

LESSON 6

Remembering the Forgotten War

On June 25, 1950, the North Koreans, led by Kim Il-sung and supported by the Soviet Union, launched an invasion of South Korea. Seoul fell in three days and almost all of Korea was overrun in about a month. The United Nations sent troops to aid the south, creating an international force from 20 countries. Fierce fighting continued until a cease-fire agreement was reached on July 27, 1953.

Primary source quotations from individuals involved in the Korean War bring insights and information about this tragic event. In this lesson, students go beyond political history to explore the war from the perspectives of soldiers, military leaders and ordinary civilians.

LINKAGE WITH CURRICULUM

*World History

MATERIALS

*Textbook Sections on
Korean War
*Handouts and Readings
Accompanying This
Lesson

Purpose of Lesson and Overview

Students will examine the major events and significance of the Korean War, including U.S. involvement in the war.

Students will read primary source materials to understand the political, social, emotional and cultural costs of the Korean War.

Content Focus

At the close of World War II, postwar rivalry among the major world powers set the groundwork for the division of the Korean peninsula and the Korean War. In accordance with a secret decision at Yalta, the Soviet Union moved into the northern part of the Korean peninsula to disarm Japanese troops, while U.S. troops took over the south. The United States had set the 38th parallel as a dividing line between the U.S. and Soviet troops.

In 1947, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution calling for elections in Korea to ensure independence and unification. The Soviet Union strongly objected to this resolution and refused to allow U.N. delegates to visit the north. An election was held in the south and the Republic of Korea (ROK), with a democratic constitution, was formed in 1948. In the north, a communist regime, called the People's Democratic Republic of Korea (DPRK) was established under Russian influence.

Kim Il-sung led the North Koreans in an invasion of the south on June 25, 1950. In three days, Seoul fell and soon the entire peninsula was engaged in combat. The United Nations General Assembly voted to send troops to aid the south. A bitter and divisive war dragged on for three years until a cease-fire agreement was reached on July 27, 1953. The agreement left Korea divided into north and south, two armed countries with rival leaders and governments. Millions of Koreans were and still are, separated from their families as the Korean peninsula remains divided today.

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The Lesson: Remembering the Forgotten War

OPENING

1. What do you know about the Korean War? Have students brainstorm what they know about the war. Ask students to identify the major players (countries, individuals) who were involved in the Korean War.

“We shall be learning more about the Korean War and will start with what our own textbook has to say. Then, we shall read statements from people involved in the war. What might we be able to learn from these individuals?” Have students discuss this question.

READING

2. Have students identify and read the sections in their textbook that discuss the Korean War. In addition, students can study the handouts that accompany this lesson to learn basic facts about the war.

ORAL READING PRIMARY SOURCES

3. “Remembering the Forgotten War “ — Handout 1 to 6 — is a narrative that includes selections from memoirs and oral histories of people involved in the Korean War. The reading is divided into the five chronological phases of the war and develops a sense of what the war meant to individual participants. These include military officials and civilians from Korea, the U.S., Britain, Turkey, France and Australia. The purpose of this reading is to give faces and voices to the war and to build multiple perspectives about the Korean War.

There are roles for two narrators in this reading. In addition, there are 36 primary source quotes. Assign roles to members of the class. Have students read the script prior to the oral presentation of the narrative.

During or after the oral reading of the narrative, use the embedded questions to assist students to understand the material.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

4. After reading Handout 1 to 6, develop a discussion around the following questions:
 - a) What impression did you get listening to people talk about the war?
 - b) Were any quotations particularly striking? Did any seem puzzling? Did any provide new information or new insights about the war?
 - c) How did the narrative compare to the information in your textbook?
 - d) Were there any clues in the quotations as to why this war is sometimes called the “forgotten war”?

CONDUCTING THE INVESTIGATION

5. Each student should investigate the research question that accompanies his/her quotation(s). Students should identify at least three additional sources to address the question. They should identify the viewpoint of the original quotation and compare it to other viewpoints they have researched.

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EXTENDING THE LESSON

6. Interested students can conduct research on the Korean War Memorial unveiled in the Washington, D.C. Mall in 1995. Have students discuss:
 - a) Do you think the Korean War Memorial is a fitting memorial? How would you compare it to the Vietnam Memorial or the Civil War Memorial?
 - b) Why do some Americans think of the Korean War as the, “forgotten war?” Why do you think it took so long for the Korean War Memorial to be built? How might the fall of the Berlin Wall have influenced our views of the Korean War? When dedicating the Korean War Memorial, President Clinton told Korean War veterans, “You put the free world on the road to victory in the Cold War.” What did he mean?
 - c) If your group had been asked to design Korean War memorial, what might it have looked like?
 - d) How does the American memorial for the Korean War compare to those in Turkey, South Korea and Australia?
 - e) Some critics have pointed out that the Washington Mall is now filled with war memorials and they objected to one more memorial. How would you respond to that criticism? What is your view of the role of war memorials? How does a community go about showing remembrance?

ASSESSMENT

7. How has your knowledge and understanding of the Korean War changed?
 - a) Of the various activities — reading the text, hearing quotations, doing research, discussing the war — which gave you the greatest sense of “remembrance” of the Korean War? Was this sense of “remembrance” the same as your understanding of what happened historically? Is there a difference between “memory” and “history”? Explain
 - b) In your own, “history,” of the Korean War, what would you stress as the three most important points to remember?
 - c) If you were a novelist writing about the Korean War, what would be your major themes and characters?
 - d) If you had the chance to speak to survivors of the Korean War, what questions would you want to ask? Design a set of questions for an interview.

World Wide Web

- <http://kimsoft.com/korea.htm>

(for research on the Korean War Veterans Memorial: Fair Portrayal of US - Korea Relations)

- <http://www.thehistorynet.com/MilitaryHistory/articles/0496-cover.htm>

(The History Net - The Korean War: A Fresh Perspective)

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Handout I

Remembering the Forgotten War

Prologue: 1945-1949

1st Narrator: After World War II, Korea was divided with Soviet Union troops occupying the north and American troops in the south. The 38th parallel became the dividing line, though both sides claimed that general elections would be held to reunite Korea. In 1948-49, the United States and the Soviet Union clashed over Iran, Turkey, Greece, Czechoslovakia, Berlin and Yugoslavia.

2nd Narrator: While United States policies — the Marshall Plan, NATO and the Truman Doctrine — focused on Europe and the Middle East, its policy toward Korea was uncertain. In the past China, Russia and Japan had each seen Korea as part of its sphere of influence. There is a Korean saying, “When whales fight, the shrimp in the middle get hurt.” Japan had been defeated in World War II, Would the U.S. and Soviet Union become the new “whale” in Korea’s future?

1st Narrator: In 1949, the Chinese Communists won control of China, with the help of North Korean communists. Thousands of well-trained North Korean soldiers returned to help North Korea invade the south. About 6,000 Soviet advisors had helped train other troops.

2nd Narrator: In 1949, the United States pulled its army out of South Korea and Congress debated whether or not to send more aid to South Korea. Only 500 American troops were left to train the newly formed South Korean army.

1st Narrator: The South Koreans were not well equipped. They had no tanks.

2nd Narrator: The North Koreans were well equipped and had 150 tanks.

1st Narrator: Both North Korea, led by Kim Il-sung and South Korea, led by Syngman Rhee, dreamed of uniting Korea.

2nd Narrator: But both had quite different visions of what that united Korea would be.

Question for the narrators to research:

What were these different visions? What sort of government did Kim and Rhee each represent?

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Handout 2

Phase One: North Koreans Attack and Advance to the Pusan Perimeter

June 25 - September 15, 1950

1st Narrator: On June 25, 1950, the North Koreans attacked South Korea. Nikita Khrushchev, later a leader of the Soviet Union, remembered how the attack had been planned:

Quotation 1: “About the time I was transferred from the Ukraine to Moscow at the end of 1949, Kim Il-sung arrived with his delegation to hold consultations with Stalin. The North Koreans wanted to prod South Korea with the point of a bayonet. Kim Il-sung said that the first thrust would touch off an internal explosion in South Korea and that the power of the people would prevail — that is the power ruled in North Korea. Naturally Stalin didn’t object to the idea. It suited his convictions as a Communist all the more so because the struggle would be an internal matter that the Koreans would be settling among themselves. Stalin persuaded Kim Il-sung to think it over again, make some calculations and then come back with a concrete plan. Kim went home and then returned to Moscow when he had worked everything out. He told Stalin he was absolutely certain of success. I remember Stalin had his doubts. He feared the Americans would jump in, but we were inclined to think that if the war were fought swiftly and Kim Il-sung was sure it could be won swiftly, then intervention by the USA could be avoided. Nevertheless Stalin decided to seek Mao Zedong’s opinion. Mao also answered affirmatively and put forward the opinion that the USA would not interfere. I remember a high-spirited dinner at Stalin’s dacha [villa]. We wished every success to Kim Il-sung and toasted the whole North Korean leadership.”

(Source: Nikita Khrushchev. “Truth About the Korean War,” in Kim Chullbaum (Editor). *The Truth About the Korean War*. Seoul: Eulyoo, 1991: 61)

Question for Quotation 1: Why did Kim check with Stalin before he attacked? How do you explain the view that the United States would not become involved? Do you think Stalin and Mao expected the U.N. to get involved? Research the relationship among these three leaders in 1949-1950.

2nd Narrator: Though there had been border fights before June 1950, the North Korean attack came as a surprise. Despite valiant attempts by South Koreans, the North Korean army quickly took Seoul and raced southward. To slow the attackers, the bridge over the Han river was blown up, leaving refugees and part of the South Korean army. U.S. war correspondent Marguerite Higgins wrote about the disorder at the bridge:

Quotation 2: “Soon after the lieutenant announced the Communist breakthrough, mortars started bursting around our billet [housing]. Filing into separate jeeps, we rushed toward the big bridge across the Han River, the only escape route. As we raced through the rainy darkness a sheet of orange flame tore the sky. “Good God, there goes the bridge,” said the lieutenant. We were trapped. The Han River lay between us and safety to the South and the only bridge had been dynamited. It was obvious now that if we were not captured, we would have to abandon our equipment and wade or ferry across the river. When we reached the riverbank, we found masses of refugees and South Korean soldiers in a panicky press. Some of the soldiers were firing at people in boats

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and rafts in an attempt to force them to come to our side of the river. Other soldiers were defeating their own aims by rushing aboard any available craft in such numbers that they swamped the tiny boats. It was only by holding back the rush at rifle point that we got our band across the river. We were harassed all the while by steady but inaccurate rifle fire. Once across the river, there was nothing to do but walk across the mountain trail toward Suwon. Our single file of soldiers was soon joined by a huge stream of refugees, a ragamuffin army of tattered soldiers, old men, diplomats, children and a woman war correspondent.”

