

ANTI-COMMUNISM AND THE KOREAN WAR (1950–1953)

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1. Introduction

On April 16, 1952 the (London) Daily Worker carried a small item about a press conference given in Mexico City by the great Mexican painter, **Diego** Rivera. His latest painting, *Nightmare of War and Dream of Peace*, commissioned by the government, had just been cut down. Its two themes were the collection of signatures (including by Frida Kahlo) for the Five-Power Peace Pact and the exposure of the atrocities of the Korean War. The painting has since disappeared (it is reportedly in **Beijing**). Even Picasso's *Massacre in Korea* (1951) is rarely reproduced or mentioned. Rather, the Korean War is 'known', indeed un-known, to much of the Western world through M.A.S.H. This brilliantly resolves the problem of the nature of the Korean War by keeping almost all Koreans well out of sight, and isolating a few GIs in a tent, leaving them to ruminate about sickness, sex and golf.

In its evasion, *M.A.S.H.*, reveals a central truth about the Korean War—that it was not just anti-Communist but so anti-Korean that the **US** and its allies, including Britain, not only could not take in who the enemy really was, but even who their Korean allies were. All Koreans became 'gooks' and very soon **US** pilots were being given orders to strafe, napalm and bomb any grouping of **Koreans**.¹ In Western history and mythology there has been a double elimination: of Korean Communism and of the Korean revolutionary movement, on the one hand, and of the whole history, culture and society of Korea as a nation. The paradoxical paroxysm of this is that although the **US** and its allies actually occupied North Korea—the only time the **US** has ever occupied a Communist country, and the only case of effective 'rollback'—this experience is censored out of existence. There is not a single study on a unique event in post-World War II history: the ousting of an established Communist regime and the occupation of its capital and 90 per cent of its territory.

2. Korea: Unknown but Invaded

It is not possible to prove that if the West had known more about Korea it would have behaved any differently—it might even have behaved worse. But ignorance was a factor in the West's scorn for the interests of the Korean people. At the Cairo Conference in 1943 Britain suggested the

fatal formula that Korea should be free and independent 'in due course'. In the end, in spite of efforts by the Russians (who were not in Cairo), Korea got the worst treatment of any nation in the whole world as a result of the Second World War. In spite of the fact that it had had absolutely nothing to do with any attack on the Allies, it was occupied in **mid-1945**—North of the 38th Parallel by the Russians, South of the Parallel by the Americans. Like **Germany**, which was an aggressor nation, it was divided. But it got a much worse administration in the South than did Western Germany—in a sense, Korea (South) got the occupation which Japan deserved, or which was designed for **Japan**.²

Korea, which was one of the oldest nations on earth, with a rich culture, was occupied by Japan from 1910 until 1945 and annexed outright to Japan **under** an extremely harsh administration. The fact that it was occupied by a non-European power and that both its language and that of the colonising country were known by few in the West contributed to the general ignorance of the country. Very little was published in the West about the resistance to Japanese colonialism. Unfortunately, probably the best known fact about Korea was that many Koreans were deployed as guards by the Japanese in POW camps, where their brutality became legendary. After 1945 very few Western correspondents visited Korea. One of the few to do so was Edgar Snow, who spent New Year 1946 with US troops on the 38th Parallel. In what seems to have been his only article on the trip, a little-known short piece in the *Saturday Evening Post*, Snow opened with an important statement: 'When everything has been said about our occupation of Korea, probably the most **significant** thing is that we stopped a revolution **here**.'³ In fact, unbeknownst to most people in the West, the US had actually overthrown the existing nation-wide Korean regime set up in September 1945 and was backing, arming and often participating in a reign of terror which ultimately broke the left-wing movement in much of the South and drove it either underground, into prison, into the North, or to its graves. Mark Gayn was one of the very few people to witness some of the upheavals in the South under the American occupation, which he ranked, justifiably, with the great peasant rebellions of **history**.⁴ By the time the Korean War erupted in June 1950 probably about 100,000 people had been massacred or killed in guerrilla fighting in the South.

The North

Ignorance about what was really happening in the South, as well as of the history of Korea (including of Korea's lack of responsibility for war against the Allies) was combined with an equally total ignorance of what was happening in the Northern half of the country. Unfortunately, in both cases it was not 'pure' ignorance: lack of knowledge, as often, was fused with false knowledge, prejudice and outright lies.

There have been two major problems for the world left as regards the North Korean regime. First, the nature of the Soviet occupation of the North (1945–48). Second, the background, credentials and policies of the new Korean administration set up in the North after the Japanese surrender. Both of these need excavating. It is as impossible to understand the Korean War without these as it would be to understand the Vietnam War without knowing anything about the Vietnamese revolutionary movement, the history of Ho Chi Minh, etc. Yet, this is exactly how the Korean War has usually been handled—even on the *left*.⁴

The Soviet occupation of North Korea lasted from August 1945 until September 1948 (formal independence; Soviet troops withdrew by the end of 1948). It was atypical compared to Russia's role in Eastern Europe. The Russians recognised the local Korean organisations, the People's Committees, and, more surprisingly, accepted a highly decentralised administration and a broad political coalition in the North during the early months. There was personal indiscipline in the early months, but no looting of plant and equipment, as there was in Northeast China. On the contrary, the Russians rapidly set about making a major effort to rehabilitate the economy and promoted not just agricultural revival, but renewed industrialisation and high *growth*.⁵ As Cumings sums up in a striking formulation: the Soviet people were disliked but their policies were popular; with the Americans it was the other way round.

Dispute about the nature of the Soviet occupation is inextricably linked to controversy (and ignorance) about the history of the Korean revolutionary movement and the credentials of Kim Il *Sung*.⁶ The main specific of the Korean revolutionary movement is that it had been based mainly outside Korea, chiefly among the Korean diaspora in Northeast China, and was at its strongest not in the period immediately preceding liberation (as in Yugoslavia and Albania), but in the late 1930s. Kim was an important guerrilla leader in Northeast China in the 1930s, but seems to have had to lie low (perhaps at Stalin's behest) during the early 1940s in the Soviet Far East. He was by no means, as Seoul and many Western sources still claim, an unknown fraud. Neither was he, as official hagiography claims, the undisputed national leader, much less, as Pyongyang often outrageously suggests, did he lead the liberation of his country. Northern Korea was freed by the Soviet Red Army.

However, under the umbrella of a generally 'hands off' Soviet administration, the new Korean administration in the North set about from early 1946 implementing a series of radical reforms (Land Reform, Equality of the Sexes, etc.) which are demonstrably Korean and there is solid documentary evidence to show that from at least mid-1946 Kim established his own 'Korea-first' line.

The result was not simply the social and economic transformation of the North, but a further boost to the national credentials of Kim and the

Korean radical movement. The Korean Communist movement, although divided in the diaspora, had solid credentials, widely recognised, as the force which had consistently fought the Japanese. Although it did not actually liberate Korea, it did immediately thereafter demonstrate its superior claim to represent the nation in several indisputable ways. First, in its energetic elimination of Japanese colonialism (seizure of all Japanese property immediately and punishment of collaborators); second, land reform ('land to the tiller' reform in March 1946—the fastest and most peaceful land reform in Asia, and probably in any socialist country ever); third, formal equality for women (July 1946)—leading to some real advances—within what had been a very traditional patriarchal society;⁷ and, last but not least, on policy for a united and independent Korea.

The upshot was a tremendous surge of support throughout the whole of Korea in favour of the North. Cumings has noted that some 350,000–370,000 Koreans in Japan (many originally from the South) chose to return to the North—'probably the largest group of voluntary emigrés to a socialist country on record' (to be followed by many more later).⁸ A dispatch to the *New York Post* from Seoul on November 20, 1945 stated: 'it is noteworthy that, whereas a constant stream of Koreans moves south across the border, an even larger stream wends its way slowly into the Russian zone'.⁹

A further strong sign of the North's popularity was the 'demonstration effect' of the reforms in the North.¹⁰ The Americans were also worried that the Russians, in their first occupation-cum-liberation of a Third World country, might come off better than America and that Soviet tutelage might seem more appealing than American to the Third World.

The South

The other side of the coin was what was happening in South Korea. There the US refused to recognise the People's Committees and even, initially, deployed Japanese troops against the Korean patriotic movement (far worse than similar actions in Indochina and Indonesia, given the length and harshness of Japanese colonial rule in Korea). In October 1945 the aged conservative politician, Syngman Rhee returned to Korea. Rhee had been in exile in the USA for 34 years (much more out of touch with his country and much more controlled by his mentors than Kim Il Sung who got called a Russian 'puppet' after fighting the Japanese). Not all is yet clear about Rhee's return, but it seems he returned against the wishes of the State Department, probably with the support of MacArthur and the deputy of the OSS, M. Preston Goodfellow.¹¹ Rhee himself had not collaborated with the Japanese, and he had a reputation as a well-known old Nationalist. The regime which he soon presided over, however, was made up largely of two groups: former collaborators with the Japanese, especially in the key sectors, army and police; and right-wing American

advisers like Goodfellow who in private looked forward to being able to throw the left into 'concentration camps'.¹² Rhee was not only cantankerous, but incipiently senile. He set about eliminating the organized left—and much of the centre and even right-wing opposition (his main Nationalist rival, Kim Koo was assassinated by an army officer in 1948; the main centre-left leader, Yo Un-hyong, was assassinated in July 1947 in broad daylight on a Seoul street in sight of a police box).

Furthermore, the Rhee regime had no policy for economic recovery (it was, in many ways, a 're-tread' of the Yi regime which ruled Korea for five centuries before the Japanese occupation). There were very large peasant uprisings throughout the South, particularly in 1946.

By 1947, with the People's Committees virtually smashed in the South, but with Rhee and the US unable to establish a viable regime, the US called in the United Nations to try to legitimize the Rhee government, at least in the South—and, if possible, endorse it for the North, too. The history of this incredible fraud has been described elsewhere.¹³ The essential points are two. First, the separate election in the South was opposed by every single political leader in the whole of Korea except Rhee and it is a fair estimate that at least 80 per cent of the organized political forces opposed it; all the main Southern leaders, including the very conservative Kim Koo and Kimm Kiu-sic, travelled to the North for two nation-wide conferences to try to stave off the division of their country.¹⁴ (It is difficult to think of such an event in Germany in 1948!) Second, the UN, leaving aside its political will and bias, never had the personnel or the resources to be adequately informed about what was actually happening in the South, and particularly was quite incapable of checking the 1948 election.

It was on the basis of this unilateral move that the Republic of Korea (ROK) was set up, based on Seoul, in August 1948, with Rhee as President. It claimed jurisdiction over the whole nation.

In that same month another poll took place. The North claims that this was a nation-wide election (clandestine in the South) in which 77.52 per cent of the Southern electorate (99.97 per cent in the North) took part—and it is on this poll that the regime established in Pyongyang in September 1948, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), bases its claim to represent the entire nation."

