



2011-030

Allan R. Millett, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951: They Came from the North*. Lawrence: Univ. Press of Kansas, 2010. Pp. xx, 644. ISBN 978-0-7006-1709-8.

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This is the second volume of a projected trilogy on the Korean War by distinguished military historian Allan Millett (Univ. of New Orleans). Volume one¹ provided the background and setting for his account here of the intense fighting in 1950-51. Millett again makes extensive use of US government documents and archival materials as well as published and unpublished memoirs and papers of many individuals involved in the war. In addition, he draws on official South Korean documents and materials, the archives of the United Nations and some of the nations that fought under UN command, as well as the limited available materials from North Korea's backers, China and the Soviet Union. Although he had no direct access to North Korean materials, certain information could be deduced from Soviet and Chinese sources and the interrogation of North Korean POWs.

This prodigiously well-researched and well-written book comprises an introduction, prologue, twelve chapters of text, and an epilogue. Useful enhancements are eighteen maps, photographs, an appendix on the Romanization of Chinese and Korean words, extensive footnotes, and a long bibliographical essay. In short, this is an authoritative work intended for serious students of history and politics.

Millett begins by surveying interpretations and theories of the Korean War, then states his own take: "the essential intellectual foundation of this book is that the Korean War, known in the West as the war of 1950-1953, was simply the most violent phase of a struggle between two competing visions of a modern, authentic Korean nation" (10). Current events on the Korean peninsula confirm this thesis. A divided Korea resulted from the 1945 Yalta Agreement between the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union; the Cold War ensured the continuation of the division.

On the eve of the Korean War, Kim Il-sung was head of the communist Democratic People's Republic of Korea (henceforth North Korea) and the powerful Korean Peoples' Army (KPA), which was equipped by the Soviet Union and led by veterans of the Soviet Red Army and the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). Under the iron-fisted control of the Soviet forces and then the KPA, North Korea had no insurgency to suppress. In contrast, popular elections in South Korea (May 1950) produced a National Assembly and a president in the Republic of Korea (henceforth South Korea); US forces that had helped stabilize South Korea then withdrew, leaving only the 468 officers and men of the Korean Military Assistance Group (KMAG), entrusted with training the infant South Korean Army (ROKA), which was facing a communist insurgency. Poorly armed and equipped, the army also lacked logistical support. A military academy to train officers had been established only in 1950. The US embassy in Seoul estimated that, without American logistical support, the ROKA could only hold out for ten to fifteen days against a North Korean attack, which it anticipated would occur in the summer of 1950. Nevertheless, the CIA and US State Department ranked Korea fifth among global danger spots, behind Indochina, Greece, Iran, and Yugoslavia.

Given such favorable odds, the thirty-seven-year-old Kim Il-sung was eager to invade the south. Kim made two trips to the Soviet Union, in late 1949 and March 1950, to seek permission and aid from Stalin, who agreed but stipulated two conditions: that the United States would not become involved in the war and that China would also provide assistance. Kim next visited Beijing and obtained a pledge of assistance from Mao Zedong, who envisioned aiding North Korea as a means of gaining Soviet aid for China. On 25 June, seven KPA divisions supported by two hundred airplanes and three tank regiments crossed the 38th parallel, heading for Seoul and the Han River valley. Fashioning a strategy after Germany's World War I

1. *The War for Korea, 1945-1950: A House Burning* (Lawrence: U Pr of Kansas, 2005), with my review at *MiWSR* 2010.08.01.

Schlieffen Plan, North Korean planners expected to destroy the South Korean army and government within a week. As predicted, the ROKA did indeed suffer massive casualties, especially among its officers, and Seoul fell in four days. But, even though it had lost half its manpower and much of its equipment, the ROKA survived to fight on along with the South Korean government.

The outbreak of the war caught President Harry Truman's administration unprepared and in disarray. Truman's top priorities had been the US economy and the Democratic Party. To promote economic growth and placate the Soviet Union, his administration had slashed the military budget, reducing the armed forces from 12 million in 1945 to 1.6 million in 1947. Truman's inner circle was also divided: Secretary of State Dean Acheson, who favored a powerful military to defend US strategic interests in Asia, had initially been uncertain about defending Korea. He changed his tune after North Korea's invasion—"the most cynical, brutal, naked attack by [its] armed forces upon an undefended country that could occur" (123).

Truman turned for advice to Gen. Dwight Eisenhower, who agreed with Acheson, saying, "I believe we'll have a dozen Koreas soon if we don't take a firm stand" (122). Eisenhower also pointed out the lesson of World War II, when not checking early acts of aggression by the Axis had led to further aggression; he urged Truman to save South Korea, but not to widen the war beyond the Korean peninsula. Drawing on a more recent precedent, Truman also equated helping Korea with defending Greece against communism three years earlier. Eisenhower said of Truman's terrible problems: "poor HST, a fine man who, in the middle of a stormy lake, knows nothing of swimming" (314). To eliminate disagreement between his Defense and State Departments, Truman replaced the uncooperative Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson with Gen. George C. Marshall.