(Source: Marguerite Higgins. *War in Korea*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1951: 25-26)

Question for Quotation 2: One of the controversies of the war was whether or not the Han Bridge was blown up too soon. Why was this bridge so important? If you had been giving orders, would you have blown up the bridge at that time? Explain your decision. Consult histories of the war. You may also wish to consult the fictional account of the bridge decision in Richard Kim’s novel, *The Martyred*.

1st Narrator: The attack by the North Koreans was referred to the United Nations as an act of unlawful aggression. Because the Soviet Union had walked out, the Security Council voted U.N. support for South Korea. Its view was as follows:

Quotation 3: “The United Nation Security Council Resolution of 27th June, 1950 at the 474th Meeting. The Security Council: Having determined that the armed attack upon the Republic of Korea by forces from North Korea constitutes a breach of the peace; Having called for an immediate cessation of hostilities; and Having called upon the authorities of North Korea to withdraw forthwith their armed forces to the 38th parallel and Having noted that the authorities in North Korea have neither ceased hostilities nor withdrawn their armed forces to the 38th parallel and that urgent military measures are required to restore international peace and security; and Having noted the appeal from the Republic of Korea to the United Nations for immediate and effective steps to secure peace and security, Recommends that the Members of the United Nations furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security to the area.”

(Source: Anthony Farrar-Hockley. *British Part in the Korean War*. Vol. I London: HMSO, 2991: 400-401)

Question for Quotation 3: Use historical sources as well as this quotation to explain why the United Nations voted to support South Korea.

2nd Narrator: To support the South Koreans, the American Task Force Smith was quickly sent to Korea from Japan. But the Task Force was small; without tanks, it could do little. An American diplomat remembered how he watched the Task Force leave Pusan and headed north — only to be defeated.

Quotation 4: “Suddenly I was aware of Koreans quietly forming lines along Pusan’s main street; they stretched down blocks. They stood there waiting. I asked what they expected. They told me I would soon see. In 5-7 minutes three trucks rounded the corner carrying the first platoon (yes, platoon!) of American soldiers to join the Korean War. Behind us were only the victories of World War II and the heady feeling of virtual omnipotence. Only ahead lay the Chongchon River and Vietnam and trade deficits. No young man today can relive the feelings of utter confidence in victory and peace which then fell on my heart, on us all without exception. Now we were there, we would win and the war would be over. I remember scoffing at colonels who some days later began, in

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greater wisdom, to talk of repairing roads ravaged by next spring's floods. So we took those feckless, untrained men of Task Force Smith to a single electric car on the railroad. It wouldn't start — a symbol of foreboding I only later understood. So the USO man and I and two or three others hopefully leaned against it. Incomprehensibly, the car responded to our hopes. It started rolling slowly down the tracks bearing the front soldiers of Task Force Smith toward Taejon on their way to the outpost south of Suwon, in a place and a land they still scarcely even knew existed; and none of us in Pusan ever saw them again. I too would never be young like that again."

(Source: Gregory Henderson. "Korea, 1950" in *The Korean War in History*. Edited by James Cott and Ian Neary, Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1989: 181-82)

Question for Quotation 4: Some historians think that American troops were soft because they had come from easy duty in Japan. Based on the reading, do you think this criticism was accurate, or were there other factors that led to the defeat of these American troops? Use your research to support your answer.

1st Narrator: South Korean and American troops often had the will to fight, but not the means. Marguerite Higgins remembered one of the first skirmishes as Task Force Smith faced Soviet-made North Korean tanks:

Quotation 5: "The first swoosh from a bazooka flared out when they (the Americans) were nearly five hundred yards away from the tanks. But the aim was good and it looked like a direct hit. But apparently it didn't look good to Lieutenant Pays. 'Those kids are scared — they've got to get close to the tanks to do any damage.' The first Communist tank whose turret rose above the protecting foliage along the railway answered the bazooka with a belch of flame. We could see enemy soldiers jump from the tank and machine guns began to chatter at the approaching bazooka teams. Through my field glasses, I could see a blond American head poke up out of the grass — the young soldier was trying to adjust his aim. Flashes from the tank flicked the ground horribly close and I thought I saw him fall. It was so murky I wasn't sure. But in a few minutes I heard a soldier shout: 'They hit Shadrack right in the chest. He's dead, I guess.' The tone of voice was very matter-of-fact. I thought then how much more matter-of-fact the actuality of war is than any of its projections in literature. The wounded seldom cry — there is no one with time and emotion to listen. Bazookas were still sounding off. We felt certain that the tanks were like sitting ducks astride the tracks would be demolished within a matter of minutes. But time passed and suddenly, after an hour, we saw the bazooka boys coming back toward us across the fields 'What's going on?' I asked a sergeant. 'We ran out of ammo [ammunition],' he answered bitterly. 'And the enemy infantry moving up way outnumbers us. Besides, these damn bazookas don't do any good against those heavy tanks — they bounce right off.'

(Source: Marguerite Higgins. *War in Korea*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1951: 62-63)

Question for Quotation 5: Did the United States have any alternative to sending in troops quickly even if they were not combat-ready and well supplied? Explain your answer.

2nd Narrator: ROK troops and U.S. forces fell back to the Pusan area, where they formed what was called the Pusan Perimeter to hold off the North Koreans. Fighting there was particularly fierce. Americans tried to hold on until new troops arrived while the North Koreans tried to get UN troops out. Though the North Koreans had many advantages, American air superiority became an important factor. American Lieutenant. Lyle Rishell remembered some of the fighting:

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Quotation 6: “I was very apprehensive, as exhausted as I was, I could not sleep. I had an overwhelming and unshakable sense that, come morning, we would be hit. I was right. At dawn, the North Koreans attacked. To my immediate left, one of our machine guns commenced its staccato chatter. Soon other weapons began a chant, returning the first and the battle was joined. A heavy barrage would roar in and then die down a bit before starting up again. It was terrifying to watch the battle, but there was also a fascination in what was happening. Charlie Company on our right flank called for an air strike and soon we heard the familiar sounds of the close support aircraft as they came into view. Both F-80’s and the slower F-51’s were homing in on this one. In seconds they were over the target area, being directed by a small observation plane. The slow-moving spotter plane would weave back and forth in the battle zone and when it found the enemy, it would contact the fighters and give them the location.

“The larger planes reminded me of vultures waiting as they circled for the kill and then they began to peel off. They dropped shiny, aluminum containers that tumbled erratically from the sky before us. Instinctively we cringed as these napalm containers hit the ground and exploded and burning gel of gasoline flushed the attackers out of the rocks. Someone named it the Devil’s Brew. I wondered how any living creature could survive this holocaust. Still the airplanes continued their killing, coming around for another sweep. The men [Americans] were ecstatic, shouting encouragement to the planes as they ran for cover. Even as I watched feeling relieved that the attack had been stopped by the planes, I felt sympathy for the attackers. They were in the open, catching hell and there was no place to hide. The combination of exploding rockets, machine-gun fire and napalm had broken the enemy spirit. I said nothing to the men as I watched the soldiers die.”

(Source: Lyle Rishell. With a Black Platoon in Combat: A Year in Korea. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1993: 53-54)

Question for Quotation 6: Though air superiority might bring some advantages, how might its effectiveness be limited? One of the criticisms of both the Korean and Vietnam wars was an over-reliance on air power. Would you agree or disagree? Explain your answer using evidence from historical sources.

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Handout 3

Phase Two: The United Nations Offense

September 15 – November 25, 1950

1st Narrator: By September, United Nations forces had held the Pusan Perimeter and the commander of UN forces, Douglas MacArthur, planned a surprise attack on North Korean forces. An amphibious landing was planned out at Inchon, but the Marines who were supposed to take the area worried about the site. Marine Captain “Ike” Fenton, Jr. remembered their fears:

Quotation 7: “Everyone was very apprehensive about this landing. It really looked dangerous. There was a finger pier and a causeway extending out from RED Beach that reminded us of Tarawa (bitter island battle in World War II) and if machine guns were on the finger pier and the causeway, we were going to have a tough time making the last 200 yards to the beach. Our landing had to be made against a seawall that was about fifteen feet above the water level. That meant that we would have to use scaling ladders. However, a few boats in each wave would be able to locate holes in the seawall, the result of aerial bombing. Using scaling ladders meant that only two men at a time could get out of the boats and climb up the seawall. Equipment had to be lifted by lashing and lowering lines. Once on the beach we would face a flat area of about 200 yards before we actually ran into the town itself. On the left side of the beach, our left flank, was a hill called Cemetary Hill. Approaching it by sea, it was a sheer cliff. The only good approach to the hill was from the water side. The whole landing beach was dotted with emplacements and bunkers.”

(Source: Donald Know. *The Korean War: Pusan to Chosen: An Oral History*. New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1985: 214)

Question for Quotation 7: The Inchon Landing was later seen as MacArthur’s greatest triumph of the war, a great gamble that paid off. Why was the Inchon Landing such a gamble? How might his success have affected him as he made decisions in the future? Read more about MacArthur’s career to find evidence to support your answer.

2nd Narrator: The Inchon Landing was achieved with few casualties. The United Nations began to move forward from Inchon and break out from the Pusan Perimeter. UN forces now included troops from 20 countries. Many troops felt strongly about their own national identity even as they fought under UN flag. Norman Bartlett, an Australian reporter, described their sense of nationality, even to not wearing UN helmets:

Quotation 8: “The Scots and the Australians clung to evidences of their national identity. Even though there were men from many parts of Britain in the Argylls, they were Scottish enough to insist on the bagpipes and to prefer ‘The Campells are Coming’ and ‘Highland Laddie’ to the jive of the American Forces Network from Tokyo. The Australians flew the Australian flag alongside of the United Nations flag over their battalion headquarters, a map of Australia adorned the red and blue signs used to indicate the locations, while the men clung to many items of Australian equipment despite the generosity of the Americans. Driver Charlie Symes, of Edibin, Queensland, was one of the few Diggers to wear his slouch hat throughout. ‘They can take my strides,’ he said, ‘But they won’t get my hat.’

(Source: Norman Bartlett. *With the Australians in Korea*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1954: 26)

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Question for Quotation 8: What problems might arise in trying to command forces from 20 nations in a war? Find evidence about how UN forces worked together in Korea.