Contrary to Western claims then and now, some sort of poll did indeed take place in some areas of the South, as well as in the North. But Merrill is surely correct to state that DPRK claims are exaggerated.¹⁶ The trouble with the DPRK's claim is that it is inherently unverifiable. The claim simply is not and cannot be recognised widely, either within Korea or abroad. The DPRK has a strong claim to represent the nation, but not on narrow legalistic (and unprovable) criteria. The specific *political* confusion which prevailed on the left (except in the 'down-the-line' Communist

movement) when the Korean War erupted in June 1950 is partly explicable by the linked phenomena of: a) UN cover for the ROK and b) the **'failure'/inability** of the DPRK to establish its credentials as not simply a legitimate government for the Northern half of Korea, but as the organised force which had the right, or the best claim to represent the whole Korean nation. In turn, the reasons for this relate to a combination of: 1) 'genuine' ignorance about Korea and its revolutionary movement; 2) assimilation (both thinking and unthinking) of Kim to Stalin and of the DPRK to the USSR: very few in the West could imagine either that Kim was independent of Russia, or that he could be independent in alliance with Russia. The left in the West could locate the DPRK and Korean Workers' [Communist] Party, the KWP neither in their local Korean context nor in their international context.

3. *The Background and Start of the War*

When Gertrude Stein was dying she is reported to have raised herself on her cushions and asked those gathered round her bed: 'What is the answer?' After she had fallen back and all thought she was gone, she lifted herself up once more and said: 'What is the question?', whereupon she died. It is an extraordinary fact that the main question asked about the Korean War is: 'Who started it?' Even on the left, this is usually considered the central issue. But this is a question never asked, for example, about the Vietnam War. The distance is easily demarcated by simply posing the question: 'Who started the Vietnam War?'

The Korean War was essentially a civil war, delayed by foreign intervention (in 1945) further complicated by the foreign-imposed division of the country and thus, in the form it took, ultimately caused by that foreign intervention. Without US (and Russian) occupation and division, the left would easily have taken over the whole of Korea, just as it did in Yugoslavia. South Korea was not invaded by North Korea in June 1950, it was invaded by US imperialism in 1945.

The background to the war can be traced to the combination of dual occupation and the establishment of two separate regimes, each claiming jurisdiction over the whole nation. While the USA and USSR formally occupied their respective halves, the uncompleted civil struggle was partly held at bay—partly by repression, and partly by a **left/right** redistribution into North and South, respectively. Inter alia, of course, this politico-geographic redistribution meant that both regimes were made up of people from both North and South Korea (this was especially important in the case of the ROK army, which was staffed and headed almost entirely by former collaborators with the Japanese, many of them refugees from the North eager to oust the Pyongyang government).

After the proclamation of the DPRK on September 9, 1948, the USSR announced that it would withdraw its armed forces by the end of 1948,

which it did. The USA withdrew its forces by mid-1949, leaving behind a substantial advisory group, **KMAG**.¹⁷

The proximate background to the war involves two major aspects both of which have been grossly undervalued in the conventional literature. The first is the state of extreme dissension and revolt inside the ROK, including within the ROK state, between its founding in mid-1948 and June 25, 1950. The second is the very heavy cross-border fighting which went on, particularly from mid-1949.

According to the official US military history of the war, the ROK Army 'disintegrated' immediately after June 25, 1950.¹⁸ One reason it did so was that both it and the ROK state had been in a state of some disintegration for quite some time. Immediately after the ROK was set up, the new army was almost torn apart by a series of major mutinies, during which rebel troops seized and held major cities for up to one week. Unknown scores of officers were executed; and major purges carried out. In May 1949 two battalions of troops went over to the DPRK, with their officers.¹⁹ And one navy ship mutinied and went over to the DPRK.

At the same time, a fairly extensive guerrilla movement sprang up, particularly in the mountain areas and on Cheju Island, off the South coast. There were countless skirmishes and killings of the much-hated Rhee police. The US-Rhee campaign against the guerrillas on Cheju Island has been called by Cumings 'one of the most brutal, sustained, and intensive counterinsurgency campaigns in postwar Asia'.²⁰ Probably about one hundred thousand people were killed in fighting and massacres inside South Korea before the Korean War even began. It may also be noted that this level of violence contrasts markedly with the very low use of violence among Koreans themselves at the time of liberation from the Japanese.

At the top, Rhee's own regime was becoming increasingly isolated. The US Congress began to cut off funds. And in (rigged) elections in May 1950 Rhee and his supporters won only a small minority of the seats in the National Assembly. Once again, Rhee's reaction was violence. His own police force raided the Assembly and arrested 22 Assemblymen: 16 of them received smashed skulls, ribs or broken eardrums. By June 1950, the Rhee regime was **reeling**.²¹

Throughout this period there were skirmishes around the 38th Parallel. From about mid-1949 these began to escalate. Both the size and the causes of these clashes have been seriously understated in the West. In August 1949 the head of KMAG, Gen. William Roberts, wrote to a friend, Gen. **Bolté**, about these clashes: 'Each was in our opinion brought on by the presence of a small South Korean salient north of the parallel. Each was characterized by the [ROKA] **CO's** screaming "invasion, reinforce, ammo!". . . The South Koreans wish to invade the North. . . Most incidents on the parallel are due to needling by opposing local forces.

Both North and South are at fault. No attacks by the North have ever been in serious proportions.¹²² The former Chief of the ROK Navy General Staff, Rear Admiral Lee Young-woon, told me that in August 1949 he launched a totally unprovoked assault on the DPRK Navy at Monggumpo on the orders of Rhee's Minister of Defence, Shin Sin-mo. 'You have to take into account things like that,' Admiral Lee said. Likewise, the former ROK intelligence Brigadier General Choi Duk Shin, told me: 'The first thing you have to remember is that most leaders of the South Korean Army were refugees from the North and hated communism. They had already [i.e., before June 25, 1950] invaded the North several times to a depth of 3-4 miles. . . The fact is that the high-ranking officers in the South needed a war.'¹²³

The key question is thus not at all 'Who fired the first shot on the morning of June 25?' The real question is: why did the cross-border fighting erupt *at that moment* into full-scale fighting and what were the political and military factors which decided the DPRK to cross the Parallel in force and push into the South?

The answer lies in a complex combination of domestic and international factors. Conventional Western analyses over-emphasise the international factors at the expense of the local ones and, of course, emphasise Communist conspiracy at the expense of US and right-wing North Pacific intrigues. But the key and simple fact is that Korea was over-ripe for revolution, which the US had blocked in the South. The DPRK's case does not rest on the size of a putative cross-border incursion by the ROK Army on the morning of June 25, but on its credentials to represent the nation (which is the criterion accepted by all parties, in effect).

My own, tentative, view is that the DPRK took a *political* decision, on rather short notice, *on its own*, to cross the Parallel and detonate the collapse of the Rhee regime, in the hope that this could be accomplished without or before a US intervention. This gamble failed—although it very nearly paid off. The Rhee regime did disintegrate well ahead of the arrival of the People's Army (KPA). The population of the South, on the whole, seems to have welcomed liberation from Rhee.¹²⁴ The KPA was able to arm large numbers of the local population. But the US was able to hold onto a corner of Southeast Korea, the Pusan Perimeter, and stage a comeback with the Inchon landing in September 1950.

What is most unclear is the role of Rhee and his personal allies in all this. Richard Nixon has written, long after the event, that June 25 was 'a miscalculation by them, based upon a misrepresentation by us'.¹²⁵ There was feinting, thrusting and skirmishing along the Parallel, with large-scale artillery battles and in August 1949 Admiral Lee's attempt to sink the entire DPRK fleet.

There are two arguments against the DPRK/world communist line that the war was started by Rhee. One is that the ROK army and state

apparatus manifestly collapsed immediately after June 25, 1950, and Rhee was almost out of his job and out of Korea for good. The second is that although the US got into the war quite quickly, it equally manifestly was not geared up for an instant assault on the DPRK on June 25, 1950. Both of these arguments have to be tackled.

As for the first one: it does not mean anything at all that the ROK collapsed, except to demonstrate that it was in a rotten condition. If one takes a longer time perspective, it is clear that although Rhee retreated at the beginning, the Korean War saved him. Without it he was finished, as some senior US officials have acknowledged.

No one can dispute the documented historical record that Rhee and his top officials wanted to invade the North, were planning for this and were trying to draw the US in. This is unequivocally on the public record. There are at least two major possibilities along these lines. One is that Rhee, in June 1950, knew, or thought, that US support was forthcoming. The other is that he thought it *might* be, and made a unilateral move in order to force the US to come in. even if his initial move did not 'succeed' (in the sense of making a major advance into the North). Since most Western sources agree that the only thing that was holding Rhee back before June 25, 1950, was lack of US support at the top for an invasion of the North, it is necessary to see if anything changed on this front in mid-1950.

The DPRK has made much of a visit by John Foster Dulles to South Korea in mid-June 1950. Dulles visited the 38th Parallel, made a speech to the National Assembly, and met privately with Rhee. On the record, he gave very strong—and *unqualified*—support to Rhee, without any disclaimer about Rhee's stated intentions to invade the North. The DPRK has claimed, with some documentary support, that Dulles went *further*.³⁶ These claims have been generally dismissed in the West.

But there is strong evidence that the DPRK was correct to read the Dulles visit as a major shift in US policy. MacArthur actually states in his memoirs that Dulles 'apparently reversed' US policy on the question of the commitment to Rhee—exactly one week before the war *started*.³⁷ Not enough attention has been paid to the possibility that Rhee interpreted Dulles' statements to mean that he could force US backing by starting a war—or even that he got such backing in advance, perhaps from a part of the US regime. This would make sense of Rhee attacking and being hurled back (another possibility, of course, is that he was so demented that he genuinely expected the DPRK to collapse). Western sources have, on the whole, disgracefully underestimated, or even concealed, Rhee's constant bellicosity in trying to invade the DPRK before June 1950, in trying to prevent the war being brought to an end in 1953 and in trying to get US backing to start the war up again in 1953-54.

There is another possibility: that the DPRK, too, read the Dulles pronouncements as meaning that the US would now give a much firmer

commitment to Rhee and that therefore *either* he might attack and, if so, the US would come in once it was ready (i.e., very soon, but perhaps not immediately); *or*, that the DPRK's hopes of Rhee being toppled by domestic opposition now only had a very limited time-span. One has to make sense of the fact that the KPA moved, according to US intelligence, on June 25 less than half mobilised—not a normal way to start an offensive war. The US ambassador to Seoul, John Muccio, stated, long after the event: 'I felt that if the Communists were anywhere near as intelligent as we credited them with being, they would not use force because the South had many weaknesses.'²⁸

The lack of preparedness of the US can be interpreted in different ways. Several leading US figures have stated that they welcomed the Korean War. US Secretary of State Dean Acheson acknowledged afterwards that 'Korea came along and saved us'.²⁹ Gen. Van Fleet, commander of the 8th Army, said that 'Korea has been a blessing. There had to be a Korea either here or some place in the world.'³⁰ So one cannot dismiss the idea that *some* American officials wanted *a* war. The fact that the US was not geared up for an instant counter-attack in Korea (though it was geared up for both instant *political* action and instant military retaliation) is not inconsistent with the possibility that a *part* of the US apparatus looked favourably on a war in Korea.

Anti-communism naturally took the form not merely of attributing malign intentions to the DPRK, but of designating Kim Il Sung as a Russian 'puppet'. This was, after all, the time when Dean Rusk, the man who had actually drawn the line through the middle of Korea in 1945, was calling the People's Republic of China 'a Slavic Manchukuo'. The idea that the DPRK could be taken seriously, that it had its own history and revolutionary experience, that Kim might be a 'Tito', was rarely voiced. Least of all was it stated that Kim and the KPA (Korean People's Army) had much closer ties with China than with Russia, and that his relations with Stalin had historically been rather difficult.