When North Korea attacked, the main US force in Asia consisted of the eight divisions of the 8th Army under Gen. Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers and Commander-in-Chief of the Far East Command. Headquartered in Tokyo, he was charged with safeguarding Japan from Soviet attacks and overseeing its democratic transformation. Supplementing MacArthur's US forces were units from Britain and the British Commonwealth countries Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. All were led by experienced officers, but the ill-equipped soldiers had become softened by peacetime duty.

President Truman immediately went to the UN for authorization to counter North Korean belligerence, and the Security Council met to consider action. Fortunately for the United States, the Soviet Union was boycotting Security Council sessions to protest the Chinese Nationalist government's tenure of the permanent China seat on the Council. In the absence of the Soviet ambassador, the motion authorizing a UN force to counter North Korean aggression passed without opposition. A second resolution on 7 July authorized the United States to establish a unified command for all the forces of participating UN nations. President Truman appointed MacArthur commander-in-chief of UN forces. The threat of future Soviet vetoes of Security Council motions (realizing its mistake, the USSR had hastily ended its boycott) meant all subsequent motions on the Korean War were presented to the General Assembly, where vetoes were impermissible and nations sympathetic to the United States were a clear majority. The General Assembly consistently voted to condemn North Korea and later its patron China as aggressors in the war.

The US Congress quickly authorized funds to bolster the military and increase military aid to South Korea and other anti-communist countries in Asia, and the Seventh Fleet moved to the Taiwan Strait. However, these measures took time and the American Far East Command did not reach full strength until November 1950, while the 8th Army could not be kept at full strength until March 1951. Consequently, the first weeks of the war were desperate ones for South Korea's badly mauled army and its retreating government. The only bright spot was the success of US, British, and Commonwealth air forces in destroying the North Korean air force and airfields by the end of June. But UN air superiority did not stop the advances of the KPA or end the threat of retaliation by the large contingents of the Soviet air force in the Soviet Far East and Manchuria in China. Moscow and Beijing were also worried because South Korea had not collapsed, prompting Mao to move nine divisions, including the crack forces massed across the Taiwan Strait, to the border of North Korea, thus postponing his quest to invade Nationalist-held Taiwan. By early July, 255,000 PLA soldiers had assembled to cross into North Korea as needed to help the KPA fight a protracted war.

Stalin also promised additional air support, but would not allow Soviet advisors to accompany the KPA across the 8th parallel into the south.

American forces provided the backbone of the UN command throughout the war, while the ROKA slowly built up. British and Commonwealth forces also played important roles, being the first to join the United States (a squadron of the Australian air force [RAAF] went into action on 2 July). Together they were the third largest among the participants, with land, sea, and air components topping out at 32,000 men. They were also the only other national forces with adequate logistical support.

Each of the twenty-some participating nations had its own motives: Belgium and the Netherlands, for example, were grateful to the United States for previous aid and wanted to excel as NATO members; Greece and Turkey appreciated the Truman Doctrine aid that had saved them from Soviet domination; the Philippines wanted to show gratitude for their liberation from Japan; and Thailand wished to expunge the taint of its World War II collaboration with Japan. Many of the participating countries sent veterans, who served in an exemplary manner; for example, the Greeks were excellent mountain infantrymen, and the 4,500-man Turkish unit even resisted orders to retreat as insulting to their valor.

Managing a multinational military posed daunting problems. Many of the troops did not understand English and used various types of weapons. The assorted national contingents also had diverse expectations of the US command: for example, the French demanded wine and organized prostitution; the Dutch gin and better bread; the Turks no pork, more beef, and hard bread; and the Greeks raisins, figs, wine, and olives (256–65). But all participating units fought well under tremendously difficult conditions and suffered from disease and privations. The only UN member whose offer of troops (two divisions) was refused was Nationalist China, probably because the United States feared to expand the war by pitting the protagonists in the unfinished Chinese civil war against each other in a new theater.

As the battles raged, much of South Korea's infrastructure was destroyed and its civilians suffered terribly. From the start, General MacArthur required adherence to the Geneva Convention on the treatment of POWs and restrained the South Korean military and police from excesses. Still, brutalities were inevitable; for example, the execution of jailed Communists and suspected North Korean spies. While UN forces were engaged in a limited war, South Korea fought a life-or-death total war, in which North Korean infiltrators were traitors (160, 164, 328, 374–75).

The KPA routinely tortured and massacred South Korean and US POWs, wounded captives, South Korean officials and their families, hostages, and foreign missionaries who opted to remain in Seoul the first time it was captured. The many mass graves of its victims attest to the routine viciousness of the KPA throughout the war (see, e.g., 102, 105, 192–93, 256, 273).

