

The Korean War, 1950-1953: The First Defeat of the U.S. Military in the 20th Century

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As the People's Liberation Army crossed the Yangtze River in April 1949 and captured the capital of the Guomindang, the U.S. government moved to contain the Chinese Revolution. It built up major military bases in Japan, Okinawa, the Philippines and Guam; fortified the province of Taiwan ruled by Chiang Kai-shek; supplied 80 per cent of the military equipment for France's war in Indochina.; and supported the police state of Syngman Rhee in South Korea. In early June 1950, Mao Zedong stated that "there is absolutely no ground for the United States' intervention in the internal affairs of countries such as Korea, Philippines and Vietnam."

In reaction to the U.S. "loss" of China, Congress passed two bills in February and June 1950 that provided infusions of American economic and military aid to an "independent" Republic of Korea (ROK). This assistance included nearly 500 military advisers at all levels of the ROK army and government. John Foster Dulles, the future Secretary of State, visited Seoul for private talks with President Syngman Rhee between June 17 and 21, 1950 and visited the 38th Parallel.

In Korea, a civil war developed in the years after the Japanese defeat in August 1945. Communist guerillas in South Korea fought against the U.S.-supported Rhee regime, which had 80,700 political prisoners in the spring of 1949.¹

After years of border clashes and threats by Syngman Rhee to "march north" to "liberate" the north by force of arms, on June 25, 1950, the North Korean People's Army (KPA) crossed the 38th Parallel in a pre-emptive strike to bring down the Rhee dictatorship and reunite Korea.² Kim Il-sung, with Stalin's approval, believed that the war would be over before the U.S. military could intervene. On June 27, President Truman committed U.S. troops, with UN support³, to prop up Rhee's regime. On the same day, Truman re-intervened in China's civil war by ordering the 7th Fleet to move into the Taiwan Strait to defend Chiang Kai-shek. Truman also sent

¹ Even before the outbreak of the Korean War, National Security Council policy NSC-68 called for a tripling of U.S. military spending from \$13.5 billion to \$50 billion in Europe, the Middle East and Asia. *The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1954* by Gabriel and Joyce Kolko (1972) 565, 567.

² Mao had been informed of Kim Il-sung's plans for a "military reunification" of Korea while he was in Moscow in early 1950. However, the timing of the North Korean offensive was a surprise to Mao and the CCP leadership, which conflicted with their plans to liberate Taiwan. *Ibid.* 87,90.

³ Beginning in January 1950, the Soviet Union boycotted UN proceedings due to the United Nation's denial of the rightful place of China's seat on the Security Council to the People's Republic. Due to this boycott, the Soviet representative was not present to veto the Security Council's decision to commit military forces to the U.S. intervention in Korea. The UN forces in Korea were under the direct command of the U.S. military, and under General Douglas MacArthur up to his removal in April 1951.

“a strong military mission” to French Indochina and accelerated military aid to the U.S. neo-colony in the Philippines.

The outbreak of the Korean War changed the strategic calculus of the CCP. An attack on the 7th Fleet would supply the U.S. with a pretext to bomb and even invade China. The PLA redeployed much of the Third Field Army facing Taiwan and the elite Fourth Field Army to form the Northeast Border Defense Army in Manchuria to await developments in Korea. While land reform in southern China was pressed forward, and a campaign against counter-revolutionaries was intensified in order to secure the rear, the First Five-Year Plan for industrial development had to be delayed.

On June 28, Mao and Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai responded to Truman by stating that Taiwan was historically and indisputably Chinese territory, and that the outbreak of civil war in Korea was a pretext for American intervention in the Taiwan Straits. The CCP called for mass anti-American rallies to be held on July 7, 1950, the anniversary of the Japanese invasion of 1937, to which U.S. policy towards Taiwan was compared. On Army Day, August 1, over one million people participated in demonstrations against U.S. intervention in Taiwan and Korea.

On July 10 “The Chinese People’s Committee of the Movement to Fight against U.S. Invasion of Taiwan and Korea” was formed, made up of workers, youth, women and non-communist democratic parties. This committee waged a nationwide campaign to educate the Chinese people about the U.S. imperialists’ aggression against Asian countries, explaining that they could be defeated. “Beating American arrogance”—with a particular focus on General Douglas MacArthur—became a central theme of this campaign.⁴

Two weeks after the outbreak of the Korean war, an editorial in People’s Daily commented that American troops will “of course make the Korean people’s victory come a bit slower and the Korean people cannot but prepare to undertake prolonged and more arduous fighting. . . Both China’s war of resistance against the Japanese in the past and the Vietnamese war of resistance against the French can be taken as evidence of a victorious future for the Korean people.”⁵

In August 1950, U.S. B-29s bombed railway installations and jets strafed populated areas in Manchuria. MacArthur demanded the unconditional surrender of North Korean forces up to the border of the Yalu River with China. This would have “reunited” Korea under U.S.-puppet Syngman Rhee, propped up by U.S. military occupation forces.

On August 30, New China News Agency in Beijing explained how the struggle of the Korean people was linked to the security of the People’s Republic and anti-imperialist struggles throughout Asia:

We must regard the Korean people’s defensive war as our war, for the American invasion of Korea is as much a threat to us as it is to the existence of a free and

⁴ *China’s Road to the Korean War* by Chen Jian (1994) 139-140.

⁵ People’s Daily, July 6, 1950, in *The Strained Alliance* by Robert Simmons (1975) 150.

independent Korean nation. That is why the attack on Korea has such sinister undertones for China, why the struggle of the Korean people is bound up with our struggle, and inevitably with the struggle of all Asian peoples against imperialism.⁶

Mao and other CCP leaders believed that China had an internationalist obligation to come to the aid of the Korean people, in part because of the sacrifice of many Korean communists in the CCP's Anti-Japanese War and the Revolutionary Civil War from 1946-1949. In addition, the CCP leadership believed that a victory by U.S. imperialism in Korea would fan counter-revolutionary sentiments in China, East Asia and elsewhere in the world.

Mao and Zhou linked aid to North Korea with the necessity to defend the People's Republic. At a speech before the Chinese People's Consultative Conference on October 24, 1950, Zhou stated that U.S. subjugation of North Korea would threaten the security of Northeast China: "Half of our heavy industry is in the Northeast, and half of this industry is in the southern part, within range of enemy bombers. . . . If the U.S. imperialists get close to the Yalu River, how can we have the peace of mind to go about production?"⁷ Manchuria was China's main source of coal, steel and hydro-electric power. The CCP understood that if U.S. forces reached the Chinese border, much of the PLA would have to be indefinitely stationed on 1000 kilometers of the Yalu River defending the People's Republic.