1st Narrator: By late September and early October 1950, UN forces had retaken Seoul and had crossed the 38th parallel into North Korea. U.S. reporter E.J. Kahn was impressed with the citizens of Seoul who came back to reclaim their city:

Quotation 9: “Seoul seemed like a ghost town, but here and there I came upon a sign of the affection that its citizens still felt for it, no matter at how low an ebb its fortunes might be. It was perhaps typical of what Seoul means to most Koreans that one day I saw two old women who were industriously scrubbing dirt off the brick facade of a building, notwithstanding the fact that all the rest of the building lay in a crumpled heap on the other side of the facade.”

(Source: E.J. Kahn, *The Peculiar War: Impressions of a Reporter in Korea*. New York: Random House, 195 : 39 - 40)

Question for Quotation 9: What characteristics did Korean civilians display in the midst of the Korean War? Find additional evidence to support your answer.

2nd Narrator: After retaking Seoul, United Nations forces were divided over whether or not they should cross the 38th parallel. The British and others thought it might be seen as a threat to China. U.S. President Harry Truman was also reluctant to risk Chinese entry into the war. General MacArthur, however, wanted to crush the North Korean army. Dean Acheson, Truman’s Secretary of State, claimed later that MacArthur deliberately misunderstood military orders given to him and moved north of the 38th parallel. Acheson quoted the instructions to MacArthur as follows:

Quotation 10: “Your military objective is the destruction of the North Korean Armed Forces. In attaining this objective you are authorized to conduct military operations north of the 38th Parallel in Korea, provided that at the time of such operations there has been no entry into North Korea by major Soviet or Chinese Communist Forces, no announcement of intended entry, nor a threat to counter our operations militarily in North Korea. Under no circumstances, however, will your forces cross the Manchurian or USSR borders of Korea.”

(Source: Dean Acheson. *The Korean War*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1971: 56)

Question for Quotation 10: Why was crossing into North Korea a critical decision? Why might MacArthur have viewed his orders differently than U.S. civilian leaders? Research the controversy surrounding MacArthur’s actions.

2nd Narrator: As United Nations troops drove north, taking the North Korean capital Pyongyang and approaching the Yalu River on the Chinese border, the North Korean leader Kim Il-sung asked for Chinese help. An officer in the Chinese army Ye Yumeng remembered hearing about MacArthur’s plan to get the war over by Christmas and the Chinese general Peng Tehuai’s reaction:

Quotation 11: “On hearing of MacArthur’s statement to a news conference that the battle would be over by Christmas, Peng Tehuai said the following: ‘Liar! So you plan to drive up to the Yalu River by December 25th? That

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is a groundless tale. I think that MacArthur is too optimistic.”

(Source: Ye, Yumeng. "Memoir of the Chinese Officer in the Korean War," in Kimchullbaum (Editor) *The Truth About the Korea War*. Seoul: Eulyoo, 1991: 244)

Question for Quotation II: Many of Mao's advisors warned the Chinese leader that joining the Korean War might lead to an all-out war with the U.S. and that he would be better off rebuilding China after its own long civil war. Mao, however, decided to enter the war. Why might the Chinese leader have risked a major war in order to help North Korea? Find out more about why Mao chose to back North Korea with Chinese troops.

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Handout 4

Phase Three: Chinese Entry and Offens

November 25, 1950 – June 23, 1951

1st Narrator: General MacArthur divided his forces, sending the Eighth Army west and Task Force X east, to cross the 38th parallel and head north. In late November, the Chinese offensive started. Thousands of Chinese troops crossed the Yalu River and infiltrated the space between the two UN forces. The Chinese attack came largely as a surprise. Robert Smith, a Marine near Yudam-ni, described a Chinese attack:

Quotation 12: “We were down around Turkey Valley when we started to move up to join the unit of the 5th that had gone through us. We hadn’t gone very far when the Chinese hit us. My God, it was unbelievable! Every which way you looked, all you could see were Chinamen. I had an M-1. I fired it so much that the barrel was almost burned out. It seemed that every shot hit someone. If you fired low, you’d get someone in their front ranks, if you fired high, you’d hit someone in the rear. They’d stopped our advance, but we’d stopped them cold in their tracks. The next morning, just about everywhere you looked, you could see dead Chinese. It seemed obvious we were surrounded. To make things worse, the temperature kept dropping. Each Marine is doing his best to keep warm. I know I have a real problem with my feet and I’m trying to keep them from freezing. The problem was the shoepacs. Where the leather and the rubber met in the pacs was the spot that hurt my Achilles tendon. This made me put too much pressure on my toes. The sweat would pour down on my toes and freeze. All right, do you know the difference between frostbite and frozen? Frostbite means the destruction of the tissue. This means amputation. Frozen, if it is caught in time, can be thawed out. What I was trying to do was keep my feet from getting frostbite. And while I’m doing this, the weather is getting worse and worse.

In the meantime, we got all these Chinese all around us. And we’ve taken a lot of casualties. I later heard the rest of the 7th is calling us ‘Suicide Charlie.’ We had to clear the hills of all these Chinese who were on all sides of us. Things get a little hazy from here on. All I can remember is constantly fighting and being worried about my feet.”
(Source: Henry Berry. *Hey, Mac, Where Ya Been: Living Memories of the U.S. Marines in the Korean War*. New York: St. Martins Press, 1988: 172 - 3)

Question for Quotation 12: Despite all their casualties, the Chinese succeeded in surrounding and pushing the United Nations forces back. Based on the reading, why might the Chinese have succeeded? Do additional research to find reasons for the Chinese success.

2nd Narrator: Along with the fierce ground war, the air war also increased as Chinese and Russian pilots joined in the fighting. In 1990 after forty years of silence, Soviet MIG pilot Alexander Smirtchkov told of his experiences in Korea.

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Quotation 13: “It was at that time (February, 1951) that I learned the fact that we were going to take part in the Korean War. At the end of March, my 18th Aviation Regiment arrived at Dandong airfield. The whole regiment flew out on its first combat sortie, but we had to fly in [radio] silence, only receiving [communications]. Also, we couldn’t even show where we came from. The fuselages of our planes had DPRK markings and we had to wear Chinese flight suits. Although we tried to maintain this strict security, it made us very nervous. We couldn’t understand why we had to hide the fact that we were Soviet pilots. Even though we didn’t know Korean or Chinese, we had to make contact in combat in Korean. However, once combat began, we couldn’t stick to unreasonable guidance like that.

We had very complicated feeling towards the American soldiers. It had not been very long before that we had embraced each other in an emotional victory on the Elbe [at the end of World War II]. However, yesterday’s blood ally had become today’s enemy. At first, we did not think of them as our enemies. However, hatred began to appear a little at a time. That was because of my friends who died in combat. As that happened, I found myself thinking about home and I didn’t like myself for that. In North Korea, the US aircraft were after two targets. They were interested in the Yalu River bridges and the hydroelectric generating stations in Pyongan Pukdo which were the sources of supply for North Korea’s electric power. Like the Nazis, the Americans fought tenaciously. Our pilots asked ourselves what we were fighting for. Especially when a friend who died in combat, giving his utmost in the fight, was buried in Port Arthur [not taken home for proper burial and recognition].”

(Source: Alexander Smirtchkov. “Memories of Soviet Pilots Who Participated in the War,” Kim: 25-26).

Question for Quotation 13: Why do you think Soviet pilots were told to pretend to be Korean? What were the goals of the air war the writer describes? Why did the U.S. target these goals?

1st Narrator: After their first victories, UN forces suffered severe setbacks and retreated south down the peninsula. A group of U.S. marines later told an historian what they remembered about that retreat:

Quotation 14: “The rear guard entered Hell Fire Valley and saw what Task Force Drysdale had endured. For Maill and other commandos, coming back through the area was almost as bad as fighting north through the area. ‘We found our dead where they had fallen in the snow, preserved in gruesome postures,’ he remembered. ‘Trucks and jeeps were bumper to bumper. All were either burned or shot to pieces. Some were still smoldering.’

‘We tried to pull bodies out of the trucks but they were frozen in grotesque positions,’ said Kelly who had passed through the area earlier. ‘Christmas packages with their bright wrapping paper and colorful ribbons were strewn about the area for a quarter of a mile,’ Maill said. ‘It was a terrible sight,’ he added. ‘Sacks of mail were scattered as far as you could see.’

Instead of sitting down to rest, as they had done at other stops, the marines spread out quietly and began to collect the mail. Sacks of letters and packages, the most precious gift a fighting man can receive, had been ripped apart by explosions and the wind had blown them all over the landscape. But there was so much mail there they didn’t have time to collect it all. ‘The men just stood there gazing in disbelief at the wreckage, trying, it seemed, to make it go away, or tell a different story than the one that was so obvious,’ Barrett said.”

(Source: Jim Wilson. *Retreat Hell*. New York: William Morrow, 1988: 306)

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Question for Quotation 14: The retreat south from the Yalu River later became a legendary achievement of the Marine Corps. Why do you think a retreat became such a memorable event?

2nd Narrator: With the retreating Marines was David Duncan who took some of the finest photographs of the Korean War particularly illustrating its costs. When Duncan wrote about his experiences, he included this conversation with one young marine:

Quotation 15: “I noticed a Marine trying in vain to prod loose with his spoon a single, frost-coated bean from the others in his can. The cold had so cut into his eyes that even the look of animal survival was gone. At last he loosened the bean and slowly raised it to his mouth. Then he stood, unmoving, waiting for it to thaw. ‘If I were God and it was Christmas,’ I asked, ‘What would you ask for?’ After several attempts to form words, the Marine’s eyes went up into the graying sky and he said, ‘Give me tomorrow.’ “

(Source: David Douglas Duncan. *This is War! A Photo - Narrative of the Korean War*. Boston: Little Brown, 1951: 2)

Question for Quotation 15: Unlike the Vietnam War, the Korean War was not a television war because TV had not yet been fully developed. How might pictures of soldiers Duncan have affected the American public? In Desert Storm fought in 1991, the military generally kept newspeople away from major actions. What role do you think the press and television cameras should have in a war?

1st Narrator: “While U.S. Marines were escaping Chinese encirclement in the east, the Eighth Army was retreating from the North Korean capital of Pyongyang. For South Korean troops, this retreat was devastating — the dream of uniting Korea seemed to die.” South Korean officer Paik Sun Yup remembered the wretched withdrawal of January 4, 1951.

Quotation 16: “Pyongyang’s fires proved to be funeral pyres for U.S. Army supply storage points. After the railroad link with South Korea had been restored, veritable mountains of U.S. supplies had appeared in Pyongyang. General Walker had ordered that these be destroyed to prevent them from falling into enemy hands. As we passed through the city, the light from the flames treated us to terrible spectacles. Numbers of Pyongyang’s destitute citizens approached the pyres and risked blazing death to retrieve clothing and food from the flames, even as American guards fired warning shots over their heads. Some of my own soldiers salvaged items of clothing from the flames and draped them over their bodies against the sting of the cold.