Khrushchev's memoirs, published in the West as *Khrushchev Remembers*, in 1970–71 provide an excellent example of the complexity of the problem of using and evaluating evidence. These contain a very interesting chapter on the Korean War (Vol. I, Part 2, ch. 11). Khrushchev's chapter has been consistently deployed—in a wholly uncritical way—when it not only badly needs evaluation, *but after this evaluation has actually been carried out and it has been found wanting*: not in the sense of whether or not the material is authentic, but as to whether or not the published text reproduces accurately what Khrushchev said on the tapes. John Merrill has shown that this is not the *case*.³¹

The published version unequivocally describes two visits to Moscow by Kim Il Sung before the Korean War, from which it has been widely concluded that Kim planned the war with Stalin. But where the published text

confidently states: 'Kim went home and then returned to Moscow when he had everything worked out' (394), the full transcript reads: 'In my opinion, either the date of his return was set, or he was to inform us as soon as he finished preparing all his ideas. Then, I don't remember in which month *or year* [my italics—JH] Kim 11-sung came and related his plan to Stalin.'

Not even US intelligence picked up any sign of a second visit by Kim, and there is no independent confirmation of it. Reliance on Khrushchev as proof that Kim returned to Moscow to co-ordinate with Stalin the plan for launching the war is severely undermined by the fact that Khrushchev cannot date Kim's *first* visit. Published text: 'About. . . the end of 1949, Kim 11-sung arrived. . . to hold consultations with Stalin.' (393) (In fact, this visit was in March 1949, a full 15 months before the Korean War broke out.) But on the tapes, Khrushchev cannot even get the year right: 'I don't remember which year this corresponds to, but in my opinion, it seems, it was 1950. . .'

So what the original tape amounts to is that Khrushchev gets the *confirmed* visit by Kim out by a whole year (when timing is rather important) and cannot place the alleged second visit to any year at all. Khrushchev may be right. But it hardly seems good enough evidence on which to be adamant.

Yet Khrushchev's memoirs in the published version continue to be wheeled out, with no hint of criticism, or even enquiry.

The other text most often cited to buttress the claim that the North planned and executed the start of the war is an *article* in *Life* by Pawel Monat, usually referred to as 'Polish military attaché in North Korea during the Korean War'. This he was. But Monat did not actually reach Korea until July 1952. He does have an account of how the war *started*—but it is entirely second-hand, rather long after the event—and suspiciously pat. Most references to his version cite only an article in *Life*, rarely the detailed version in his book, *Spy in the U.S.*³² Once again, the context of the evidence needs to be taken into account, and the context is a defection to the US.

The standard Western version—that the Russians detonated and sustained the war—also takes a knock from an unexpected source recently released in the British archives: Douglas MacArthur *himself*.³³ In a report dated November 21, 1950, James (now Sir James) Plimsoll reports that MacArthur had told him that: 'No evidence had been found of any close connection between the Soviet Union and the North Korean aggression. The only possible link was the Russian equipment being used. . .' MacArthur referred to the 'accidental' bombing of the Soviet Union—for which Russia even declined compensation. Nor did the Soviet Union complain when the US hit a power plant in Northeast Korea that supplied the Soviet Far East and cut off the power. Plimsoll goes on: '7. MacArthur thought that, if it had really inspired the North Korean aggression, the

Soviet Union would not have abandoned the North Koreans so completely, giving them no assistance whatever. This would have been the greatest betrayal in history since Judas accepted his thirty pieces of silver.'

The Western line also fails to provide any rational explanation for the behaviour of the USSR at the UN (unless the ultra-Machiavellian thesis that Stalin wanted Kim to stew in his own juice is true, which I doubt). The Russians were absent over the question of recognition of the People's Republic of China. But it seems inconceivable—even as a deep feint—that they would have sustained this stance had they known war was about to erupt.

As a coda to the UN saga, it is worth noting how permeated the entire UN structure then was by anti-Communism and anti-Communists. Two-thirds of the entire UN headquarters staff were American citizens, tightly controlled by FBI screening and subjected to close anti-Communist surveillance.³⁴ The UN took many of its key decisions on very inadequate information, frequently manipulated by the Secretary General, Trygve Lie, and US officials. Information reaching the UN sometimes came from UN staff in Korea, but some was based on unverified reports by provenly unreliable or downright lying sources like Syngman Rhee, his Minister of Defence and ROK Army officers.

When the war broke out the UN, for the first time in its history, rejected the fundamental principle of hearing both sides of the story. The DPRK was not allowed to present its case. In autumn 1950 the DPRK sent the UN photostatic copies of materials captured in Seoul to back up its case. Some of these documents, which demonstrate that Rhee was planning to invade the North, were authenticated by their authors or recipients (including one US embassy official and one close (US) adviser to Rhee). To my knowledge, none has been disowned by any living first-hand witness. These documents reached the UN and were apparently made available for consultation in early November 1950. They subsequently disappeared.³⁵

Quite apart from its shabby treatment of the DPRK, the UN as a body at no time went to the root of the problem, which is that it itself, via US manipulation, had helped to create and give legitimacy to an unrepresentative regime which was itself a threat to peace in Korea and throughout the world. The rather sober complaints of the DPRK on this score before June 1950 were repeatedly brushed aside.

4. The Political Character of the War

Anti-Communism leapt into action in the West to empty the Korean War of all its essential features: rather than a civil war, it was made part of the Cold War; rather than a war with manifest local roots, it was attributed to the hand of the Kremlin and the counterpart of the demotion of the Korean revolutionary movement was the downplaying of the belligerency

of Rhee; rather than a war which had many features of a war of liberation from a hated tyrant, it was presented as an unjustified invasion which visited misery and massacre on the population of the South.

Most of the time it was genuinely impossible or very difficult for an ordinary citizen to find out what the truth was. The US imposed very tight censorship on correspondents in Korea. The newspaper proprietors did the same in England: James Cameron resigned from *Picture Post* over the blocking of his reporting on Rhee's atrocities; Rene **Cutforth** had his reports on napalm suppressed by the **BBC**.³⁶ In the USA Senators **McCarran** and **McCarthy** went after domestic dissidents in a well-known witchhunt, which had far more to do with Korea than has generally been recognised (for example, the first charge against Owen Lattimore was connected with **Korea**).³⁷

Anti-communism and a refusal to look at Korean society both played a big role in the treatment of the two determining (and linked) episodes of the war: the **occupation/liberation** of the South by the KPA and the occupation of the North by the **US/UN/Rhee** forces.

Reunification I (June–September 1950)

The standard Western version is that the KPA got a hostile reception; that the North imposed an alien Communist occupation regime; and that extensive massacres were carried out.

The DPRK version is that the KPA got a warm welcome; that the People's Committees were re-activated and that the new regime was based largely on Southern Communists; that the new regime armed large numbers of the Southern population; that land reform, **equality** for women and other reforms were enacted; and that the Rhee regime carried out extensive massacres in the South both immediately ahead of the KPA, in the rear areas and in the areas which Rhee reoccupied immediately after the KPA was driven out in September 1950.³⁸ But the official DPRK line (since August 1953) is that the new regime based on the People's Committee also committed some murders and atrocities in June–September 1950.³⁹

There is not space here to disentangle and weigh all the conflicting evidence on a comprehensive basis. But the main points are:

a) the KPA *was* given a warm welcome; the strongest evidence for this is in the memoirs of US Gen. **Dean**.⁴⁰

b) The new regime *was* based on the local People's Committee which, although severely reduced by Rhee's repression, had a better claim to be popularly representative than any other bodies.

c) The KPA did arm and recruit very large numbers of the local population; estimates vary between 400–500,000.⁴¹ Some Western critics suggest these were press-ganged. Again, the evidence of Gen. Dean, who can hardly be accused of bias in this direction, contradicts this interpretation.

d) The new regime did carry out very extensive reforms. Its claims to have enacted a major land reform in the short period of liberation have generally been dismissed or ignored. But in 1973 a clearly authorised volume was published in South Korea which reproduces the land reforms figures with only the mildest disclaimer, viz., that there were 'some exaggerated figures'."

e) Strong, if indirect, evidence for support in the South for the new administration comes from the number of people killed by Rhee when he reoccupied the South; Gregory Henderson, a US diplomat who was there at the time, has written that 'probably over 100,000' people were killed without trial in the South immediately after the re-establishment of the Rhee regime in autumn 1950.⁴³

Only three Western correspondents, to my knowledge, were personally present at any point during the KPA occupation of the South: Philip Deane of the (London) *Observer* and Maurice Chanteloup of AFP, who witnessed the advent of the KPA and then were taken off to the North as prisoners in July 1950; and the British correspondent, Alan Winnington, of the (London) *Daily Worker*. Winnington states that the ROK killed between 200,000 and 400,000 people as Rhee retreated before the KPA.⁴⁴ This claim was widely derided or ignored in the West. But there is evidence to indicate that it merits re-examination. Particularly striking is the testimony of Philip Deane which, although second-hand, is impressive because it provides a rare and explicit bridge over the 'information gap' between conflicting versions. Deane recounts being told by Winnington of a massacre by Rhee's police at Taejon—and just not believing it. A few weeks later, Deane was told about the same incident by a French missionary, Fr. Cadars. Cadars had witnessed with his own eyes the ROK police shooting 1,700 people in one incident near Taejon—with American officers watching.⁴⁵ ROK Admiral Lee told me that Rhee had systematically had political prisoners executed on the way South, and attempted to pin these deaths on the KPA and/or the local Communists.⁴⁶ Reporters like James Cameron and Rent Cutforth witnessed repeated, systematic brutality by Rhee's police. Rent Cutforth described the activity of Rhee's forces (in a later period) as 'plenty of massacres, not much fighting'.⁴⁷ British Foreign Office files record numerous atrocities by Rhee's forces in the South. Since Rhee (and the US) officially endorsed killing *anyone* on the grounds of being *suspected* of 'Communism', and since Rhee showed such a flagrant disregard for the lives of his own people,⁴⁸ is Winnington's version so implausible after all?

Of course, the case does not rest simply on who did more and worse atrocities. There is solid evidence to show that the local Communists executed numbers of people without trial, mainly in two moments: initially on liberation—mainly police and some landlords; and then right at the end when the People's Committee seems to have panicked after

the **Inchon** landing in September 1950. But, quite apart from any political or moral judgment on who was executed and for what, there are two points worth **making**.⁴⁹ First, it seems out of the question that the Communists killed anything like as many people as the Rhee regime—and quite unfounded allegations to this effect by the British government were and are most dishonest. Secondly, in some ways more important, the systematic cruelty and what **Cutforth** called the 'horrible brutality' of Rhee's police was quite unparalleled. They used torture routinely, plus death by crucifixion and other gruesome **means**.⁵⁰

A final—and, to me impressive—piece of evidence about the behaviour of the short-lived left-wing regime, at least in Seoul, comes from the official US Air Force study of Seoul under Communist occupation, ***The Reds Take A City***. This is *the* official US study of the occupation of Seoul. It is also the source for much later speculation. In this book of *selected first-hand* accounts of Communist rule, there is not one single eye-witness to an atrocity by the Communists. There is one account of a People's Court, by one Kun-ho Lee, described as 'the author of several widely known volumes on Korean law'.⁵¹ According to Lee, the People's Court 'In effect. . . massacred innocent people.' How does he know? Because he heard this from his 'older aunt' (who, he says, was an eye-witness). Surely, one can ask for better than this in a book of selected first-hand accounts compiled only a few months after the alleged events. The absence of any direct evidence, when it is manifest from the book that it would be there if it could have been found, is most convincing of all to me.