In early October, the North Korean Army was in full retreat, and its government was on the verge of collapse. On October 7 the US/UN forces crossed the 38th Parallel, and the U.S. imperialists gave no sign that they were going to stop there. The arrogant MacArthur stated that U.S. forces would be "home by Christmas." The U.S. military believed that repeated warnings by Chinese diplomats were a "bluff."

The Decision to Intervene

On October 8, Mao, with the support of the majority of the CCP leadership, decided that the PRC would intervene militarily in order to "Resist America and Defend Korea." The decision was made to bring the fight to the U.S. military in the mountainous region of North Korea.

At that time, there was sharp debate in the CCP leadership. A number of top PLA and CCP leaders, including Lin Biao, the commander of the Fourth Field Army, Gao Gang, chairman of the Northeast region, and Chen Yun, who was in charge of economic affairs for the CCP, argued that China should focus on rebuilding

⁶ *China Under Threat* by Gurtov and Hwang (1980) 51. The CCP Politburo meeting on October 13, 1950 took a similar position on the relationship between support for the Korean people, eliminating the U.S. military threat to Manchuria and the People's Republic, and support for anti-imperialist struggles in Asia. "Beijing and the Korean Crisis," Michael Hunt, *Political Science Quarterly* (Autumn 1992) 464; Chen Jian 184.

⁷ *Ibid.* 276.

its economy. At that time, U.S. output of steel was 144 times that of China. Most importantly, they did not believe that China, with its outdated arsenal, could stand up to the strongest imperialist country in the world, armed with atomic weapons. Mao's close ally Peng Dehuai called this the "fear-of-the-United States illness."⁸

At the start of the war, some units of the Thirteenth Army that were stationed in Manchuria dreaded both the U.S. army and the atomic bomb. To address these fears, the CCP launched a campaign to restore morale and confidence in the military's ability to protect the Chinese people.⁹ A prominent role in this campaign was played by Mao's talk with Anna Louise Strong in August 1946 on the first anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombings of two Japanese cities:

The atom bomb is a paper tiger which the U.S. reactionaries use to scare people. It looks terrible, but in fact it isn't. Of course, the atom bomb is a weapon of mass slaughter, but the outcome of a war is decided by the people, not by one or two new types of weapons.¹⁰

Beginning in 1950, the CCP developed a comprehensive civil defense strategy to protect China against U.S. nuclear weapons. It dispersed defense and strategic factories from vulnerable urban sites in Manchuria and coastal areas to the interior. For these industries, the PRC began to move entire manufacturing units underground or into mountain tunnels in order to remove them as military targets. In November 1950, a Chinese physicist reported on U.S. studies of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He noted that a group of 400 people in a tunneled public shelter in Nagasaki and in concrete buildings in Hiroshima, both close to ground zero, survived the atomic blasts. China began building thousands of air-raid shelters and steel-reinforced concrete buildings in urban areas.¹¹

In October 1950, Mao ordered four armies, three artillery divisions and three anti-aircraft regiments of the PLA's Northeast Border Defense Force to move across the Yalu. Mao stated that these forces would be designated the Chinese People's Volunteers (CPV).¹² Throughout the war, the Chinese government stated that their forces fighting in Korea were highly motivated volunteers in order to

⁸ See *Mao's Military Romanticism: China and the Korean War, 1950-1953* by Shu Guang Zhang (1995) 78. Zhang's book has a great deal of useful material about the CCP's principles, plans and conduct of the Korean War. He argues that Mao and the PLA/CPV leaders believed until the spring of 195 that they could drive the U.S. off the Korean peninsula. Hence the title of Zhang's book: "Mao's Military Romanticism."

⁹ *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao and the Korean War*, edited by Conchorov, Lewis and Xue (1993) 164, 285.

¹⁰ *Selected Works, Volume IV* 100.

¹¹ *Chinese Attitudes Toward Nuclear Weapons during the Korean War* by Mark Ryan (1989) 107-124. See "Defense against Atomic Bombs is Possible," written by physicists at Beijing University in December 1950, with a first edition of 10,000 copies, whose primary audience was civil defense experts.

¹² Zhang 82; Gurtov and Hwang 52.

avoid an official declaration of war between the United States and China¹³, to deflect U.S. charges of "Chinese communist aggression" and to focus attention on the invasion of Korea by the US/UN forces, which Truman called a "UN police action."

There were different forms of recruitment into the CPV for service in Korea. The most important source of recruits was the People's Militia, which grew from 5 million in mid-1950 to almost 13 million in September 1951. More than one million members of the militia were drafted to fill vacancies in the Field Armies in Korea.¹⁴ In the course of the government's political mobilization known as the Volunteer Movement, large numbers of workers, peasants and students, infused with the same consciousness that allowed them to triumph over the Guomindang and the Japanese military, joined the CPV to fight in Korea.¹⁵

As part of the nationwide campaign to Resist America and Aid Korea, factories drew up "anti-American aggression emulation targets," and popularized the slogan "Our factory is our battlefield and our machines are our weapons." A movement to increase production to support Chinese forces in Korea involved 1.2 million industrial workers in the Northeast and the rest of the country.¹⁶ In 1951, the first full year of the war, 46 per cent of China's national budget was dedicated to support the war to resist U.S. aggression in Korea.¹⁷

The CCP employed a variety of popular art forms to build the Resist America, Aid Korea campaign. The *yangge* dance, based on a traditional planting song, was infused with revolutionary and anti-imperialist elements, and brought as many as 1500 workers, peasants and youth into the streets at a time. Patriotic and internationalist parades were also common. The slogans in the 1951 National Day parade in Beijing were "Salute the People's Volunteer Army!" and "Celebrate the Victory of the People of China and Korea!"

¹³ Based on the Sino-Soviet military alliance, this could have required a direct Soviet military confrontation with the U.S., to which Stalin was strongly opposed. *Uncertain Partners* 175.

¹⁴ Zhang 78-79.

