East Berlin on 7 October. The increasingly relaxed line by Moscow had already permeated the population of the GDR, and civil unrest was increasing: its momentum unconstrained by Soviet or East German security forces. The hard-line leader Erich Honecker was replaced by Egon Krenz on 18 October. Following significant demonstrations in Leipzig, Erfurt, Gera, Rostock and Dresden later that month, Krenz initiated talks with the West German leader, Helmut Kohl, about relaxing the inter-state border controls. On 4 November, one million people demonstrated peacefully in East Berlin. Then, five days later on 9 November, during a radio interview, Krenz was understood to have indicated that any GDR citizen who so wished could obtain an immediate exit visa at the border. Much of the population of East Berlin took him at his word and headed for the several official checkpoints at the Wall. Prudently, the border security guards simply opened the barriers. In an ecstatic but surreal atmosphere the human tide surged into the brightly lit streets of West Berlin, and more than three million East Germans entered West Berlin and West Germany during the weekend that followed. Krenz saw that change was inevitable and spoke of his intention to promote 'reformed socialism'. On 11 November he published plans for radical new measures, including free elections, independent courts, economic reform, a freer press, autonomous trade unions and scrutiny of the infamous state security police, the *Staatssicherheit*, or '*Stasi*'.

The communist regime, however, could not survive. Mikhail Gorbachev had already told US President George Bush that he supported the GDR decision to open its borders, and hoped that the situation would remain calm. This thinly disguised indication that the Soviet Union had no intention of intervening in East Germany, or by implication anywhere else in the Eastern bloc states, meant that the GDR's days as a sovereign state were numbered. It also signified that Soviet military domination of Eastern Europe and the need for the Warsaw Pact were at an end. Finally, it ensured that the Soviet Union itself would soon be no more than an (albeit important) entry in the history books. The Cold War conflict in Europe that began shortly after the Red Army captured Hitler's Reichstag building Berlin in May 1945 had ended at that same spot a little more than forty-four years later.

CHAPTER SIX

THE KOREAN WAR, 1950–3

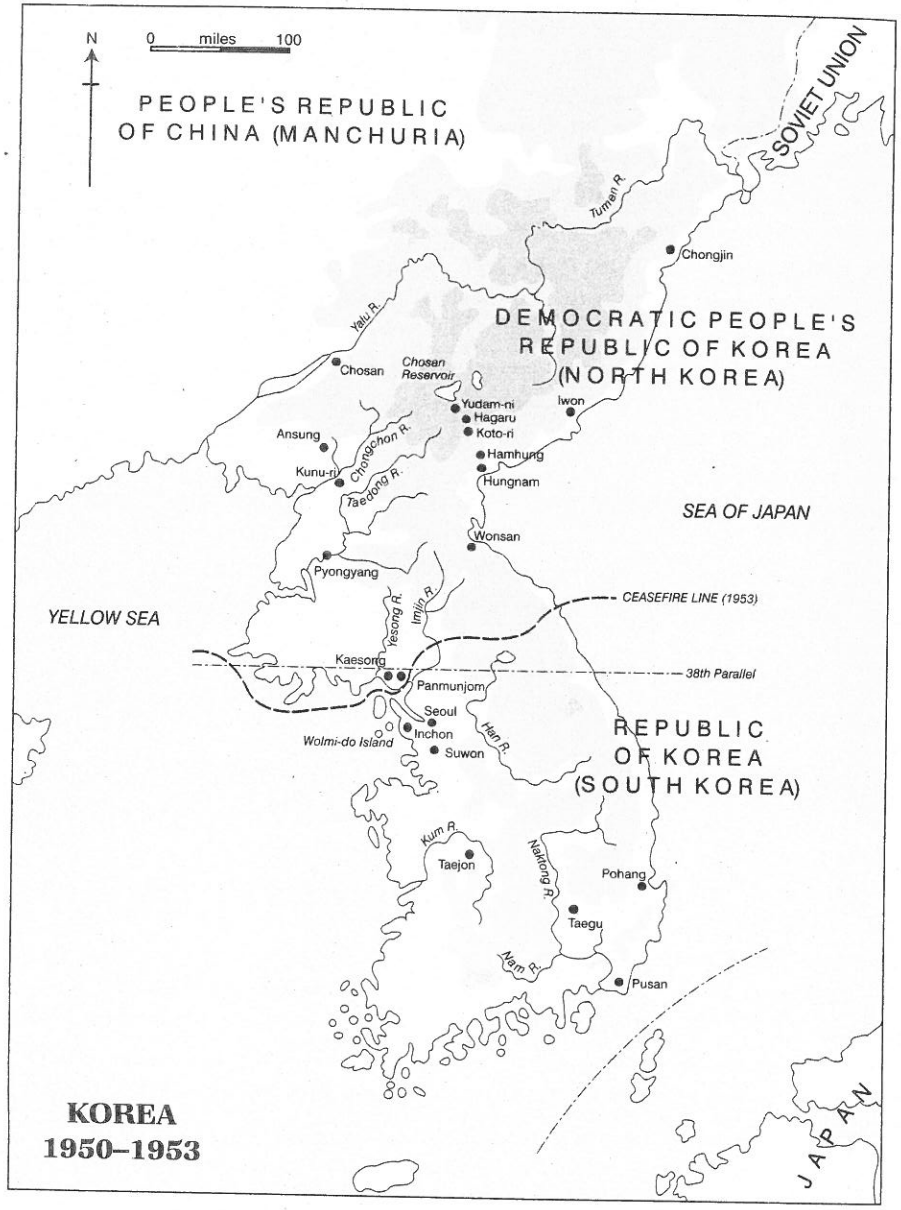
A few minutes before four o'clock on the morning of Sunday, 25 June 1950, the first light of dawn was appearing in the skies above the Korean peninsula. In their border posts and bunkers along the 38th parallel – the frontier between the communist Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to the north and the non-communist Republic of Korea (ROK) to the south – those duty personnel of the ROK paramilitary security forces not away on weekend leave viewed the seemingly deserted hills and valleys that stretched away from the border into the DPRK. Suddenly, their world was turned upside-down in a cacophony of sound, light, dust, smoke and explosions, as the shells and bombs from more than 1,600 guns and mortars rained down on their positions, before lifting their fire to engage other targets in depth. At the same time, flights of Illyushin Il-10 bombers thundered south to engage airfields and other targets that were beyond the reach of the field artillery.

Out of the dust and destruction of that devastating Soviet-style bombardment emerged the next horror for the ROK soldiers who had survived thus far, as columns of T-34 tanks stormed across the 38th parallel into South Korea. Behind the tanks came olive-green clad hordes of well-equipped infantry. The ROK infantry had no effective anti-armour weapons and their positions were quickly overrun, as the T-34s rumbled on virtually unscathed, the armoured spearhead of ten DPRK combined arms divisions streaming south on four main axes of advance. Surprise was absolute,[52] and in any case the 95,000 ill-trained, poorly equipped and in many cases unmotivated and inadequately led men of the ROK were no match for 135,000 well-drilled and highly motivated soldiers of the North Korean People's Army (NKPA). On the morning of 28 June, just three days after they crossed the 38th parallel, the first communist troops entered the South Korean capital, Seoul, which had been abandoned to its fate by the ROK army twenty-four hours earlier.

Opinions will always vary as to which of the several 'hot wars' that occurred during the course of the Cold War was the most significant in terms of its wider importance and impact. However, by the way it shaped the Cold War subsequently and by its influence upon world events, the war in Korea from 1950 to 1953 (and beyond, inasmuch as no peace treaty was formally signed at its end, merely an armistice) was a prime contender for that distinction. During a single conflict, many policies and guidelines were set as indicators to the way in which the two superpowers would do business for much of the next thirty years. Not least, political administrations and military leaders already familiar with waging a total war from 1939 to

1945 came to terms with the concepts and modalities for war-fighting at lower levels of intensity. Most important of all, the implications of using what was in 1950 still a very new weapon, the atom bomb, were addressed for the first time in light of the often divergent needs of military operations and political expediency.

At the same time, the position of the UN vis-à-vis the superpowers and



communist China was highlighted. Korea also provided a first opportunity for the PRC to enter the world stage after its long civil war, and to flex its military muscles against what it had identified as its principal ideological opponents: the capitalists and imperialists of the United States and the British Commonwealth. This military foray by the communist Chinese was carried out at the same time as somewhat less obvious Chinese support was flowing steadily south to aid the communist Viet Minh in their struggle against the other great Western imperial power, France, in Indochina.

In addition to its strategic and political significance, the Korean conflict also provided many operational lessons for those involved. During three years of fighting Korea was a catalyst that forced changes of organisation, weapons, equipment, training and tactics and signalled the end – or the beginning of the end – of the Second World War military mindset. Consequently, although some of the lessons were hard-learned (for the United States and Great Britain especially), it might be argued that Korea ensured that the West (and therefore NATO) was better prepared to conduct and win the Cold War. All this illustrated the wider importance of the three-year conflict fought on the 600-mile-long by 150-mile-wide Korean peninsula – a country virtually unnoticed by the news media and world statesmen until the final days of the Second World War.