Reunification II (October–December 1950)

Between October 1950 and December 1950 the US, with the aid of Commonwealth (including British) and Turkish troops, occupied 90 per cent of North Korea (territory and population).

For cosmetic reasons, the US decided it would be good if ROK troops led the advance into the North. De facto, the new administration was a US military occupation regime, under which, and under whose authority (sometimes explicit and conscious, sometimes implicit and ignorant, but none the less thereby responsible), there operated a vast rag bag of Rhee police, ROK Army, youth groups, gangs of thugs, and old landlords. Once again, there is little or no agreement about what actually happened. But unlike with the 3-month occupation of the South, there are not really two opposing versions of events. There is one version—and one silence. The DPRK version is that (while the KPA staged a well-organized retreat) the US–Rhee forces carried out extensive massacres, especially of Party cadres, but also of ordinary civilians, women and **children**.⁵² The West says nothing at all about its one and only successful case of rollback. To my knowledge, there is not even a detailed attempt to refute the DPRK

version.

The DPRK says 'hundreds of thousands'⁵³ of people were killed but has never given detailed and comprehensive figures for deaths during the occupation of the North. Soviet figures show that the North lost well over 1 million people between 1949 and 1953.⁵⁴ The area which apparently had the highest proportion of people massacred was Sinchon County in South Hwanghae Province, where 35,383 people out of 142,788 reportedly were killed.''

The DPRK does not present overall and comprehensive figures. Its case is also weakened by failing to differentiate between actions attributed to US (and other UN) forces, on the one hand, and those of Rhee troops, police and irregulars, on the other, and between responsibility for these actions.

But the DPRK allegations are a lot stronger than is generally acknowledged in the West. Although it is not possible to be sure exactly what happened everywhere, it seems probable that the core of the accusations is true—viz., that the US and Rhee forces slaughtered very large numbers of people during their occupation of the North.

Not only are there the detailed accusations made by the DPRK regime, plus some physical evidence (which is not conclusive, and could be faked); there are also reports of visiting foreign delegations, especially those of the International Federation of Democratic Women in 1951 and the International Association of Democratic Lawyers in 1952, plus those of Wilfred Burchett and Alan Winnington.⁵⁶ The dismissal of all this evidence under the rubric of anti-communism is not convincing. Least of all when allegations of killings are made by first-hand witnesses like Julian Tunstall. Even an Australian Catholic priest who was a prisoner in the North at the time gives credence to these allegations (in regard to one specific locale where 600 people were reported massacred).'' British Foreign Office files confirm that major atrocities took place.

It is also necessary to set all this in context, just as with My Lai. First of all, there was the stated intention of Rhee to exterminate Communism and Communists, even those 'suspected' of Communism, and the verified active campaign of his police and army to find suspects; since this was done on a vast scale in the South, it would be illogical to assume it was not done in the North, where many people could reasonably be supposed to be Communists. Second, there was the manifest contempt for Korean life on the part of the US troops, along with orders to kill any potential 'enemy'. The ground troops, too, were operating under a canopy of airborne destruction which created a context of brutalization. By the time the UN forces got into the DPRK, the US had plastered the North with millions of gallons of napalm and other explosives and within five months of the war starting the US officially grounded its bomber force—because there were no more targets to hit (something which never happened in

Vietnam)⁵⁸ Quite unsympathetic US military leaders often referred to what had been done in Korea in terms of the worst slaughter ever known.⁵⁹ UN ground forces systematically burnt down entire villages and towns, especially on the retreat in late 1950.⁶⁰

'Don't Rock the Boat'

The files recently opened in Britain reveal a shameful performance by the government, Labour as well as Conservative. Most startling is the cabinet discussion over whether or not to prosecute the *Daily Worker*—for treason—for publishing Alan Winnington's pamphlet, *I Saw the Truth in Korea* (which simply exposed crimes by Rhee's government, none of which had been disproved). There seems to be only one reason the cabinet decided not to prosecute—because if the verdict was 'guilty' there was only one sentence possible: death, which was mandatory.⁶¹

The entire drift of government policy, though by no means nearly as menacing as in the USA, was to try to shut everyone up. One emblematic case involved the United Nations Association (of Britain), which wanted to print in *United Nations News* of January 1951 James Cameron's story on atrocities (by Rhee) which had been banned from *Picture Post* and then leaked to the *Daily Worker*. Mr Judd of *UN News* approached Sir Gladwyn Jebb (then British ambassador to the UN) to write a reply. An internal memo from the Foreign Office dated November 23, 1950, states: 'Mr Judd has a mania for writing to high-ups at the slightest provocation.' But Gladwyn Jebb was no fool. He wisely declined, because, as he wrote to Sir Pierson Dixon at the Foreign Office: 'It would be by no means easy to draft anything which would appear convincing. . . .' Dixon concludes: 'I think that Judd is being very misguided in this affair. . . This is only one of several cases where the United Nations Association in this country has got out of step recently.'⁶²

When local branches of the United Nations Association, and trade union branches, write to the government about Rhee's atrocities, the Foreign office tries to damp everything down, counselling against publication of the correspondence 'as otherwise all the other branches of the United Nations Association will be tempted to start up correspondence with the F.O. We may then find many of our letters to the branches being published. . .

'The best way to prevent correspondence with the branches seems to be to refer them to their head office.'

When the Labour Party branch at Newcastle-under-Lyme passed a resolution condemning Rhee's brutalities, the government replied by saying that Britain was not fighting for the Rhee regime, but to resist aggression. In other cases it fobs off complaints by saying that it will continue to pay attention to the issue (although in at least one case, the Foreign Office explicitly cut this assurance out of a draft reply to

questions in the Commons).

Another technique, despicable in its callousness, was to say 'so what?' On November 7, 1950 the *Daily Mirror* carried a detailed report from its correspondent Don Greenlees describing appalling beatings, people being bashed with rifle butts and executions of women and men. George Thomas (now Lord Tonyandy) was planning to ask a question about this on November 13. The Foreign Office briefing for the minister in the Commons reads: 'If attention is called to the *Daily Mirror* report of the 7th November it might be said that it contains nothing substantially different from earlier reports.'

When Mr Judd wrote to Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary, about Britain and the United Nations doing something about Rhee's behaviour, the Foreign Office ducked out once again and wrote Judd that: 'The United Nations Commission has. . . no legal power. . . to take over the conduct of affairs in the territory already administered by the Government of the Republic.' All the time the government knew of Rhee's brutality. 'It is unfortunate that brutalities have been committed by the South Koreans and that the Administration has at times attempted to impose its will in a manner which has laid it open to some criticism from successive United Nations commissions.' Earlier a covering letter from Britain's man in Korea, Alec Adams, to the Foreign Office spelled things out a bit more: '. . . even by reading between the lines you probably do not guess at the reprisals, police brutality, summary methods, etc. which arise probably nearly as much among the S. Koreans as among the Northern 'red' ones.'⁶³ The *Times* reported: 'An officer of a United Nations investigation team said that reprisals are as numerous as reports (sic) of Communist atrocities. Most non-Korean members of the United Nations forces are aware of this. . . ' (Oct. 25, 1950).

But the essence of the British government position—viz. to be deaf and dumb about the Rhee regime (with a few token enquiries)—is perhaps best summed up by their treatment of a problem in December 1950: British troops had witnessed a mass execution by Rhee forces. The report from Seoul⁶⁴ to the F.O. is worried: 'As I understand it, considerable feeling was aroused among British troops both because of the callous way in which the executions were carried out and because they mistook two of those shot for boys (they were in fact women. . .wearing trousers). . . 4. Fearing that there would be an incident if British troops were again subjected [!] to the spectacle of mass executions in their vicinity I represented to the United States embassy yesterday the urgent need to dissuade the Korean authorities from running unnecessary risks [!]'' [Rhee's forces were rushing through mass executions in case the KPA returned to Seoul—JH] This execution took place on December 15. On December 17th another mass execution took place. But no problem—British (and US) troops were kept away. J.S.H. Shattock at the F.O. writes to Adams in

Seoul: 'The continuing reports of "atrocities" and "political shootings" (quote marks in original) are, as you know, giving us a lot of trouble. . . we are indeed sorry to have to burden you with these requests for information.' A few days later all is well and a F.O. official writes on the report: 'Public interest in the executions seems to have abated and we do not expect much further trouble.'

James Cameron records that when he sent his dossier on Rhee's atrocities to the British delegation at the UN (then headed by Kenneth Younger) nothing happened.⁶⁵

The old British techniques of isolation and malign neglect were skillfully deployed by the government and the press. The most senior former Foreign Office figure who opposed the war, Sir John Pratt, the distinguished China expert (and Boris Karloff's brother) was crudely attacked and ostracized.⁶⁶ Emrys Hughes was refused permission to stage an exhibition of photographs of the bombing of Pyong-yang in the House of Commons.⁶⁷ Monica Felton, the British delegate on the Women's delegation to the DPRK in 1951 was sacked from her job as Chairman of Stevenage Development Corporation. The press, with the exception of the *Daily Worker*, ignored the IADL report in 1952. And the report of the 1952 International Scientific Commission on bacterial warfare, made up of eminent scientists, including Britain's Joseph Needham, was dismissed without investigation of its claims. The government called its evidence 'pseudo-scientific' and the report itself 'obviously valueless'.⁶⁸

Although Britain did not descend to the excesses of HUAC, McCarran and McCarthy in the USA, the behaviour of the Labour and Conservative governments and the media proprietors constitutes a shabby and shameful episode in British history, with honourable exceptions, such as S.O. Davies (MP for Merthyr Tydfil) and Emrys Hughes among the politicians, and many among the press corps in Korea.

5. China Enters the War

China's entry into the Korean War was widely represented in the West as the ultimate proof of both Communist aggression and of the co-ordination of the Communist camp (this in spite of the fact that the allegedly monolithic socialist bloc had 2 countries, both directly affected, fighting, as against 16 on the other side—and much later, too!). It is hard now to reconstruct the mythology of the time, still perhaps best summed up in Dean Rusk's characterisation of the PRC as a 'Slavic Manchukuo'.

The basic Western portrayal of China at the time was made up of the following elements: *a*) China was a Russian puppet; *b*) it flouted the rules of international law, especially in two ways: (i) it intervened in a war in another country without good reason; (ii) it failed to signal its intentions in a conventional ('honourable'/'civilized') manner. The West's position was summed up in the resolution put through the UN on February 1, 1951

which condemned China as an 'aggressor' nation for entering the Korean War. It need hardly be recalled: 1) that US forces had reached the actual border of China before China intervened; 2) that China had good reason to fear that the UN forces might well carry on across the Yalu.⁶⁹

When China did enter the war in late 1950 little effort was expended on trying to understand its real methods, objectives and general behaviour. The first thing lacking was an appreciation of the very deep ties between the Chinese and Korean revolutionary movements, and especially between the two revolutionary armies, the KPA and the PLA (China). Here propaganda about Kim as a Russian puppet perhaps served to blind the perpetrators of the myth. Few paid attention to the fact that very large numbers of Koreans—perhaps as many as 200,000 (in 1949) had fought with the PLA.⁷⁰ One of the senior commanders of the KPA, Mu Jong, had fought on the Long March. Kim Il Sung and most of the top officers in the KPA had fought with the Chinese Communists in Manchuria in the 1930s. The Korean forces had played a major role in helping liberate Northeast China—and were known as the Korean Volunteer Army—a name echoed in the title given the Chinese forces in Korea, the Chinese People's Volunteers (CPVs). When China entered the Korean War it stated that this was not simply in self-defence, but also a blood debt it owed the Korean people.