¹⁵ John Gittings describes the workings of the Volunteer Movement: "The call for volunteers for the CPV [Chinese People's Volunteers], whether from the militia or from the civilian population, was organized at the local level by the Volunteer Movement Committee, set up by the Military District and party authorities. Volunteers were called for at agitation meetings, and emulation contests were organized both on an individual and on a village basis. . . This is illustrated by one account of a recruitment meeting of a trade union branch in Peking:

"The secretary of the branch spoke about the danger of American attacks towards the Manchuria border; the Americans were professing peaceful intentions while 'aiming a gun at our heart and preparing to pull the trigger.' Any Chinese volunteering was a true patriot... Suddenly someone shouted that he wanted to go to Korea... thereupon many other people rose to their feet... After two hours had passed the trade union secretary said that it appeared to him that everyone wished to volunteer." Gittings, *The Role of the Chinese Army*, 1967, 84-85.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 87.

¹⁷ Hunt 470.

The sharpest form of revolutionary propaganda in the PRC during the Korean War was the cartoon. The U.S. imperialists were portrayed as wolves and snakes, symbols of cunning, ruthlessness and brutality. In many of these cartoons, MacArthur held a gun, a sword or an atomic bomb, menacing the Pacific region.

“Paper Tiger” (July 1950) denounced the U.S. invasion of Korea, and stripped away the paper on “a roaring American tiger to reveal the feeble croak of a toad.” “The ‘Traveler’ Has Returned” (September 1952) portrayed the homecoming of a badly wounded American sailor from Korea, pulling a shipload of downed planes and tattered flags.

During the war, Pablo Picasso and Diego Rivera contributed artwork that helped to build international support for China and North Korea. In “Massacre in Korea,” Picasso showed U.S. storm troopers firing into a group of Korean women and children. Rivera’s “Nightmare of War and Dream of Peace” showed civilian atrocities in Korea, behind which hovered a huge atomic mushroom.¹⁸

In the summer of 1950, the PRC’s international supporters circulated the Stockholm peace appeal, which gathered millions of signatures and culminated in a World Peace Congress in November. The Chinese delegation asked the Congress to “oppose resolutely the use of atomic weapons and demand that the government first using atomic weapons be declared a war criminal and punished accordingly.”¹⁹

One of the best known Western scientists who spoke out against the U.S. brandishing of nuclear weapons during the Korean War was Joan Hinton, who had worked on the U.S. nuclear Manhattan Project during World War II. “Faced by war, secret work, the Navy, the Army and madmen locked in their laboratories thinking up new and better methods of mass destruction, suddenly I made up my mind and left ... I had to find out what was going on in the world outside of physics. What was happening to the peoples of the world—so I came to China, to see America from the outside and to understand the tremendous upheaval going on inside Asia.” Hinton called on scientists in the U.S. and Japan to “think again what it is that you are doing.”²⁰

How the Chinese People’s Volunteers Fought in Korea

The CPV fought in Korea following revolutionary principles of warfare that had achieved decisive victories over Japanese occupation forces during World War II and over Chiang Kai-shek’s U.S.-supported Guomindang. These included tactics of deception and fighting at night in close combat to neutralize U.S. artillery and airpower; gaining the initiative by concentrating forces larger than the enemy;

¹⁸ *Mao’s New World: Political Culture in the Early People’s Republic* by Chang-Tai Hung (2011) 79, 99, 159-165.

¹⁹ Ryan 44, 99, 103.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 80-81.

using flanking tactics and striking at the enemy's rear; overcoming logistical difficulties by traveling by foot over difficult terrain; conducting political work in the CPV to tell the soldiers about the just nature of the war and why it must be fought; knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the revolutionary forces and those of the enemy; and being willing to fight a protracted war on the basis of self-reliance.

In Korea, Mao stressed the concept that strategically China's revolutionary forces should despise their enemies, but to tactically take them seriously. Mao, Peng Dehuai and other CPV commanders believed that these factors would bring victory to a technologically inferior but politically superior army in a protracted war in Korea.²¹

Speaking on the eve of the CPVs' crossing of the Yalu River, Peng Dehuai stated, "From the standpoint of tactical operations, we are better than the enemy. Our resolute and brave tactical operations consist in having the courage to fight in close combat using dynamite, fighting the enemy with bayonets, and throwing hand grenades. The enemy is afraid of such operations. Our troops are of much higher political quality than the enemy's."²²

In October and November 1950, the overconfident U.S. Eighth Army, the 10th Marine Corps and ROK (South Korean) forces drove north towards the Yalu River, badly underestimating the strength of the combined Chinese armies they would soon face. In those same months, 260,000 soldiers of the CPV, organized in six armies, crossed the Yalu at night in winter camouflage uniforms after removing the red stars from their caps. The CPV re-organized 65,000 retreating soldiers of the North Korean People's Army (KPA). 40,000 guerillas operated behind the US/UN forces.

Offering little resistance, the CPV and the KPA lured the American forces deep into North Korea in late October, and several weeks later launched devastating close combat attacks at night, equipped only with light machine guns, mortars, grenades and bayonets. In just two months, the CPV routed the demoralized US/UN forces in North Korea.

The 2d Division of the U.S. Eighth Army was virtually destroyed after a successful envelopment by the CPV's 113th, 114th and 119th Divisions, which marched through a winter night over mountainous terrain into the American rear. One-third of this road-bound U.S. division was killed or captured. As the 2d Division's armored columns drove into a six-mile long gauntlet set by CPV forces, American soldiers threw their weapons away and headed for the hills, while trucks of wounded men were abandoned. A Turkish Brigade of 5,000 soldiers joined the battle and was routed by the CPV. Even as they were overcome by Chinese

²¹ Zhang 10, 13, 22-24, 76, 195. Many of these principles were explained in depth by Mao in "On Protracted War," 1938, *Selected Works, Volume II*.

²² Uncertain Partners 287.

soldiers with superior tactics and morale, the troops of the 2^d Division referred to the CPV as “Chinks.”²³

A similar fate met overextended Marine and Army divisions of X Corps at the frozen Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir that was several mountain ranges to the east of Eighth Army. After initial engagements with U.S. forces in October, the 66th Army of the CPV compiled a study that analysed American strengths and weaknesses. Respect was accorded for U.S. firepower, but American infantrymen were found to be “weak, afraid to die and haven’t the courage to attack or defend.” The study then formulated these principles for future Chinese action:

As a main objective, one of the units must fight its way rapidly around the enemy and cut off their rear. . . Route of attack must avoid highways and flat terrain in order to keep tanks and artillery from hindering the attack operations. . . Night warfare in mountainous terrain must have a definite plan and liaison between platoon commands. Small leading patrol groups attack and then sound the bugle. A large number will at that time follow in column.²⁴

The commander of the X Corps, General Ned Almond, told a group of Marines who were about to be overrun by the CPV, “We’re still attacking and we’re going all the way to the Yalu. Don’t let a bunch of Chinese laundrymen stop you!”²⁵ One battalion of the 7th Division that started out with 1053 officers and infantrymen ended up with 181 officers and soldiers.²⁶ Retreating American soldiers composed a song to the tune of the hillbilly song “Movin’ On”: When you see the pitter patter of GI feet/That’s the Third Division in full retreat/They’re movin’ out/They’re buggin’ out/They’ve got us surrounded/Bug out while there is time. “Bug out” referred to American soldiers who abandoned their positions in the face of the CPV.