A Land Divided: 1945–50

Unlike many of the conflicts in Asia and the Far East that began as nationalist campaigns against former colonial powers and subsequently became communist-inspired struggles, the Korean War was a direct result of various events and decisions made in the closing months of the Second World War. By early 1945 it was clear that the defeat of Japan, whose forces then occupied Korea,[53] was only a matter of months away; and it was agreed that the Soviet Union would declare war on Japan and deal with the Japanese troops in the north of Korea, while the United States would deal with those in the south. Separation of the Soviet and American operations was to be by the division of the country and of their respective areas of responsibility along the 38th parallel. However, US use of the atom bomb at Hiroshima on 6 August 1945, followed by the second at Nagasaki, pre-empted the Soviet declaration of war on 8 August. The Japanese capitulation followed shortly after the second atomic attack, and events then moved quickly as the agreed arrangements to process the Japanese surrender in Korea were implemented. US forces arrived in the south on 8 September, but found that – despite its late involvement in Korea – Red Army units had reached the demarcation line of the 38th parallel by 26 August, and had already begun to establish North Korea as a communist state in the Soviet mould.

By the time that the UN attempted, in November 1947, to introduce a process of national elections for the whole of Korea, the creation and consolidation of the Soviet-sponsored state was well advanced and a unified Korea with a single, democratically elected government was no longer achievable. Separate elections were held in the south and the north, and on 13 July 1948 the Republic of Korea was proclaimed in South Korea, headed by President Syngman Rhee. In North Korea the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was proclaimed on 8 September 1948, with Kim Il Sung as its first president. Both administrations asserted their constitutional right to govern the whole of Korea. Thus were sown the seeds of future conflict.

Arguably, given the antagonistic but nevertheless manageable relationship that then existed between the Soviets and the Western Powers in Central Europe, the continued presence of American and Soviet troops in Korea might have maintained a degree of stability, and even averted the outbreak of war. However, the UN General Assembly expressed its wish in December 1948 that all Soviet and US forces (apart from some military training advisers) should be removed from Korea. Accordingly, all of the Red Army units were withdrawn from the North by 25 December, whilst those of the United States finally departed the South in July 1949. With these troops gone, and with events in Europe and elsewhere occupying Washington much more than the future of an isolated peninsula on the southern border of China, the two Korean republics embarked upon their own campaigns of harassment and propaganda, all of which passed largely unnoticed in the West. However, Moscow and Beijing had certainly not lost interest in Korea. At the end of 1949 Stalin and the Chinese leader, Mao Tse-Tung, were busily forming their own plans for Korea – plans that would ultimately introduce the PRC into the Cold War equation and establish that country as a new and enduring threat to US interests in the region.

When the Soviets and Americans left Korea, the two indigenous armed forces that they had created were very different. In the DPRK the NKPA – 135,000 strong – had (by June 1950) seven combat-ready divisions, an armoured brigade equipped with 150 Soviet T-34 tanks, three additional reserve divisions and a motorcycle combination-equipped reconnaissance regiment. Virtually all of the NKPA's weapons and logistic support assets were of Soviet origin. The NKPA's supporting firepower included a total of 1,643 guns within ten divisional towed artillery regiments (122mm howitzers) and self-propelled gun battalions (76mm guns). Large numbers of mortars of various calibres were also available below division-level to provide direct fire support to brigades, regiments and battalions. Finally, DPRK airpower included some 200 Soviet Yak-9 fighters and Il-10 bombers.

The contrast between the NKPA and its southern counterpart could not have been more marked. The ROK army numbered 95,000 men, but it had no tanks, and possessed only 140 light anti-tank guns, a number of ex-US Army M-3 105mm howitzers, light mortars and a quantity of 2.36in anti-armour bazookas, plus a full range of late-1940s American small-arms. The ROK possessed no bombers or fighter aircraft, its airpower being limited to a number of T-6 trainers – all of which were destroyed on the ground during the first hours of the war. Once its first-line ammunition stocks were exhausted, only a further six days' reserves remained. The ROK logistic chain was decrepit. More than a third of its vehicles were unserviceable in mid-1950, with virtually no spare parts available to effect repairs. Low morale, corruption and lack of motivation of the ROK forces all reflected similar failings within the regime that they served.[54] Given the unequal nature of the two Korean national forces, it was not surprising that the communist invaders made rapid progress during those final few days of June 1950.

A Decisive Response: June to September 1950

From Washington, President Truman directed General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, commander of US forces in the Far East (which included the occupation forces in Japan) to send matériel assistance to the beleaguered ROK forces and to assess the situation in Korea. In his initial evaluation MacArthur judged that a complete collapse of the ROK forces was imminent, so Truman authorised the use of US airpower and naval units to support them, but with the proviso that such support was only to be provided south of the 38th parallel.[55] At the same time, the US 7th Fleet was ordered to the seas between Japan and Korea.

It might be wondered why – apart from the indisputable fact that North Korea was the aggressor – the United States showed such alacrity in supporting South Korea. After all, President Syngman Rhee's administration was profligate, corrupt and oppressive, and so could hardly claim to be democratic. However, Truman's decision needs to be viewed in the context of the time at which it was made. In the United States the persecution of alleged communists climaxed in 1950. This process had been instigated and pursued enthusiastically by Senator Joseph Raymond McCarthy, following his election to the Senate in 1946, and these purges had rocked all levels of American society. Anti-communist fears were also at a fever pitch following the Soviet Union's first successful atomic weapons test in 1949. Meanwhile, J. Edgar Hoover's FBI was vigorously pursuing a number of spy rings: a process that eventually revealed communist spies such as Klaus Fuchs and Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. Against this background President Truman, on the enthusiastic and obsessive advice of Attorney-General Tom Clark,[56] had allowed the

anti-communist campaign in America to escalate rapidly ever since 1945. Consequently, by 1950 the question of whether or not the United States should assist what was patently an undemocratic – but crucially non-communist – regime to counter a clear act of communist military aggression was fairly easily resolved. As a result, objections to US military intervention against the communist invaders were minimal in America at the outset of the war; although this did change later on. At the strategic level, for the two major non-communist states in the region – Japan and Nationalist China, both of which were closely linked to the United States – the implications of an all-communist Korean peninsula were very evident. In light of all this, Washington's decision to support South Korea was neither surprising nor perverse.

In New York the UN was also taking action. On the day of the North Korean invasion the Security Council called for an immediate ceasefire and the withdrawal of all NKPA units south of the 38th parallel. Most significantly, the Soviet Union's representative was absent from the meeting on 25 June. Indeed, he had been absent from these meetings since 13 January, after walking out in protest over the Security Council's refusal to replace the Nationalist Chinese representative with a delegate from the PRC. Had he been present he would assuredly have supported the DPRK, and the subsequent course of history might then have been very different. However, his absence enabled the UN not only to call for a ceasefire, but also – uniquely in the history of the organisation – to identify one of the warring sides as the aggressor. Consequently, on 27 June the Security Council passed a further resolution, calling on all UN member states to provide military aid to South Korea in order to repel the invaders.

The same day, possibly without its great significance being fully appreciated, an ill-judged statement was made by President Truman to the effect that 'the occupation of Formosa by communist forces would be a direct threat to the Pacific area and to US forces performing their lawful and necessary functions in that area'. The president's words, although clearly made in the specific context of the invasion of South Korea by the NKPA, were regarded by Beijing as an unequivocal commitment by the United States to prevent a communist takeover of Formosa. Such a commitment represented a direct threat to the national interest of the PRC, not least because it provided an opening for General Chiang Kai Shek's 33,000 nationalist Chinese soldiers to enter the conflict on the UN side. This could have dire consequences for the PRC if North Korea were to be defeated and occupied, as nationalist Chinese troops might then make an appearance on the Manchurian border.

Consequently, a country that had so far only tacitly approved and indirectly supported the military actions of its North Korean neighbour now

viewed events on the Korean peninsula with considerable concern. By a single ill-advised statement Truman had linked Beijing's fear of encirclement and foreign invasion with its ideological hatred of Western imperialism and its aspiration to 'liberate' Taiwan; and the international and domestic consequences of this returned time and again to haunt successive US administrations during and after the Korean War. Accordingly, Truman's pronouncement on 27 June was one of the defining moments of the Korean conflict, and of the wider Cold War as well.

Meanwhile, the fighting continued. The South Korean capital had fallen, and NKPA units were driving rapidly southward through the mountains that lined the eastern side of the Korean peninsula, while columns of T-34 tanks also rumbled along the roads south-east towards Taegu and the coastal town of Pusan, on the extreme tip of the peninsula. On 29 June General MacArthur visited Korea and made his own appreciation of the rapidly deteriorating situation. In light of what he saw and heard in Korea he recommended to Truman that US ground forces should be deployed to support South Korea, and that a failure to do this would inevitably result in the loss of Korea to the communists. The next day Truman directed the committal as necessary of the four divisions of the 8th US Army – the US Army of Occupation in Japan – to combat the invasion. General MacArthur was also appointed commander-in-chief of the UN forces in Korea. The American divisions based in Japan reacted speedily to this call to arms. The first of these (the 24th Infantry Division) began arriving at Pusan on 1 July, followed between 10 and 15 July by the 25th US Infantry Division, and by the 1st US Cavalry Division (an infantry division, despite its title) on 18 July. The three divisions were commanded by Lieutenant General Walton 'Bulldog' Walker, who had previously commanded the 20th US Corps within General Patton's 3rd US Army during the final year of the Second World War.