“At the Taedong River railroad station, I saw eighteen tanks on flatcars surrounded by oceans of flame. The tanks had crossed the broad Pacific Ocean to support our battle, but now at the end of their long journey, they were being destroyed before they had fired a single shot.

“Military engineers blew [up] the temporary pontoon bridge over the Tadong River, stranding huge crowds of refugees. But that didn’t stop the people. Desperate to escape, hundreds died fording the chest-high water in freezing weather. No pen can describe the grief that engulfed me as I watched helplessly. The dream of uniting the fatherland was gone.”

(Source: Paik Sun Yup. *From Pusan to Panmunjon*. New York: Brassey’s Inc. 1992: 110-11)

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Question for Quotation 16: Paik was an admired South Korean officer, but there was criticism of some ROK forces. Research to find out what were some of the problems and achievements of South Korean armed forces.

2nd Narrator: Even worse was to follow as Seoul, too, fell to advancing North Korean and Chinese troops. Refugees desperately tried to leave for Pusan. K. Connie Kang, whose family later came to the U.S., described her family's flight from the communist forces:

Quotation 17: "On a cold January night in 1951, when North Korean troops were about to invade Seoul, I rode on the rooftop of the last train bound for Pusan with my mother to escape the oncoming Communists. Bone-chilling wind from Siberia whipped across the "freedom train," which was jam packed with soldiers, the sick and the injured. There was no room inside for able-bodied civilians — not even children.

'I don't want to go up there, Mommy,' I protested. 'It's too scary.'

'We will be all right,' Mother assured me, even though I could tell she was scared herself. 'See those fellows on the train? They will secure us,' she said, pointing to the men on top of the train with a big wad of straw rope in their hand. 'If we don't take this train, we will surely die in the hands of Communists. This is the last train to Pusan.'

Mother climbed very slowly up a small staircase at the back of the coach. When I got up on the top of the train, I was surprised to see how roomy it was. Looking up from below, I had imagined a narrow strip of space barely enough for Mother and me to sit, but there was plenty of room for the two of us and all our belongings. With the help of the man who pulled me up, Mother arranged our allotted space efficiently, as if it were a family room. An eighty-pound sack of rice was placed about three-quarters of the way toward one side of the train, as one would place a couch. A bundle containing kitchenware and clothing was put along each side of the rice. I sat on a straw mat in the middle so I could lean back on the sack of rice. My mother sat beside me and held me by the cord tied around my middle with one hand to make sure I didn't fall off the train. The "freedom train" traveled all through the night. Not everyone was as fortunate as I on that fateful night. That night several youngsters fell accidentally to their death. Life was cheap. I could have been one of them, had my mother not secured me and grasped the rope tied to my waist through the long trip, her hand nearly frozen under her mittens from the exposure to the biting wind. Whenever my mother caught me dozing off, she pinched me. 'Don't fall asleep,' she said. 'You'll fall off the train if you do,' she said, all the while not once letting go off the rope around my waist."

(Source: K. Connie Kang. *Home Was the Land of Morning Calm*. New York: Addison, Wesley, 1995: ix-x)

Question for Quotation 17: A UN soldier was asked why he was fighting in Korea. He answered that he wasn't really sure, but it did seem that the refugees were going south so he thought he was on the right side. Based on the reading and your research, what were some of the motives of the people moving south?

1st Narrator: Other refugees also fled south with the UN forces who fought their way to Hungnam Harbor and who were evacuated by sea to Pusan. Also evacuated were some of the MASH (Mobile Army Surgical Hospital) hospital units assigned to Task Force X. One of the MASH doctors, Dr. Carl Dubuy, described the departure of the nurses.

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Quotation 18: “The farewell to our nurses, who had already shared the hardships to the beach landings at Inchon and in North Korea at Iwon Beach, as well as the midnight ambush in the mountain pass South of Chung-ju in South Korea in October, was somewhat tearful for many. Most of the men were more convinced than ever by this departure of the nurses that the rest of us would never really escape in the evacuation of Hungnam. Certainly the atmosphere of constant bombardment, the overcast skies, the hustle and bustle of loading troops and the material to the impatiently waiting ships, together with the word that the 1st MASH would be the last to leave, if and when, were all less than conducive to the elevation of morale.”

(Source: Carl Dubuy. “MASH: The Last Days at Hungnam,” in *Korean War Special*. Norfolk: MacArthur Memorial Foundation, June 25, 1995: 8)

Question for Quotation 18: MASH units in the Korean War are frequently identified with the television sitcom “MASH”. Watch a “MASH” rerun on television. Then research to find out what these units were really like. Compare your research to the television program “MASH.”

2nd Narrator: During the Chinese offensive, many UN troops made heroic stands only to be overrun and captured. Lloyd Pate, an American soldier captured in January 1951, suffered on the forced march north. He was even more devastated when he saw the conditions of the prisoners captured earlier in the war. Pate later described the “brain washing” attempts by North Korean and Chinese captors.

Quotation 19: “Some prisoners had been there for several months. They were much skinnier than any men I had ever seen. Their clothes and shoes were practically gone. Starvation was written all over their faces. I saw men who were well over six feet tall and couldn’t have weighed a good hundred pounds. I looked at the prisoners and couldn’t believe that men could get like that and still be alive. Practically every man had dysentery. It was caused by the filth they had to live with and it just added to the filth. The first day, the [Chinese] called for a burial detail. I was on it with some of the men in my squad. We went to the death house and it was a sight I’ll never forget. The bodies were stacked up and thrown around the room. There were forty or fifty in there. Most of them were just young kids, seventeen, eighteen and nineteen.

We also had criticism meetings. Every man had to criticize himself or another man while the monitor took notes. It is a Communist trick to get information and to get you used to confessing or ratting. My squad stuck to things they didn’t want to hear about. One man would say, ‘I’m John Smith. I criticize myself for not brushing my teeth this morning.’ Then another guy would pipe up. ‘My name is Joe Blow. I criticize myself for not washing my teeth.’ Late in May they started the indoctrination going full blast. There were lectures every day, hour after hour. They were about Americans committing aggression in Korea, about soldiers being used for cannon fodder by American imperialists, about racial discrimination at home and about unemployment in the United States caused by Wall Streeters and monopolists.

At this time there were a lot of colored soldiers in Company I and the [Chinese] were really bearing down on racial discrimination. A few colored guys got up and said it was our business what we did in the United States and for the [Chinese] to mind their own damn business. Most of them wouldn’t talk about racial discrimination and didn’t say much.”

(Source: Lloyd Pate. *Reactionary!* New York: Harper, 1955: 54, 66-68)

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Question for Quotation 19: A few United Nations troops did join the communists. In the West, there was much protest against the brainwashing, or indoctrination of POWs (prisoners of war). Research the POW issue during the Korean War. What were the main issues concerning the treatment of both North Korean and South Korean POWs?

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Handout 5

Phase Four: UN Forces Hold and Counterattack

June 23 – July 27, 1951

1st Narrator: Throughout the spring of 1951, United Nations forces tried to curb the five major offensives by the Chinese and North Koreans. One of the most notable battles was the stand of the British Gloucester Regiment made at the Imjin River. Finally overrun, its colonel gave the order to retreat. A British officer, Anthony Farrar-Hockley, remembered that desperate stand.

Quotation 20: “I met Bob returning to the Regimental Aid Post from a talk with the Colonel. The signalers had already destroyed their sets and Henry was stamping on the ashes of the codebook he had just burnt. We were all ready to move. In small groups, the Headquarters split up and ran over the ridge. When they had gone, I too, came up on to the ridge crest and prepared to descend the other side. Bob was standing alone by the path that led to the steep slopes below us. ‘Come on, Bob,’ I said. ‘We’re about the last to go — you ought to have gone before this.’ He looked at me for a moment before saying: ‘I can’t go. I must stay with the wounded.’ For a few seconds I did not comprehend his meaning: we were all making our way out — there seemed a very fair chance that some of us would make it. To stay here was to stay certainly for capture, possibly for death, when the Chinese launched their final assault on the position. And then I realized that he had weighed all this and made a deliberate choice: he would place his own life in the utmost jeopardy in order to remain with the wounded at the time they would need him most. Too moved to speak again, I clapped my hand upon his shoulder and went on.”

(Source: Anthony Farrar-Hockley. *The Edge of the Sword*. London: Alan Sutton, 1954: 66)

Question for Quotation 20: Some historians have suggested that war brings out both the best and the worst in human beings. Why was Bob’s action so heroic? Find out at least three other acts of bravery in the Korean War. You could wish to check citations for individuals who received the Congressional Medal of Honor in the Korean War.

2nd Narrator: By March, United Nations forces had fought back and retaken Seoul. Soldiers were beginning to call this the “Yo-Yo War.” Pierre Berton, a correspondent with Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry, remembered the UN entry into Seoul.

Quotation 21: “The silence of the grave hung over Seoul. When I entered the city ten days after the fourth liberation, its population, which once stood at a million and a half, had dwindled to fewer than 200,000. It had been looted of every grain of rice, every stick of fuel, every item of value. Its power plants had been wrecked so effectively that engineers despaired of getting electricity into the city in less than three months. Its water plants were ninety percent ruined. Its citizens had been beaten, hunted, burned out, kidnapped, jailed, starved and shot by the tens of thousands. Seoul had become a city of beggars and barterers, foragers and pimps. Women with small children strapped to their backs scabbled in the ruins gleaning charcoal for fuel. Old tired men sat in the marketplace trying to sell silver cups, which they had hidden from Communist looters or looted themselves

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from the homes of the rich. There were few young men or women in Seoul. Those who had not fled south had been herded north by the Communists into armies and work camps.”

(Source: John Melady. *Korea: Canada's Forgotten War*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1983: 79)

Question for Quotation 21: Historians have noted that the Korean War placed heavy burdens on both women and men. What does the reading reveal about the impact of the war on both men and women? Research to find out how the war changed the roles of women and men.

1st Narrator: In April, General Douglas MacArthur was removed from his position as commander of UN forces. He was recalled to the U.S. by President Harry Truman. Truman said he had to fire MacArthur because MacArthur wanted to widen the war and attack China, which Truman did not. MacArthur openly criticized Truman's policy. He wrote Representative Joseph Martin, 'in war there is no substitute for victory.' The firing was very unpopular with the American people, but a respected U.S. general Omar Bradley suggested that widening the Korean War was:

Quotation 22: "... the wrong war, in the wrong place at the wrong time."

(Source: Donald Knox and Alfred Coppel. *The Korean War: Uncertain Victory*. Vol. II. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, 1988: 125)

Question for Quotation 22: Research the controversy surrounding MacArthur's firing. Should Truman have fired MacArthur? Why or why not? How did the president and MacArthur come to have such different views about the war?