The U.S. armies which had been ordered to advance to the Yalu River were driven out of North Korea and below the 38th Parallel and south of Seoul by January 1951. This was an unprecedented victory for the CPV, but it paid a high price due to the unopposed U.S. bombing and sub-zero conditions that it was exposed to. Around the 38th Parallel, U.S. resistance stiffened. Its supply lines and defensive lines shortened while the Chinese supply lines from Manchuria to the front lengthened. 30 to 40 per cent of the CPV’s supplies were destroyed in transit by American bombers.

²³ This crushing defeat was described by T.R. Fehrenbach, an officer in the 2d Division, in *This Kind of War* (1963) 304-350; see also *The Captives of Korea* by William Lindsey White (1957) 177.

²⁴ *To the Yalu: From the Chinese Invasion of Korea to MacArthur’s Dismissal* by James McGovern (1972) 87.

²⁵ *American Tenth Legion: X Corps in Korea, 1950* by Shelby Stanton (1989) 275.

²⁶ McGovern 129.

The U.S. dropped 690,000 tons of bombs on the CPV and on North Korea during the war, four times more than were dropped on Japan during World War II, or some five tons for every square kilometer in North Korea.²⁷

Because of these logistical problems and the danger of U.S. amphibious landings behind Chinese lines—patterned after the U.S. landing at Inchon in September 1950--Mao and the CPV commanders determined that it would not be possible to advance further into South Korea.²⁸ Instead it was necessary to wage a positional war around the 38th Parallel.

The CPV dug 1,250 kilometers of deep tunnels and 6,000 kilometers of bunkers that were more than 30 feet underground for both defensive and offensive purposes. These “defense-in-depth tunnels,” designed by PLA engineering units, were from 15 to 25 miles deep. This system protected stockpiles of military supplies and the CPV’s command system.²⁹

In late 1951, significant supplies of Soviet artillery and other heavy weapons arrived. Just as with the civil defense system being implemented in China, these underground fortifications at the 38th Parallel were designed to withstand the U.S. use of nuclear weapons.

The principles for the political and military work of the CPV in Korea were formulated and tested in practice using the *mass line*, a concept which Mao first developed to guide the CCP’s revolutionary work during the Anti-Japanese War. According to Mao, “all correct leadership is necessarily ‘from the masses, to the masses.’ This means: take the ideas of the masses . . . and concentrate them . . . then go to the masses and propagate and explain these ideas until the masses embrace them as their own, hold fast to them and translate them into action, and test the correctness of these ideas in such action.”³⁰

To take two examples of tactics developed by CPV soldiers, it reduced its losses from U.S. air power by setting up a network of sentry posts that would fire signals when they heard the approach of U.S. planes; then the trucks on the roads would turn off their headlights and hide in nearby shelters. These trucks also responded to approaching U.S. bombers by driving at full speed, raising up a

²⁷ Mao’s Generals 23; Hong Xuezhong, Chief of the CPV Logistics Department, 126; Nie Rongzhen 52-53. Peng Dehuai wrote that as the CPV crossed the 38th Parallel into southern Korea, the CPV “had lost almost half of their men because of combat and noncombat losses.” 34

²⁸ Mao and Peng had initially set the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Korea as their goal, but in June 1951 they realized that this could not be achieved militarily. Nevertheless, Kim Il-sung and Soviet advisers pressed for a new offensive to drive the U.S./UN forces out of South Korea. Mao and the CPV leadership rejected this plan as unrealistic given military realities at the 38th Parallel, which included the weakness of the North Korean forces themselves. Zhang 121,132.

²⁹ Mao’s Generals, Yang Dezhi, CPV Commander from 1952-1953 after Peng was brought back to China for medical treatment, 155; Ryan 129-133.

³⁰ “Some Questions Concerning Methods of Leadership,” 1 June 1943, *Selected Works*, Volume III 119.

100-meter-long dust wall to confuse the enemy pilots.³¹ Another way the CPV overcame its logistical problems was its ability to capture American weapons on the battlefield; over one-quarter of its weapons came from the U.S. Army and Marine Corps.³²

In January 1951, the “Volunteers Newspaper” was launched by the CPV Political Department. Its goal was extensive news reporting and correspondence from rank and file units. Political officers at all levels organized newspaper reading on the battlefield. Over the course of one year, it solicited opinions from more than 30,000 CPV soldiers, carefully analysed the responses and reprinted many of them.³³

Another important method of raising political morale in the CPV was the practice of issuing “outstanding service” awards, which identified soldiers as heroes or models. Supervised by Revolutionary Serviceman Committees, every company in the CPV met after battles or campaigns to identify candidates for meritorious awards. In order to assure CPV soldiers that their families were cared for, local governments gave favorable treatment to their families. In the Chinese countryside, they received the best parcels in the land reform; in the cities, they received assistance in finding jobs. Some cities opened new factories or shops exclusively for CPV family members.³⁴

In addition, the Federation of Chinese People to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea issued a nationwide appeal in 1951 to raise funds in order to purchase aircraft and artillery for the CPV to enhance its combat effectiveness. By 1952, the federation had collected 556 million renminbi, mainly through pledges to donate portions of workers’ salaries.³⁵ This campaign became particularly important when in 1952 the Soviet Union required that China buy its weapons with hard currency.

At the battlefield, two-thirds of the PLA was rotated to the front at the 38th Parallel and the rear areas. PLA Acting Chief of Staff Nie Rongzhen wrote that “our troops in China gain[ed] experience in combat with the American army.” As a result, “Korea became a huge school that offered us combat training.”³⁶

China’s Support for North Korea in a Revolutionary Civil War

There were pre-existing close political ties between the Chinese and Korean communist forces. Many of the North Korean leaders, including Kim Il-sung, had been members of the CCP in the 1930s. At the height of the fighting in Manchuria with the Guomindang during 1947 and 1948, the Korean communists provided military supply bases and sanctuaries for the PLA when it was confronted by

³¹ Zhang 170, 175-176; Mao’s Generals, Hong Xuezhi 125.