The initial deployment was neither an easy nor a happy experience for the troops involved. The enforced speed of deployment and lack of US political or military readiness to deal with the crisis in Korea were typified by the experience of the 24th US Infantry Division. In June 1950 the Japan-based division was enjoying the routine, comfortable and relatively uneventful life of an army of occupation, with its units based at Kyushu and Honshu, when:[57]

> On 1 July 1950 [the division] was ordered to send a small delaying force [to Korea] by air (Task Force Smith), shortly followed by a full battalion. The rest of the division was to depart by sea at once. The 24th Infantry Division found itself short of over 2,000 [2,108 in fact] officers and men and quickly cannibalized other units stationed in Japan to bring itself

> up to full strength. Units were committed to action the second they landed, and found themselves facing a far more formidable enemy than expected. Lack of communications, intelligence and adequate weapons led to a terrible mauling of the division's units, and as a result they were forced to quickly retreat back toward Pusan. The division's [commander], General William F. Dean, was reported missing in action on 20 July, and was [one month] later captured by North Korean forces.[58]

Before Dean's headquarters in Taejon was overrun, he had already seen the collapse of successive units of his division with little or no real damage or delay inflicted upon the NKPA. Shortly after the precipitate retreat of his division's 34th US Infantry Regiment on 6 July, he had relieved the 34th's commanding officer of his command; this was but the first of a number of sackings that resulted from failures of American arms at all levels in Korea during that summer of 1950.

Although its lack of military readiness was inexcusable, there were reasons for the poor performance of the 8th US Army. In 1950 it was occupying a country that had been totally subjugated by the US forces, and which had just five years before been devastated and traumatised by the use of the first atom bombs against two of its cities. Indeed, the possession of the atom bomb by the United States had encouraged a belief that any future war would be won by the use of air-delivered atomic weapons – an over-simplistic and flawed theory that nonetheless provided a politically attractive justification for the US government to neglect or deliberately reduce the nation's defence capability. Meanwhile, the attitudes that a privileged lifestyle and soldiering in a professionally undemanding environment engendered in the troops of the 8th US Army had combined with the wider post-1945 malaise of the US armed forces to produce an army that was simply not trained, equipped or motivated to fight in Korea – or indeed anywhere else! But although the blame for the 8th US Army's lack of readiness did not lie exclusively with its commanders, it was certainly true that MacArthur himself had consistently neglected to accord combat training an appropriate priority – as opposed to the army's representative role and duties in Japan. Even the intelligence indicators were disregarded, and both the military headquarters in Tokyo and the CIA in Washington had discounted a flurry of intelligence reports in early 1950 that indicated the likelihood of an invasion of South Korea. One such CIA report on 10 March specified an invasion by North Korea scheduled for June.[59] Consequently, the North Koreans and their communist Chinese and Soviet mentors achieved near-total surprise on 25 June. At that point, however, one of the great ironies of history occurred, when (as already

mentioned) the Soviet representative's absence from the crucial Security Council meeting convened in New York on 25 June 1950 enabled military action to be directed by the UN. Had he been present he would undoubtedly have used the Soviet veto, and so would have prevented the robust UN response which in turn launched a military campaign in Korea that eventually resulted in the defeat of the communists.

Despite the deployment of the three US divisions and isolated instances of successful delaying actions by some ROK and American units, these forces continued their withdrawal south-east. On 31 July they crossed the Naktong River and occupied the 130-mile perimeter of a salient based on the port of Pusan about eighty miles to the south. Initially, General Walker had some 47,000 US troops available to him, plus the residue of the ROK army of about 45,000 men, and despite several locally successful NKPA assaults on to and into the salient, the tide was about to turn. Indeed, by early August the defenders of Pusan actually outnumbered the attacking NKPA, and also commanded significantly greater firepower than did the communists.

Although all of the fighting in support of South Korea had been conducted under UN auspices since 27 June, it was really only at this stage that the forces opposing the communist onslaught could truly be identified as a UN force, with the arrival of British and British Commonwealth troops, including the 27th Commonwealth Infantry Brigade from Hong Kong, plus contingents from other nations to reinforce the ROK and US forces. The defenders of the Pusan salient were also reinforced by troops from the continental United States during early August, including the 1st US Marine Provisional Brigade. At last, the NKPA offensive slowed, and finally ground to a halt in front of the UN defences at Pusan.

Inchon and its Aftermath: September 1950

The time had come for the UN forces to take the offensive, and General MacArthur did so with an inspired strategic move that ranked as one of the historic moments of twentieth-century warfare. Yet this decision provoked an unforeseen political and military outcome that had serious short-term implications for the UN forces in Korea and, in the longer term, for the wider Cold War and the United States. It also propelled the PRC and its embryo, but potentially formidable, military capability to the front of the world stage. Paradoxically, MacArthur's triumph also marked the start of a chain of events that culminated in his removal as the UN commander in Korea.

The concept of landing a significant force on the west coast of Korea, far to the north, but still south of the politically crucial 38th parallel, had been actively considered ever since 4 July, just nine days after the North Korean invasion. The original idea for the landing at Inchon was virtually

MacArthur's alone, which demonstrated his strategic awareness as well as his audacity and acumen as a modern military commander. The aim of the operation was to sever the overstretched NKPA supply lines and force its capitulation or withdrawal. At the same time, by landing at the port of Inchon, close to Seoul, the South Korean capital could be quickly recaptured. Apart from the obvious political benefits of this, taking Seoul would also give the UN forces control of Korea's principal road and rail hub. Finally, whatever the NKPA did in response to the landing, cutting their lines of communication would allow the 8th US Army to break out from the Pusan salient and begin to push the North Koreans back to the 38th parallel.

Despite numerous delays and setbacks, and lengthy consideration of the many issues that might prejudice what was undoubtedly a risky operation (including the need to weaken the Pusan perimeter in order to support the amphibious landings), the planning for Operation Chromite proceeded apace. Many problems faced the UN forces at Inchon. The first waves of assault troops would need to use ladders to scale a 12ft-high sea wall, rather than landing over open beaches. The access channel into the port was very narrow and Inchon had extreme tidal variations, which produced almost three miles of mudflats between the harbour and the sea at low tide. Next, there were only three hours of high water, on one day per month, when the water was deep enough to allow tank landing ships (LST) to disembark the armour necessary to counter the T-34s of the NKPA. And finally, all the proposed landing sites were dominated by the hills that rose up to the east of Inchon.

Nevertheless, at a meeting at Chief of Staff level in Tokyo on 23 August, MacArthur briefed the details of the plan for some three-quarters of an hour without reference to any notes, and successfully justified the concept and his choice of the landing site at Inchon largely on the basis that its clear unsuitability would ensure that the UN forces achieved complete surprise! Final authorisation by the US Joint Chiefs of Staff was secured on 28 August, and planning for the largest amphibious operation conducted since the Second World War was completed on 4 September. D-Day was set for 15 September.

As with the best of all military schemes – whether tactical, operational or strategic – the plan for Operation Chromite was relatively simple. The principal formations involved were the 1st US Marine Division from the United States and the 7th US Infantry Division from Japan, which together formed the 10th US Corps. These two divisions were augmented by units from within the Pusan perimeter, plus some ROK army units and US marines embarked on ships of the US 6th Fleet. Some 230 ships from the United States, Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand, South Korea, Australia and France completed the task organisation. The 10th US Corps was to be commanded by

MacArthur's Chief of Staff, Major General Edward Almond, while command of the overall operation and all phases until the point at which the ground troops were safely ashore was assigned to Admiral Arthur Struble, Commander-in-Chief US 7th Fleet. In all, some 70,000 men were committed to Operation Chromite.

First, the marines would secure the island of Wolmi-do, which dominated access to Inchon from the sea. This would be followed by the main landing of the 1st US Marine Division. The marines would then push inland to capture Inchon, Kimpo airfield and Seoul, the capital being about eighteen miles distant from the coast. The NKPA strength at Inchon was assessed to be about 2,000 troops, with some additional forces at Seoul. Shortly after the initial landings, the 7th US Infantry Division would land a little to the south of the marines and push southward to Suwon. Finally, the 10th US Corps would hold its positions until the 8th US Army offensive reached it. In addition to the main assault, diversionary landings and air and naval bombardments would be carried out between 1 and 13 September all along the west coast of Korea, and against the North Korean capital, Pyongyang.

Apart from one or two minor modifications, the operation proceeded as planned and in textbook style. A preparatory landing on a small island adjacent to the seaward end of the channel into Inchon harbour was made on 31 August by a small team of personnel led by a USN lieutenant. This party provided invaluable intelligence right up to the day of the main landings, as well as target information for the naval bombardment that began on 13 September. At 06.33 hours on 15 September the 3rd Battalion of the 5th US Marine Regiment landed on Wolmi-do with the morning tide, and secured the tactically important island by 07.30 hours, sustaining only seventeen casualties wounded in the process.

