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COLOMBO

COMMONWEALTH AGREES TO DIFFER OVER CHINA

Colombo - capital of Ceylon - youngest of the Dominions - is the setting for a vital Commonwealth Conference.

Here at this strategic centre of South-East Asia, delegates will assemble in the Senate building to tackle the problem that strikes at the roots of the Asiatic world - the problem of China. Latest pictures from China show General Mao-Tse-Tung reviewing his victorious Red troops - now poised for the rounding-up stages of their campaign. With British investments in China totalling nearly 200 million pounds, the Government's recognition of General Mao was inevitable. It is, in the words of the Foreign Office, "a recognition of fact and not a mark of approbation." Here, in Formosa, the Nationalists have pledged themselves to a last-ditch stand and General Chiang-Kai-Chek appealed to the Western world for aid. Little was forthcoming and the General's wife went to Washington to plead personally with President Truman, but without success. Before leaving again for Formosa, Madame Chiang said this of her husband:

"A few years ago he was exalted for the courage and tenacity of the fight he waged. Now he is pillaried. Russia will never know one day of peace in China. Russia will never own China. China will remain free."

That was the situation that faced the Commonwealth statesmen at Colombo. With India's Premier, garlanded Pandit Nehru, leading those in favour of General Mao, the Dominions agreed to differ over China. Although Nehru urged that the Big Powers should forget Chiang-Kai-Chek, Canada, represented by Foreign Minister Lester Pearson, Australia and New Zealand decided to continue their support of the Formosa Government. On other problems on the agenda, the Dominions acted as one. As Mr. Bevin said on his arrival in a launch from the cruiser KENYA, the economic defence of Asia against Communism was the main task for the Conference. On measures to meet this threat, all the delegates were agreed. The Colombo meeting sets an example to the world that co-operation between white man and coloured - between nations thousands of miles apart - is not only possible, but effective and workable.