Shortly after they entered Korea, the CPVs helped bring about the what Dean Acheson called 'the worst defeat of U.S. forces since Bull Run', yet were denigrated as 'hordes' (the title of the first 'scholarly' work on the PLA published in the US was *Red China's Fighting Hordes*).⁷¹ Rare were the observers, like René Cutforth, who noted the way the Chinese tried to fight a 'people's war' in extremely difficult circumstances. Last, but not least, anti-Communist venom was poured on the Chinese for their treatment of POWs, when the record shows a much more nuanced picture than was given at the time—and still widely believed now, even if swept under the rug.

6. Refugees and POWs

Around mid-1951 the war more or less stabilised near the 38th Parallel, where it had started. Truce talks began, and dragged on for two years before an Armistice was signed on July 27, 1953 (South Korea refused to sign the Armistice and Rhee vigorously opposed it before it was signed and afterwards).⁷² The US dragged out the war in an attempt to try to legitimate its first full-scale counter-revolutionary war against Communism. Having come in on the side of an unpopular autocrat against what was in effect the 'national liberation movement' embodied in the DPRK/KPA, the US had to work hard to try to make it appear that its side (Rhee) was popular and the enemy, the DPRK—and China—unpopular.

The main immediate stumbling block to a peace agreement was one

thrown up by the US about the POWs. The generally accepted interpretation of the Geneva Conventions was that prisoners were to be returned to their country of origin. The US insisted on 'voluntary repatriation'. A nice **high-sounding** phrase. But it did not mean what it seemed to.⁷⁴ The essence of the US strategy was to attempt to manufacture a plebiscite out of the only two groups of Koreans (and Chinese) who could be coerced or manipulated into appearing to back the US thesis. The question of the POWs and the manufacture of refugees were part of a linked phenomenon: to try to make the Korean 'people' speak against the DPRK, socialism and the Korean national movement. The US and Rhee therefore not only 'created' refugees, but also *invented* them on a vast scale, denied the reality of contrary movements (cf. re 1945-46), ascribed population loss in the North (much of which was caused by devastating bombing) to people fleeing; refugees and POWs became the centre-piece in the West's presentation of its case."⁷⁵

The POW issue had some of the same characteristics as the refugee question. Here it was necessary to show: 1) that as many as possible POWs in UN hands did not want to go back to 'Communism' and that as few as possible UN POWs in Communist hands wanted to stay on the other side; then 2) if any did, this decision had to be written off to 'Brain-washing', 'menticide'—and torture.

There can be little doubt that the general feeling in the West is that the final verdict on the justice and injustice of the Korean War was based on the answers to two questions: first, 'Who started it?'; second, who and how many (respectively) wanted to stay with/go back to Communism? I think it can equally flatly be stated that the West won a major propaganda victory *in the West*. Most people still believe that Western POWs were brainwashed or coerced. *And* that the UN did not maltreat the POWs it held, at least not on a scale comparable to that alleged with the other side.

There is not space here to disentangle this murky issue as it would merit. But a few points are worth making.

1. The UN side demonstrably exercised **large-scale** violence against POWs—and *actually killed hundreds of POWs in pitched battles*. Ridgway brought troops and tanks back 200 miles from the front line because, as he himself, said: 'I wanted the killing machinery on hand to do a thorough job.'⁷⁶ All this while the UN was juggling false statistics about UN POWs dying.

2. The Communist POWs, just like British troops captured by the Germans, did not regard being in captivity as a reason to give up. They carried on the struggle in the *camps*.⁷⁷

3. The US let Rhee's right-wing thugs rampage through the UN camps, and also imported squads of Kuomintang agents from Taiwan to 'screen' the POWs. The US ambassador Muccio, later referred to these Chiang

troops as 'Gestapos'⁷⁸ and one US official described the situation in the camps as 'a reign of terror'. The chief US negotiator at **Panmunjom**, Admiral Joy, recorded in his diary that when the Nationalist Chinese leaders in the compound asked who wanted to go back to the PRC 'those doing so were either beaten black and blue or killed (sic). . .' (b). Records by two interpreters, available to US officials, estimated that if a fair poll were made, instead of the **85** per cent refusals which the US registered, the real figure would have been **15** per cent. The US felt it particularly important to get a high level of defections among the Chinese. Rhee helped all this along by raiding the camps and forcibly deporting ('releasing') some **27,000** prisoners, including thousands of Chinese to Taiwan. The US did its bit, too, by dishonestly reclassifying detainees as civilians.

But what can not be disputed are two things: a) the UN killed far more prisoners than the Communists did (or allowed to die in captivity); b) the extreme violence used, on a systematic scale, in the POW camps run by the UN invalidates any claim that those refusing repatriation represent a verifiable plebiscite for anticommunism.

7. Back to *Oblivion*?

The war finally came to an end with the signing of the Armistice on July **27, 1953**. Far more attention has been given to the start of the war than to its end. But Rhee's vigorous opposition to ending the war is itself an element which must be taken into account in characterizing the war politically. The fact is that the DPRK side made active efforts to bring the fighting to a stop and the ROK side took active steps to keep it going. This does not answer the question of who started it all, but it does tell one something about the two Korean sides.

Between early summer **1951** when the front roughly stabilised and the Armistice two years later, the US gradually intensified its bombing of the North. Much discussion in the West has fixed on the question of whether or not the US used bacterial warfare in Korea. But much less attention has been focused on the staggering destruction rained down on the DPRK. More bombs were dropped on the DPRK during the Korean War than were dropped on the whole of Europe (from all sources) in World War II. The US not only burned most of the DPRK to the ground, it incinerated unknown hundreds of thousands of Koreans by napalm, drove much of the rest of the population and industry underground, and finally bombed irrigation dams (last done by the Nazis, and deemed a war crime at Nuremberg). In an interview given in **1954** and embargoed until after his death Douglas MacArthur said: 'I would have dropped between **30** and **50** atomic bombs. . . across the neck of Manchuria.' Later he planned 'to spread. . . from the Sea of Japan to the Yellow Sea [i.e., across the middle of North Korea]. . . a belt of radioactive cobalt. . . It has an active life of between **60** and **120 years**.'⁷⁹ Gen. Ridgway wanted to use chemical

weapons in winter **1950-51** (MacArthur had to remind him that poison gas had been outlawed by the Geneva Convention). The destruction in North Korea was worse even than that in North Vietnam. Recently declassified documents and diaries show that the US was ready to think about doing absolutely anything to North Korea including killing much of the population as well as destroying the country, its agriculture, irrigation and its entire **ecology**.⁸⁰ I think that it is within this general context that discussion of the specific issue of germ warfare needs to be set.

One argument can be easily dismissed: that germ warfare was not used because it was too horrible. The top echelons of the US government and military discussed—and did—things in their way just as horrible. The US **regime**—~~did~~ not care what happened to the population of the DPRK as such.

The germ warfare issue is extremely contentious and there is not space here to go over it in **detail**.⁸¹ Several recent texts throw much new light on it. It is still very much an open question whether it was used—and whether on an experimental or a mass basis. During the Korean War the world Communist movement developed a huge campaign, of a co-ordinated kind, on the issue. The West vehemently denied that it had used bacterial weapons—and this was generally believed in the West. But the West lied about some extremely important elements: in particular, they denied that the US had given protection to leading members of the Japanese germ warfare establishment, headed by Gen. Ishii. Communist accusations to this effect were dismissed as propaganda when they were in fact **true**—and when the US government knew them to be true (Ishii had even been taken to Fort Detrick, Maryland, in **1949**, after which his trail goes **dead**).⁸² The DPRK also accused the US of taking in a member of the Nazi germ warfare programme, Gen. Walter Schreiber. This was, to my knowledge, never acknowledged at the time (and still remains a very little known aspect of US policy, of rather more significance than re-employing Klaus Barbie, in its way). Yet, in **1983** it was confirmed that the DPRK accusation was **true**.⁸³ All this, of course, does not prove that the US used germ warfare in Korea. But it does show that an important part of the DPRK–Chinese case—which was denied by the US at the time with a vehemence equal to that used to deny the charges of using germ **warfare**—was true.

The West denigrated the report of the International Scientific Commission in **1952** and at least one of its members was hounded. But the evidence in the ISC Report was never scientifically disproved (nor was it, as the British government so flippantly claimed, '**pseudo-scientific**').⁸⁴ Some American pilots confessed in captivity to having dropped germ bombs. After their release some of these 'de-confessed'. In the West the original confessions are dismissed as due to coercion. But the recantations are accepted. Yet there is evidence that pressure was exercised to obtain

at least some of the recantations.⁸⁵

In fact neither side has really engaged with the arguments and evidence of the other. Claude Bourdet remarked at the time that the generally greater mendacity of the Communist camp imposed upon it the greater obligation to establish its case.⁸⁶ And it is true that in the time of Stalin the world Communist movement had a poor record for truth on many questions. It tended to handle issues like the Korean War in 'campaigns', with rigid formulations, manifest evasions and sometimes inventions, many of which still mar the official (and only) DPRK version of events. The West seems prodigal with information, leaks and revelations by contrast. Yet, when all is said and done, on the Korean War, the West lied far more than the other side, and on many of the most fundamental questions.

But unlike with the Vietnam War, the arguments can rarely be settled by a direct appeal to published sources. The Korean War is still buried. It has to be excavated even more than analysed.