2nd Narrator: General Matthew Ridgeway was appointed the new commander. One issue he faced was racial discrimination in the U.S. armed forces. Truman had ordered the army desegregated in 1948, but there were still segregated units of African-American troops commanded by white officers. Ridgeway wanted all U.S. forces integrated as he later explained:

Quotation 23: "It was my conviction that only in this way could we assure the sort of esprit [spirit] a fighting army needs, where each soldier stands proudly on his own feet, knowing himself to be as good as the next fellow and better than the enemy. Besides, it had always seemed to me both un-American and un-Christian for free citizens to be taught to downgrade themselves in this way, as if they were unfit to associate with their fellows or to accept leadership themselves."

(Source: Clay Blair. *The Forgotten War: America in Korea 1950-1953*. New York Times Books, 1987: 867-88)

Question for Quotation 23: Why did Ridgeway support integration? Research to find out how army policies on integration compared to civilian ideas about integration in 1950, especially in the U.S.

1st Narrator: The integration of American troops was not without problems. Robert Smith, an African-American marine, remembered the prejudice he faced:

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Quotation 24: “There were and still are, several whites in the Corps who feel the same way, [anti-integration]. I can remember drinking with a couple of ‘em in a noncommissioned officer’s club after I’d made sergeant. One of them brought up this man’s name. ‘Oh, he’s a real Marine,’ he said. ‘He can sure keep those blacks in line.’ ‘Do you mean he can’t handle the white?’ ‘Well, uh, I didn’t say that.’ ‘But you sure implied it.’ That was the end of the conversation. You see, I think it’s all a matter of education. You have prejudice today and always will have. Look at Ireland. But if you look at it from an educated standpoint, it’s all foolishness. I’ve served with plenty of Marines, white and black, who I’ve thought were idiots. I’ve tried to stay away from these people. Once the order came down to integrate, though more and more Marines started to accept it, but not all, not by a long shot.”

(Source: Henry Berry. *Hey, Mae, Where ya Been: Living Memories of the U.S. Marines in the Korean War*. New York: St. Martins Press, 1988: 168-69)

Question for Quotation 24: How did Smith think integration would proceed? Find out the problems and successes of U.S. efforts to integrate its armed services during the Korean War.

2nd Narrator: Some white troops, strongly supported integration. One white soldier remembered this incident:

Quotation 25: “When they first started talking about integration, white soldiers were aghast. They would say, ‘How can you integrate the army? How do you know when you go to the mess hall that you won’t get a plate or a knife or a spoon that was used by a Negro? Or when you go to the supply room and draw sheets, you might get a sheet that a Negro had slept on.’ Well, of course that’s ludicrous. But it wasn’t ludicrous in 1950.

“I remember a night when my rifle company was scheduled to get some replacements. I was in a three-man foxhole with one other guy and they dropped this new replacement off at our foxhole. The other guy I was in the foxhole with was under a poncho, making coffee. It was bitterly cold. And pitch dark. He got the coffee made and he gave me a drink and he took a drink and then he offered some to this new replacement, who we literally couldn’t see, it was that dark. And the guy said, ‘No, I don’t want any.’ What the hell are you talking about, you don’t want any? You got to be freezing to death. Here, take a drink of coffee.’ ‘No,’ the guy said, ‘I don’t want to.’ ‘What’s wrong with you, man?’ ‘Well,’ he said, ‘you can’t tell it now, but I’m black. And tomorrow morning when you find out I was drinking out of the same cup you were using, you ain’t gonna be too happy.’ Me and this other guy kind of looked at each other. ‘Here, take the damn coffee,’ I said.

“That was our first black replacement. And it really struck me then, what a terrible, terrible thing we’d done to ourselves and to our society. That a man would come to us with an attitude like that.”

(Source: Rudy Tomedi. *No Bugles, No Drums: An Oral History of the Korean War*. New York: John Wiley, 1993: 107)

Question for Quotation 25: Wars can focus attention on civil rights issues. Research and compare civil rights issues in the military in World War II, Korea and Vietnam. What changes occurred in each?

1st Narrator: The Korean War brought some former enemies together under the UN command. Australians and Turks, who had been bitter enemies during World War I, now fought side by side. The Turks were known as aggressive fighters and brave in enduring wounds. An American correspondent, W. L. White, described his memories of wounded Turks and Chinese POWs in a MASH hospital:

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Quotation 26: “You may see some Turks, whom the nurses love as patients because they take everything with stoical grins. It is hard, however, to explain to the Turks that they may not get up and walk around, but should lie quietly, awaiting their turn on the table. Furthermore, these Turks (and the UN has no better fighters) are always bewildered when they find a live Chinese next to them in a litter. Since a Turk’s understanding is that he has been shipped some ten thousand miles for the express purpose of killing Chinamen, he is sure this must be an error, which he now moves to correct by arising to strangle this neighboring Chinese. However, an orderly always gets there in time.”

(Source: W.L. White. *Back Down the Ridge*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1953: 71)

Question for Quotation 26: Why did the Turks try to kill Chinese patients? Research to find out why the Turkish government supported the UN action in Korea.

2nd Narrator: In their memoirs, many soldiers praised the doctors and nurses of MASH hospitals and the Scandinavian hospital ship personnel. They also praised the corpsmen, or stretcher-bearers, who aided the wounded on the battlefield. One stretcher bearer was Pat O’Connor, a Canadian. His friend, Ed Haslip, remembered his battlefield deeds:

Quotation 27: “O’Connor’s company was overrun by enemy troops and several men were hit. O’Connor moved through the dead and dying, giving them comfort, bandaging wounds, occasionally praying with them, all the while ignoring his own exposed position. In a couple of cases, dying men held his hand and whispered their final words in his ear. To others who were wounded he gave support, told them they would be okay and occasionally dried the tears of pain and fear that he saw on so many of the young faces around him. Finally, when his medical supplies ran out and the situation started to look more and more desperate, he told [me] that he would go and get help. I watched him start to run back, but before he’s gone fifty yards a Chinese machine-gun cut him down. He was a completely selfless and dedicated soldier.”

(Source: John Melady. *Korea: Canada’s Forgotten War*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1983: 143)

Question for Quotation 27: On the battlefield, medical aid often consisted of a corpsman trying to take care of the wounded. How did such people as O’Connor “make a difference”? Find out what medical advances were made during the Korean War? What role did helicopters play? How did UN medical care compare to that of the communists?

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Handout 6

Phase Five: Attrition and Negotiation

July 27 1951 – July 27, 1953

1st Narrator: By the summer of 1951, it was becoming obvious that neither side could force the other out of Korea without widening the war. Cease-fire talks began on July 10, 1951. But these talks were suspended or came to nothing as battle lines shifted and prisoner of war issues were raised. Meanwhile, the fighting went on. One of the fiercest battles was at Heartbreak Ridge. It got its name, as French officer Louis-Christian Michelet remembered, when an American Colonel Adams was ordered to send his men one more time up a Korean hill, despite heavy casualties. As Adams later said,

Quotation 28: “To send battalion after battalion up this ridge only to have them slaughtered, with no reinforcements to back them up, is such a heartbreak for me.

(Source: Arned L. Hinshaw. *Heartbreak Ridge*. New York: Praeger, 1989: 36)

Question for Quotation 28: Why might officers have to order troops into battles like the one at Heartbreak Ridge? Some historians have compared this phase of the Korean War to trench warfare stalemate during World War I. Do research to find out how the two wars were similar and how they were different.

2nd Narrator: This phase of the war was largely confined to the hills and mountains near the 38th Parallel with no huge offenses or retreats. Instead, troops were locked into hill fighting. Howard Matthias remembered what it looked like as a new marine officer coming to lead a platoon:

Quotation 29: “The command bunker was impressive. Several adjoining rooms were connected by an underground passageway and completely protected by the top of the ridge only a few feet away. Late in the afternoon I was briefly orientated to the area, first with a map and then a visual inspection of the area from an observation post. The first look was bewildering. It was impossible to discern one hill from the other. I could not imagine being able to patrol and fight in that amazing amount of sameness.”

(Source: Howard Matthias. *The Korean War: Reflections of a Young Combat Platoon Officer*. Tallahassee: Father and Sons Publishing, 1995: 32)

Question for Quotation 29: What was hill fighting like? Battling to take hills, losing them and then retaking them was hard on morale. Find out how this phase of the Korean War compared to the fighting troops had heard about or taken part in during World War II?

1st Narrator: Maintaining morale while negotiations dragged on was difficult. Soldiers began to resent the possibility that there would be no clear victory and that instead they would “die for a tie.” One American officer, however, was impressed with the morale of French troops and their commander Monclar:

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Quotation 30: “I was with the French at Chipyong-ni. They were superb soldiers and they were all volunteers. Everyone of them was in Korea because he wanted to be there. They were led by a man named Monclar, a general in the French army who had taken a reduction in rank just to lead the battalion to Korea. Monclar was an old man by then, but he was a fighter. He spoke pretty good English and once when we were in the perimeter at Chipyon he overheard some of the guys griping about having to be in Korea. ‘What are we doing here anyway?’ That kind of thing. Monclar walked right up to these guys and said, ‘Just a minute. This is the first time in five thousand years of recorded civilization that there has ever been an international organization to help preserve the peace. This is the first time an international army has fought to maintain law and order. If civilization lasts another five thousand years, that will not change the fact that this is the first time it’s ever been done. And you people are part of it. And you should be honored to be part of it.’ And then he turned on his heel and walked away.”

“Monclar believed totally in the concept of the United Nations and what the UN was doing in Korea. That’s why he was there. But I think a lot of those French soldiers he had under him were old Foreign Legion types. They just wanted to be in a war. It didn’t really matter what the cause was they were fighting for, just so long as they were fighting. You have people like that. They get an excitement out of war that they can’t get anywhere else.”

(Source: Rudy Tomedi. *No Bugles, No Drums: An Oral History of the Korean War*. New York: John Wiley, 1993: 145)

Question for Quotation 30: Why did Monclair consider the Korean War unusual? Research what was happening in 1950 in French – ruled Vietnam. Compare the French struggle in Vietnam and Indochina to the Korean War. How were they similar and different?

2nd Narrator: For many troops, their most vivid memory of the Korean War was the cold. James Brady, looking back on his experiences, entitled his memoirs, *The Coldest War*. But fighting in the summer time had its own unbearable memories:

Quotation 31: “No one I knew who had been there long enough missed the winter, regretted the cold. But this fighting in the heat possessed its own dimension of horror. You could see the wounds, see what killed people, the explicit manner of death and injury: a leg severed at the knee, a mangled arm, how startlingly white a man’s ribs looked sticking out from under a flak jacket, pink at the splintered ends with little bits of meat attached. I could see what my own legs looked like and the backs of my hands, when I came down from Yoke peppered with rock and grit and sharp nails.”

