

THE KOREAN WAR, 25th June 1950-27th July 1953.

(nb. In a sense, there were 2 wars: a Korean civil war, in which the US/UN and then Communist Chinese forces joined.)

A. Causes.

I. Background and sequence of events leading to conflict in June 1950.

1. In August 1910, the Japanese formally annexed Korea, which they had occupied since 1905. Thus there ended the reign of the Yi Dynasty, which had begun in 1392.

2. Resistance to the Japanese was led by Yo Un-Hyong, a left-winger, who formed the Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence (CPKI). The CPKI included a few right wingers, such as Kim Ku and Syngman Rhee, but most right-wingers tended to collaborate with the Japanese, so that the CPKI was more left-inclined. An underground Korean Communist Party had been formed in 1925 in Seoul, with Pak Hon-yong as the main leader, but the party was very divided. At the end of the Korean War, Pak Hon-yong, at the time Foreign Minister of North Korea, was purged by Kim Il Sung, who had emerged as the main communist leader after 1945. The details of Kim Il Sung's early life are unclear, but he was apparently born in 1912 into a peasant family near Pyongyang. His real name was Kim Song-ju, but he took the name of a possibly mythical guerrilla who fought against the Japanese between 1910 and 1930.

3. On 6th September 1945, the CPKI declared the independence of the Korean People's Republic. At the same time, at local level, People's Committees were spontaneously set up to run things. These developments followed the sudden Japanese capitulation to the US on 14th August 1945.

4. Korean aspirations conflicted with the plans of the victorious allies. At their Cairo Conference in December 1943, Jiang Jieshi (formerly spelt Chiang Kai Shek), Churchill and Roosevelt had agreed that Korea should become an Allied trusteeship, with the USSR included; this would last 20-30 years after the conclusion of peace, while Korea was prepared for independence. Stalin accepted these proposals and in 1945, on Japanese surrender, Korea was divided between Soviet and US occupying forces, as had been arranged at Potsdam. The dividing line was the 38th parallel, with the Russians in the north and the US in the south. The Russians had begun to occupy Korea on 8th August 1945, with the Americans, commanded until 1948 by General John Hodge, arriving in September.

5. Although John Hodge's political adviser, William Langdon, pointed out that the Koreans would resist trusteeship, the US Secretary of State James Byrnes, at the December 1945 Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers (Bevin, Byrnes, and Molotov) proposed a quadripartite trusteeship of Britain, China, Russia and the US. Byrnes envisaged the appointment of a neutral (possibly Swiss or Dutch) High Commissioner, aided by a council, to supervise the Korean administration. The US proposal was adopted, as was the Soviet plan for the prior establishment of a provisional government.

6. In 1946, with the deterioration in US-Soviet relations in Europe, the US and USSR proved unable to agree on how to establish a provisional government for a united Korea. US officials took the view that any provisional government would be dominated by the Communists. Furthermore, the US, in October 1946, dismantled the People's Committees, which they had considered Communist dominated, and came to rely on wealthy right-wing Koreans, many of whom, according to the CIA, had collaborated with the Japanese. Naturally, both moves brought great Korean opposition. Hodge and the Americans increasingly placed their faith in Syngman Rhee. Rhee (1875-1964), who came from a poor branch of the royal family, had been one of the chief right-wing leaders against the Japanese, working from exile mainly in the US. He was a capable, subtle, ruthless politician, with a strong sense of mission and faith in his abilities. He was also very ambitious and, during the Second World War, he tried to get the US to recognize him as the Korean ruler-in-exile,

7. In February 1946, Hodge and Syngman Rhee, with Byrnes's support, set up the right-centre Representative Democratic Council (RDC) to oppose Communism in the South. The RDC, comprising 28 right-wingers, was intended to become the nucleus of a future South Korean administration. In response, the South Korean left established the Democratic National Front (DNF), including Yo Un-hyong and the Communist leader Pak Hon-yong. Despite Hodge's belief, the DNF was not Communist dominated. Had Rhee been less ambitious he might have influenced Hodge to try working with the left. Hodge was honest and courageous, but unsubtle and very anti-Communist, and not really the man for the job. Thus the US came to rely on Koreans who, according to a British report, were "almost completely incompetent".

8. Meanwhile in the North, the Russians followed the US lead, setting up later in February 1946 the Interim People's Committee, led by Kim Il Sung.

9. Between March and May 1946, a US-Soviet Commission, headed by Generals Arnold and Slitikov, met, as had been arranged in Moscow in December 1945, to continue discussions about the establishment of a provisional government for Korea. The Russians rejected the US proposals that the RDC should represent the South, on the grounds that the DNF was excluded; in addition, the USSR pointed out that the RDC opposed the trusteeship which the US wanted and which had been agreed at Moscow. British observers, who were not consulted, took the view that the US policy was unwise, partly as Korea was an area of Soviet domination, but mainly because neither the DNF nor Korea seemed Communist dominated.

10. In October 1946, the US pursuing its favoured policy of South Korean self-government before reunification, arranged the election of an Interim Legislature of 90, half elected and half appointed. The right was helped to victory by a limited franchise and indirect voting. Already in May 1946, Rhee had urged the US to establish a separate South Korean government, even though this made little economic sense as the industrial North and agricultural South complemented each other. The British Foreign Office took the view that Rhee was only interested in power.

11. In February 1947, US intelligence reported not only that the Communist threat in South Korea had subsided, but that the right now seemed the main threat to order.