It also needs to be re-conceptualised. For it was *the* great turning point of the post-1945 world, the transitional war between World War II and all that followed. It was the first time (apart from Greece) the US went to war directly against a Communist revolution, and the only time it engaged in battle directly with a major Communist power (China). It was the only time the US managed to round up a broad coalition of client armies, 16 in all, from all the five continents (Colombia from Latin America; Ethiopia and South Africa from Africa). It conditioned the evolution of the whole modern world. In the USA, it stimulated the witchhunts which go under the misnomer of 'McCarthyism'; the CIA quadrupled in size during the Korean War; US military spending rose sharply. According to Dean Acheson, it also 'destroyed the Truman administration'.⁸⁷ Australia was solidified into a pro-US stance. The Korean War in effect brought down the Labour government in 1951—and ultimately thus destroyed the Labour Party in the long term. To help pay for a defence budget in 1951 which accounted for 14 per cent of national income, Labour put a 50 per cent charge on National Health dentures and spectacles. NATO, which had been founded in 1949, was given a colossal boost by the Korean War. Korea also allowed the US to consolidate its alliances with new client armies around the world, like those of Greece, Turkey, the Philippines and Thailand.⁸⁸

It was the Korean War, not the revolution in China, which led to the US decision to keep China divided by blocking off access to Taiwan. It was US hostility to China in the Korean War, not hostility to the Chinese revolution as such, which got China branded an 'aggressor' at the UN in February 1951. And it was the Korean War which caused, or provided the occasion for the US to step up its backing both for the regime in the Philippines against the Huks—and for the French in Indochina.⁸⁹ And

there is a very strong link between the Korean and Indochina wars. Many of the senior French officers in Indochina like Marshal Juin, travelled up to Korea, and senior US officers like Gen. Collins travelled down to Vietnam. At the end of the Korean War in 1953 a number of KMAG officers moved straight on to Vietnam.⁹⁰ In strategic thinking, too, Korea led directly on to 'flexible response' and the new ideas of Maxwell Taylor and John F. Kennedy. The Korean War also had a major effect on China's strategic thinking and on its subsequent diplomatic behaviour.⁹¹

One reason Korea needs to be re-conceptualized is that it is absent from so much of the discussion of the post-war world. Although it was *the only* war between the West as a bloc and the Communist world, it was fought in and over a society about which the West knew and cared little. Thus, just to take some of the very best texts produced from the left: the Korean revolutionary movement is absent from I.F. Stone's *Hidden History*; the Korean War is absent from what is probably the single most brilliant conceptualisation of the Cold War, by G. Therborn, when it is in fact the *centre* of the Cold War; and the radical transformation of the DPRK receives treatment both scanty and unsympathetic in Schurmann's *The Logic of World Power*, even though the land reform was probably the most peaceful and the most successful ever carried out in a socialist country.⁹²

The greatest victory of anti-Communism has been the obliteration of Korea and it was this massive blotting out of an entire nation and its culture which allowed the US to wage such a brutal war. But anti-communism, like everything, has its differentials. Even though it was China which was the main target of US accusations and phobias about 'brainwashing', China is now accepted as an ally of the US (although, interestingly, the 1951 condemnation of China has never been repealed by the UN). But North Korea is still effectively ostracized and little understood: none of the major Western states or Japan recognise it, and over 30 years after the end of the war, the US still maintains its toughest trade embargo against it.

It seems most unlikely that the dangerous situation in the Far East and the tragedy of Korea's division can be resolved without some attempt to come to grips with the past and to understand it. This must involve some minimal understanding of the Korean War. And this in turn demands some effort to pose the war in different terms from those usually deployed. Instead of only talking about the start of the war, one must look at its causes and its origins. Instead of fixating on one entirely 'intra-Western' question like the firing of MacArthur in April 1951, it is necessary to examine the nature and political character of the war, and of the whole ongoing political struggle in Korea. As Gertrude Stein rightly implied, without the right questions one is unlikely to get the right answers.

In conclusion, may I appeal to anyone with first-hand knowledge, whether personal eye-witness information or documents, on the Korean War, to contact me via the *Socialist Register*. Any information would be greatly appreciated and will be treated in confidence. J.H.

NOTES

1. For the 'Gook syndrome' see Reginald Thompson, *Cry Korea*, (London, Macdonald, 1951), p. 44. (Thompson was the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent in Korea during the early part of the war); Julian Tunstall, *I Fought in Korea*, (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1953), p. 12, where he reports officers' orders to 'Shoot everything in white' (most Korean civilians wore white) and 'Take no prisoners'. Capt. Walter Karig, 'Korea—Tougher to crack than Okinawa', *Collier's*, September 23, 1950, p. 24 (the subtitle of this article is: 'Our Red foe scorns all rules of civilized warfare, hides behind women's skirts and has children play near bombing targets').
2. On this and what follows, the outstanding source is Bruce Cumings' *The Origins of the Korean War: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes 1945-1947*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1981).
3. Snow, 'We Meet Russia in Korea', *Saturday Evening Post*, March 30, 1946, p. 18. This re-appears, somewhat re-written, in Snow, *Journey to the Beginning*, (London, Gollancz, 1959), pp. 393-398 ('We Stop a Revolution'). Robert Klonsky, '27 Years Ago: A United States Soldier in South Korea', *Korea Focus*, (New York), Vol. 2, no. 1 (Jan.-Feb. 1973), pp. 63-4, says Snow's published text was much watered down.
- 3a. Mark Gayn, *Japan Diary*, (New York, 1948) has an excellent section of over 100 pages on South Korea in late 1946.
4. For example, I.F. Stone, *The Hidden History of the Korean War*, (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1952; re-issued 1969), is a pioneering, outstanding and courageous exposé of US machinations and deceit—which is all Stone claims to be doing. But the book contains only a single reference to the Korean Workers' [Communist] Party and only two references to Kim Il Sung (p. 224), both in contexts where they could be removed without altering the sense. The trouble is that there are really *two* 'hidden histories': one certainly is the secret history of what the USA was up to in Korea; but the other, without which the former cannot be properly understood, is the history of the Korean left. The US did not just choose to intervene *anywhere*—it chose to go to war for the first time after 1945 on a major scale (apart from Greece) in *and against* a country with a strong revolutionary movement.
5. See Cumings, *cit.*, esp. ch. 11. Interesting observations in Edwin W. Pauley, *Report on Japanese Assets in Soviet-Occupied Korea* to the President of the United States (June 1946), based on a visit to North Korea in May-June 1946 by a US mission headed by Pauley.
6. On Kim's career, see Cumings, *cit.*, esp. pp. 397-403, for a judicious sifting of the evidence.
7. I have discussed these reforms and their long-term impact in two texts: 'The North Korean Enigma', *New Left Review*, no. 127 (1981) and 'The North Korean Model: Gaps and Questions', *World Development*, no. 9/10, 1981.
8. Cumings, p. 562; cf. p. 61.
9. *Amerasia*, December 1945, pp. 324-5. At the time both Seoul and the US were spreading reports of large numbers of people fleeing the Soviet zone and of atrocities there. But Pauley, a staunch anti-Communist, reported to Truman:

- '... I was present when many returning Koreans were cross-examined and they all (sic—JH) broke down and admitted that what they were, reporting were things they had heard and not things they had seen' (Pauley, *Report*, p. 139). It is also interesting that Pauley refers to 'returning' Koreans: many of those moving from North to South were people returning to their villages who had been displaced by the Japanese to points North—especially Northern Korea and Manchuria; cf. Cumings, *cit.*, p. 425–6.
10. Cumings, *cit.*, pp. 417–8, 424–6.
 11. For new light on Rhee's career and his return, see Cumings, *cit.*, pp. 188 ff. James Cameron refers to 'the allegedly noble old exile, the extreme reactionary... Syngman Rhee', (*Point of Departure*, (London, Panther, 1980), p. 98). By mid-1948 the US political adviser, Joseph E. Jacobs, was writing that 'He [Rhee] is definitely suffering from a messiah complex... Some of his own friends say that in the mornings he is usually rational, but by afternoon he is completely "off the beam".' (Cited in Charles M. Dobbs, *The Unwanted Symbol: American Foreign Policy, the Cold War, and Korea, 1945–1950*, (Kent State University Press, 1981), p. 154. (Dobbs' title is typical of a certain white-washing, 'accidental' school.) Probably the single best text on Rhee is by himself, an interview he gave in *U.S. News and World Report*, August 13, 1954.
 12. Letter from Goodfellow to US General John R. Hodge, *Occupation Commander*, June 21 1946, cited in Cumings, *cit.*, p. 532.
 13. I have discussed this in 'The United Nations and Korea', in Frank Baldwin, ed., *Without Parallel: The American-Korean Relationship Since 1945*, (New York, Pantheon Books, 1974).
 14. This is dealt with in detail, with references on contentious issues in 'The Korean Revolution' in my pamphlet, *Three Articles on the Korean Revolution*, (London, AREAS, 1972, pp. 12–13) (edited version with the same title in *Socialist Revolution*, (San Francisco), Vol. 1, no. 6, (1970)).
 15. *The US Imperialists Started the Korean War*, (Pyongyang, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1977), p. 67–8. This is a useful exposition of the DPRK case, with many references to Western sources (many apparently re-translated via Japanese).
 16. John Merrill, 'The Cheju-do Rebellion', *Journal of Korean Studies*, (Seattle), Vol. 2 (1980), pp. 177–8.
 17. Robert K. Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea: K MAG in Peace and War*, (Washington, D.C., Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Military History, 1962), p. 42. K MAG was the (US) Korean Military Advisory Group.
 18. Roy E. Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, (Washington, D.C., Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Military History, 1956), p. 34.
 19. Se-Jin Kim, *The Politics of Military Revolution in Korea*, (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1971), p. 55.
 20. Cumings, *cit.*, p. 349. Merrill, *cit.*, (note 16) is a pioneering study of the rebellion on Cheju Island, off the Southern coast of Korea.
 21. Andrew Roth, 'Korea's Impending Explosion', *The Nation*, August 13, 1949, p. 152. For the weakness of the Rhee regime, see the CIA study, 'Prospects for the Survival of the Republic of Korea', October 28, 1948, cited in John Merrill, 'Internal Warfare in Korea', in Bruce Cumings, ed., *Child of Conflict: The Korean-American Relationship, 1943, 1953*, (Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1983), p. 144.
 22. Roberts to Holté, August 19, 1949, cited by Merrill, *ibid.*, p. 148.
 23. Author's interviews with Rear Admiral Lee and Brig. Gen. Choi, New York City, April 3, 1977. For the Japanese background of the ROK Army top brass,

see Kim, *The Politics of Military Revolution*, *cit.* At the beginning of the Korean War every single top commander in the ROK Army except one was a former member of the Japanese Army. The Korean People's Army (KPA) was led entirely by veterans of the anti-Japanese resistance. A reasonable analogy would be the West fielding former members of the Waffen SS against, say, Tito's partisans.

24. . . . millions of South Koreans welcomed the prospect of unification, even on Communist terms. They had suffered police brutality, intellectual repression and political purge. Few felt much incentive to fight for profiteers or to die for Syngman Rhee. Only 10 per cent of the Seoul population abandoned the city; many troops deserted, and a number of public figures, including Kimm Kiu Sic, joined the North', (Alfred Crofts, 'The Case of Korea: Our Falling Ramparts. . .', *The Nation*, June 25, 1960, p. 547). Rhee and his backers claimed that Southern political figures (including some Assemblymen) who went to the North when the Korean War broke out were killed. But quite recently a man who had known them before June 1950 met one of them and ascertained that he and several others were alive and well as of 1982 (private communication to the author). There is not space to argue out all the issues here; I have attempted to develop the discussion about the start of the war in 'What Happened in Korea?', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol. 5, no. 3, (November 1973) and 'The Korean War: Some Notes on Evidence and Solidarity', *ibid.*, Vol. 11, no. 3 (1979) (henceforth: BCAS).
25. Richard Nixon, *The Real War*, (New York, Warner Books, 1980), p. 254, cited by Bruce Cumings, 'Introduction: The Course of Korean-American Relations, 1943-1953', in Cumings, ed., *Child of Conflict*, p. 49.
26. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, *Documents and Materials Exposing the Instigators of the Civil War in Korea: Documents from the archives of the Rhee Syngman Government*, (Pyongyang, 1950), especially Part IV; on this volume see text below. I have discussed the events of June 1950 and the Dulles visit in more detail in 'The Korean War. . .' BCAS, XI. 3, 1979, *cit.*
27. Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, (New York, Crest paperback ed., 1965), p. 371.
28. John J. Muccio, May 1975, in Francis H. Heller, ed., *The Korean War: A 25-Year Perspective*, (Lawrence, The Regents Press of Kansas, 1977), p. 11.
29. At Princeton Seminars, July 9, 1953, cited in Cumings, 'Introduction', in *id.*, ed., *Child of Conflict*, p. 49.
30. *New York Journal-American*, January 19, 1952, cited in I.F. Stone, *cit.*, p. 348. The possibility that the US wished to try 'rollback' in Korea is made stronger by the fact that the first attempt to topple a Communist regime after World War II, that in Albania, in 1949, had just failed.
31. John Merrill, review of *Khrushchev Remembers*, *Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. 3 (1981), pp. 181 ff. Numbers in the text in brackets refer to Vol. I of the (UK) Penguin edition, 1977.
32. Monat's much-cited (but little read?) article is in *Life*, June 27, 1960; a full account is in his book: Pawel Monat, with John Dille, *Spy in the U.S.*, (London, F. Muller, 1964), pp. 193 ff.
33. Public Records Office [henceforth: PRO] (UK), FO371/84075. Plimsoll was chief Australian delegate on UNCURK, the UN Commission for the Reunification and Rehabilitation of Korea.
34. Shirley Hazzard, 'The betrayal of the Charter', *Times Literary Supplement*, (London), September 17, 1982, pp. 967-8, is an excellent *exposé* and critique of the standard complacent line, exemplified in Evan Luard's, *A History of the*

United Nations, which Hazzard reviews. Some information on Trygve Lie's combination of machination and negligence in my 'The United Nations and Korea'. Excellent analysis in Marie-France Labouz, *L'ONU et la Corée*, (Paris, Presses Universitaires de Paris, 1980).