“All winter you were so muffled in clothes, layers and layers, swaddled against the cold, that a man could be all shot to pieces, literally sieved, but unless you were a corpsman you didn’t have to look at the broken bones and the torn flesh and see blood pulsing from cut arteries and veins. The bodies were just as hurt, just as broken, but it happened under a couple of pairs of pants and an oversized parka. Men died more neatly in winter, modestly covered instead of naked and obscenely ripped apart. Those heavy clothes gave death a certain muffled discretion. A man could die in decency.”

(Source: James Brady. *The Coldest War: A Memoir of Korea*. New York: Pocket Books, 1990: 258)

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Question for Quotation 31: How did Brady compare fighting in the winter to fighting in the summer? How might bitter cold winters affect both sides? Research to find out how winter fighting affected all aspects of the Korean War such as uniforms, equipment and availability of resources.

1st Narrator: In the United States, the public seemed less and less interested in the war. Leonard Korgie found out that when he went home on leave. No one seemed to understand what he had been through:

Quotation 32: “I couldn’t get over how luxurious and clean everything was. Living was so easy. Korea had been such a struggle. A great number of people came over to meet me and to talk. I wanted to wallow in all this happiness, but somehow I just couldn’t. I began to notice I had a hard time talking to people. I put a shield between myself and my friends. I felt anxious about everything but didn’t know why. My family and friends were concerned about Korea, but more important, they were confused about it. They couldn’t understand the losing, the winning, the losing, the winning. What were these tremendous casualties all about? What kind of a police action was it that had dead and wounded reported in small-town weekly newspapers? That had local boys dead or home with missing arms and legs? What kind of Army have we got over there? You guys can’t do anything against North Koreans.’ I kept my mouth shut. They would have to learn about limited conventional warfare themselves. They would have to get the drift without my help. How could I explain it? I didn’t understand it myself.

“What really surprised me was how many of my relatives and friends couldn’t believe Korea was a “real” war, that I had actually been in combat. When I got home in 1951, one of my friends remarked, ‘Lennie, what’d you get the Purple Heart for, get spiked stealing second?’ That hurt. I was introduced to a Marine who had been at the Chosin Reservoir [bitter fighting near the Chinese border]. We didn’t say much to each other. Didn’t need to, we both understood.”

(Source: Donald Knox and Alfred Coppel. *The Korean War: Uncertain Victory*, Vol.II. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, 1988: Vol. II: 171-72)

Question for Quotation 32: Why did Korgie feel isolated from friends and relatives at home? Why do you think there was confusion on the home front about the Korean War? Research what was happening in the U.S. during the Korean War and public response to the war.

2nd Narrator: By the summer of 1952, many Americans were supporting Dwight D. Eisenhower, who was running for President of the United States. Eisenhower was a hero of World War II and was running on a platform to end the Korean War. His son, John, was bound for Korea. John Eisenhower remembered his father’s goodbye:

Quotation 33: “We talked of nothing very important, but in the course of the conversation, Dad gave me one admonition: never get captured. He shrugged off the fact that in infantry combat the chance of being hit by a mortar or artillery shell was always present, but as the son of a new nominee for President, my capture would not only subject me to special cruelties but would also put the Communists in a position to blackmail him. ‘If you are captured,’ he said, ‘I suppose I would just have to drop out of the presidential race.’ I assured my father this would never happen and told him not to worry. Yet had I ever found myself surrounded by Chinese or North Koreans, I had every intention of keeping my promise and using my .45 pistol taking, I hoped, some of them with me.”

(Source: John Toland. *In Mortal Combat: Korea, 1950 - 1953*. New York: William Morrow, 1991: 539)

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Question for Quotation 33: Why might John Eisenhower have become a special target in the war? Find out more about Eisenhower and his view of the Korean War. Why might it have been easier for Eisenhower rather than Truman or other politicians to end the war with a negotiated peace instead of an all-out victory?

1st Narrator: To encourage settlement, U.S. planes stepped up their bombing near the Yalu River and bitter fighting continued in such areas as Pork Chop Hill. As negotiations continued, Syngman Rhee, the South Korean president, was dismayed that North Korean and Chinese prisoners of war would be sent back north whether or not they wanted to be returned. Disregarding tentative terms for their return, Rhee saw to it that thousands were released so that they could remain in South Korea or go to Taiwan. Although American officials protested Rhee's actions, the South Korean commander of the Nonsan prison camp, Hong Sung-jong, explained why he helped to release the prisoners:

Quotation 34: "I'll take full responsibility for whatever was done by my officers and men. I'm not speaking as a battalion commander in charge of guarding the prisoners, but as a citizen of the Republic of Korea. You must remember that the prisoners who regained freedom are my fellow Koreans. If you understand this point, I don't think you can blame me for my sympathy towards them."

(Source: John Toland. In Moytal Combat: Korea, 1950-1953. New York: William Morrow, 1991: 570)

Question for Quotation 34: Why did Hong support Rhee's policy of releasing POWs? Research the POW issue in the Korean War. Why was it so difficult to resolve? Rhee claimed he was acting as a Korean patriot. Did his action prolong the war? Why or why not?

2nd Narrator: On July 27, 1953, negotiators agreed to an armistice at Panmunjom; it restored the boundary between North Korea and South Korea to the same 38th parallel, at roughly the same place it had been when the war began. A Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) was set up that exists to the present day, with border skirmishes continuing. But for most of the troops, the war ended on July 27th. American officer Robert Gerald remembered that day and night:

Quotation 35: "July 27th, 1953, started out as a rather quiet day on line. We were located on the west edge of the Punchbowl, near a place we called 'Luke's Castle,' a nasty little piece of ground which had changed hands a number of times as a result of probes and combat raids. Assaults on the 'Castle' were designed to punish the enemy, but not to seize and hold ground forward of our established positions.

"July 27 was an important day because the official cease-fire was to take place at 10 p.m. that night. No contacts with the enemy were reported during the day. Daylight patrols were limited to setting up ambush position. The generally quiet day was punctuated from time to time by a burst of small arms fire. As twilight approached there was a sense of excitement in the air. We had received strict instructions that all weapons firing was to cease promptly by 10 p.m. As it grew dark, the occasional exchange of fire picked up in tempo. Rifle fire was reinforced with the chattering of automatic weapons. The mortars were reinforced with artillery which swooshed overhead on its way to some unseen enemy. Both sides had picked up the pace and by 9:30 p.m., the exchange was at a peak. It was as if both sides were under heavy attack and were shooting desperately to keep from being overrun. The air was thick with the acrid smell of gunpowder mixed with clouds of dirt and dust. The sky was illuminated with one flare after another.

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“At about 9:45 p.m. the firing began to fall off. At 9:55 p.m. firing was limited to an occasional short burst from an automatic weapon. After a few more single rifle shots, it became deadly quiet. The only remaining noise was the whispering sound of a final parachute flare, casting an eerie glow over our positions and whispering, almost mournfully, as it clung to its fading light.

At first, no one spoke. Then voices could be heard up and down the line.”

(Source: Rod Paschall. *Witness to War: Korea*. New York: Berkeley Publishing 1995:184-85)

Question for Quotation 35: Why do you think the last hours of the war were so noisy? Research at least three different accounts of the Korean War. What does each see as the result of the war? Compare their views and develop your own view of the war’s outcome.

1st Narrator: The Korean War has been called a “forgotten war,” an “unnecessary war,” as a substitute for World War III and a “peculiar war.” A soldier who later became commander of the South Korean army made this comment in his memoirs:

Quotation 36: “We gained no victory, true enough, but we staved off a defeat that the infamy of surprise attack had nearly made a sure thing and we established the cold war policy of containment by bringing the enemy’s predatory aggression up short.

“My memory shall never expunge the scenes of Korean soldiers, soldiers sacrificing their lives to place explosives on enemy tanks in the first days of the war, soldiers who fought with grenade and bayonet and died in the rugged mountains within the Pusan Perimeter, soldiers who fought desperately to gain every possible inch of ground before the armistice brought the curtain down. These heroes will live always in my heart.”

(Source: Paik Sun Yup. *From Pusan to Panmunjom*. New York: Brassey’s Inc. 1992: 254)

Question for Quotation 36: What is Paik Sun Yup’s view of the Korean War? Research the policy of containment and explain its goals and outcomes. Do you think other nations that sent troops to fight with the UN forces would have shared General Paik’s conclusion? Why or why not?

LESSON 6

Brief Chronology of the War

1950

- June 25 North Korea invades South Korea
- June 26 U.S. air and sea forces directed to assist South Korea
- June 27 U.N. Security Council recommends U.N. assistance
- June 28 Seoul, capital of South Korea taken by North Koreans
- July 1 U.S. ground troops – Task Forces Smith – reach Korea
- September 12 Pusan Perimeter holds
- September 15 Invasion by U.N. forces at Inchon
- September 28 Marines retake Seoul
- October 9 U.N. forces cross 38th parallel into North Korea
- November 1 First clash between Chinese and U.N. forces
- December 5 North Koreans and Chinese reoccupy Pyongyang
- December 15 Evacuation of Hungnam Harbor

1951

- January 4 U.N. forces abandon Seoul
- March 14 U.N. forces reoccupy Seoul
- April 11 General Matthew Ridgway replaces General Douglas MacArthur
- June 23 Soviet Ambassador Malik proposes cease-fire talks
- July 10 Cease-fire talks begin at Kaesong
- August 23 Cease-fire talks suspended
- October 25 Cease-fire talks resume at Panmunjom