12. Between May and June 1947, the US-Soviet joint commission met and again failed to reach agreement on unification. The US rejected Slitikov's proposal for the withdrawal of US and Soviet forces as a first step to unity. The US insisted on consultation with democratic organizations, some of which it admitted, after Soviet protests, did not in fact exist! At the same time, Rhee stirred demonstrations against a trusteeship, and there even seemed the possibility of his declaring South Korean independence.

13. In September 1947, the US State Department (with George Marshall as Secretary from January 1947 to January 1949) decided against trying to bolster South Korea, on the grounds that the area was not vital and the US lacked the necessary manpower. It was hoped that US air power would deter the Communists, but it was realised that there was the risk not only of Communist control of all Korea, but also of a reduction in world confidence in the US will to resist. Consequently, the US also took the question to the United Nations in September 1947. In November 1947, the United Nations General Assembly, despite Soviet opposition, voted to establish a UN Temporary Commission on

Korea (UNTCOK). UNTCOK proposed elections in both North and South, as a first step to unification, but the USSR objected to all UN involvement on the grounds that it was unnecessary as the Koreans would sort things out if US and Soviet forces left the country.

14. In February 1948, the UN Assembly passed a resolution for UN supervised elections in North and South Korea by May 1948, with the armies of occupation being withdrawn within 3 months after the election. The Russians refused UN supervision of elections in the North but in May 1948, UN supervised elections went ahead in the South; however, there were only 30 observers for 20 million people, which compares unfavourably with the elections supervised by the League of Nations in the Saar in 1935, where there were 1,000 observers for a population of under 1 million. The elections had gone ahead, despite a conference in Pyongyang in April 1948, attended by all the main South Korean leaders except Syngman Rhee, which had condemned US policies. Not surprisingly, Rhee's party, the National Society for the Rapid Realization of Korean Independence (NSRRI) won the election. On 28th May 1948, the new South Korean National Assembly invited the North to send delegates to help write a constitution. The invitation was ignored and on 12th July 1948, the South adopted a constitution nominally for all Korea. On 15th July 1948, Rhee was elected President, and the same day, the US and the South officially proclaimed the establishment of the Republic of Korea (ROK), with a population of 20 million and Seoul as the capital.

Meanwhile in the North, the Russians arranged the election in August 1948 of a North Korean People's Council. The election was won by the North Korean Labour Party (NKLP), an alliance of Communists and leftist groups, formed in August 1948 just before the election and headed by Kim Il Sung. On 9th September 1948, the Korean People's Democratic Republic (KPDR) was established, population 9 million, capital Pyongyang. Some credence was given to its claims to represent all Korea as Pak Hon-yong, from the South, was Foreign Minister.

Thus Korea (like Germany, where the Berlin Blockade was underway) was divided, with the US convinced that North Korea was a Soviet puppet state.

15. In September 1948, in the thick of the Berlin Blockade, the Russians announced that their forces would leave Korea by the end of December 1948. The Russians were true to their word, although advisers remained. The US followed suit, with its withdrawal complete by 30th June 1949, despite disturbances, border incidents and guerrilla attacks; for example, in April 1948, on Cheju Island, guerrillas advanced from their mountain bases. Syngman Rhee was very critical of the US withdrawal, and also of the lack of US support. South

Korea was left with a force of only 65,000 men, although Rhee rapidly increased this to 100,000. South Korea also lacked equipment, especially planes and artillery, and spares. However, the US ambassador to South Korea, John Muccio, pointed out that the North and South Korean forces balanced each other; furthermore, to build up South Korean forces might be an invitation to Syngman Rhee to try to conquer the North. Following the US withdrawal, the UN Commission on Korea (the word Temporary was dropped) established observation posts along the border.

The US State Department was influenced by the Army Department's view that Korea was of "little strategic value" and "to apply the Truman Doctrine to Korea would require prodigious effort and vast expenditure, far out of proportion to the benefits to be expected". Congress was also unwilling to support Korea, partly as the influential Republican Senator Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan was ill. Thus, for example, the Democratic Senator, Tom Connally of Texas, expressed the view in May 1949 in a widely reported speech, that the Communists would likely overrun South Korea and Taiwan, which were not worth defending. Significantly, in August 1949, a US government White Paper indicated the virtual end of US support for Jiang Jieshi, and the possibility of recognizing Communist China.

The US, moreover, was not impressed by Syngman Rhee's regime. According to Ambassador Muccio, South Korea in 1950 was in much the same position as China in 1947-8. Rhee, who was emotional and autocratic at the best of times, became increasingly intolerant, equating criticism with treason. Indeed, the 1950 National Security Law (which, for example, specified that Communists and Communist sympathizers should be tried by 4 judges, against whom there was no appeal) raised fears of a police state, especially as the assembly passed the bill only after Rhee threatened to arrest them if they refused! There was also serious inflation, very slow economic progress, and much incompetence and corruption. It was little wonder that, despite pressure, the South Korean elections in May 1950 were a setback for Rhee.

16. On 2nd September 1949, the UNCOK reported its failure to mediate between North and South, and warned of possible civil war. Sporadic fights along the border and artillery duels often developed into full-scale pitched battles, which by June 1950 left perhaps 100,000 dead. According to US sources, the South was as responsible as the North; for example, on 8th May 1949, a South Korean unit had advanced 2.5 miles over the parallel and attacked several settlements.

