.

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40 The Chief of Naval Staff was not present at this meeting. 'The Whole Committee as constituted', included among others, MacDonald, Keith Holyoake, the Deputy Prime Minister, Doidge, Shanahan, now of the Prime Minister's Department, Alister McIntosh, the Secretary of External Affairs, Major General Stewart as Chief of the General Staff and Army and Colonel Bullot as Chief of the Air Force.

41 N.A. 08/11/26 (ii) Minutes of Defence Committee meeting, 26 July 1950.
When the Cabinet met at 6.30 p.m., Holland outlined the message from Attlee and stated that the

question of the provision of a New Zealand ground force had been considered at a special meeting of the Defence Committee where it was recommended for the approval of Cabinet, that New Zealand should provide an artillery formation consisting, with a small administrative element, of a total of one thousand volunteers on despatch from New Zealand. Cabinet approved this recommendation that a force be sent in response to the United Nations appeal.

At 7.30 p.m. on 26 July Holland made the following statement in the House of Representatives.

Though the question of the role and type of a New Zealand force is still under consideration, I feel that I should, without further delay, announce that the New Zealand Government is immediately offering to the Secretary-General of the United Nations a special combat unit for service with other ground forces. Subject to the outcome of the consultations now proceeding, this will probably take the form of an artillery formation.

Army offices will be open to receive volunteers for this Combat unit from 8 a.m. tomorrow.

I am sure that the course I have outlined will commend itself to both sides of the House, and to the country as a whole.  

42 C.M. (50) 48 Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, 26 July 1950.

43 N.Z.P.D. Vol. 289, 26 July 1950, pp. 697. See Appendix II.
Reactions to the Government's decision were favourable, both within New Zealand and overseas. The Labour opposition supported the move wholeheartedly. Fraser thought there could be "no two opinions about the matter". In the United States, Berendsen reported that Perkins, to whom he delivered the text of the Prime Minister's statement asked him to tell Doidge, "we all think this is wonderful", and commenting, Berendsen said,

I am certain this renewed evidence of New Zealand's readiness to play its part will have widespread influence and will redound greatly to our credit and indeed ultimately to our practical advantage.

The press in New Zealand were quick to point out that in taking this action, "New Zealand was, as twice previously in her history, the first of the Dominions to answer the call". In fact, the Government's offer preceded those of the United Kingdom as well as Australia.

The response to the call for volunteers was a further indication of the public enthusiasm to the Government's decision. In the 10-day recruiting period from 27 July to 5 August, a total of 5,982 volunteers had applied for enlistment in the force, 2,018 of which came forward

44 Ibid. The only dissident voice in Parliament was that of the Member for Timaru, Rev. Mr C.L. Carr, who was 'convinced that New Zealand had been led up the garden path on insufficient evidence, in what he considered was, at bottom, a civil war.' Clemow, pp.65.

45 Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs.

46 P.M. 324/2/7 (i) I.T. No. 107. Berendsen to Doidge, 26 July 1950.

on the first day. Such a response removed any of the doubts the Service Chiefs had voiced earlier in July. But the preparation of this unit, which came to be known as 'K-Force', took a month longer than had earlier been predicted and during this time "betting odds were even on its prospects of ever facing fire." By early August, the North Korean offensive had been contained and by the end of October, the United Nations forces had pushed the North Koreans out of Southern Korea and were now pursuing them north of the 38th Parallel.

In discussing the future of 'K-Force', in view of this improved military situation in Korea, Holland stated that there had been no proposal so far for any change in the New Zealand contribution, and that any decision on the future of the New Zealand force would be made by the United Nations, of whose forces it was a component.

This situation was only temporary, however. On 2 November 1950, Communist China entered the conflict and in doing so, created a completely new war in Korea.

49 Clemow, pp.43.
50 A.J.H.R., 1950, J-3, op.cit. By the end of July, it was agreed that New Zealand, Australian and British forces would combine, and K-Force served as part of the First Commonwealth Division in Korea.
51 New Zealand had a maximum of 1,900 men engaged on the ground in Korea at one time which amounted, in proportion to her population, to a contribution which was second highest to that of the United States. Twenty-two recruits were killed, and seventy-seven wounded during the entire course of the war. Clemow, pp.58, pp.451.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

It seems surprising that the two decisions to extend military assistance to the Republic of Korea during June and July, 1950, were made at all, let alone so promptly, considering the Government's commitment to Commonwealth defence, its ambivalence towards the United Nations and the importance of South Korea to New Zealand's national interests. Only two days before the outbreak of the Korean crisis on 25 June, the Prime Minister, Mr Holland, was acknowledging New Zealand's military obligation to the maintenance of Commonwealth security, particularly in the Middle East, and accepting that the security of the Far East was of secondary importance to New Zealand's well-being. Moreover, Korea itself was thousands of miles from New Zealand. The Government knew comparatively little about Korea, and its threatened political status presented no immediate danger to New Zealand's security. The decision to commit naval forces, the first decision, seems all the more remarkable when considering the events leading up to this move between 25 and 29 June.