1952

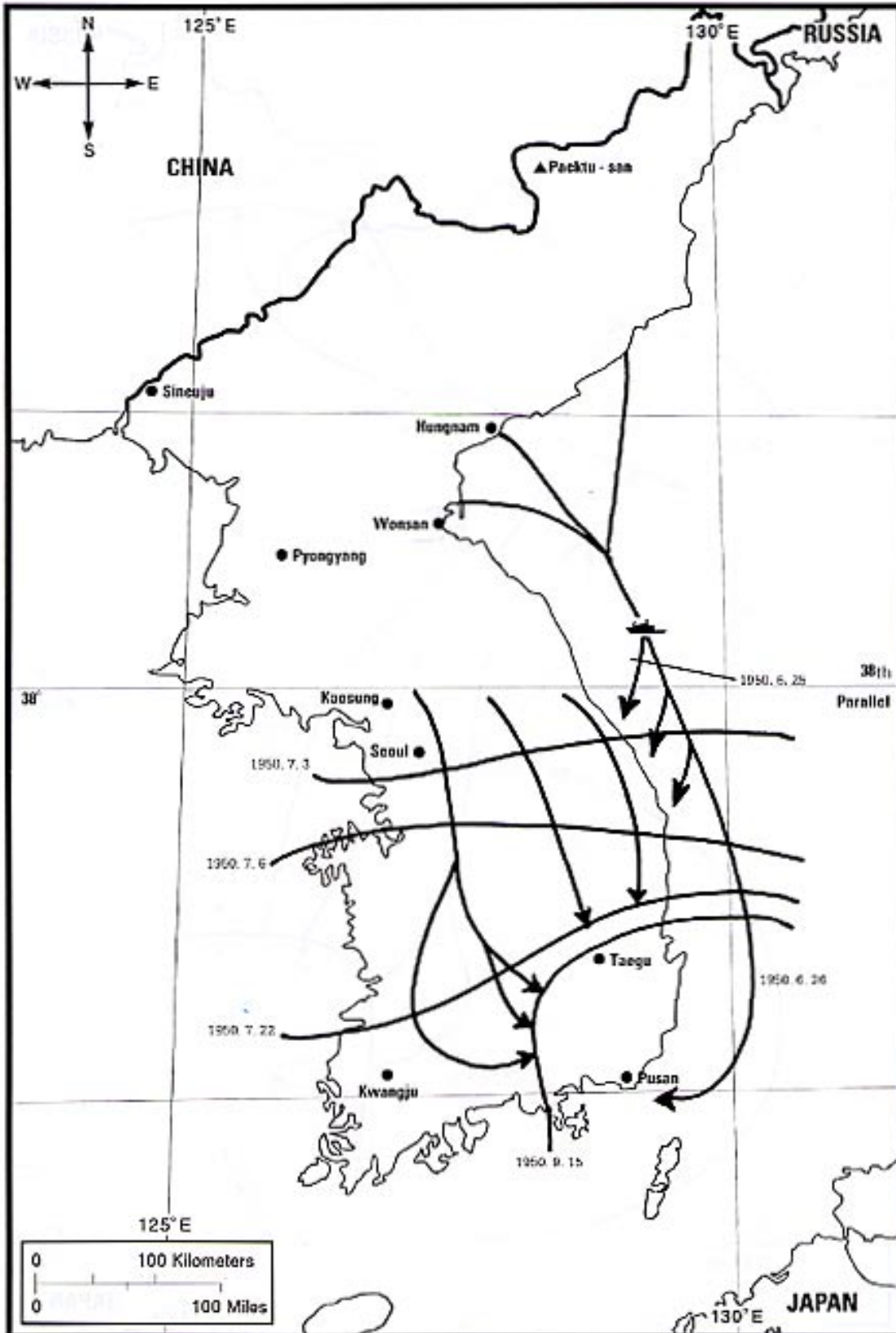
- May 8 General Mark Clark succeeds General Ridgway
- October 8 Cease-fire talks recessed over P.O.W. questions

1953

- April 11 Agreement on exchange of sick and wounded P.O.W.s
- April 26 Cease-fire talks resume at Panmunjom
- June 8 Panmunjom negotiators sign agreement on P.O.W.s
- July 27 Cease-fire agreement signed at Panmunjom

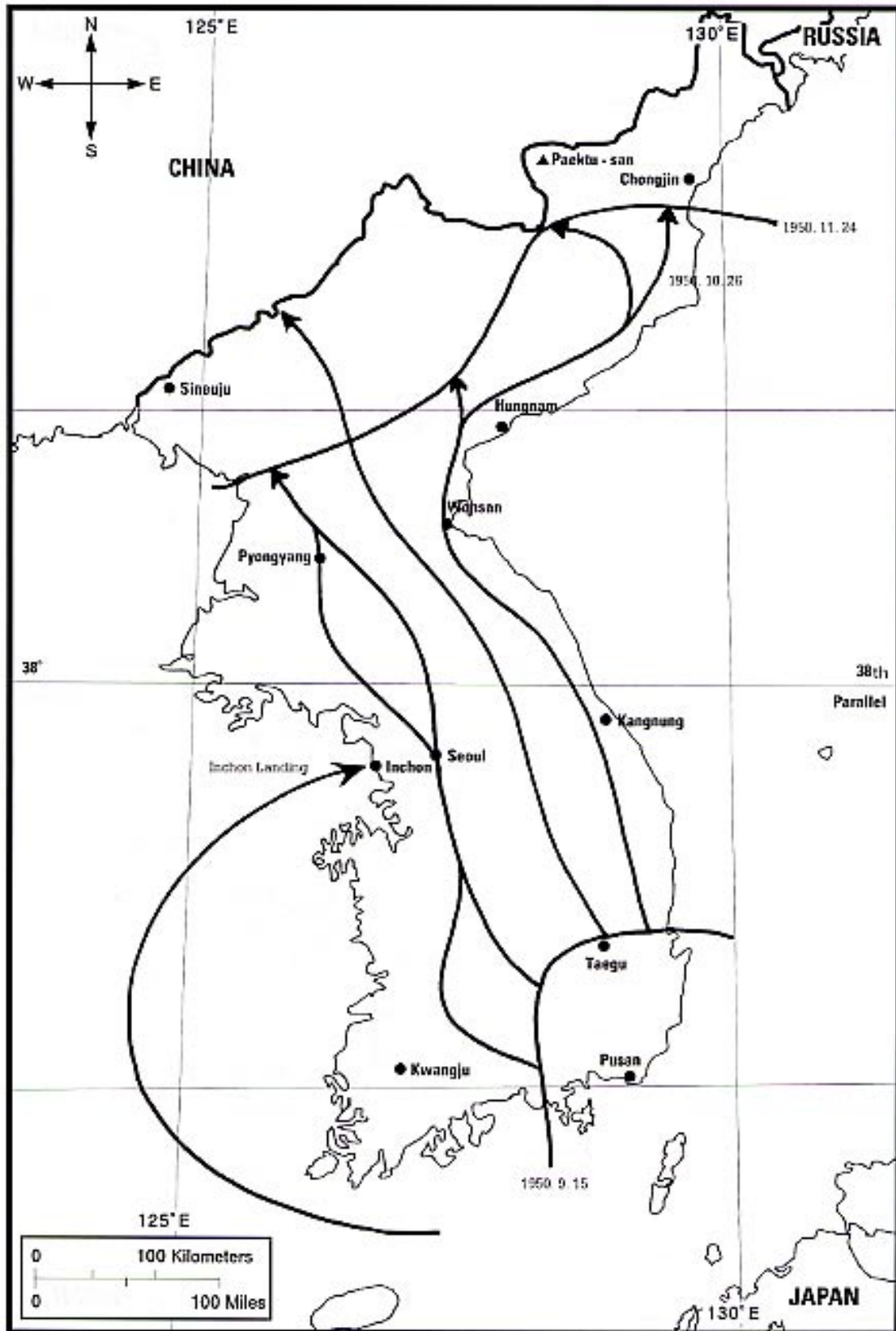
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North Korean Attack and Advance to the Pusan Perimeter, June 25-Sept. 15, 1950



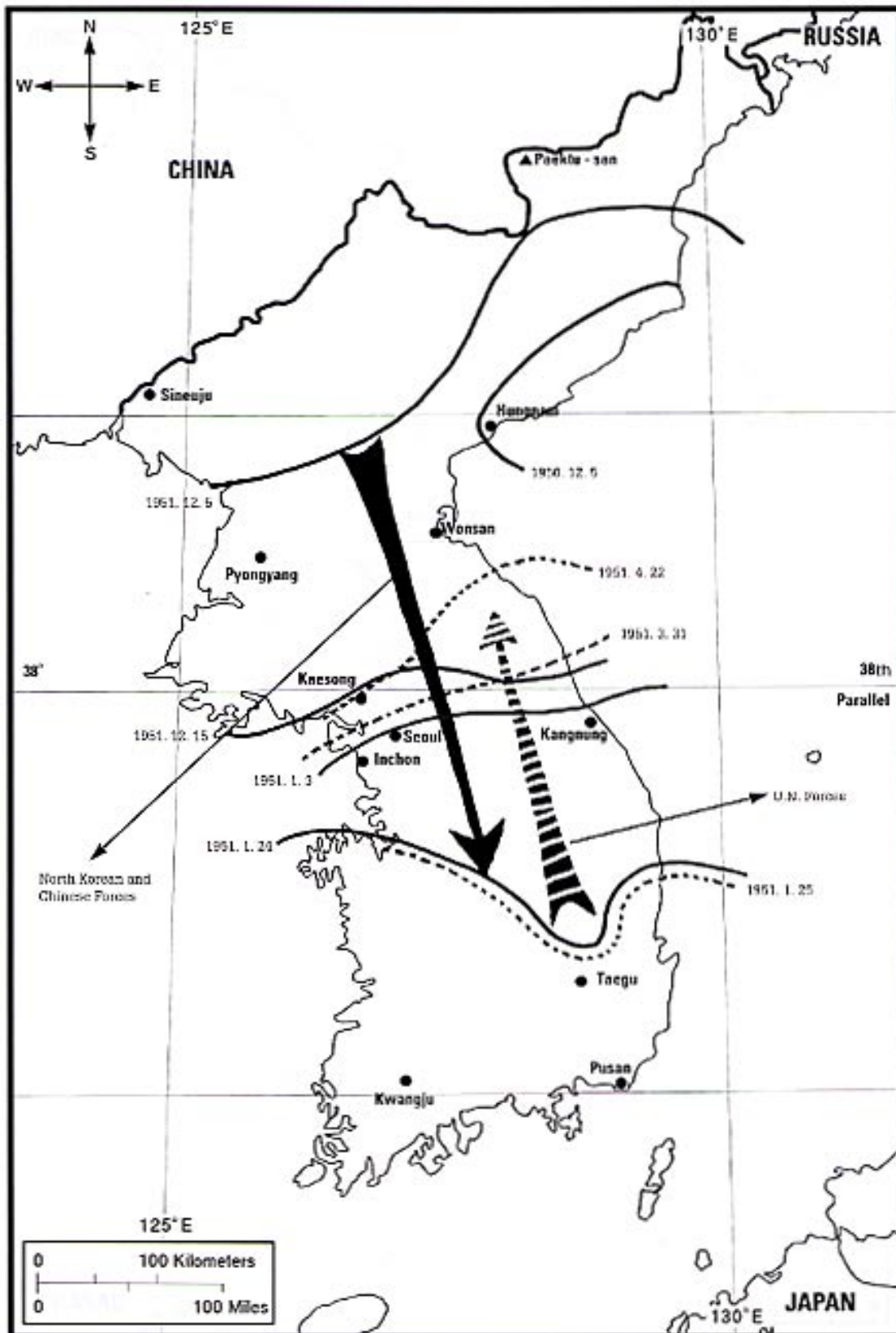
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United Nations Offensive, Sept. 15- Nov. 25, 1950