17. On 25th June 1950, full-scale war began, apparently following a North Korean invasion of the South. By 1950, US policy had changed to a more

positive role in Korea, so that, when it became clear that the fighting was not just another border incident, US forces were committed.

Throughout the 4 years of fighting, no declaration of war was made by anyone. On 7th July 1950, the UN Security Council voted 7-0, with 3 abstentions (Egypt, India and Yugoslavia) to send a policing force to Korea. The US forces, already committed on 27th June, were nominally part of this UN force. Although 16 countries sent troops and 5 more provided medical and other support, US personnel comprised 90% of the UN force.

II. Responsibility.

I. Factors.

- i. The absence of Communist documents.
- ii. "It is difficult to establish exactly what took place in the summer of 1950" (Allen Whiting in "China crosses the Yalu").

2. Stalin and the USSR.

i. It was, and is still, generally assumed in the West that Stalin was responsible for the Korean War. Thus Truman on 27th June 1950 said that "the attack upon Korea makes it plain beyond all doubt that Communism has passed beyond the use of subversion to conquer independent nations, and will now use armed invasion and war". On British advice, his original references to "Soviet directed Communism" were omitted, on the grounds that it would make it harder for the USSR to extricate itself, should it decide to do so.

Chip Bohlen, the American expert on Russia, considered the war "typical" of Stalin's indirect approach.

The British Foreign Office considered it "virtually certain" that Stalin and the Russians had connived at the attack, if they had not actually instigated it.

ii. Possible reasons for an attack. (There is no agreement among the experts.)

a. An attempt to make up for the failure and defeat in the Berlin Blockade by attacking in an area where the US was unlikely to act. In 1950, the US Secretary of State Dean Acheson had affirmed that "Korea was excluded from the (US) defense perimeter".

b. An attempt to regain prestige and influence among Asian Communists following the failure to aid Mao Zedong 1946-1949.

c. General Omar Bradley, Senator William Fulbright and others regarded the attack as primarily diversionary, to preoccupy the US while the Russians advanced elsewhere, for example in Iran (the main British fear), the Middle East, Germany or Yugoslavia; the Hungarian Bela Kiraly later said that he headed a Hungarian force which would have invaded Yugoslavia if the US had not taken a stand over Korea. Instead, or in addition, it might have been intended as a diversion while the Communist Chinese conquered Taiwan.

d. A probe to test US resolve in a soft spot, although surely Iran 1946 and Berlin 1948-9 had already done this). General Douglas MacArthur was convinced that a Communist victory would mean Soviet attacks in Europe.

e. An effort to control an area strategically important for the USSR and Communist China, especially in view of the US reconstruction of Japan. Control of Korea would give security against Japan, and at the same time, give added influence over Communist China. To John Foster Dulles, increasingly important in the State Department, the USSR was primarily influenced by Japanese revival. Korea, just 90 miles from Japan, was the traditional jumping off point for an attack on the mainland.

f. A first step to control of S.E. Asia, which was rich in raw materials (for example, 90% of the world's rubber, 60% of its tin, oil). It was not so much that the USSR needed these but the fact that the West did and could be denied access.

g. According to the Russian historian Lev Kopelev (in a samizdat, that is, an illegally produced book), the Korean War was provoked by Stalin primarily to involve Communist China in a local war with the US, which would weaken China and increase its dependence on the USSR.

h. A good chance of success, as the US was apparently not interested in the area.

j. Spread Communism.

iii. However, Western revisionist historians question Stalin's responsibility.

a. It is not absolutely clear that it was North Korea that actually began the war.

b. If an attack on Korea had been planned, would Jacob Malik, the Soviet Ambassador to the United Nations in New York, have walked out of the UN from January to August 1950 (in protest at US opposition to Communist Chinese membership of the UN), for the UN was an important propaganda forum?

c. There was none of the usual propaganda build-up before a Soviet move. Admittedly, on 7th June 1950, Pyongyang had called over

the radio for reunification elections on 5th August 1950, excluding Rhee and his associates.

d. North Korea was strong on "juchŏ" (Korean for self-reliance) and distrust of foreigners, including Russians, who had traditionally competed with the Japanese (and Chinese) for domination of China.

e. According to Khrushchev's Memoirs in 1971 (Columbia University, which was given the tapes, proved their authenticity by voice print tests), Kim Il Sung was responsible for the war, although Stalin gave his blessing.

f. Peter Lowe in "The Origins of the Korean War" points out that Stalin must have known about the stronger position the US was beginning to take in 1950 with regard to Korea because he was receiving information from his agents Burgess, Maclean and Philby. For example, he would surely have known about the US National Security Council Document Number 68 of April 1950 advocating a policy of global containment of the USSR. Lowe concluded that "on balance, it is unlikely that the Russians manipulated the North Koreans in June 1950, but it is still a possibility".

iv. None the less, the consensus among historians is that Stalin was responsible. The deciding factor is that "Kim Il Sung could not have acted without Stalin's go-ahead" (Andr  Fontaine, in *Le Monde* 1978). Military experts point out that the Russians must have been involved; for example, the North was dependent on Russia for supplies, and radio intercepts by the BBC and others show that Russian advisers, 15 per division, were withdrawn a week after fighting began. (To avoid trouble, or because it seemed they were no longer needed?)

Revisionists naturally argue that what the Russians provided for defence was used by the North Koreans for an attack, which once launched, the Russians had to support.