The Government knew that it was the action of the United States that gave any effectiveness to the directives of the Security Council.

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1 See above, pp. 19-21.
As Sir Carl Berendsen pointed out,

It is significant ... that the important and guiding decisions have been taken by the United States. The United Nations Security Council, in the absence of the Soviet Representative, has done well and has given the moral backing and authority which are so essential, but both the initiative and the action have been substantially those of the United States, and, indeed, nothing whatever could or would have been done without the United States.²

The Government was aware also, that in taking the Korean issue up with the United Nations, the United States was merely 'validating' a course of action which it seemed likely to have pursued irrespective of Security Council sanction.³ To this end, it must have occurred to the authorities in Wellington that the United States was, in effect, merely using the United Nations as an instrument in carrying out its policy regarding Korea. When President Truman announced on 27 June his decision to 'insulate' Formosa, Government apprehension towards this otherwise 'welcome manifestation of American power and determination', became even more apparent.

But in spite of these prior commitments and reservations, the government did not face any major difficulties in providing the two frigates Tutira and Pukaki to serve in Korean waters. After all, the despatching of the two ships to Korea did not interfere with

² PM 324/2/3 (ii) Memo. Berendsen to Doidge, 4 July 1950.
³ For example, the United States had been using air and naval forces for nearly 24 hours before the authorizing Security Council resolution (27 June) was passed.
New Zealand's ability to make an effective contribution to defend the Middle East in the event of a hot war. Furthermore, whether the Government liked it or not, it did have certain obligations to fulfil by its membership in the United Nations, and it recognised these obligations. As Doidge pointed out, "the Security Council has called upon all the members of the United Nations to go to the aid of Korea. To ignore that request would be to disown the United Nations."\(^4\)

Given these circumstances and the extent of New Zealand's initial contribution, it seems certain that the first decision was based on United Nations considerations. Certainly there was little or no consultation with the American authorities concerning assistance from New Zealand. In fact, the New Zealand move was not anticipated by them. "The United States had reconciled themselves to supporting the United Nations resolution single-handed", the Government learned from one report, "and were agreeably surprised at the prompt offer of aid, especially from the British Dominions."\(^5\)

The fact that New Zealand was anticipated in formulating its decision by the British and Australian move to extend aid on the 28 and 29 June respectively, accounts for the promptitude of the New Zealand commitment. Although the Government had considered on 28 June that the only form of assistance New Zealand could provide at

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\(^5\) PM 324/2/7 (1) Despatch from Air Commodore Findlay (Head of the N.Z. Joint Staff Mission, Washington) to Doidge, 13 July 1950.
that time was naval units, the evidence suggests that when Holland announced the Government's decision the following day, it was still unprepared to undertake the commitment so soon. But, preferring to make New Zealand's offer appear as part of a joint Anglo-Australasian initiative, the decision followed soon after the British and Australian announcements.

Whereas the reason behind the naval commitment appears to be the fulfilling of New Zealand's obligations to the United Nations, the reasons behind the decision to commit ground forces, the second decision, are less clear. A positive response to the Secretary General's appeal on 14 July, concerning the provision of ground forces, presented the immediate problem of what troops New Zealand could provide 'over and above its primary task of planning to provide in the global strategy'. The recommendations in the Service Chiefs report on New Zealand's capacity to provide more combat troops, for the use of volunteers, instead of an already 'obligated' regular force, largely overcame this difficulty, but two major problems remained. Whether enough suitable recruits could be attracted was debatable. Furthermore, the size of the New Zealand contingent envisaged for this task, would make necessary its association with a larger force. For reasons of logistics this larger force would have to be a combined Commonwealth force. For this reason alone, a positive decision by New Zealand to Secretary General Lie's request was dependent on a similar move by other Commonwealth countries.

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6 See Above, pp.35.
7 See Above, pp.36.
But even this understanding aside, it seems clear that New Zealand would not have committed ground forces, even if there were no military problems involved, without a 'lead' from the rest of the Commonwealth and especially Britain. As was customary New Zealand was reluctant to act independently of her Commonwealth partners, and although the Government had already formulated its decision on aid to American forces in Korea, this apparent readiness of New Zealand to 'play its part' was conditional upon a similar initiative from Britain. It would follow, therefore, that the Government, as Holland was quick to emphasise in his statements, was in "constant consultation with the United Kingdom and other British Commonwealth countries," during the crisis.