North Korea's victorious drive climaxed in August 1950, when ROK-held territory was reduced to the southeast tip of the peninsula around Pusan. But, despite Stalin's prodding, the KPA could advance no farther. MacArthur's brilliantly executed Inchon landing behind the KPA lines turned the tide of the war and culminated in the capture of Seoul. Millett is highly critical of the Inchon operation: "The thunderous self-congratulations have drowned out the critics who identified the essential impact of these victories. The campaign did little to defeat the North Korean army, and its obvious operational brilliance sowed the seeds of a strategic disaster, the Chinese intervention only a month after the landing. The liberation of Seoul at a relatively low cost gave Harry Truman, Syngman Rhee, Douglas MacArthur and their many admirers a virulent case of 'victory disease.' It temporarily forced MacArthur's critics ... into reluctant silence" (240).

MacArthur's orders were to destroy the KPA and, by October, UN forces had occupied North Korean capital Pyongyang and the remnant KPA had retreated almost to the Chinese border, leading both Stalin and Mao to conclude that North Korea could not hold on. Mao appointed one of his ablest generals, Peng Dehuai, to command the PLA, disguised as the "Chinese People's Volunteer Force," while Stalin deployed MiG-15 jet fighters stationed in Manchuria and the Soviet Far East and flown by Soviet pilots. UN air units, however, were not allowed to bomb the bridges across the Yalu River to cut off supplies coming into North Korea, or to strike Soviet air bases. By November, there were 380,000 Chinese combat troops in Korea (with more than that number in reserve in Manchuria); they henceforth bore the brunt of the fighting for the

Communist side. The UN forces they faced consisted of the 8th Army (240,000 men) and the X Corps (102,000 men), with South Korean, Commonwealth, Turkish, and other troops comprising over half their strength.

Brutal weather conditions and a willingness to absorb huge losses cost the Chinese one-third of their troops in three weeks of action. According to Millett, it was now Mao's turn to suffer from the "victory disease," while MacArthur worried about holding South Korea and an alarmed Truman pledged to use "every weapon we have" (356–59). By late December, the Chinese had recaptured Pyongyang and much of North Korea, while suffering at least 25 percent casualties in a force of 450,000 (the depleted KPA could muster only 75,000 troops for the drive). The Chinese offensive continued into South Korea, with the goal of driving UN forces out of the Korean peninsula altogether. Neither Stalin nor Mao cared how many Chinese died and both poured in reinforcements (Chinese manpower and Soviet air power). Under these perilous conditions, Truman was determined not to widen the war, while MacArthur felt his hands were tied without authorization to bomb supply lines and bases in Manchuria.

MacArthur's public statements troubled some American politicians and US allies, notably Britain. Truman fired him on 4 April 1951 and replaced him with Gen. Matthew Ridgeway (former commander of the 8th Army), an "inside the tent, salute and execute" officer (423–24). During Senate hearings in May and June on the conduct of the Korean War, the "Europe first" advocates and the "victory of anti-Communism in Asia" group aired their differences. Secretary of Defense Marshall acted as chief witness against MacArthur, whose firing the committee found to be legal though unwise (437–41).

Heavy fighting continued through May 1951. The Chinese launched five massive human-wave offensives. During the fifth (16–21 May), the UN reported its casualties at 39,274 and estimated Chinese losses at 100,000, while Peng reported that he had lost 84,000–85,000 killed and wounded and 20,000 missing, of whom 12,000 had been taken as POWs. Peng decided to withdraw and regroup around Pyongyang to recover and consider operational changes. Despite the strategic advantage he had gained, General Ridgeway was pessimistic about continuing the offensive. The United States hinted at a ceasefire in January on condition that Korea be the only issue, and Stalin finally acquiesced on 23 June. Kaesong, just north of the 38th parallel and the tenth-century capital of the first unified Korean state, was chosen as the site of the ceasefire talks, which began on 15 July 1951.

The Korean War was pivotal in redirecting US policy toward the Communist bloc, especially in Asia. It replaced the post-World War II reductions in the armed forces with a build-up of arms and manpower. It also led to bilateral and multilateral alliances and mutual defense treaties across Asia and the Pacific. Soviet aid and Chinese intervention on behalf of North Korea contributed to the Cold War hardening of positions between the United States and the Communist bloc. In his addresses to American units in Korea, General Ridgeway explained that they were defending the United States by fighting on foreign soil in a struggle for American values. As for South Korea, Millett ends his final chapter with a bleak assessment:

The Republic of Korea had moved from underdeveloped to war-ravaged. Its entire population of 21 million was at risk from disease that swept Asia....There were 150,000 active typhoid cases in South Korea, traced from refugees from North Korea. The refugee problem—two million in 1950 and increased to six million in 1951—made disease control a nightmare. Of 30,000 estimated orphans, only half were under care. One million Koreans, at least, were wards of the state. The scarcity of food had made starvation and malnutrition widespread. Clean water was rare.... No single Korean business showed signs of life. Rice production was at new lows. Even if United Nations Command could claim a real operational triumph in June 1951, it might have saved a nation beyond saving.

What gargantuan tasks of nation building lay ahead.