35. Confirmation that they had reached the UN is contained in a 'Note by the Secretariat', dated 6 November, 1950 (UN document, *A/C.1/565/Add. 1*). Information about their disappearance: author's telephone conversation with a senior UN official, June 19, 1984, New York. The volume published by the DPRK Foreign Ministry in 1950, *Documents and Materials Exposing. . .* (cited in note 26) may contain some or all of the documents sent in photostatic form to the UN, but I have been unable to confirm this. The volume also contains interesting confessions by senior officials of the Rhee regime who were captured by the KPA.
36. Cameron's account is in his *Point of Departure*, pp. 145 ff; René Cutforth provides lugubrious reflections in *The Listener*, November 11, 1969, pp. 342-3; I had two memorable encounters with the late René Cutforth and owe him for much fascinating information and insight into the Korean War. There is an excellent account of press censorship in Korea in Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty*, (London, André Deutsch, 1975). Stanley I. Kutler, *The American Inquisition: Justice and Injustice in the Cold War*, (New York, Hill & Wang, 1982) has good chapters on Lattimore and John W. Powell, both with much valuable new information on connections between Korea and the US witchhunts.
38. The DPRK case can be read in *The US Imperialists Started the Korean War*.
39. Immediately after the end of the Korean War the DPRK put on trial and executed a group of key Southern Communist leaders (see BBC, *Summary of World Broadcasts*, Part V (Far East), no. 277 (August 18, 1953), pp. 36-56, for details). I have tried to disentangle this murky affair in 'The Korean War: Notes. . .' in *BCAS*, XI, 3, p. 8. While there is no reason to doubt that there were extensive reprisals, the DPRK case against the Southern Communists as it stands is not persuasive.
40. William F. Dean, *General Dean's Story*, (New York, Viking Press, 1954), especially pp. 67-80.
41. John Gittings, 'Talks, Bombs and Germs: Another Look at the Korean War', *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 5, no. 2 (1975), p. 208, gives a figure of 500,000 ROK troops 'believed to have been re-educated and enlisted' in the KPA. Other sources suggest Southern civilians also joined up (or were enrolled) and Gen. Dean implies that this is the case (Dean, *cit.*, p. 68, 78).
42. Kim Chum-kon, *The Korean War*, (Seoul, Kwangmyong Publishing Co., 1973), p. 384. The text of the land reform is available in BBC, *Summary of World Broadcasts*, Far East (Part V), no. 64 (July 11, 1950), pp. 11-12. Details confirmed to the author by six senior KPA officers, interview, Pyongyang, July 26, 1977.
Gregory Henderson, *Korea: The Politics of the Vortex*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 167.
44. Alan Winnington, *I saw the truth in Korea*, (London, Daily Worker, 1950), p. 6.
45. Philip Deane, *Captive in Korea*, (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1953), pp. 83-4.
46. Interviews with the author, New York, April 3, 1977; Los Angeles, March 1978.
47. Interview with the author, March 1983. In the *Listener*, Cutforth wrote of 'other sickening sights: the shooting without trial of civilians, designated by the police as "communist". These executions were done. . . on any patch of waste ground where you could dig a trench and line up a row of prisoners in front of it. Then there was the horrible brutality and corruption of Syngman Rhee's

police, among whose chief rackets was the selling of destitute girls from the refugee columns into the city brothels.' (*Listener*, November 11, 1969, p. 343).

48. The largest massacre by Rhee's forces which is undisputed even in Western sources was that at Koch'ang in February 1951 when 'about 600 men and women, young and old, were herded into a narrow valley and mowed down with machine guns', (John Kie-Chiang Oh, *Korea: Democracy on Trial*, (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1968), p. 35, 206). The callousness of Rhee's regime also emerges from an event very little discussed in the standard literature: the National Defence Corps scandal. This involved 'South Korean young men, who had been forcibly impressed into the army from refugee camps, starved to death by army leaders who misappropriated their supplies and rations', (Chung Kyungmo, 'The Second Liberation of South Korea and the Democratization of Japan', *The Japan Interpreter*, Vol. 9, no. 2 (1974), p. 194). Chung says 50,000 'reportedly' died. But a source very close to the Seoul government cites, with no disclaimer, a figure of 'over 90,000' (Kim, *The Politics of Military Revolution*, *cit.*, p. 70). Whether the figure is 50,000 or 90,000 plus, this is surely one of the biggest atrocities of modern times.
49. Gayn, *Japan Diary*, provides excellent background on the origins of the police force, many with Japanese training. An adviser to the US embassy wrote in late June 1950: 'The jails in Seoul are overcrowded with political prisoners. Six weeks ago I inspected a police jail in Inch'on. The prisoners there were living under conditions which I hesitate to describe in this letter. It reminds you of a sense of the *Divina Comedia* (sic). Goya could have painted what we saw there. What is going to happen to the almost 10,000 political prisoners in case the capital is to be surrendered? It is hard to imagine the acts of vengeance and hatred which the people will commit. . .' (cited in Frank Baldwin, ed., Harold Joyce Noble, *Embassy At War*, (Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1975), p. 255).
50. Crucifixions: Cameron, *Point of Departure*, p. 134; cf. photograph in the *Daily Worker*, October 5, 1950; Winnington, *I Saw the Truth*. . ., *passim*.
51. John W. Riley, Jr., and Wilbur Schramm, *The Reds Take A City: The Communist Occupation of Seoul, with Eyewitness Accounts*, (Greenwood Press, Westport, Conn., 1973 [reprint of 1951 edition]), p. 46); I have discussed this valuable source at greater length in 'The Korean War: Notes. . .', *BCAS*, XI, 3.
52. *The US Imperialists Started the Korean War*, *cit.*, pp. 288 ff. I have discussed these events more fully in *BCAS*, XI, 3.
53. *The US Imperialists*. . ., p. 236.
54. V.V. Martynov, *Koreya*, (Moscow, Izdatel'stvo 'Mysl', 1970), p. 59, cited in Robert Ante, 'The Transformation of the Economic Geography of the DPRK', *Korea Focus*, Vol. 1, no. 3 (n.d. [1972]), p. 55. These figures show a decline of 11.76 per cent in the population between 1949 and 1953.
55. *The US Imperialists*. . ., pp. 233, 235; during a visit to Sinchon County, I was informed that the Sinchon figure was considerably above the national average (author's interview, July 28, 1977).
56. Monica Felton, a British member of the International Women's delegation, reports on their findings in *That's Why I Went*, (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1953). International Association of Democratic Lawyers, *Reports on Investigations in Korea and China*, (March-April 1952), (Brussels, IADL, 1952); press conference and article by Jack Gaster, British member of the IADL delegation, in *Daily Worker*, April 23 and May 9, 1952. Philip Crossbie, *Three Winters Cold*, (Dublin, Browne and Nolan, 1955), p. 220; cf. J. Tunstall, *cit.*, p. 39, for first-hand testimony by a British soldier who was in the North; for a first-hand account by a US soldier, Scott D. Oliver, a sergeant-

major in the Marines, see letter by Oliver in *Korea Focus*, Vol. 3, no. 1 (August-September 1974), pp. 40 ff, including mass rape.

58. Major General Emmett O'Donnell, Jnr., testifying to the MacArthur hearings, June 25, 1951 (US Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services and Committee on Foreign Relations, *Military Situation in the Far East: Hearings to Conduct an Inquiry into the Military Situation in the Far East and Facts Surrounding the Relief of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur from His Assignments in That Area*, 82nd Congress, 1st Session, 1951, Vol. 4, p. 3063.
59. MacArthur: 'The war in Korea has already almost destroyed that nation. . . I have never seen such devastation. . . I have seen, I guess, as much blood and disaster as any living man, and it just turned my stomach, the last time I was there. After I looked at that wreckage and those thousands of women and children and everything, I vomited. . . ' (*MacArthur Hearings*, Vol. 1, p. 82). note that MacArthur was fired one-quarter of the way into the war and this testimony is less than one-third of the way into the war—and before the US greatly increased its bombing of the North.

At the same hearings Senator Stennis asked Gen. O'Donnell: ' . . North Korea has been virtually destroyed, hasn't it? . . '.

Gen. O'Donnell: 'Oh, yes, we did it all later anyhow. . I would say that the entire, almost the entire Korean Peninsula is just a terrible mess. Everything is destroyed. There is nothing standing worthy of the name. . . ' (Vol. 4, p. 3075). Gen. Curtis LeMay, head of Strategic Air Command during the Korean War, later recalled asking the Pentagon for permission to 'burn down' five of the biggest cities in North Korea and being told 'It's too horrible'. But, LeMay observed, 'over a period of three years or so. . . we burned down *every* town in North Korea. . . Now, over a period of three years, that's palatable'. (LeMay oral history in John Foster Dulles papers, Princeton University, cited in Bruce Cumings, 'Korea—the New Nuclear Flashpoint', *The Nation*, April 7, 1984, p. 416). For US bombing of North Korea, including major dams in spring 1953, cf. Gittings, 'Talks, Bombs and Germs. . . ', *cit.*, pp. 212–6.