3. The United States. (President Truman 1945-53, Secretaries of State James Byrnes 1945-January 1947, George Marshall January 1947-January 1949, Dean Acheson 1949-53.)

i. The USSR and North Korea blamed the US and the South Koreans for the start of hostilities on 25th June 1950. However, there is no evidence that the US organized South Koreans into attacking.

According to the Chinese Premier, Zhou Enlai (Chou En-lai), the puppet South Korean government attacked the North at US instigation, to give the US a pretext for invading Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam.

According to some sources, General MacArthur, notoriously pro-Jiang Jieshi, provoked the North Koreans to get the policy of containment extended to Asia.

All this is highly unlikely in view of the obvious US unpreparedness. US forces in Japan had been run down to 70% of full strength, largely because there was no concept then of a limited war. In addition, there was the rapid North Korean advance, which suggests North Korean preparedness.

ii. However, the US did unintentionally encourage the war by leading the Communists to expect that there would be no US involvement. US troops had been withdrawn in 1949, there were the public statements that Korea was outside the US defence perimeter, and, as the Republican Senator Robert Taft emphasised, the US had not built up South Korean defences.

iii. The US had also lost the chance immediately after 1945 to settle the problem by accepting the People's Committees and co-operating with Yo Un-hyong. Instead, the US had supported, and continued to support, Syngman Rhee.

iv. In 1950, the US adopted a new and more forceful policy with regard to Korea, as part of a firmer commitment to containment. Thus, for example, steps were made at reconciliation with Japan, culminating in the signature in 1951 of the Treaty of San Francisco. Possibly the reason for the firmer stand was the growing awareness that the Vietminh in Vietnam were Communist dominated, which, coming after Berlin Crisis of 1948-1949 and Mao's victory in China, made it seem as if the world was threatened by Communism; US policy makers had no wish to repeat the 1938 Munich Agreement by appeasing Communism. Possibly Truman and his advisers were influenced by Senator McCarthy and accusations of "sympathy towards Communism" (Republican Senator Robert Taft) and the effect this would have on the 1950 Congressional mid-term and 1952 presidential elections.

Clearly, the new US policy of action changed a local civil war into a wider international conflict.

4. North Korea.

The North Korean leader, Kim Il Sung perhaps ordered the attack without consulting the Russians (cf. the Egyptian attack on Israel in 1973). North Koreans were certainly nationally minded and distrustful of foreigners, including Russians.

He would have been influenced by the obvious weakness of South Korean forces, by the Japanese revival, and by US assertions that Korea was not in the US "defense perimeter".

Bruce Cumming (in "Child of Conflict: the Korean-American relationship 1949-53", written in 1981) concludes that Kim Il Sung was the main agent of the war. He admits there is no hard evidence and is forced to rely on facts such as the notebook of a captured North Korean mechanic showing that planes in mid-June were being prepared for an attack and were not receiving just routine maintenance, thereby indicating that the North Koreans were not responding on 25th June to a South Korean attack.

5. South Korea.

i. According to the South Koreans, they were merely responding to an attack by South Korea. The maverick, but highly respected US journalist, I.F.Stone, in his 1952 book "Hidden History of the Korean War" asked whether Syngman Rhee deliberately provoked the North by border incidents as his popularity was waning and he hoped that a war would bring US aid and consequently unification; he was 75 years old in 1950 and was an old man in a hurry to make his mark in history. Possibly, he was encouraged by Jiang Jieshi, who was disappointed by the US failure to help reconquer the Mainland and to give what he considered adequate aid for the defence of Taiwan; a war would push the US into giving what he wanted. Stone's thesis had been taken up by later historians, such as Gabriel Kolko, who in the 1960s, tried to demonstrate that the North Korean attack was a response to provocative incursions over the 38th Parallel by South Koreans, who withdrew, luring the North Koreans into following.

Evidence to support the above is very limited. However, 17th-21st June 1950, John Foster Dulles, famous for his promise, never fulfilled, to "roll back Communism". and at the time a highranking State Department official, visited South Korea and allegedly told Syngman Rhee "You are not alone". According to the British envoy in Tokyo, Dulles told him, with obvious satisfaction, that Syngman Rhee was looking forward to a time when he could invade the North.

ii. Exactly what happened along the length of the 38th Parallel on 25th June is unclear. But according to UN observers, ROK forces were "entirely for defence" and "in no condition to carry out an attack on a large scale against the forces of the North", which in some places had won salients to the south of the parallel. This of course does not preclude a senile old man trying to lure the North Koreans. However, the rapid North Korean success and the

obvious South Korean unpreparedness would seem to support the traditional view that the South Koreans were acting only in defence.

6. China.

i. People's China (Communist China).

Did Mao push Kim Il Sung, hoping to preoccupy the US while the Chinese Communists occupied Taiwan, or perhaps Tibet? Tibet was occupied in October 1950, but was US intervention so rapid that Beijing (Peking) had no time to put into operation the plan for the conquest of Taiwan? All this is unlikely as Beijing had enough problems without adding more. There is certainly no evidence, only surmise.

Of course, Mao's victory in 1949 in the Chinese Civil War may have encouraged Kim IL Sung and/or Stalin to adopt a more forceful policy. Alternatively, Mao's success may have pushed the US into a more assertive stance.

ii. Nationalist China (Taiwan).

It has been alleged that Jiang Jieshi encouraged the South Koreans to attack in order to divert Beijing and perhaps bring him more US support, but there is no evidence.