With the evening tide came the main landings by the 1st and 5th US Marine Regiments. Their landing craft hit the shoreline shortly after half past five that afternoon. The US marines, easily recognisable by the distinctive green, brown and tan-mottled camouflage helmet covers used by the United States Marine Corps (USMC) ever since the early 1940s, quickly scaled the sea wall and moved inland. The 5th Regiment secured the high ground beyond Inchon by midnight, and the 1st Regiment was advancing steadily along the main road to Seoul by about half past one o'clock the next morning, when the order came to establish a perimeter six miles or so inland from the landing areas. There was some resistance by the NKPA, but it was largely ineffective and, with all their objectives secured, UN losses on D-Day amounted to only twenty men killed, 174 wounded and one missing. The following day the 7th US Infantry Division landed as planned and moved south-east towards the advancing 8th US Army, which began its breakout

from the Pusan salient on 16 September. Seoul fell to the UN forces on 22 September, although the city was not finally cleared of what turned out to be 20,000 NKPA defenders until 27 September. Finally, General Almond's 10th US Corps linked up with General Walker's 8th US Army on 26 September.

Some of the heaviest fighting took place in Seoul. There, the UN forces' ready use of their devastating firepower against any remaining pockets of NKPA resistance destroyed large areas of the city. The consequences of this were all too predictable for a civilian population that had already suffered horrific atrocities committed by the North Koreans during their three-month occupation of the capital; but the nature of this fighting was but a foretaste of that which was to come. By late September 1950, Operation Chromite had achieved all that MacArthur had asked and expected of it, as the outflanked and defeated NKPA streamed back across the 38th parallel and into the relative safety of North Korea.

At that stage many on the UN side might perhaps have been forgiven for believing that the war had been won, that their task was complete, and that the various non-Korean forces involved would shortly be on their way home. However, in Washington and elsewhere, pressure to carry the battle beyond the 38th parallel and destroy the NKPA was gaining momentum. Surely, it was argued, North Korea had committed a blatant act of armed aggression, invaded another country, and almost defeated it. It had also been directly responsible for the destruction of much of South Korea and the death of thousands of its citizens. Therefore, the DPRK could not simply be permitted to revert to the status quo ante, with its communist government still in power and its armed forces a badly mauled but still effective fighting force – capable of repeating the exercise in the future. For MacArthur, the need to pursue and destroy the NKPA was a logical and essential tactical and strategic next step in order to resolve the Korean crisis satisfactorily, and it was at this point that wider issues and political considerations began to influence the war. From that which followed was born the 'limited war' concept that dominated political and strategic thinking in the West for the remaining years of the Cold War, and beyond.

The main concern now for the Americans and their allies was whether or not a UN advance would provoke a Soviet or Chinese intervention. There was also apprehension that the Security Council, with the Soviet representative again back in place, would now be unable to propose a resolution permitting an advance across the 38th parallel without inviting a Soviet veto. However, although intelligence on Chinese intentions was scant, it was evident from the steady flow of intelligence emanating from sources in Moscow that the Soviet leadership was actually seeking to distance itself from events in Korea; therefore a direct Soviet intervention was thought unlikely. But the Americans committed a serious error when they chose to discount the Chinese communist dimension – treating it as subordinate to and indivisible from that of the Soviets.

In the wake of the UN success at Inchon, however, the military imperatives were clear, and following considerable debate in Washington the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) issued a new directive to MacArthur at the end of September. In summary, this set the destruction of the NKPA as a strategic objective, and authorised ground operations north of the 38th parallel to achieve this. However, such operations were not authorised where the entry of Soviet or Chinese communist forces into Korea had taken place or was anticipated. Most importantly, MacArthur was in no circumstances to allow his forces to cross the border into the Soviet Union or Manchuria, or to authorise them to carry out air or naval gunfire attacks against Soviet or PRC territory. Similarly, no non-Korean ground forces were to be permitted to operate adjacent to the northern borders. Armed with this directive, and with the knowledge that his main allies supported in principle an advance northward, MacArthur prepared the plans that he believed would complete his victory and confirm him as one of the greatest generals of the twentieth century.

Unsurprisingly, a key element of General MacArthur's plan was an amphibious landing designed to cut off the retreating NKPA. This operation involved a landing at Wonsan by General Almond's 10th US Corps, which would be extracted from Inchon and move via Pusan for the purpose. Meanwhile, General Walker's 8th US Army would continue its advance north to seize Pyongyang and the surrounding territory of North Korea. The decision to maintain a divided command (with General Almond reporting directly to MacArthur, rather than subordinated to General Walker) attracted a deal of criticism and fuelled the US debate about Walker's professional competence. However, the apparently impending end of the war probably led MacArthur to conclude that he could both weather the political storm and also avoid having to relieve Walker before the final victory was achieved. Thus the stage was set for the UN offensive.

Washington had hoped for a subtle approach to this critical new venture, which was beginning to generate some unease in London, together with appreciable concern in Beijing. But MacArthur ignored such considerations and indicated to North Korea that unless its forces surrendered forthwith, 'such military action as may be necessary' would be taken against them. The die was cast, and President Truman chose to back MacArthur; although by mid-October there were already signs of a growing rift between the president and his general.

On 28 September ROK army units advanced across the 38th parallel, and on 7 October the leading armoured units of the 8th US Army spearheaded the

main UN advance northward. After a short period of intense fighting the remnants of the NKPA broke and fled, pursued by the tanks and armoured half-tracked infantry carriers of the 1st US Cavalry Division and the 24th US Infantry Division. Meanwhile, the 1st US Marine Division and 7th US Infantry Division moved towards their embarkation points in preparation for their amphibious operation at Wonsan at the end of the month.

In a whirl of optimism and growing confidence the 8th US Army and its ROK allies stormed north, meeting little resistance. On 19 October they took Pyongyang, and by late October the lead elements were approaching the area of the Yalu River – the border between North Korea and Manchuria in the PRC. Indeed, General Walker's army moved so speedily that the US marines who eventually landed at Wonsan on 25 October found to their embarrassment that two ROK divisions had already reached the town on 10 October, and that the entertainer Bob Hope had staged a USO show in Wonsan on the evening of the 24th! The 7th US Infantry Division's experience was similar, when it eventually landed and formed up at Iwon on 1 November. But although the NKPA collapse was heartening, the landings and subsequent operations of the 10th US Corps that October were by no means as straightforward as those carried out at Inchon a month earlier.

On 20 October MacArthur ordered all of his forces to prepare to advance to the border, and on 24 October he removed unilaterally all constraints on non-ROK troops moving into the border zone. He stated his intention to secure all of North Korea by military means and on 25 October the first ROK army units reached the Yalu River. Despite ever more cautionary voices in Washington and London, the political leaders failed to regain control of a military commander who was in effect running his very own war. But in late October 1950 it was a war that seemed to promise total victory, the unification of Korea under a regime sympathetic to the West, and of course the opportunity for those same politicians to bask in the reflected glory of 'their general' at the moment of his greatest achievement.

Enter the Dragon: October 1950 to March 1951

Prior to MacArthur's declaration of intent, the Korean crisis might have been resolved by a negotiated compromise. However, the twin failures of the president and the JCS not insisting upon MacArthur conforming to their directives, and (above all else) that of the Western intelligence community in not assessing correctly the communist Chinese perspective and probable response to the presence of UN forces on the banks of the Yalu River, together negated much of that which the UN forces had achieved since June. It also meant that a war which might otherwise have been concluded by the autumn of 1950 continued for almost three more years. But the future course

of events had been set as soon as US ground forces crossed the 38th parallel. The very next day Chairman Mao Tse-Tung issued orders that just a week later brought the PLA into direct combat with the UN forces.

Between 13 and 25 October hundreds of thousands of Chinese soldiers moved southward by road and rail to the Yalu River. Generally, they marched by night and remained concealed by day. They provided none of the tell-tale trademarks of a modern army's deployment – radio communications, vehicle movement, concentration areas and so on – and so they crossed the Yalu River bridges unobserved, unreported and unopposed by the UN forces. They established a large bridgehead on the south side up to fifty miles deep in places, where regiments and divisions of tough little Chinese soldiers simply clothed in lightweight canvas and rubber shoes, olive drab quilted cotton uniforms with reversible camouflage smocks, with the small red star of communism emblazoned on their caps, paused briefly before moving rapidly and enthusiastically onwards to do battle with the 'imperialist aggressors' that apparently threatened their country. Many were veterans of the years of fighting against the nationalist Chinese forces.

From 14 October almost 200,000 'volunteers' of the PLA crossed the Yalu River and advanced southward along the west and centre of the peninsula. This huge force was part of the PLA's 4th Field Army. It was designated the 13th Army Group, which was made up of six armies: the 38th, 39th, 40th, 42nd, 50th and 66th. By 24 November a further PLA army group, the 9th, had also moved into North Korea, on the eastern side of the country. The PLA armies each comprised three infantry divisions (each of 10,000 men), a cavalry regiment and five regiments of artillery.