This was not altogether the case, however. Granted, New Zealand's policy regarding Korea was almost entirely dependent on Commonwealth considerations, but the notion that there was "close, quick and dynamic Commonwealth consultation" over this issue is questionable. In fact, it was fortunate that a thorough assessment of New Zealand's capacity to provide ground forces had been made during July, as notification of the impending British decision came suddenly and unexpectedly. In these circumstances, at least, the authorities in Wellington were not forced to make a hasty decision, unlike the naval commitment. In fact, the degree to which the Government was prepared enabled it to "stress the Commonwealth setting in which the decision was made and the professional consultations that were supposedly taking place."

10 See above, pp. 40-42.
11 Wood, op.cit, pp.105-106.
Australia, on the other hand, was not quite so fortunate as the following report Doidge received from the New Zealand High Commissioner in Canberra illustrates.

The announcement of the United Kingdom proposals without warning precipitated an [Australian] decision which had previously been withheld at the special request of the United Kingdom pending discussions by Mr Menzies with British and American authorities in Washington. The result is that the Australian decision and announcement were against a background of incomplete examination of the practical problems involved and method and implementation is, to say the least, uncertain...

[In any event] local United Kingdom faces are a trifle red. 12

If Anglo-Australian consultations were superficial, communications between Australia and New Zealand were little better. In the same telegram, Doidge was told that,

presumably the scanty consultation between Australia and New Zealand prior to the [Australian and New Zealand] announcements was due to the premature announcement in the United Kingdom and this explanation has been accepted by authorities here. 13

The situation went deeper than this, however. Whereas the former Australian and New Zealand Labour Governments, under the leadership of Chifley and Fraser respectively, had established a close working relationship, in the 1950's New Zealand-Australian relations lost something of the intimacy of former years. Menzies, the leader of the new Liberal-Country coalition, saw himself in the mould of a world statesman, and apparently did not consider the position of Holland in New Zealand as very significant. During this period,

12 PM 324/2/7 (i), I.T. No. 170. N.Z. High Commissioner, Canberra to Doidge, 27 July 1950.

13 Ibid.
there developed a relationship between the two Heads of State that was just short of hostile rivalry. This would account for Holland's wish to make a statement on the evening of 26 July, because he did not want to be behind the United Kingdom Government and more important, because he wanted to forestall Australia should that country also consider sending troops. 14

As far as New Zealand-United Kingdom relations were concerned during this time, the only measure of uncertainty was voiced by Berendsen. "I can see no really consistent logic on the attitudes of the British in this matter," he told Doidge. That they should openly, immediately and enthusiastically provide forces to aid South Korea, especially in the light of United Kingdom (i) recognition of China, and (ii) trying to persuade others to do likewise and (iii) call for Chinese entry to the United Nations [sic] [seems contradictory.] I cannot see how they can reconcile one with the other. 15

He was, nevertheless, happy with the British decision to commit forces in South Korea.

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14 See above, (Chapter IV, pp.16). It is worth noting, although it goes beyond the period with which this essay is concerned, that tensions between the two governments increased at the beginning of August when Menzies, then on an official visit to the United States, proposed to announce during his speech to the American Congress on 1 August, of a co-operative ANZAC effort in Korea. This intended move was to be made without consultation with the New Zealand Government. Upon hearing of this, Holland, cabled the Acting Australian Prime Minister, Arthur Fadden, and "made it clear (he emphasized it three times) that he thought it would be quite improper for Mr Menzies to make any announcement to America as to the part New Zealand would play ... a decision in that connection could only be arrived at after consultation with other Empire countries." PM 324/2/7 (i), O.T. No. 210. Holland to Fadden, 1 August 1950.

In all other aspects of British policy concerning the Korean crisis, however, the authorities in Wellington found themselves in complete agreement. Indeed, as the evidence suggests, this relationship was of the utmost importance to New Zealand during the crucial months of June and July and this was especially noticeable in the Government's efforts to ascertain American attitudes, intentions and objectives during the early days of the conflict.