III. US involvement.

On the outbreak of the war, the US considered the situation so serious that US forces from Japan were committed. However, there was no military danger to the US and it was a political decision not to appease, and to show US allies that it could be relied upon. The US was clearly taken by surprise, not least because it had assumed that any war after 1945 would be total. US forces were apparently committed not with the intention of driving the North Koreans back but in expectation that the Communist forces would withdraw when it was clear that the US meant business.

Dean Acheson likened this situation to 1939, and insisted that strong action should be taken.

Thus the US intervened in a civil war, which the North would otherwise have quickly won, and transformed the conflict into an international war of attrition.

B. Events.

I. The First Phase, June-July 1950: rapid North Korean victories and advance into South Korea, and the commitment of US/UN forces,

1. On 25th June 1950, North Korean forces apparently made a surprise attack across the border.

2. In 3 days, the forces of the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) had captured the South Korean capital, Seoul, and the South Korean government had fled south to Taejon.

3. In the first week, communist forces captured 50 miles, taking Suwon and Wanju. In the second week, they advanced 40 miles to Chonan. In the third week, they advanced a further 18 miles, by which time they were in control of over half South Korea.

4. On 27th June, US forces were ordered from Japan to assist the ROK (Republic of Korea), and by 18th July 1950, 30,000 had arrived. US forces were soon supported by contingents from a score of countries to comprise a UN force. It is possible that US action was so rapid that People's China had no time to begin its part of a planned combined operation, perhaps against Taiwan.

5. The first major battle between DPRK and US forces occurred on 20th July 1950, ending with the communist capture of Taejon. US policy then became one of building a defensive line (called the "perimeter") near the port of Pusan, while building up forces for a counter-attack. UN air supremacy, naval bombardment and 3.5 inch anti-tank bazookas proved very effective, so that by late July 1950, the Beijing People's Daily newspaper was predicting a long war. Indian proposals for mediation and the admission of People's China to the UN won support from the USSR, rejection from the US, and accusations from Beijing that India was reactionary and at the beck of the imperialists.

II. The Second Phase, August-October 1950: the pushing back of the DPRK forces and the advance by UN forces to the border with Communist China.

1. In August 1950, UN/US forces won their first victory in the battle of Masan, in which a North Korean attack was held. In view of the growing UN/US strength and short lines of communications, the UN/US forces expected a rapid North Korean collapse, unless Soviet and Mainland Chinese aid was forthcoming. In August 1950, the USSR proposed peace-talks, with People's China represented.

However, the US demanded free elections for all Korea first, whereupon Beijing threatened to intervene, presumably hoping to bluff the US into agreeing to talks. US officials considered that the offer of talks was largely a ploy to gain American recognition of Communist China (which came only with President Nixon in 1972).

2. On 15th September 1950, a US/UN force was landed behind DPRK lines at Inchon, the port of Seoul. This was followed on 17th September by a UN offensive on the "Pusan perimeter". North Korean forces were rapidly pushed back and on 29th September 1950, General Douglas MacArthur, in command of UN forces, welcomed Syngman Rhee, the South Korean President, back into Seoul. By this time, DPRK forces had been expelled from South Korea, except for a few guerrillas. MacArthur's adoption of the plan for landing at Inchon had been a very risky gamble but one that had paid off handsomely.

3. US/UN policy now changed from saving South Korea to "liberating" North Korea. On 1st October 1950, ROK troops crossed the 38th Parallel and MacArthur called on Pyongyang to surrender.

4. On 2nd October 1950, Zhou Enlai, Premier of People's China, via the Indian ambassador Panikkar, warned that if UN troops crossed into the North, People's China would intervene. The Soviet Foreign Minister, Andrei Vyshinsky, introduced a resolution in the UN General Assembly for a cease-fire, removal of foreign troops, and UN supervised unifying elections; these proposals were rejected by the US.

5. On 7th October, the US First Cavalry Division crossed the 38th Parallel. This brought violent denunciation of the US inside People's China, but Beijing's diplomatic response was moderate and People's China's threats were not taken too seriously, partly as Beijing had made belligerent threats before about liberating Taiwan, despite the presence of the US 7th Fleet, but had made no effort to implement the threats; Korea, it was assumed in the West, was less important in Beijing's eyes than Taiwan, so action was even less likely. Beijing had also failed to help at Pusan, although it would have made good strategic sense. In addition, Communist Chinese forces were involved in Tibet from 7th October 1950, reasserting Chinese control which the Tibetans had thrown off in 1911. Admittedly, in early September 1950, 180,000 Communist Chinese troops had been sent to Manchuria on the border with Korea, and a further 320,000 had arrived by the end of September 1950.

III. The Third Phase, October 1950-March 1951: Communist Chinese involvement and the pushing back of the UN forces,

1. Between 14th and 16th October 1950, the first Communist Chinese troops, from the 4th Army, secretly crossed the Yalu River border between China and Korea. By the end of October, 180,000-220,000 had crossed, and by the end of November, between 200,000 and 340,000. Throughout the hostilities, Chinese 4th and 5th Army forces were officially called "volunteers"

2. On 19th October 1950, the US First Cavalry Division and ROK forces entered the North Korean capital Pyongyang.

3. On 26th October 1950, the first US and ROK forces reached the Yalu River at the border village of Chosan. At night, the UN forces were hit hard by a Communist Chinese ambush, and as they fought back, encountered more Communist Chinese forces, as far south as 40 miles from the border. Yet there was no all-out Communist Chinese attack until November 1950, possibly because:

i. Mao's strategy of "protracted war" was still accepted. This opposed attempts at quick advance and victory as being risky for a weak China, which needed time to grind down the enemy, who should be lured into Chinese territory.