Although some early contacts occurred between the PLA and the 8th US Army in the north-west on 27 and 30 October and with the 10th US Corps to the north-east on 29 October, it was on the night of 1 November 1950 that battle was finally joined right across the front. In his account of the war, Max Hastings recorded the crisis that befell the UN over the next five days, from which a number of extracts conveyed the mixture of shock, horror, disbelief, complacency and chaos that ensued within the UN forces and the US-led high command. They also provided an insight into the nature of the forces that now opposed them:[60]

> On the [25 October], the ROK 2nd Corps, driving north on the western axis of the UN advance, was strongly attacked, and in the action that followed, almost destroyed. Despite the fact that some Chinese communist soldiers, in uniform, had been captured by the ROK soldiers and clearly identified as such by General Paek Sun Yup, commanding the ROK 2nd Corps, neither General Milburn, commanding 1st US Corps,

nor his immediate superior, General Walker, chose to believe the report or the assessments that were by then being revised rapidly by their intelligence staff. Walker's reasoning for the Chinese presence among or in place of the familiar NKPA forces was that 'After all, a lot of Mexicans live in Texas …'

On 1 November near Ansung, about midway across the Korean peninsula, it was the turn of the Americans. Strong [Chinese communist] forces hit them with great determination, separating their units, then attacking them piecemeal. Batteries in transit on the roads, rifle companies on positions, found themselves under devastating fire from small-arms, mortars and katyusha rockets. The 3rd Battalion of the 8th Cavalry was effectively destroyed. The regiment's other battalions were severely mauled, and elements of the 5th Cavalry damaged.

'There was just mass hysteria on the position,' recorded Private Carl Simon of G Company, 8th US Cavalry. 'It was every man for himself. The shooting was terrific, there were Chinese shouting everywhere, I didn't know which way to go. In the end I just ran with the crowd. We just ran and ran until the [Chinese] bugles grew fainter.'

'They were unlike any enemy I had seen before,' wrote Lieutenant Colin Mitchell[61] of the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders [of the British 27th Brigade]. 'They wore thick padded clothing, which made them look like little Michelin men. I turned one body over with my foot, and saw that he wore a peaked cap with a red star badge. These were Chinese. I turned over another and, as I looked down at him, he opened one eye and looked up at me. I shot him with my Luger, shouting to the platoon, "they're alive!" It was quickly over, and all the enemy lay dead.'

And on the Chinese communist side:

> [On 1 November,] Li Hua, the propaganda officer of his company, examined his unit's first American prisoner at much the same time, and with much the same curiosity, as Eighth [US] Army were studying its captives from the PLA: 'This young American, he fell on his knees and begged for mercy. We felt very sorry for him. He obviously didn't want to fight.'
>
> Yu Xiu [a regimental deputy political commissar] was one of the men who stormed the 8th [US] Cavalry's positions on 1 November, exulting to discover the success of their techniques of hard-hitting night assault … He said that the overwhelming lesson the PLA learned from its first brushes with the Americans was the need for speed. 'In the Liberation War [against the nationalist Chinese], one might take days to surround a Kuomintang division, then slowly close the circle around it. With the Americans, if we took more than a few hours, they would bring up reinforcements, aircraft, artillery.'

And finally, Li Hebei, an infantry platoon commander of the 587th Regiment, while talking about conditions of service and the communist Chinese soldiers' motivation, observed:

> 'Life [in the PLA] was very hard, but the atmosphere was very good, because we were full of hope.' [And as Hastings observed] Most [of the PLA soldiers] were genuinely enthused by the spirit of revolution, the sense of participation in a new China that seemed to offer brighter promise than the old land of tyrannical landlordism and official corruption.

However naïve the Chinese view may seem today, it undoubtedly provided a degree of motivation and level of morale that to some extent offset the significant matériel deficiencies of the PLA and contrasted markedly with the views of some of the UN troops who found themselves in Korea in the autumn of 1950.

So, with Chinese MiG-15 jet fighters screaming overhead and a rolling tide of thousands of infantrymen pursuing or infiltrating their fragmented formations, the UN forces withdrew rapidly, and in some cases in considerable disorder, from the area of the Yalu. Nevertheless, by 6 November the superior firepower of the UN forces again began to tell and a new defensive line was established on the Chongchon River. Also, UN reinforcements were arriving in Korea in some strength, and on 12 November the 3rd US Infantry Division joined the UN order of battle. Three days later, everyday life in Seoul was reportedly returning to normal, whereas a short while previously the city's population had been on the verge of fleeing from the prospect of a second occupation by the communists. It seemed that once again the situation might be saved and that MacArthur might yet have the victory he craved. 'Home by Christmas' seemed to be a realistic aspiration for the UN troops, and Christmas was certainly drawing closer, as the damp chill of autumn gave way to the first signs of the notoriously severe Korean winter.

On 24 November the UN troops resumed their advance northward to recover the territory lost after 1 November, but just two days later the PLA launched its own offensive – on a massive scale. Only ten days earlier President Truman, in line with his limited war policy, had stated categorically that the UN forces would not in any circumstances extend their operations beyond the Chinese border. Secure in that knowledge, the PLA once again

swept southward, and inflicted a slaughter and panic upon the UN forces which well exceeded that of the initial assault three weeks earlier. This new onslaught also had military and political implications that extended far beyond the Korean peninsula. As well as leading to the end of MacArthur's career it signalled to Beijing and Moscow that the United States was not prepared to wage all-out war, no matter what the repercussions might be for its soldiers and its allies. A very significant precedent had been established, and with it the parameters were set for every other major Cold War conflict involving the United States.

The UN retreat was little short of a total disaster:

> In camps and vehicle concentrations along the length of the Chongchon Valley, Americans found themselves wakened in their sleeping bags by a terrifying cacophony of bugles, drums, rattles, whistles – and gunfire. Again and again, Chinese assault groups smashed through ill-prepared perimeters, overrunning infantry positions, gunlines, rear areas … Amid individual acts of great bravery, the collective American response was feeble. From Army Command to the meanest hilltop foxhole, men seemed too shocked and appalled by the surprise that had overtaken them to respond effectively.[62]

Among the many disasters of the retreat at the end of November, that which befell the 2nd US Infantry Division at the pass of Kunu-ri was one of the worst. While the division's official history describes an action that cost the division 3,000 men and almost all of its vehicles, weapons and equipment as 'a magnificent stand', its ambush along the six-mile-long single road within the Kunu-ri pass was by no means an edifying action, the outcome of which rendered the 2nd US Infantry Division non-combat effective for many months thereafter. Soldiers of the Middlesex Regiment from the British 27th Brigade were fighting the Chinese at the south end of the pass when the unfortunate American convoy drove into it from the north. The long column of nose-to-tail vehicles immediately became embroiled in a storm of mortar and machine-gun fire from the hills that dominated the valley, when, at half-past one o'clock on the afternoon of 30 November:

> Through six miles of enemy fire, vehicles sought to smash their way past the blazing wreckage of those that had gone before. Infantrymen ran among them, seeking their own salvation, and rarely finding it. A dreadful paralysis of command and discipline overtook the division. Major Walt Killalie, commanding the division's mobile anti-aircraft battalion, saw men sitting motionless in their vehicles, incapable even of rousing themselves to return the hail of Chinese fire, merely waiting for death … Nightfall brought infantry attacks from the Chinese, ending in desperate close-quarter fighting among the shambles of vehicles and casualties on the road. Only a handful of men like Colonel James Skeldon, commanding the 2nd/38th Infantry, kept their heads and maintained their units' cohesion sufficiently to maintain an effective defence, and lead their survivors to safety.[63]

Only the arrival of American ground attack aircraft on the morning of 1 December, to attack the Chinese positions in the hills, allowed those who had survived the débâcle finally to extricate themselves and escape to the south. With the passage through of the last remnants of the 2nd US Infantry Division, the soldiers of the 27th British Brigade also headed south. Although the sheer panic, despair and breakdown of discipline evident in the American and ROK formations that November were generally not replicated in the British units or in some other national contingents, the steady flow southward must have seemed unstoppable to the UN commanders in Washington and Tokyo. Pyongyang was vacated on 5 December, with much military matériel left behind intact. General Walker's 8th US Army was in total disarray; incapable of offering other than token resistance to the Chinese advance, having lost 11,000 men dead, wounded and missing during the first few days of the PLA offensive. In early December, Colonel Paul Freeman of the 23rd US Infantry Regiment in the 2nd US Infantry Division remarked to his executive officer: 'Look around here, this is a sight that hasn't been seen for hundreds of years: the men of a whole United States Army fleeing from a battlefield, abandoning their wounded, running for their lives.'[64] As the general retreat continued, so the full force of the bitterly cold Korean winter swept down on the warring armies to add to their problems and their misery. The harsh weather and initial speed of the Chinese advance began to tell on the PLA, particularly its ability to support and supply its combat troops. Consequently the pressure on the retreating 8th US Army gradually eased as December drew on, and by Christmas 1950 the front had more or less stabilised along the familiar line of the 38th parallel.[65]

Meanwhile, well to the north-east of Korea, at the Chosin Reservoir, the effects of the arctic weather conditions were felt particularly acutely by the marines and soldiers of General Almond's 10th US Corps (which from 28 November included the British marines of 41 Independent Commando Royal Marines) who had landed at Wonsan and Iwon in late October, and were, at the end of November, preparing to continue their own push northward even as the new Chinese offensive struck them. But despite the appalling weather conditions and the increasingly acrimonious relationship between General

Almond and the commander of the 1st US Marine Division, Major General O. P. Smith,[66] as the early days of December passed, the troops of the 10th US Corps – the 1st Marine Division in particular – managed to restore some of the reputation of American arms lost by their comrades of the 8th US Army on the west side of the peninsula.