³² “Confronting the West: China as David and Goliath in the Korean War,” by Philip West in *A Revolutionary War* 229.

³³ Mao’s Generals, Du Ping 91-93.

³⁴ Zhang 199-201.

³⁵ Ibid. 202.

³⁶ Ibid. Nie Rongzhen 51.

superior GMD forces. In early 1947, the North Korean leadership dispatched tens of thousands of Koreans to fight with the People's Liberation Army, swelling existing ethnic Korean units in the PLA to division size.³⁷

After the main body of GMD forces in the Northeast was defeated in 1948, the PLA sent more than 40,000 ethnic Korean soldiers to the newly formed Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) by the end of 1949. These battle-hardened troops became the Fifth and Sixth Divisions of the Korean People's Army. In February 1950, another 23,000 Korean soldiers from the PLA were transformed into the KPA's Seventh Division. Veterans of revolutionary warfare in China supplied the majority of the political cadres in the KPA in 1950.³⁸

Though there were close ties between the Chinese and Korean communists during the 1930s and 1940s, their paths to power were very different. During World War II, the Soviet Army formed a Korean brigade in the Far East, which was under the command of Kim Il-sung, a young Korean nationalist. Kim's brigade spent World War II out of combat, and the Soviet Union brought Kim to power in North Korea after it entered the war against Japan in August 1945. Kim's "Kapsan" faction sidelined first the "Yenan" group that had fought with the Eighth Route Army in China's civil war, and later the "Domestic" group of communists who had stayed in Korea during World War II.³⁹ When it crossed the 38th Parallel in late June 1950, the DPRK's leaders relied on World War II-vintage tanks, artillery and a small number of Soviet military advisers, and believed that they could conquer the South before the U.S. military could intervene.⁴⁰

All-out armed conflict between North and South Korea in June 1950 was preceded by fierce fighting at the 38th Parallel between the KPA and ROK (Republic of Korea) forces in 1949 and early 1950. As American occupation forces pulled back to Japan in 1949, they left behind \$110 million in weapons that gave the ROK an offensive capacity for the first time. From 1946 until the outbreak of the Korean War, the U.S. provided \$442 million in military aid to the Rhee regime.⁴¹ Under the watchful eyes of 482 American advisers deployed in South Korean army and government units, the ROK was formed in 1948. Much of the South Korean government had collaborated with the Japanese during World War II, and the ROK army and its national police force were led by veterans of the Japanese military.⁴² The Korean war was a civil war, and accounted for the loss of 100,000 lives, mainly civilians, in the South before June 1950.⁴³

³⁷ Chen Jian 108-109.

³⁸ Ibid. 109-110; *Uncertain Partners* 329; Hunt 457.

³⁹ Simmons 23-28, 104-108, 185-186.

⁴⁰ *Uncertain Partners* 131, 299; Simmons in *The Strained Alliance* 120.

⁴¹ "The Korean Civil War" by Robert Simmons in *Without Parallel: The American-Korean Relationship Since 1945*, edited by Frank Baldwin (1973) 150.

⁴² "American Policy and Korean Liberation" by Bruce Cumings in *Without Parallel* 48-83.

⁴³ *The Korean War* by Bruce Cumings (2010) 66.

In 1945, four out of every five peasants in South Korea were tenants. People's Committees under communist leadership were formed to redistribute land and remove Japanese collaborators from the armed forces and government. Popular opposition to the "South Korean Interim Government" installed by the U.S. occupation forces in 1946 was widespread. Armed suppression of strikes and labor unions in 1946 and 1947 was followed by communist-led partisan warfare in many areas of South Korea from 1948 to 1950.⁴⁴

South Korea's Syngman Rhee, who sat out World War II in the U.S. and returned in one of General MacArthur's private planes, had a history of calling for a "march north" to "liberate North Korea." MacArthur agreed. In August 1948 he proclaimed that the "38th Parallel barrier must and will be torn down." In a letter to his chief American adviser on June 14, 1950, Rhee said: "I think now is the best time for us to take the offensive to mop up the guerillas in Pyongyang. We will drive Kim Il-sung and his bandits to remote mountains and make them starve there in order to make the Tumen and Yalu Rivers our defense line."⁴⁵

With new infusions of American weapons, the South Korean army's strength was projected to surpass that of the KPA later in 1950. This may have prompted the DPRK to launch a pre-emptive offensive against an expected ROK attack.⁴⁶ When North Korean troops drove into the South on June 25, 1950, they coordinated their operations with South Korean guerillas who had been fighting against Rhee's police state since 1948.

The rapid advance of the KPA into the South encountered little resistance from an intact ROK army. Rhee, with the support of MacArthur, the US/UN Supreme Commander in Asia, claimed that the ROK army was on the verge of defeat, which would require the commitment of U.S. ground, air and naval forces to Korea. They believed that this was an opportunity to conquer North Korea.⁴⁷

The differences between the U.S.-backed Rhee dictatorship and North Korea's progressive policies were demonstrated in the summer of 1950 in the areas of South Korea that the KPA liberated. It reinstated the People's Committee structure—based on mass organizations of peasants, labor, youth and women—that emerged in Korea after the defeat of Japan in August 1945. Two sociologists sponsored by the U.S. Air Force found that the majority of South Korean factory workers and two-thirds of the students supported the DPRK. Land reform, patterned after the system in North Korea in 1946 that benefitted millions of peasants, was implemented in the South.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ *Korea: The Unknown War* by Cumings and Halliday (1988) 20, 40, 52.

⁴⁵ The Tumen River is the North Korean border with the Soviet Union. Simmons 115-116.

⁴⁶ Simmons in "The Korean Civil War" 152.

⁴⁷ Kolkos 578-584, 592.

⁴⁸ *Unknown War*, 21-23, 35, 40, 85. In late 1945 and 1946, the North Korea redistributed 2.3 million acres of land to 600,000 peasant households, affecting over 50 per cent of North Korea's

Thus the Korean War was a continuation of a revolutionary civil war between the reactionary Rhee regime on the one hand, and progressive social forces in South Korea and the North Korean government on the other. This ongoing struggle was internationalized through U.S. military intervention.