ii. There was fear of US air-raids, and even atomic weapons. Some air-raid shelters were built, civil defence drills were held, and in late October, MIG fighters appeared along the Yalu. (With regard to the US atomic threat, the official Chinese view was that the A bomb was "a paper tiger, with which the America reactionaries try to terrify the people". Beijing probably felt safe in the knowledge that their Soviet ally also possessed atomic weapons, while, in addition, the US since 1945 had not thrown its atomic weight about.)

iii. Beijing had just emerged from a long civil war, and with enough problems on its hands, was anxious to avoid fighting and hoped at this stage to achieve a UN settlement involving Communist Chinese membership of the United Nations.

iv. The first attacks had been merely a probe to test US/UN strength and resolve.

v. Chinese forces were not ready for a full-scale attack. They were inadequately equipped and provisioned for a sustained conflict and were awaiting the winter ice, which would make bridges unnecessary.

4. On 2nd November 1950, Chinese "volunteers" attacked US units. The same day, Beijing made its first reference to "volunteers".

5. On 8th November 1950, Chinese representatives were invited to the UN Security Council talks on Korea, on condition that they withdrew their "volunteers". This offer was rejected.

6. On 11th November 1950, the Chinese Foreign Office admitted that "volunteers" were fighting.

7. Between 6th and 26th November 1950, the Communist Chinese were inactive. Then 27th-29th November, they opened an offensive along the entire front, with UN lines being smashed in what MacArthur called a "new war". Until 26th November, it was reasonable to have assumed that the Communist Chinese forces might have withdrawn, for, whereas North Korea was mountainous and suitable for guerrilla warfare, lower Korea was a plain, peopled with enemies, and wide open to naval and air attack. Continued involvement might also have brought US bombing of China and increased US support for Taiwan.

Admittedly, half the UN forces were ROK, and were not very effective. UN victory would raise questions in Communist China about the effectiveness of its leadership, would encourage US action elsewhere (Vietnam, for example), and might bring Korean-Japanese co-operation, which would be very dangerous to Beijing; Communist propaganda certainly indicated alarm at the possibility of Japanese revival.

It has been suggested that Beijing was forced to act by the Russians, but this is unlikely, given Communist China's nationalistic spirit and independence.

8. Within a week, the UN forces had been pushed back 50 miles, often fleeing without putting up resistance and leaving behind valuable equipment. Part of the reason for the precipitate flight was the overestimation of the Chinese numbers involved, with attacks by 400,000 or so expected.

9. On 5th December 1950, UN forces abandoned Pyongyang. By 15th December 1950, UN forces were crossing the 38th Parallel and preparing defence lines in South Korea.

10. In January 1951, a fresh Communist offensive brought the UN withdrawal to a line 70 miles south of the 38th Parallel in the west and 45 miles to the south in the east. Seoul was abandoned as part of a scorched earth policy. However, the longer Chinese Communist communication lines, UN air supremacy, and naval bombardment brought a halt to the Communist advance.

Communist man-power may have been superior, but the UN had superior firepower.

IV. The Fourth Phase, April 1951-July 1953: the UN counter-offensive, Communist retreat, stalemate, and peace talks.

1. In April 1951, MacArthur was replaced as UN Commander-in-Chief by General Matthew Ridgway, who was himself replaced in May 1952 by Mark Clark. MacArthur had been too willing to take the war into Chinese territory and to use atomic weapons, despite the risk of a general world war resulting as People's China joined the war fully and was joined by the USSR. At the same time, the maverick but respected US journalist I.F.Stone, after examining what official and other reports were available, accused MacArthur of having retreated unnecessarily to the 38th Parallel, in order to obtain Washington's consent to the use of the A bomb and possibly even the return to power on the mainland of Jiang Jieshi.

2. In May 1951, Communist attacks were held and UN forces began a slow grinding offensive, which by June 1951 was just below the 38th Parallel in the west, 20 miles north of it in the centre, and 45 miles north of it in the east.

3. At this point, the USSR proposed ceasefire talks, and at the battle-front inaction set in, except for an occasional probing attack.

4. In July 1951, peace talks began, first at Kaesong, and then at Panmunjon. Delay was caused initially by Communist Chinese insistence on the 38th Parallel as the border. (According to I.F.Stone, the Truman administration delayed things too, in order to get Congressional support for increased military spending, and to facilitate the building of an anti-Communist coalition.)

5. December 1951 saw fresh outbursts of fighting, all inconclusive. Later outbursts were equally inconclusive. Only in May 1953 did Communist offensives gain their earlier intensity, but although the UN suffered heavy casualties, the communists made only small gains of territory.

6. Eventually, on 27th July 1953 in Panmunjon, an armistice line was agreed upon, more or less at the line proposed by the Soviet diplomat Malik in the first Soviet peace proposal on 24th June 1951.

The end of the stalemate in the armistice talks was facilitated by new governments in 1953 in both the US (in January 1953 Dwight Eisenhower was

inaugurated as President) and the USSR (in March, Stalin died and Bulganin, Khrushchev, and Malenkov began their power struggle). It was easier for the new leaders to end the fighting, since they had not previously been associated with it and their prestige was not at stake.