On 27 November, the 10th US Corps was centred on Wonsan, with the 7th US Infantry Division to the north-east and the 1st Marine Division to the north and west; both divisions were deployed in the general area about the Chosin Reservoir. When the Chinese offensive struck the corps that day its huge scale was very soon obvious, and General Almond ordered a withdrawal to the coast. The task of securing the main supply route that ran south from Yudam-ni, at the extreme north of the corps area, all the way to Hamhung and the port of Hungnam some fifty miles away, fell to Major General Smith's division. In simple terms, this mission also meant that (apart from a valiant stand by the 7th US Infantry Division's 32nd Regimental Combat Team to the east of the reservoir, when this unit was virtually annihilated) the American and British marines would be the rearguard for the 10th US Corps' withdrawal to the coast. On 1 December their own fighting withdrawal began, when the 5th and 7th US Marine Regiments set out along the fourteen miles from Yudam-ni to Hagaru. The battalion spearheading the column was led by a single tank, and as the force moved southward the companies and platoons leapfrogged their way from shoulder to shoulder of the hills that rose above the road, clearing the Chinese away by assault after assault. On 3 December the marines reached Hagaru. Of the 2,000 men that the lead battalion (3rd Battalion of the 5th Marine Regiment) commander, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Taplett, had mustered at Yudam-ni three days earlier, only 326 were still unwounded and fit for further combat. The last men arrived at Hagaru on the night of 4 December, and the division prepared for the next phase of the withdrawal: from Hagaru to Koto-ri, a distance of eleven miles.

This withdrawal commenced on 6 December and cost the division a further 103 men killed and 506 wounded; plus 147 of 160 Chinese prisoners of war who were shot by the marines when they attempted to escape during one of the many PLA bombardments from the surrounding hills. At Koto-ri 15,000 men and about 1,500 vehicles crowded into the marines' positions. At Koto-ri the marines also took the opportunity to bury their dead, brought with them so conscientiously all the way from Yuam-ni and Hagaru. Despite its precarious situation, this was an indication of the high morale and standard of discipline of the 1st US Marine Division.

The final part of the withdrawal (from Koto-ri to Hamhung) continued, during which the marines applied the same tactics that they had successfully employed during the earlier stages of the operation. Despite considerations

such as the need to bridge a 30ft-wide chasm with bridge sections parachuted to them for the purpose, dealing with the continuing Chinese fire and occasional local attacks, and the need to separate the marines' rear-guard from some 3,000 refugees at the rear of the column by the expedient of blowing up a bridge in their faces and stranding the refugees on the north side, the first marines began to arrive in the port of Hamhung on 10 December. Although many marines and their commanders voiced their belief that a salient based on Hamhung could well have been successfully defended against the PLA, the decision to evacuate had already been taken, and the 100,000 men – marines, soldiers and ROK troops – of the 10th US Corps boarded the large fleet of amphibious landing craft that awaited them. After destroying any matériel that could not be removed, the corps sailed for Pusan, leaving the navy to bombard Hamhung on 24 December and reduce its buildings, jetties and other facilities to rubble and twisted metal. In what was otherwise a bleak period of American military history, the fighting withdrawal of the 1st US Marine Division from Chosin to Hamhung was in the best traditions of the USMC, albeit the division had sustained 4,418 casualties in combat, plus 7,313 non-battle casualties (mainly from frostbite).

Meanwhile, the PLA had lost about 37,500 men in the battle about Chosin and the fighting to the south of the reservoir, having also suffered severely from the cold. Indeed, ninety per cent of the Chinese soldiers reportedly suffered various degrees of frostbite during the winter of 1950–1, and the PLA's 27th Army suffered 10,000 non-combat casualties that winter. But despite this, and although the PLA offensive in the east had ground to a halt early in the final phase of the 10th US Corps' withdrawal to Hamhung, due to the sheer inability of its rudimentary supply chain to support the speed and tempo of its advance,[67] the Chinese had successfully forced the entire 10th US Corps to withdraw from North Korean territory. Even though the PLA lacked the strategic and logistic capability to destroy the UN forces, the implications and lessons of the PLA's successes (against the military might of the United States in particular) were not lost upon the watching Soviet leaders.

By Christmas 1950 the UN forces were more or less back where they had started, and the US military leaders were dealing with an unprecedented amount of domestic criticism of its operations and leadership, as well as from some of its allies in Korea.[68] The demoralised 8th US Army attracted particular censure, and fate took a hand in its future fortunes when, on 23 December, General Walton Walker was killed in a traffic accident. His jeep was hit by a ROK army truck that suddenly turned into its path and General Walker was thrown from the vehicle, sustaining severe head injuries from which he died while en route to the hospital.[69] His untimely demise opened the way for the very professional and widely respected former leader of the

82nd US Airborne Division and 18th US Airborne Corps in the Second World War – the fifty-six-year-old Lieutenant General Matthew Bunker Ridgway – to fill the vacant post at Headquarters 8th US Army. Ridgway arrived in Korea on 26 December 1950, very conscious of the formidable task ahead of him.

In the meantime, in parallel with the changed nature of the war in Korea since the PLA intervention, a growing political and strategic debate had surfaced in Washington. There, a military consensus now favoured bombing targets north of the Yalu River – an action long sought by MacArthur. Indeed, MacArthur was indicating publicly and not too subtly his view that the use of atomic weapons against the Chinese should be actively considered. This issue was raised again on 30 November, when Truman himself confirmed in an unguarded moment at a press conference that there had 'always been active consideration of its use', a comment that alarmed many in the British government headed by socialist Prime Minister Clement Attlee. However, despite this Truman remained adamant that there was to be no escalation of the scale or nature of the conflict, a line that reflected the wider American belief that the PRC was simply an extension of the Soviet Union, and that any direct attack on China would therefore bring the Soviets into the conflict. This view was one that the British intelligence community did not support, for its analysts believed that the differences between the two great communist states were much more significant than their American equivalents believed, and that the risk of Soviet involvement in Korea was therefore minimal; although American use of the atom bomb against China could of course change that situation considerably.

In December 1950 a key meeting took place between the US President and Attlee in Washington. Parallel meetings were held at military Chiefs of Staff level. Much was discussed, and this meeting set the future policy for the conduct of the war. Truman reassured Attlee that the United States was not actively considering the use of the atom bomb, or any expansion of the conflict.[70] However, it was also agreed that in the event of any subsequent decision to expand the war this would only be done in consultation with Britain and the other allies. Finally, the Americans conceded that their original aim of creating a unified, non-communist Korean state was now unachievable, and that a border settlement based on the old 38th parallel would be acceptable. When MacArthur and his headquarters staff in Tokyo were apprised of these decisions, their paranoia and suspicions that the political leadership in Washington was selling them out were virtually boundless. This reaction progressively diminished MacArthur's stature, as he used various ill-judged devices to persuade Washington of the need to escalate and expand the war. These ploys led to his downfall.

Meanwhile, in Korea Lieutenant General Ridgway set about retraining and revitalising the 8th US Army, and preparing viable plans for the defence of Korea rather than for an evacuation, although this contingency was still entertained by Washington. Strong defences were constructed about the former Pusan salient perimeter, just in case another withdrawal might become necessary, Ridgway was quite clear, however, that this was not an option. He was also emphatic that his mission was to wreak sufficient destruction on the communist forces for an acceptable compromise peace to be achieved. In a message issued in January 1951 to all of those under his command, Ridgway specifically addressed the question 'What are we fighting for?' – a question that had frequently been put to him by his soldiers during his early days with the 8th US Army. Ridgway's response provided an insight into the strength of his personal patriotism, values and religious faith, as well as an indication of the wider philosophy, style of leadership and view of communism of very many senior American military commanders, political leaders and ordinary citizens of the early 1950s:

> To me the issues are clear. It is not a question of this or that Korean town or village. Real estate is, here, incidental. It is not restricted to the issue of freedom for our South Korean Allies, whose fidelity and valour under the severest stresses of battle we recognise; though that freedom is a symbol of the wider issues, and included among them … The real issues are whether the power of Western civilization, as God has permitted it to flower in our own beloved lands, shall defy and defeat Communism; whether the rule of men who shoot their prisoners, enslave their citizens, and deride the dignity of man, shall displace the rule of those to whom the individual and his individual rights are sacred; whether we are to survive with God's hand to guide and lead us, or to perish in the dead existence of a Godless world … If these be true, and to me they are beyond any possibility of challenge, then this has long ceased to be a fight for freedom for our Korean Allies alone and for their national survival. It has become, and it continues to be, a fight for our own freedom, for our own survival, in an honourable, independent national existence … In the final analysis, the issue now joined right here in Korea is whether Communism or individual freedom shall prevail, and, make no mistake, whether [or not it] shall be checked and defeated overseas or [be] permitted, step by step, to close in on our own homeland and at some future time, however distant, to engulf our own loved ones in all its misery and despair. These are the things for which we fight.[71]

Through January, February and March 1951 a transformed 8th US Army and 10th US Corps, with their allies from the other UN nations, weathered a new Chinese attack and mounted a series of major offensives. Formations such as the 2nd and 25th US Infantry Divisions were at last able to lay the ghosts of Kunu-ri and the retreat from the Yalu River of the previous November, as a combination of improved training, appropriate tactics and effective leadership, underwritten by overwhelming firepower – notably airpower – and matériel resources boosted the self-confidence of the UN troops. 'The myth of the magical millions of Chinese in Korea has been exploded. In the last United Nations offensive, the Americans have learned how easy it is to kill the Chinese, and their morale has greatly increased thereby' – so observed British Air Vice-Marshal C. A. Bouchier in February 1951.[72] Although the war was by no means popular with many of those that he commanded, the impact of Ridgway's leadership upon the UN forces was electric, and from January to early April, despite some tactical reverses, it appeared that the UN forces would never again need to endure events such as those of the last two months of 1950.