The importance of American considerations to New Zealand policymakers cannot be overlooked, but at the same time, when considering the initial stages of the Korean conflict, they should not be over-emphasized. True, a firm and early undertaking by New Zealand to provide ground forces 'would be greatly to New Zealand's credit' and have an excellent effect in the United States. Such a move would be favourable in apprising the Americans of New Zealand's value as an ally in the Pacific pact for which it, along with Australia, was working up until the outbreak of the hostilities in Korea. But as Professor Wood has pointed out, one important result of the Korean War was that the United States was so firmly committed in the defence of the Pacific that a pact was hardly necessary. 16

The real importance of the American factor for New Zealand was in an indirect way. It was the emphasis the United States placed on British participation in Korea, as noted by Sir Oliver Franks and Lord Tedder, which was significant for New Zealand, for on the basis of this understanding the United Kingdom decided to commit ground forces to Korea. Only then could the New Zealand Government conclude the decision it had already formulated; it was dependent on this lead from Britain.

One significant result of New Zealand's response to the Korean Crisis was in showing the extent to which her foreign policy formulation, in regard to the Korean situation, was integrated and ultimately dependent upon British and Commonwealth initiatives. The importance of the United States within this framework was, therefore, of a secondary nature.

The other significant result of New Zealand's response was that it forced the Government to become more aware of Asia and the problems in that region and their ultimate effect on New Zealand. As Doidge pointed out in September 1950,

It would be dangerous complacency to imagine that what is happening in Korea cannot be repeated. It can be repeated in Asia, or in any other part of the world. At present Asia is in the position of the greatest danger, and the fate of our neighbours - and they are our neighbours - is a matter of the greatest and gravest concern to this country.17

In deciding that New Zealand should participate in the Korean War, "... the Government was determined to give its firm support to the United Nations. It would do so to the maximum extent permitted by New Zealand's resources and commitments."18 That support, however, was in part, conditional upon Britain undertaking a similar commitment. Nevertheless, New Zealand endeavoured to 'play its part', and in doing so committed her soldiers, for the fourth time in only 50 years, to fighting and dying in a 'foreign war on foreign soil'.
APPENDIX I

STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 29, 1950

The Government are following events in Korea with the utmost attention and they are in constant touch with the British and American Governments.

The New Zealand Government hold the view that the action taken by the Security Council is fully in accord with the United Nations Charter.

The Charter provides that the Security Council shall determine the existence of any breach of the peace or act of aggression, and shall make recommendations or decide what measures shall be taken to deal with it. If measures not involving the use of armed force would be ineffective, then the Security Council may take such action by air, sea or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Despite the fact that the arrangements contemplated in Article 43 of the Charter have not been concluded, because of disagreements between the leading members, and there are no formal agreements with the Security Council under which members would make available to the Council armed forces and other assistance which the Council could call upon and use where necessary, the New Zealand Government hold the view that the Security Council has a clear duty to maintain international peace and security, and they feel that it is incumbent upon members of the United Nations to give their full co-operation in all endeavours to achieve that end.
The New Zealand Government welcome the measures thus promptly taken by the Security Council and fully approve the terms of the Council's resolution of 27 June. They have advised the United Kingdom and the United States Governments of their support for the action taken by those Governments to assist the Republic of Korea to withstand aggression.

The New Zealand Government will do whatever lies within their power to fulfil the obligations they have incurred under the United Nations Charter. They are prepared to make available units of the Royal New Zealand Navy should this form of assistance be required and they are at present in consultation with the United Kingdom Government on this matter.
I wish to inform the House of the Government's decision in regard to the request of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the provision of increased combat forces for Korea.

The Government has given very full and careful consideration to this matter ever since the receipt of the first resolution of the Security Council and has been in constant consultation with the United Kingdom and other British Commonwealth countries and the United States. As the House is aware, in response to the first appeal, the two frigates H.M.N.Z.S. "Tutira" and "Pukaki" were despatched for service in Korean waters.

In view of the gravity of the situation created by North Korean aggression, and of the further appeal by the United Nations for additional effective forces, particularly ground forces, we have given further consideration to the practicability of making an additional contribution in order to fulfil our obligations to the United Nations.

After discussions in the Defence Committee - with the Service Chiefs present - and in Cabinet, the Government has been in further consultation with the United Kingdom as to the role of the proposed New Zealand unit in relation to other ground forces.
Though the question of the role and type of a New Zealand ground force is still under consideration, I feel that I should, without further delay, announce that the New Zealand Government is immediately offering to the Secretary-General of the United Nations a special combat unit for service with other ground forces. Subject to the outcome of the consultations now proceeding, this will probably take the form of an artillery formation.

Army offices will be open to receive volunteers for this combat unit from 8 a.m. tomorrow.

I am sure that the course I have outlined will commend itself to both sides of the House, and to the country as a whole.
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