In addition, the Communists may have taken more seriously veiled US threats about nuclear weapons because the notorious "cold warrior" John Dulles was the new US Secretary of State. Possibly, the decisive factor for North Korea was the US bombing in May 1953 on five huge dams, which caused great flooding, including Pyongyang. For its part, the US was influenced by the cost of the war.

C. Results.

I. The July 1953 armistice did not lead to a peace settlement, although fighting did not resume. The international conference arranged as part of the armistice agreement met in Geneva between April and July 1954, but no settlement could be reached; indeed, the talks concentrated on Indo-China, where a settlement was negotiated (but where, ironically, fighting soon recommenced). Although there have been talks in Panmunjon, which continue to this day, Korea remains divided into the Communist North and non-Communist South, despite the obvious Korean desire for reunification, and is still one of the most intractable problems of the Cold War.

II. There was great loss of life and destruction.

The total number killed was at least 3,250,000, including perhaps 3 million Korean civilians, about 10% of the population. North Korea and Communist China suffered about 1,250,000 casualties (dead and injured), of whom 2/3 were probably Chinese. The total UN casualties were 118,515 dead and 264,591 wounded. The US lost 33,629 dead and 103,000 wounded (cf. in Vietnam 56,000 dead and 300,000 wounded; in the Second World War 286,000 dead; and in the Civil War 526,000 dead). British dead numbered 700, double the number in the Malayan "Emergency" between 1948 and 1960. South Korea suffered 70,000 dead and 150,000 wounded.

III. Korea remained divided and much of the country was laid waste. For example, only three buildings were left standing in Pyongyang. However, the war prompted the US to provide South Korea with aid which helped to transform the

South into an industrial power. In addition, the DMZ (Demilitarized Zone), 150 by 2.5 miles, developed into a natural nature park, especially for birds.

IV. Communist expansion was prevented.

1. South Korea did not become communist. Syngman Rhee survived in power, increasingly senile and presiding over an increasingly corrupt and brutal regime.

2. Chiang Kai-shek survived in Taiwan. Up to 1950, it had seemed inevitable that he would be overthrown by the communists, or by the US replacing him with a native Taiwanese government or a UN one. The Korean War led the US to underpin Chiang Kai-shek, even though this complicated US relations with Beijing. Thus, on the outbreak of the Korean War, the US 7th Fleet had been instructed to prevent a communist invasion. Then, in July 1950, Communist troops opposite Taiwan were moved to Shandong, ready for deployment in Korea if necessary.

3. The US was persuaded to change its policy in Indo-China, where it began to support and underpin the French. Ho Chi Minh and the Vietnamese Communists were thus unable to take over all of Vietnam, which remained divided until 1976. Vietnam thus experienced another 30 years of fighting.

4. The USSR made no advance in Europe or the Middle East, if that had been Stalin's intention,

V. The war strengthened Western resolve having upset the view that the USSR would hesitate to use direct aggression until at the peak of her military power, probably in the late 1950s. This strengthening and the outcome of the War perhaps increased Soviet fear of the West. The War was thus probably one reason for the thaw in East-West relations between 1953 and 1958, and one reason for the establishment of the Warsaw Pact.

1. The West increased its defence spending. The US defence budget increased from \$13 billion to \$50 billion, with the army being increased by about 50% to 3.5 million men. Western European defence expenditure increased by an average of 50%, from 5.3% to 7.6% GNP (Gross National Product), despite the adverse economic effects. It was also agreed that West Germany could rearm, admittedly within fixed limits which, not surprisingly, did not calm Soviet fears.

For its part, the USSR increased its defence spending by 50% between 1950 and 1951, with the Red Army doubling in size to 4.9 million.

2. NATO was strengthened. In December 1950, NATO members agreed to set up an integrated standing NATO force, under a US commander. US troops were thus stationed in Europe. In 1951 and 1952 Greece and Turkey became members, followed in 1955 by West Germany. Between 1950 and 1954, the US pushed the idea of a European Defence Community (EDC). The EDC talks eventually failed, but Anthony Eden, then British Foreign Minister, in 1955 arranged the Western European Union (WEU) to help calm French and other countries' fears about West German rearmament and membership of NATO.

3. The US also arranged the ANZUS (Australian, New Zealand, US) Defence Pact in September 1951. This was followed in 1954 by the establishment of the South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO); SEATO, which was wound up only in 1977, comprised Australia, Britain, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand and the United States. Then, in 1955, the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) was established (dissolved in 1979), comprising Britain, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey, and the US. The US reluctantly dropped its opposition to the Spanish dictator General Franco and signed the 1953 Madrid Pact by which US bases were set up in Spain, All of this was part of the Western policy of containment.

4. The US accelerated the signature of the San Francisco Treaty with Japan, signed in 1951. Japan was to have a 735,000 strong defence force but it was declared US policy not to limit Japanese rearmament.

5. Admittedly, the war had weakened the West in some ways.

US public opinion was probably unlikely to support another similar war. There was certainly not the same support for the Vietnam War (1958-73). The precipitate US/UN retreat when Chinese Communist forces became involved raised questions about the West's defences.

US generals were determined never to fight without a government promise that they could bomb enemy supply lines, towns and sanctuaries. (However, US forces were committed in Vietnam without such a promise.)

The war also brought strained US-British relations. In particular, the British thought that the US had overreacted.

VI. West Germany, Japan and Spain were restored to the Western "community of nations".

1. The war accelerated the signature of the 1951 Treaty of San Francisco with Japan. The war also helped to kill the growing anti-US movement in Japan. In addition, it facilitated Japanese economic recovery and development since Japan was the main US base and provided much of the UN materiel.