Contingency plans were still being developed for another general advance to the Yalu and the complete removal of the North Korean communist regime. However, it had already been tacitly accepted that the conflict was moving inexorably towards some sort of compromise settlement based upon the 38th parallel. Given the operational and strategic constraints imposed by the limited war policy, neither the use of US atomic weapons nor a direct attack on the PRC with conventional weapons were acceptable strategic-political options, although by early 1951 these were probably the only means by which a speedy and decisive UN victory might yet have been won.

These political constraints were entirely contrary to the line that MacArthur was still advocating in his obsessive quest for the total victory that he had so nearly achieved at Inchon. By the end of December he was pushing hard for the use of Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist Chinese troops both in Korea and directly against the PRC. He also advocated the destruction of China's military-industrial capability by air and sea bombardment, plus a maritime blockade of China. At the same time, he was also criticising Truman's limited war policy ever more openly and publicly. Even Ridgway, whose appointment to command the 8th US Army had been MacArthur's own choice, was finding his commander's style of command increasingly difficult to cope with.[73] The outcome of all this was inevitable, and on 11 April 1951 President Truman relieved General Douglas MacArthur of his command.

Deliberations over whether or not this was the correct course of action had occupied President Truman, Secretary of Defence Marshall, Secretary of State Acheson, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Bradley and others for many

months. Indeed, MacArthur's autocratic command of the US forces occupying Japan had led to calls for his removal from that post as much as two years earlier. But from early December 1950 MacArthur's own actions and media pronouncements made the pressure for his removal irresistible. The rationale for this decision was clear from Truman's press statement on the matter: 'With deep regret I have concluded that General of the Army Douglas MacArthur is unable to give his wholehearted support to the policies of the United States government and of the United Nations in matters pertaining to his official duties.' On MacArthur's departure Ridgway was appointed Supreme Commander of the UN forces, and Lieutenant General James van Fleet replaced Ridgway as commander of the 8th US Army.

In mid-March the UN forces recaptured Seoul for a final time. By mid-April they had advanced to a new defensive line slightly to the north of the 38th parallel, with part of this line based on the range of hills by the Imjin River. But then, just as the front appeared to be stabilising, on Sunday 22 April the PLA launched its major spring offensive.

Battle on the Imjin: March to April 1951

Thus far much of the story has dealt with the US role in the fighting. Certainly, apart from the ROK forces, the Americans were the first UN troops into action and their force level – which peaked at more than 300,000 men – was always significantly greater than that of any other nation on the UN side. However, fifteen other nations had also provided contingents to the UN force. Of these, the most significant were those from Britain (two infantry brigades and one armoured regiment, plus engineers and service support, together with Royal Navy ships and Royal Air Force units), Turkey (one infantry brigade), Canada (one reinforced infantry brigade, plus naval forces and transport aircraft) and Australia (two infantry battalions, plus maritime and air assets). However, Belgium, France, Thailand, South Africa, the Philippines, New Zealand, Holland, Greece, Ethiopia and Colombia all supplied contingents of about battalion or regimental size, together with ships and aircraft in some cases. Even Luxembourg provided an infantry company, while Norway, Denmark, Italy, Sweden and India gave medical support. Although the grand total of these allied contingents never exceeded about 44,000 men, they fulfilled a vital political purpose by demonstrating that the force opposing the communists was indeed an international UN force. But, far from being merely presentational, their military contributions were significant. The Turkish, British and British Commonwealth, French and Belgian troops acquitted themselves particularly well during some of the hardest fighting of the war. Among many such examples, the Chinese spring offensive against the UN defensive line on the River Imjin led to an action that

exemplified the sense of duty, stoicism, and courage that have characterised British infantry regiments of the line throughout history.

In late April the PLA's strategic intention was to smash through the UN line of defences and recapture Seoul by May Day, thereby winning a political and a military victory. The 1st US Corps had earlier advanced on the left of the UN deployment. Within this corps were the 27th Commonwealth Brigade[74] and the British 29th Infantry Brigade, the former having been sent to Korea from Hong Kong in August 1950 and the latter having arrived from the United Kingdom at the end of that year. By 22 April the focus of the fighting was at the centre of the UN defensive line, which involved the 27th Brigade in the area of Kapyong and, to the west, the 29th Brigade. The 29th Brigade's units included 1st Battalion the Gloucestershire Regiment (1 Glosters), 1st Battalion the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers (1 RNF) (also known as the '5th Fusiliers'), 1st Battalion the Royal Ulster Rifles (1 RUR), and a Belgian battalion, with the tanks of the 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars (KRIH) and the 25-pounder guns of 45 Field Regiment Royal Artillery (RA) in support. The Glosters' positions were sited on the left or west of the brigade defensive position, overlooking the various fords across the Imjin River, which meandered on its muddy way across the plain that lay between the adjacent hills. On the Glosters' left were ROK army units. Although few of the Gloucestershire soldiers manning their slit trenches and bunkers that April may have been aware of it, the positions they occupied straddled the route to Seoul that had been used successfully by invading northern armies for centuries. And the Chinese commander of the 63rd Army (which comprised the 187th, 188th and 189th Divisions, each of 9,000 men) saw no reason to deviate from the practices of his historic predecessors.

On 22 April 1951, Second Lieutenant Denys Whatmore was a platoon commander serving in D Company, 1st Battalion the Gloucestershire Regiment. His matter of fact description of the battle that the battalion fought on the Imjin in late April encapsulated the intensity and nature of the fighting, as well as the British infantryman's frequently understated but invariably professional approach to the business of war:

> There were too few UN infantry units adequately to defend the ground. The units of 29 Brigade were so spread out that they were not mutually supporting. The gap between 1 Glosters and the ROK division to the west invited penetration. Even between 1 Glosters companies there were gaps of up to 2 kilometres, making interlocking [arcs of] small-arms fire between them impossible, reliance having to be placed in this respect on the battalion's [Vickers] medium machine guns and three-inch mortars, and on artillery bombardment. No 8th Hussars

> tanks were available in 1 Glosters area. The terrain was quite unsuitable for the ponderous Centurions.[75] Only meagre supplies of barbed wire and trip flares were laid out in the forward areas. Despite all this, however, the companies, each sited on hill formations commanding the river fords and the tracks leading south from them, were quite well dug in, in the unfriendly rock.
>
> Chinese were spotted on the north bank of the river on 22 April, but they only started to wade over what became known as 'Gloster Crossing' that night. Lieutenant Colonel Carne [the battalion's commanding officer] had placed a strong patrol covering the crossing exit at the south bank and these men, plus the artillery fire they called down, played havoc with the vulnerable Chinese infantry in and approaching the river. The patrol was withdrawn when their ammunition was exhausted, without casualties. The withdrawal was timely because the Chinese were now pouring across the river at several fordable points and pressing on into UN lines.
>
> On the battalion front, A Company was the first to be seriously attacked. [They were] the left hand company, they occupied 'Castle Hill' closest to the river, with good fields of fire towards it. They were, however, a bit isolated and fought a long and lonely battle all night 22/23 April until, with the company commander and two platoon commanders dead, the third wounded, and heavy casualties, they were forced to withdraw at 0800 hours on 23 April.
>
> Meanwhile, the Chinese had advanced against D and B Companies, and these too fought an all night and early morning battle against overwhelming numbers of Chinese infantry advancing time and again in the human wave tactics they commonly used. This was infantry fighting at its bloodiest, and the most forward platoon [commanded by Second Lieutenant Whatmore] of D Company lost two thirds of its men, dead or wounded. The D and B Company positions were held, however, until a withdrawal was ordered at about 0830 hours on 23 April. On withdrawal, D Company were ordered to join what was left of A Company on Hill 235 [which later became known as 'Gloster Hill'] immediately overlooking the vital road, where they remained until the final breakout.
>
> B Company was sent to join the reserve company – C Company – in the foothills of Kaman San, the mountain looming over all the action, and whose lower western slopes also dominated the road from which the Chinese continued to be barred. But advanced Chinese units had already penetrated beyond the Glosters' position by other routes and encirclement was only a matter of time. Decisions were made in higher headquarters requiring 1 Glosters to continue to hold their position

while UN formations in the rear were regrouped [ready] to stem any Chinese breakthrough elsewhere.

On the night 23/24 April (Monday/Tuesday), B and C Companies were heavily attacked, while probing attacks against Hill 235 also kept the night alive with the flashes and thunder of war. From 235 it was possible to watch, but not to help, the B and C Company battle across the road, and to observe [the] hours of heavy fighting, and its eventual end. In early daylight 24 April, the remnants of B Company – about twenty men led by Major Denis Harding – ran across the road far below us on 235 and were able to join what was left of the battalion. B and C Company casualties were heavy, and those who could walk, and who tried to evade the Chinese and escape to the south, were rounded up and made prisoners. The battalion was now surrounded, and in depth.

