

Difficulties in Korea

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THE KOREAN conflict, which so seriously endangers the position of the United Nations, and particularly that of the United States, has a twofold aspect which renders its solution exceptionally difficult.

On the one hand, it constitutes an act of armed aggression, violating the principles and purposes of the U. N.; and for the first time, the U. N. have put to the test their capacity for executive repression — it being of the highest importance for humanity to prove that universal peace cannot be disturbed with impunity. They demand severe punishment for the aggressors and the voiding of their territorial conquests in order to discourage any similar attempts in the future.

On the other hand, we learn that the North Korean invaders are insuring the liberation of the peasants in the territories they occupy. They confiscate the lands owned by great corporations and by American and Korean private landlords (the President of the South Korean Republic being perhaps one of the greatest), and distribute them among the landless peasants. Moreover, they have abolished the leasehold system and wiped out mortgages. They have done away with all taxes and replaced them by a single tax equivalent to the rental value of the land.

These measures are confirmed by the fact that the so-called North Korean Democratic Republic of the people had already carried into effect — up to a date not supplied by information at our disposal — the distribution of 2,100,000 acres of land among 700,000 peasants, at a rate of three acres each; an area which insures the independent subsistence of a family with the methods of cultivation and standard of life usual in the Far East.

Evidently the so-called Communist Koreans are following an opposite road from that which would lead to formation of huge collective farms.

These circumstances may explain the ease with which the North Korean troops have advanced into Southern territory, with the presumable support of the population, who look upon them as their saviours and probably prefer such redemption to that offered by the troops from the U. S. or other nations at the service of the U. N.

The political problem that the U. N. must face now is whether they are fighting in order to restore the *statu quo ante bellum*, that is to say, the privileges of the land-owning class, an objective that will prove difficult to justify before those who must supply the soldiers. But if the U. N. should in any way give up its enterprise in Korea, the facts will have taught that armed violence is a most effective and expeditious means of acquiring individual economic independence, by abolishing feudal privileges.

It must be particularly borne in mind by Georgists that the Koreans do not regard the single tax as a means to do away with landlordism, but as a fiscal regime following violent confiscation of the landlord's properties and the nullification of mortgages. I do not personally approve of it — but in any case the question is a challenging one.

It is also fitting to remember that Henry George's ideas may have influenced the opinions of Sun Yat Sen, the father of Chinese revolution, and of his collaborators, through the

translation and adaptation into the Chinese language of *Progress and Poverty*, and the personal action of the translator, W. E. Macklin. Three Chinese editions of the book appeared before 1917, and there may have been later editions. Chinese is the written language of the Koreans, and thus the ideas of a nineteenth century American thinker would have a powerful influence on the development and solution of the present conflict. Indeed the power of ideas cannot be checked.