2. In 1955, West Germany under Chancellor Konrad Adenauer gained full sovereignty, the right to rearm, and NATO membership.

3. Franco's Spain ceased to be an ostracized country. Franco hitherto had feared that the US would try to overthrow him.

VII. The communists did make some gains.

1. Beijing gained in prestige and morale since it had apparently checked the US. The war helped unite Communist China behind Mao. China was clearly a great power. The war helped bring Communist China and Russia together.

2. The Russians gained international prestige by assuming the role of peace-maker. In contrast, the US was criticized, especially by Communist China, of imperialism, interference where it had no interest, germ warfare, atomic threats, and leading the world to the brink of a third world war and a nuclear holocaust.

VIII. The Effect on the US.

1. The US was forced to revise its view that future wars would be total. New military theories of limited war had to be worked out, which necessitated the build-up of conventional forces previously allowed to run down.

2. The conflict helped the Republican candidate Dwight Eisenhower to win the 1952 presidential election over the Democratic candidate Adlai Stevenson, Governor of Illinois. The Korean War had undermined the credibility of Truman and the Democratic Party; for example, Truman had stated that his policies would avert war and ensure an American peace. What was called the "Great Debate" occurred in the US about the war, and the American failure to

bring the hostilities to a rapid and successful conclusion encouraged the wild accusations by the Republican Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy (the so-called McCarthyism) that communist sympathisers abounded throughout the government and were responsible for US failure. MacArthur was especially critical of Truman, who as a result of the war decided not to stand for re-election. Eisenhower, as a candidate, promised to "go to Korea and see for myself" and it was popularly expected that the hero of 1941-5 would do what was necessary. The war added to the Democratic Party's reputation for involving the country in foreign wars, such as the First and Second World Wars (a reputation enhanced by John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson embroiling the country in the Second Vietnam War, 1958-73).

3. There were adverse economic effects.

IX. Economic effects. The war helped the Japanese economy to recover. It also prompted the US to give aid to South Korea and Taiwan, which as a result developed into industrial powers. However, it also brought the first bout of post 1945 inflation, just as Vietnam did later, and interfered with post-1945 reconstruction. In Britain, there were cuts made in the welfare system, with, for example, health service charges being imposed.

X. The war raised hopes about the effectiveness of the UN, especially as in November 1950, Truman and Acheson pushed through the Uniting for Peace Resolution, by which, the Assembly could decide on action if the Security Council were deadlocked. In the event of deadlock seven members of the Council, or a majority of the Assembly, could get the matter passed to the Assembly for a decision. In fact, the machinery was first used against Britain and France in 1956 during the Suez Crisis and not against Russia as had been anticipated.

XI. Relations between the US and People's China changed for the worse.

Before the war, the US had been on the point of recognizing People's China. With the Korean War, the US began to support Jiang Jieshi, doubtless thereby preventing a Communist invasion of Taiwan. Taiwan was "a useful, unsinkable aircraft carrier" and an important base for US communications in the Pacific, conveniently sited between Japan and the Philippines.

At the same time, Anglo-Chinese relations were strained. Britain had recognized Communist China in 1949 and there was no physical molestation of British nationals in China, but trade was reduced.

D. Comments.

1. It was the first major fighting of the Cold War, comparable for seriousness only to the German and Cuban Crises. Although shorter, it was more important than the Second Vietnam War (1958-73).

2. It was the first really modern war, fought with jet fighters and in the shadow of atomic weapons. None the less, it developed into a traditional war of attrition. The war showed the importance of air control and technology, but at the same time, the Communists illustrated the importance of numbers and enthusiasm.

3. The war remained limited, the fears of I.F.Stone and others of escalation into a Third World War and even a nuclear war proving groundless. The Russians did not become directly involved; Communist Chinese forces remained technically only "volunteers": and Truman and Acheson did not use atomic weapons (although they did threaten to use "every weapon we have"), did not bomb Communist China, and were ready to evacuate US troops if the position became untenable.

4. Korea was very important for Japan, China and the USSR, but although the Cold War was now being fought in Asia rather than Europe, Europe none the less remained the main theatre of the Cold War.

5. The war possibly encouraged the Russians (and communists generally) away from adventurism. It was also one reason for the improved East-West relations between 1953 and 1958, the so-called "thaw".

6. The war was a clear indication that the US had accepted its role as world leader.

7. The "Yalta Rule" (of agreed spheres of influence) was apparently upset by the attack by Communists on South Korea, which was a US sphere of influence. The US consequently increased its influence in areas not arranged at Yalta.

8. The war was one of the few cases where the UN could work.

9. The British in 1950 feared that US policy might alienate Asian opinion from the West.

10. Some Americans welcomed the war: "Thank God for Korea" (General Van Fleet, in an Associated Press interview). It was felt that the US had acted too weakly against the Russians in the immediate post-1945 period. In addition, the war helped the US administration secure increased defence spending, and reduced anti-US feeling in Japan.

11. It illustrated how the Cold War was likely to mean that disputes ended in stalemate. The US had not been beaten, but in view of the chance of full Communist Chinese and Russian involvement, an all-out war was not possible. As one side is unable to impose its will on the other, the problem therefore continues, as the Korean issue does to this day. Thus, in 1990, there were still 43,000 US servicemen stationed in South Korea. Effectiveness of the UN, especially as in November 1950, Truman and Acheson pushed through the Uniting for