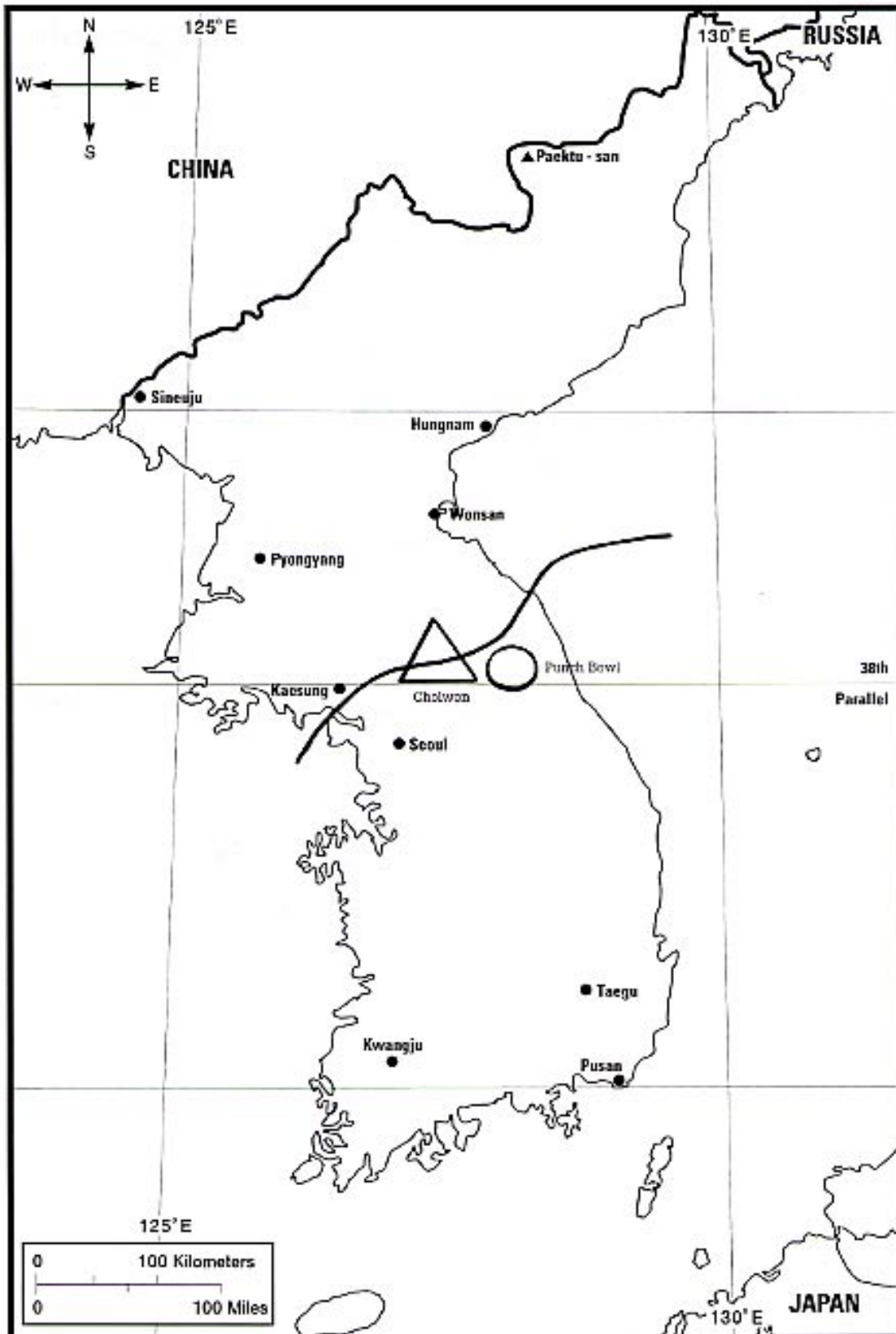
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Chinese Entry and Offensive, Nov. 1, 1950- Jan. 25, 1951



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The United Nations Forces Hold and Counter-Attack, June 23, 1951 - July 27, 1953



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Comparison of Military: North Korea & South Korea, 1950

	North Korea	South Korea
Tanks	150 medium tanks	none
Artillery	122 howitzers, 76 self-propelled guns	no large guns
Air Force	small	dependent on U.S. air force
Combat Troops	89,000 combat troops 18,000 border troops 23,000 reserves	65,000 combat troops 45,000 national police

Casualty Figures for the Korean War

	Number of killed, wounded, or missing
South Korea	1.3 million killed, wounded, missing
North Korea	1.5 million killed, wounded, missing
United States	33,629 killed in battle; 20,617 died of illness, exposure; 103,284 non-lethal wounds
China	148,000 dead; 390,000 wounded; 21,000 captured; 4,000 missing
Other United Nations Forces	17,260 casualties

LESSON 6

Comparing World War II, The Korean and Vietnam Wars

SIMILARITIES:

1. All three fought as coalition wars with allies.
2. Many of the same participants, some troops fought in all three wars.
3. World War II and Korean War began with surprise attacks in locations where General Douglas MacArthur was in command.
4. By the middle of each war, the U.S. had air superiority.
5. Naval operations and invasions were important in each.
6. Civilian casualties were higher than military casualties in all three.

DIFFERENCES:

1. World War II ended with “unconditional surrenders,” Korea and Vietnam were limited wars and ended with negotiated settlements.
2. In World War II and the Korean War, the U.S. fought to expel occupying forces, but in Vietnam the U.S. sided first with the French and then with South Vietnam.
3. In World War II and the Korean War, the U.S. had greater international support than in the Vietnam War.
4. World War II had strong U.S. civilian support; the Korean War was often ignored. Vietnam stirred up much domestic opposition.
5. In World War II, the Soviet Union was a U.S. ally, but in the Korean and Vietnam wars, it supported communist states of North Korea and North Vietnam against U.S. backed regimes in South Korea and South Vietnam.
6. World War II military leaders, like General Dwight D. Eisenhower and Marshall became postwar heroes; Generals MacArthur and Ridgeway in Korea and General Westmoreland in Vietnam were not welcomed home as heroes.

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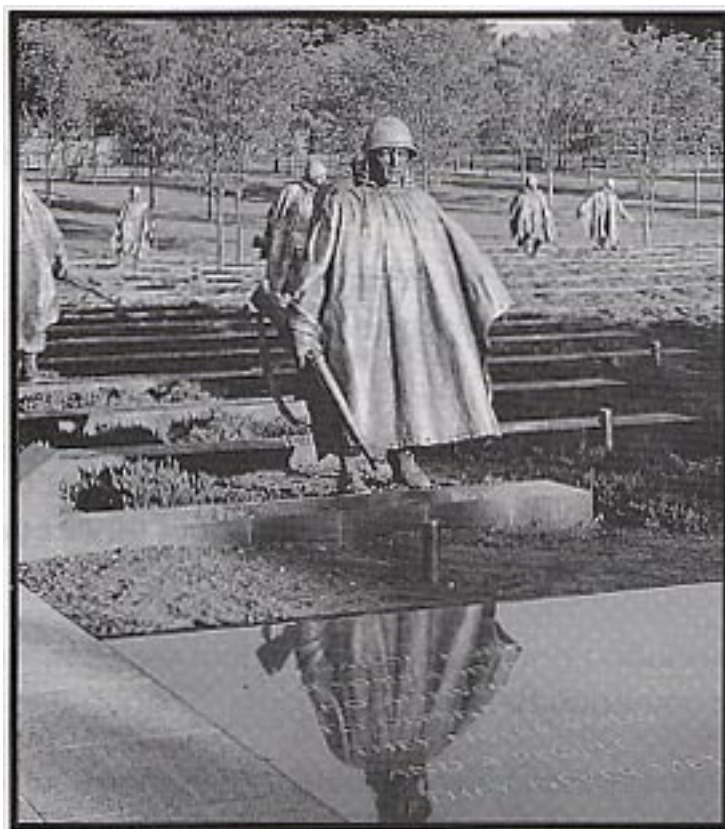
Global Impact of the Korean War

1. U.N. response to communist aggression discouraged Soviets from moving into Yugoslavia.
2. South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) was founded to counter communism in Asia, a parallel force to NATO in Europe.
3. Japan provided suppliers to the Korean War, which helped rebuild its economy after its destruction in World War II.
4. Because of the Korean War, which was seen as a struggle against, the United States encouraged lenient policies toward Japan and Germany, which it had recently defeated in World War II. In Europe, the U.S. supported a policy of rearming noncommunist West Germany.
5. While the Chinese communists were using their resources to help North Korea, they did not attack Taiwan where a non communist Chinese government had fled in 1949 after losing power in mainland China. In part because of the Korean War, the U.S. increased its military aid to Taiwan.
6. The U.S. and USSR embark on a military buildup 1948-55.
7. The U.S. Marine Corps, which had been slated for reduction or possible elimination, won support as a result of its performance in the Korean War.
8. After suffering terrible casualties, the Chinese army sought modernization but faced Mao's opposition. Its commander Peng was executed and Mao increasingly turned to the Communist Party rather than the professional army.
9. China gained prestige for its part in the war and exercised independence from Soviet control.
10. The United Nations gained some respect for its "peacekeeping" action, a test which the earlier League of Nations had failed.
11. Korea suffered huge casualties and remained divided. As South Korea rebuilt, it became the 11th leading nation in world gross national product in 1996.
12. The U.S. took on the role as a protector against the spread of communism in Asia and before long became involved in Vietnam.

(Parts based on J. Stueck. *The Korean War: An International History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995)

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Korean War Memorial



The Korean War Veteran's Memorial stands on the Washington Mall; it consists of 19 statues representing American ground troops: 15 army soldiers, 3 marines, 1 navy corpsman and 1 air force observer. The statues are in stainless steel and represent various American ethnic groups and nationalities. Highly polished granite ledges give visitors the sense of walking through rice paddies in certain lights. There is also a wall on which more than 2,500 photographic archival images, are seen illustrating the war. A pool lined in black granite reflects the sky and the American flag near by. Along the pathway to the pool are markers with the names of all the countries which sent troops or hospital units to the Korean War. Inscribed near the pool are the words, "They answered the call to defend a country they never knew and a people they had never met." On the wall are the words, "Freedom is Never Free."