As it crossed the 38th Parallel with the U.S. military in October 1950, the ROK army, the right-wing Korean Youth Association and Rhee's secret police unleashed a campaign of executions in the South and the North. In February 1951, a battalion of the ROK 11th Division committed the equivalent of the My Lai massacre in South Vietnam seventeen years later. They shot 719 people, three quarters of whom were children and elderly, in South Kyongsang province.⁴⁹ In December 1950 and early 1951, in order to protect the North Korean population, the CPV built light, floating bridges over the Yalu for KPA soldiers, government officials and civilians seeking refuge in China.⁵⁰

After joint CPV-KPA forces launched their devastating attacks on over-extended U.S. Army and Marine forces from November 1950 to January 1951, Mao cabled CPV headquarters with instructions that "The Chinese and Korean comrades must be united as brothers, share weal and woe, live and die together, and fight against the common enemy to the end." [CPV soldiers] should treat the Korean problems as ours and care about everything in Korea."⁵¹ Peng Dehuai stated that "we must under no circumstances be arrogant or taken on the air of big-nation support troops. . . The Korean Party is still young. . . We can modestly pass on our merits to them and sincerely help them correct their shortcomings. Only when we become more modest and sincere can we unite with them and learn their merits."⁵²

In order to create stronger ties between the CPV and the North Korean people, the CPV Political Department issued regulations that included: (1) We must organize a mass campaign within the troops to care about everything in Korea; (2) We shall teach the Korean masses how to prepare for air defense, and we shall always leave them enough grains for their own needs; (3) Each company must form a group in charge of Korean mass work which is responsible for maintaining discipline and mass mobilization. The CPV paid for its food and lodging in North Korea, carrying on the PLA's heritage from the Chinese civil war. According to Peng, "the question of discipline is more important when we fight a war in a foreign country."⁵³

When U.S. bombing in the summer of 1951 had so devastated North Korea's agriculture that 50-60 per cent of its people faced starvation, the CPV called on its rear defense troops to set aside a portion of their daily rations for the Korean

land. Simmons 112.

⁴⁹ Uncertain Partners 25-29; Unknown War 23-26; *Historical Dictionary of the Korean War* edited by James Matray 230.

⁵⁰ "A Reminiscence of the Chinese People's Volunteers in the Korean War," Anthony Farrar-Hockley, *The China Quarterly* (June 1984) 294.

⁵¹ Zhang 205.

⁵² Peng, October 14, 1950 in *Uncertain Partners* 288.

⁵³ Zhang 206.

people. Chinese soldiers also assisted North Korean farmers in bringing their land back into cultivation.⁵⁴

Even while the CPV was fighting against U.S. aggression in Korea, it shipped large quantities of weapons and munitions to the Vietminh in North Vietnam. According to a study by the U.S. State Department, the PLA shipped 20-30 tons monthly to the Vietminh in 1951, 250 tons in 1952 and 750 tons in 1953.⁵⁵

After the Korean armistice was signed in July 1953, the PLA's shipments to the Vietminh reached a peak of 4,000 tons in 1954. This included hundreds of heavy field artillery, 37 mm anti-aircraft guns and 75 mm recoilless rifles, much of which the CPV had captured from the U.S. in Korea.⁵⁶ This provided important support for the Vietminh's decisive victory in 1954 over the U.S.-supported French army at Dienbienphu on the remote northwest border of Vietnam and Laos.

How the U.S. Imperialists Fought in Korea

In Korea, the American military possessed superior firepower and transport. However, US/UN forces only came out to fight during the daytime, with the support of massive artillery barrages and air strikes. They most feared close combat at night; under these conditions, politically motivated Chinese soldiers wielding light weapons were extremely effective.

According to an American correspondent, "It is not the time to be a Korean, for the Yankees are shooting them all . . . nervous American troops are ready to fire at any Korean."⁵⁷ As it drove north through South Korea in the summer of 1950, the U.S. Air Force strafed civilian refugees. U.S. pilots had orders to strafe all groups of more than eight Koreans. Major Gen. Hobart Gay, commander of the 1st Cavalry Division, ordered a bridge blown up while refugees were crossing, killing hundreds.

On July 29, 1950, troops from the 7th Cavalry Division killed more than 200 South Korean civilians seeking shelter in a railroad culvert near the village of No Gun Ri. An American-Korean investigation fifty years later revealed that 83 per cent of the dead were women, children and men over the age of 40. This was the 7th Cavalry's first encounter with the "gooks" of Korea, who they would encounter again in South Vietnam. According to one American soldier, "We just annihilated them. It was about like an Indian raid, back in the old days." A widely distributed comic book, "Two-fisted Tales," describes a firefight with the CPV and the determination of a GI to get into his jeep and "Get them *** gooks."⁵⁸

During the Korean War, the U.S. military destroyed dozens of North Korean cities which had no military value. In the capital of Pyongyang, out of 80,000 houses, 64,000 were destroyed by the U.S Air Force by means of napalm and firebombing.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 206, 209-210; Peng 288.

⁵⁵ *The First Vietnam Crisis, 1953-54* by Melvin Gurtov (1967) 81, 170.

⁵⁶ "Confronting the West" by Philip West in *A Revolutionary War* (1993) 229; *Street Without Joy: The French Debacle in Indochina* by Bernard Fall (1961) 55-56.

⁵⁷ Unknown War 88.

⁵⁸ *Bridge at No Gun Ri: A Hidden Nightmare from the Korean War* by Hanley, Choe and Mendoza, 2001, 110-111, 124, 134, 291; Unknown War 89.

Air Force General Curtis Lemay stated, “Over a period of three years or so, we burned down every town in North Korea ...This is palatable, but to kill a few people [non-combatants] to stop this from happening--a lot of people can’t stomach it.” In June 1952, 500 U.S. planes bombed the four most important dams and power complexes in North Korea for the first time. One of these was the Suping hydro-electric plant on the Yalu, which supplied 90 per cent of North Korea’s total power and 10 per cent of the power of northeast China.⁵⁹

According to a well known Western scholar, over two million North Koreans, out of a total population of nine million, perished during the war.⁶⁰ Faced with this genocidal policy, the North Korean population attempted to survive in caves and in underground complexes of schools, hospitals and factories. These U.S. military actions constituted crimes against humanity as defined by the United Nations.

On four occasions, Truman, Eisenhower, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and MacArthur threatened to use tactical nuclear weapons against Chinese forces in Korea and Manchuria. On these occasions, B-29s equipped with nuclear weapons were sent across the Pacific to Japan and Guam.⁶¹ They were not used out of humanitarian concerns.