60. 'We burned anything and everything that could be consumed by the raging flames', (Scott Oliver, letter, *cit.*, p. 40 [this is before the UN retreat]; cf. Tunstall, *I Fought in Korea*, p. 49. (US troops burning Pyongyang on the retreat). All this after the UN had dropped some 7,800,000 gallons of napalm on the DPRK.
61. Cab. 71 (50), November 6, 1950, P.R.O., London.
62. FO 371184179, PRO; information below from same.
63. FO 371184055, PRO, London.
64. FO 371184075, PRO, London.
65. Cameron, *Point of Departure*, p. 145.
66. Pratt wrote a pioneering pamphlet, *Korea: The Lie That Led to War*, (London, British China Friendship Association, 1951).
67. Gittings, 'Talks, Bombs and Germs', p. 214.
68. *Korea*, No. 1 (1953), Cmd. 8793 (London, HMSO, March 1953), p. 11.
69. The documents recently released on Attlee's visit to Washington in early December 1950 are very revealing on this score. Acheson thought the US might actually be thrown right off the Korean peninsula and there was discussion of having to do 'a Dunkirk' or 'a Tobruk' (= holding a redoubt round Seoul). Attlee spent more time trying to persuade Truman not to attack China than on anything to do with the atomic bomb (FO 371184105, PRO, London).
70. Bruce Cumings, 'The Korean War: Korean Society, American Society', unpublished paper delivered to a seminar on 'War and Society' at the Shelby Cullom Davis Center, Princeton University, October 14, 1983; earlier back-

- ground in Cumings, *Origins*, pp. 411 ff. The first Chinese troops moved into Korea on or about October 14, 1950; the major CPV-KPA counter-attack started on November 26.
71. Acheson quote in letter to Truman, July 25, 1955, in Dean Acheson, *Among Friends: Personal Letters of Dean Acheson*, ed., David S. McLellan, (New York, Dodd, Mead & Co., 1980), p. 104, cited in Cumings, 'The Korean War: Korean Society, American Society' (cited in note 70). *Red China's Fighting Hordes* by Lt. Col. Robert B. Rigg, (Harrisburg, Pa., Military Service Publishing Co., 1951).
 72. René Cutforth, *Korean Reporter*, (London, Allan Wingate, 1952), pp. 103-4, reports a battle where the Chinese deliberately tried not to kill the ordinary British soldiers, only the officers—at high cost to themselves. This severely unnerved the British officer corps (interview with the author).
 73. The US prepared a plan ('Operation Everready') to arrest Rhee and his top associates (see John Kotch, 'The Origins of the American Security Commitment to Korea', in Cumings, ed., *Child of Conflict*, pp. 244 ff). Cf. Mark W. Clark, *From the Danube to the Yalu*, (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1954), ch. 18. Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, (London, Arrow Books, edition, 1979), pp. 126-9, for Rhee's attempts to persuade Nixon and Eisenhower to restart the war in late 1953; and Rhee's interview to *US News and World Report*, August 13, 1954. Barton J. Bernstein, 'The Pawn as Rook: The Struggle to End the Korean War', *BCAS*, Vol. 10, no. 1 (1978).
 74. Useful discussion of these issues, using many unpublished sources, in Barton J. Bernstein, 'The Struggle over the Korean Armistice: Prisoners of Repatriation?', in Cumings, ed., *Child of Conflict*; US Secretary of State Dean Acheson considered that 'voluntary repatriation' contravened the Geneva Convention (p. 277). Important material in Alan Winnington and Wilfred Burchett, *Plain Perfidy*, (Peking, 1954). The US goal was both *local* (i.e. specific to the Korean War) and more general—to attempt to demoralise Communist states everywhere.
 75. Harold E. Fey, 'How Refugees Are Made', *Christian Century*, January 23, 1952 (ROK troops forcing people out of their homes—not only to increase the 'head count' but also to facilitate looting, etc.); cf. Cutforth, *Listener*, *cit.*, p. 343. When refugees got in the way, they were dispensed with: on the second retreat from Seoul in January 1951, the US mortared the Han River just South of the capital to block refugees already on the ice (Cutforth, *Korean Reporter*, 116-7). For grotesque manipulation of figures, see Rhee's interview, *US News*, August 13, 1954.
 76. Matthew B. Ridgway, *Soldier: The Memoirs of Matthew B. Ridgway*, (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1956), p. 233. The biggest known massacres were on *Koje* Island and on *Pongam* Island, where 85 POWs were killed in one incident (in December 1952). Wilfred Burchett and Alan Winnington, *Koje Unscreened*, (London, *Britian-China* Friendship Association, n.d. [1953?]), p. 3, says 'some three thousand prisoners of war were killed or wounded. . . up to the end of 1952' according to American official communiques and western news agency reports alone. For overall totals and comparison, cf. Gittings, 'Talks, Bombs and Germs', pp. 210-211; cf. Gavan McCormack, *Cold War Hot War. An Australian perspective on the Korean War*, (Sydney, Hale & Iremonger, 1983), pp. 143 ff., for US invention of figures and propaganda campaign on this issue.
 77. As Gen. Collins rather sourly put it, 'their deliberate utilization of prisoners of war to harass their captors and warp world opinion in their favour was an effective tactic. . . .' (J. Lawton Collins, *War in Peacetime: The History and Lessons of Korea*, (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1969), p. 343). One of Gen. Collins' 'lessons' is that the North Koreans caused the *Tonkin Gulf Incident* (p. 387). Striking evidence of local popular support for the POWs—200 miles

behind the front line in an area which the KPA never reached—comes from Gen. Mark Clark, who notes that after the big battle on **Koje** in June 1952, the US 'moved the village that served as a key center in the [DPRK] communications network. . . so that contact between villagers and prisoners was next to impossible'. (Clark, *From the Danube to the Yalu*, p. 65). Another US source has a photograph of the village being 'moved'—by being burned to the ground (Walter G. Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1966), p. 261.

78. Information from Bernstein, 'The Struggle over the Korean Armistice', pp. 274 ff, esp. 285. Dean **Acheson** himself acknowledged the dishonest reclassification of prisoners (ib., p. 286). The question of the real allegiances and desires of the POWs is extremely complicated: in the case of the Chinese troops, many, especially among those captured early in the fighting, were soldiers who had until very recently been in the Kuomintang armies; interesting information on this in William C. Bradbury, Samuel M. Meyers and Albert D. Biderman, eds., *Mass Behavior in Battle and Captivity. The Communist Soldier in the Korean War*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1968), including two chapters co-authored by Jeane J. Kirkpatrick.
79. Cited in **Cummings**, *The Nation*, April 7, 1984, p. 416; information immediately below from same. Just after **MacArthur** was dismissed, *Newsweek* wrote: 'You can disregard the talk about "sowing" a radio-active strip across Korea. The Pentagon says this would be unduly expensive. However, placing a band of lingering nerve gas across the peninsula has been under discussion for some time. . . .' (April 30, 1951 (Periscope)).
80. Among the most frightening things unearthed is Truman's diary, in which he fantasized privately about dropping atomic bombs on Moscow, Leningrad, **Beijing**, Shanghai and other cities. He also complained that 'Dealing with communist governments is like an honest man trying to deal with. . . the head of a dope ring'. (Truman diary, entry for January 27, 1952, cited in Bernstein, 'Struggle over the Korean Armistice', pp. 291, 290; cf. Barton J. Bernstein, 'Truman's Secret Thoughts on Ending the Korean War', *Foreign Service Journal*, 57 (November 1980)). On the other hand, some of these papers show how much US leaders loathed Rhee (for Eisenhower on Rhee, see Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *The Eisenhower Diaries*, (New York, W.W. Norton, 1981), pp. 248, 275); of course, Eisenhower did little about this at the time.
81. **McCormack**, *Cold War Hot War*, ch. 11, is a good summing up, and references there; see also: Stephen L. Endicott, 'Germ Warfare and "Plausible Denial": The Korean War 1950-1953', *Modern China*, Vol. 5, no. 1 (January 1979), and **Jaap** van Ginneken, 'Bacteriological Warfare', *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 7, no. 2 (1977). A recent addition to the literature arguing that germ warfare was not used is Albert E. Cowdrey, ' "Germ Warfare" and Public Health in the Korean Conflict', *Asian Perspective*, (Seoul), Vol. 7, no. 2 (1983).
82. John W. Powell, 'Japan's Germ Warfare: The U.S. Cover-up of a Crime', *BCAS*, Vol. 12, no. 4 (1980) [shorter version in *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, October 1981]. On Powell's own case, see Kutler, *The American Inquisition*, cit., ch. 8; this also discusses the still unresolved mystery of the raid by US Gen. Sams into the Wonsan area in March 1951—a raid which was reported in strange terms in *Newsweek*, April 9, 1951 and then written up in graphic terms in *Collier's*, September 22, 1951 (Peter **Kalischer**, 'Doctor Commando').
83. *International Herald Tribune*, February 21, 1983 (from Reuters), where it is reported that Schreiber 'helped direct the U.S. Air Force bacteriological warfare program [and had been] convicted in abstentia by a Polish tribunal of conducting medical experiments on prisoners at Auschwitz'. The DPRK **allega-**

tion is reproduced in *The US Imperialists Started the Korean War*, *cit.*, p. 254; van Ginneken, 'Bacteriological Warfare', p. 135.

84. See note 68.
85. Endicott, *cit.*, particularly on the case of Col. Walker M. Mahurin; Mahurin's recantation contains one very good phrase: 'The confession written for the Chinese was made almost exactly as this one.' (p. 37 of text in UN document A/C.1/L.66; this UN document contains the text of 10 recantations submitted by the US to the UN (in General Assembly, *Official Records*, 1st Committee, 8th Session, Agenda Item 24 (26 October 1953)). This recantation was made aboard a US hospital ship in the Pacific and sworn before one Henry R. Petersen, notorious later in the Watergate affair. Cf. McCormack, *Cold War Hot War*, ch. 11.
86. Claude Bourdet, 'Vérité et Bactéries', *l'Observateur* (Paris), n. 101 (April 17, 1952).
87. Letter of July 25, 1955 to Truman, as cited in note 71.
88. In some ways the most important alliance it consolidated was that with South Korea itself. When the Vietnam war escalated, the US found few allies to help it out (all veterans of Korea, though). By far the most important was the army of South Korea, which altogether rotated 312,000 troops through Indochina (Vietnam and Cambodia). Inter alia, these Korean troops distinguished themselves for their brutality. One of the top ROK officers, who commanded the notorious 'White Horse' brigade in Vietnam, was the current dictator of South Korea, Chon Doo Hwan. These Vietnam veterans were deployed by Chon to put down the big Kwangju uprising in May 1980. The long legacy of the Korean War in the form of client armies is a major phenomenon which might merit the term 'sub-imperialism' if this had not been used to designate a different item.
89. All this is spelled out in Truman's declaration of June 27, 1950, in *Department of State Bulletin*, July 3, 1950.
90. Clark, *From the Danube to the Yalu*, pp. 319, 321-2; Collins, *War in Peacetime*, p. 357.
91. Peng Teh-huai, A *Report on the Chinese People's Volunteers in Korea*, (September 12, 1953), supplement to *People's China*, October 1, 1953. Much later, the Vietnamese claimed that China had advocated 'a Korean-type solution [for] Indochina. . . i.e., cessation of hostilities without any political solution' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The Truth About Vietnam-China Relations Over the Last Thirty Years*, (Hanoi, 1979), p. 19). The Korean War also greatly affected the DPRK's relations with both the USSR and China; and China's relations with the USSR (most of the China's \$2 billion debt to the USSR was contracted during the Korean War for arms supplies).
92. I single these texts out only because they are so important; my comments on Stone above (note 4); Göran Therborn, 'From Petrograd to Saigon', *New Left Review*, 48 (1968); Franz Schurmann, *The Logic of World Power*, (New York, Pantheon, 1974); for example: 'Collectivization had aroused considerable peasant discontent, and Kim Il Sung's harsh rule produced much the same type of tensions as in Soviet-dominated countries of Eastern Europe', (p. 239). Collectivization had not yet taken place in the period referred to (before the Korean War); Kim's rule was not comparable to Eastern Europe in many important ways. The Korean War is extremely well integrated into Joyce and Gabriel Kolko's *The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1954*, (New York, Harper & Row, 1972).