Future Secretary of State Dean Rusk explained why there was no need to use nuclear weapons: “We were bombing with conventional weapons everything that moved in North Korea, every brick standing on top of another.” Nuclear weapons also had limited utility on the “jigsaw” Korean battlefield, in which tactical nuclear weapons aimed at the CPV would also hit U.S. troops, and because only 10 per cent of China’s population lived in targeted cities.⁶² From a strategic imperialist standpoint, the majority of the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that an expanded, and possibly nuclear, war in China would divert U.S. military resources away from building up NATO to confront the Soviet Union in Europe—what was known as the “Europe First” policy.

MacArthur’s drive into the North in October-November 1950 was not his own. As early as June 30, MacArthur, with the support of the Joint Chiefs, ordered air

⁵⁹ Ibid. 118, 187; “Air Operations in Korea: The Soviet Side of the Story,” by Jon Halliday in *A Revolutionary War* (1993) 155.

⁶⁰ *The Korean War: A History* by Bruce Cumings (2010) 35.

⁶¹ “Atomic Diplomacy during the Korean War,” Roger Dingman, *International Security* (Winter 1988-1989) 51-75. In 1951, the U.S. had 450 atomic bombs in its stockpile, deliverable against China or the Soviet Union by a fleet of B-29s. The U.S. had nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union, but it was qualified. The Soviet Union had tested its first nuclear weapon in August 1949 and had 25 atomic bombs, deliverable by R-3 missiles, in 1950. Unknown War 123; *Stalin and the Bomb* by David Holloway (1994) 249; Halliday 168.

⁶² Chen Jian 192.

raids over North Korea. At the end of September 1950, Secretary of Defense George Marshall informed him: "We want you to feel unhampered tactically and strategically to proceed north of the 38th parallel." ⁶³

MacArthur was sacked by Truman in April 1951 because he went "public," attacking the administration for hamstringing him from attacking the Chinese military and industrial bases more deeply in Manchuria. MacArthur also publicly advocated using 30-50 atomic bombs to set up a "radioactive belt" at the Chinese border.

In Korea, the morale of much of the U.S. Army and Marine Corps plummeted after their defeat by the CPV in its first offensives from November 1950 to January 1951. A key U.S. weakness was that its soldiers were politically unmotivated because they had invaded another country and were fighting an unjust war. The CPV addressed these themes in the political propaganda it aimed at American soldiers, especially at defeated units and segregated units of African-American soldiers. After U.S. forces retreated south of the 38th Parallel in early 1951, wall messages appeared such as: "Die for the Wall Street? No! Demand Giving up Fighting and Go Home Soon! The C.P.V.F." ⁶⁴

American morale was also undermined by the fact that a year into the war, 98 percent of African-American soldiers were serving in segregated units, led by bigoted white officers. The casualty rate among Black soldiers, who were disproportionately concentrated in front-line combat units, was twice as high as among whites. ⁶⁵

After suffering a series of humiliating defeats in the winter of 1950-1951, the U.S. ruling class and its generals recognized that escalating the war further into China would commit the U.S. armed forces ever more deeply into an unpopular, unwinnable war. They had to settle for a stalemate at the 38th Parallel.

The Soviet Union—a Limited and Unreliable Ally

At the beginning of the Korean War, the Soviet Union committed several air divisions to protect the rear of the PRC in the Northeast, Beijing and its eastern coast. However, from October 1950 to July 1953, the Soviet Union let China do almost all of the fighting against the U.S. military in Korea.

Initially, the CPV had to fight using Japanese and American weapons captured during the World War II and the civil war against the Guomindang. In June 1951, Mao sent Xu Xiangqian, the Chief of the PLA General Staff, to Moscow with requests

⁶³ Chen Jian 168.

⁶⁴ "The Korean War and Armed Forces Integration" by Alan Gropman in *A Revolutionary War*.

⁶⁵ As an extension of Jim Crow injustice on the mainland, the U.S. military brought Black soldiers out of foxholes to courts-martial for "misconduct before the enemy," with many sentences of life imprisonment and death. *Blacks and the Military in American History* by Jack Foner (1974) 189-191.

for weapons to equip 60 Chinese divisions and for assistance in constructing Chinese factories that would help the PLA achieve a self-reliant armaments capacity. The Soviet Chief of General Staff, S.M. Shtemenko, told Xu that the Soviet Union could only provide weapons and equipment for 16 divisions in 1951—at the height of the fighting in Korea-- due to “transportation difficulties.”⁶⁶

During the most successful CPV offensives between November 1950 and January 1951, the number of captured American weapons exceeded Soviet weapons; the CPV’s front-line armies fought with 4 to 7 per cent Soviet weapons, while captured American weapons made up 31 to 50 per cent of the CPV’s arms. The Soviet Union did not provide its latest and heaviest howitzers, artillery, and anti- tank weapons to the CPV; the weapons provided were of World War II- vintage.⁶⁷ During the Korean War, China had to purchase Soviet weapons and technological assistance with a multi-billion ruble loan. Beginning in April 1952, the Soviet Union demanded that China pay for its military equipment with hard currency, which forced the CPV to curtail its military operations.⁶⁸

Of critical importance to the course of the war, when Mao and the CCP leadership were making the decision to intervene in Korea in October 1950, Stalin reneged on his earlier promise to provide air cover for the Chinese and North Korean ground forces.

After the successful Chinese offensive which started in November 1950, Soviet air cover was limited in numbers and territorial scope. It sent several hundred MiG-15s, pilots and three anti-aircraft artillery divisions with ground radar to protect Chinese supply lines into North Korea, and to defend the key bridges over the Yalu and its hydroelectric dams—which U.S. pilots called “MiG alley.” Soviet pilots received strict instructions to stay north of Pyongyang and away from U.S. ground units, airfields and naval forces. In 1951, Soviet pilots and anti-aircraft shot down a sufficient number of B-29 bombers to force them to move from daylight to less accurate nighttime bombing.⁶⁹

The PLA had to build and train an air force beginning with 122 MiG-15s that the Soviet Union provided in late 1950. The first air battles between Chinese MiG-15s and U.S. F-86s took place on January 21, 1951. It was not until late summer of

⁶⁶ Mao’s Generals, Xu Xiangqian 143.

⁶⁷ Simmons 181-182, 227. Stalin was concerned about building up a politically independent Chinese military during the war. The major exception was the MiG-15s that the Soviet air force sold to build the PLA’s first modern air force.

⁶⁸ Zhang 84, 222. China incurred a debt of three billion rubles (\$350 million) for Soviet military equipment during the Korean War. China did not pay off this debt (plus interest) until 1965. *Mao’s China and the Cold War* by Chen Jian (2001) 305.

⁶⁹ “Recent Scholarship and Findings About the Korean War,” Lester Brune, *American Studies International* (October 1998) 11-14; Halliday 156-158. Both the U.S. and Soviet Union tried to keep this aerial combat in Korea secret in order to avoid escalation that neither military was prepared for.

1951 that two inexperienced Chinese air divisions were operating out of airfields in Manchuria in order to protect the CPV's northernmost transport lines.

By then, the decisive battles of the war had been fought. This meant that Chinese ground forces were exposed to U.S air attacks in the principal combat zones before "tunnel warfare" commenced. In large part due to the lack of air cover, more than half a million Chinese soldiers died during the Korean War (including Mao's 28 year-old son Mao Anying).

Negotiations and the Deadlock over Repatriation of the Prisoners of War

After the CPV captured Seoul in January 1951, Chinese negotiators proposed a cease-fire at the 38th Parallel, a resolution of the "Taiwan problem," and the admission of the People's Republic to the UN Security Council. The U.S. responded by pressing for labeling the PRC as an "aggressor" at the UN and spurned negotiations. It took months of intense fighting, during which US/UN forces recaptured Seoul, before a cease-fire was agreed on in July 1951.

The cease-fire was followed by the signing of an armistice in July 1953. Thus, there were two years of negotiating while fighting, during which the U.S. Air Force and Navy stepped up their bombing campaign of North Korea and the Yalu border area, code-named "Operation Strangle." In the summer of 1953, the USAF bombed five dams near Pyongyang that provided water for 75 per cent of North Korea's rice production in an attempt to starve the North Korean people into submission.⁷⁰

In 1951, the Chinese agreed that a cease-fire and eventual armistice would be based on the 38th Parallel. This turned out to be the easiest issue to resolve. The question of the repatriation of prisoners-of-war deadlocked the negotiations until the spring of 1953. The U.S. had been waging a propaganda battle around the treatment of its POWs ever since their capture in large numbers during their rout by the CPV in late 1950. The U.S. military claimed that the Chinese were "brainwashing" U.S. POWs after they had received political education on world affairs and the nature of the war. According to an official military study, over one-third of the U.S. army repatriates said that they had collaborated with their captors, which included signing "peace petitions" calling for an end to the war. Some American pilots made confessions about their bombing of civilian targets in North Korea.⁷¹

Several groups of prisoners issued statements that they were being treated well by the CPV. For example, the Twelfth POW Camp Committee issued a letter to "Peace-loving Peoples of the World" on December 20, 1951: "We want to go home.

⁷⁰ Unknown War 195-196.

⁷¹ Zhang 66, 84, 148; *March to Calumny: The Story of American POWs in the Korean War* by Albert Biderman (1963) 38, 47, 218. The first groups of repatriated POWs who were accused of succumbing to "Communist indoctrination" were flown to Valley Forge Army Hospital for psychiatric care, which was later described to reporters as "reorientation treatment."

For many of us, this will be our second Christmas holiday since we became prisoners of the Korean War. Though the Chinese People's Volunteers treat us very well here, cooking good food and taking good care of us, we still miss our hometowns and families very badly." ⁷²

A basis was laid for anti-war statements as morale in the American army fell rapidly after their defeat by the CPV in late 1950. One whole unit that surrendered to the CPV was an engineering company from the African-American 24th Regiment of the 25th Infantry Division. By 1952, desertions among GIs on the way to the front had increased by five times since the early months of the war, as did the rate of self-inflicted wounds. ⁷³

The Chinese demanded that the POWs for both sides be repatriated to North and South Korea. The U.S. countered with a demand for "voluntary repatriation." However, most of the Chinese and North Korean prisoners did not have a free choice. U.S., South Korean and Guomindang intelligence officers were stationed in their camps in order to force Chinese and North Korean captives to stay in South Korea or go to Taiwan. Due to the abusive treatment of North Korean prisoners by South Korean troops and pressure against them not to return home, rebellions erupted in many of the POW camps.

Whereas the CPV was willing to repatriate all of the 11,560 US/UN prisoners-of-war, the U.S. and South Korea offered to repatriate only 70,000 out of 132,470 Chinese and North Korean prisoners. In the end, the U.S. and the CPV agreed to place POWs who refused repatriation under the control of a Neutral Nations' Supervisory Commission for three months; at the end of this period those who still refused repatriation would be set free. ⁷⁴

Though the number of U.S. casualties was much lower than those of the CPV, the 55,000 American soldiers killed, 150,000 wounded and 11,500 captured undermined public support for the war and placed pressure on Truman, Eisenhower and their generals to seek a negotiated end to it. By August 1953, 62 per cent of the American people said the Korean War had not been worth fighting. ⁷⁵ The deaths of 55,000 U.S. soldiers and airmen during the three and a half years of the Korean War were far higher proportionately than the 58,000 American deaths in the Vietnam War over twelve years.

This was the first defeat that the U.S. imperialist military suffered in the 20th century. In September 1953, Mao stated that the Korean War had shattered the myth of U.S. invincibility:

⁷² Mao's Generals, Chai Chengwen, Secretary-General of the CPV Delegation to the Korean Truce Talks 214. Conditions in the camps improved after fighting stalemated at the 38th Parallel and a ceasefire was signed in July 1951. This was confirmed by Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett and a Pulitzer-winning photographer after they visited several U.S. POW camps in 1952. *Burchett: Reporting the Other Side of the World, 1939-1983* (1986) 168-171.

⁷³ Unknown War 198.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 33.

⁷⁵ Korean Handbook 409.

We fought U.S. imperialism, an enemy wielding weapons many times superior to ours; and yet we were able to win and compelled it to agree to a truce. ... This time we have taken the measure of the U.S. armed forces. If you have never taken them on, you are liable to be scared of them. We have fought them for thirty-three months and got to know them for what they are worth. U.S. imperialism is not terrifying, nothing to make a fuss about.⁷⁶

Only a year after the victory of the revolution, the willingness of the People's Republic of China to go head to head with the most powerful military machine in history, and to make extremely heavy sacrifices in men and material, inspired and riveted the attention of revolutionaries and the oppressed in many countries.

⁷⁵ "Our Great Victory in the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea, and Our Future Tasks," 12 September 1953, *Selected Works, Volume V* 115, 117.