During the daylight hours of 24 April, the Chinese made sporadic attacks on Hill 235, repulsed by the determined efforts of A Company, reinforced by a miscellany of men from other subunits. Captain Farrar-Hockley, the adjutant, himself led a successful counter attack. Lieutenant Colonel Carne, with a few men, also chased away some Chinese infiltrators. The defenders of Hill 235 held the ring all that day and all that night, when Chinese attacks resumed in intensity. News soon came through that attempts to relieve 1 Glosters had failed, and [a] promised re-supply by air had hardly any success.

In early morning daylight on 25 April (Wednesday), two events heartened us all. One was a defiant reply to the Chinese and their bugle calls … by bugle calls of our own, played by Drum Major Buss on the orders of the commanding officer.[76] The other was the sudden appearance of American fighter bombers which roared in very low and strafed [the] Chinese positions with rockets, napalm and cannon fire. The effect was devastating if short lived; but it was a welcome addition to the constant and accurate support which had been provided all this time by 45 Field Regiment. 25 April was the last day of the battle. With many wounded, little water and no food, and ammunition running low, the commanding officer made it clear to brigade HQ, on his fading radio, that it was not possible to hold on much longer.

Orders were received then to break off the action and to try to break through the surrounding enemy to reach UN lines. Lieutenant Colonel Carne gave his own orders at about 1030 hours. The wounded could not be moved, and the doctor, [Captain] Bob Hickey, the padre, Sam Davies, and some medical orderlies stayed with them to await capture. What was left of A, B and C Companies and Battalion HQ personnel set off into the hills to the south and southwest, the most direct route to the UN

lines. Months later, we learned that they met with overwhelming numbers of Chinese and had to surrender to avoid annihilation.

[However,] D Company commander, Captain Mike Harvey, took a different route. He led his men, now joined by sundry Support Company men, to a total number of about ninety, due north for a few hundred yards, into ground which, he guessed, would be empty of Chinese. He was dead right! Turning west and then south down a steep-sided valley, it was only after two or three miles that Chinese were encountered, hidden in the ridges covering the valley, with excellent fields of fire. The Glosters column, moving south, now ran the gauntlet. They then bumped into some American tanks, [the nervous crews of] which also fired on them. Eventually however, the survivors were taken out by those same tanks. Forty-seven of the original column of ninety men reached safety and were taken to join the rear elements of 1 Glosters which had been left out of battle. The tribulations of those who escaped were over. For those taken prisoner, however, they were just beginning, and many are the stories of heroism and endurance among the [Glosters] prisoners on the march to the prison camps in North Korea and during their two years of captivity.[77]

Of the 850 men of the Glosters who had begun the battle just three days before there were just 169 left, including those who had been 'left out of battle' with the battalion's rear echelon. These men provided the nucleus for rebuilding the 1st Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment. The decimated battalion had imposed such a delay upon the Chinese advance that there was time for the South Korean capital's defences to be organised, which meant that the communists' objective of capturing Seoul was denied to them. For his actions as commanding officer during the battle Lieutenant Colonel Carne was awarded the Victoria Cross.[78] Indeed, all of the officers and soldiers of the 1st Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment had written a new page in the long history of their regiment. The Americans also recognised the extent of the Glosters' sacrifice and feat of arms on the Imjin when they subsequently conferred the US Presidential Unit Citation on the regiment, and on the other units who had supported and fought alongside the infantry regiment that was thereafter forever known as 'The Glorious Glosters'.[79]

The widely dispersed deployment of the 29th Brigade on the Imjin – an imposed tactical layout about which the British brigade commander had been most uneasy – followed by the failure of the American higher commanders to appreciate the seriousness of the Glosters' predicament until it was too late, resulted in the destruction of a much-needed infantry

battalion that could and should have been avoided. Had 29th Brigade been given the chance to conduct a fighting withdrawal to already prepared positions further south, the PLA could still have been sufficiently delayed to safeguard Seoul, and the 1st Battalion the Gloucestershire Regiment would probably have still been a viable combat unit at the end of the battle. Certainly, the 1,000 casualties sustained by the 29th Brigade had been a very high price to pay, notwithstanding estimated Chinese losses of 10,000 during their battle on the Imjin in April 1951.

One particularly positive outcome of this battle, however, was the formation of the Commonwealth Division in July 1951, under the command of Major General James Cassels. This new division finally provided a unified division-level command for the brigades, combat units and supporting arms and services that had been supplied to the UN force by Great Britain and the members of the British Commonwealth. This enabled all of these units and formations to form a cohesive and highly potent fighting formation, ending the practice of allocating them piecemeal to various US formations below the corps level of command.

Stalemate and Armistice: June 1951 to July 1953

With the front line between the UN and the communist forces more or less stabilised, with Ridgway in command, and with Washington having regained political and strategic control of the UN campaign, the war settled down to a campaign of attrition, during which the tide of battle ebbed and flowed about the hills and valleys all along the general line of the 38th parallel. As the weeks and months passed, both sides conducted tunnelling, entrenching and bunker construction on a scale not seen since the campaign on the Western Front during the First World War.

Only an occasional increase in resources, the reinforcement of an area, or some technological advance relieved the virtual stalemate that ensued once the second phase of the spring offensive had been halted in early June 1951. On 23 June Yakov Malik, the Soviet Ambassador to the UN, called for a ceasefire; this was quickly followed on 25 June by a Chinese broadcast indicating the PRC desire for a ceasefire. Thereafter, a series of largely unproductive and faltering armistice negotiations took place against a violent backdrop of military confrontation, active patrolling and occasional large-scale offensive operations by both sides.[80] Despite this form of stalemate, both sides suffered more casualties during the period from mid-1951 to mid-1953 than they had during the more intense fighting conducted in the course of the first year of the war.

> They say that it was possible to walk nearly the entire distance from Korea's west coast to the east without ever leaving the trenchworks! The trenches were not simply strung out across flat land – because there is very little flat land in this part of Korea. They spanned hills and mountains; there were gaps only where some impossible terrain feature had been encountered. In front of the trenches – on higher ground wherever possible – was the network of OPs [observation posts] and listening posts which were manned day and night. The men lived in bunkers that were dug by troops who had long since left the battle zone either on rotation or because they had become battle casualties. The bunkers were strongly reinforced and when an enemy attack got really rugged the troops pulled back into their bunkers – fairly safe from anything short of a direct hit by an extra-heavy shell. From the bunkers they could call down friendly artillery fire on the Reds [communists] assaulting their trenches. The main line of resistance (MLR) consisted of the exposed trenches on the forward slope of the hills we held. The men in these trenches were in view of the enemy – and vice versa – twenty-four hours a day. They were separated at some places by as little as 50 yards of no-man's land! In some places there were 3 or 4 miles between them. The river sides were usually separated by about 1,000 yards. No-man's land was heavy with barbed wire, tin cans, and high-powered microphones designed to pick up any sounds of movement.
>
> Almost continually, our troops were involved in an activity that is hard to explain – the battle for the 'in-between hills' – the high points that stood between the enemy lines and our own. From a military standpoint it was next to impossible to hold these exposed hill positions – but neither could Eighth [US] Army sit back and let the CCF [Chinese Communist Forces] hold them. To do the latter would be tantamount to giving the Reds a press-box seat from which they could peer right down into the trenches and positions we occupied. And so we became engaged in a campaign of bitter 'jockeying for position' and many strongpoints changed hands several times a day. In some sectors this assumed a timetable schedule: UNC [United Nations Command] troops would seize a position at nightfall and hold it until dawn. When they withdrew the enemy would return. Late in the day the Reds would pull back when our artillery started to pound them prior to our own movement toward the hill. It was monotonous, ugly, and extremely hazardous warfare.[81]

The armistice talks lasted two years. They were initially based at Kaesong, and later at Panmunjom. Throughout, a major stumbling block was the question of the repatriation of prisoners, as the communists demanded the return of all their captured troops; but very many of these soldiers had seen

the lifestyle south of the 38th parallel, and understandably had no desire to return to the bleak communist world of North Korea and China. Linked to this issue, prison camp riots, the unauthorised release of North Koreans with the connivance of the South Korean government, and Western outrage over the treatment of UN soldiers while in communist hands, all contributed to the frustration of the negotiators and to the inertia of the talks.

Meanwhile, on 12 May 1952 General Mark Clark succeeded General Ridgway as the UN's Supreme Commander in Korea. Ridgway had been appointed as NATO Supreme Allied Commander in Europe (SACEUR) in succession to General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Republican nominee to oppose Truman for the presidency in 1952 who beat Truman convincingly at the polls that November. A key element in Eisenhower's successful campaign had been a determination to 'go to Korea' himself, in order to assess the situation and, by implication, to resolve the long-running and unpopular conflict. Eisenhower visited Korea on 29 November but, to the evident disappointment of both General Clark and General Van Fleet, far from resolving the conflict by military means he seemed to be preoccupied with negotiating a viable truce and ceasefire. Therefore, despite the new administration in Washington, the war continued into 1953 still with no clear end in sight. However, some new political and strategic issues were emerging, together with an important advance in military technology, and these had various impacts upon the Korean conflict and the Cold War.

In January 1953 the Americans successfully detonated a nuclear device that could be fired from an artillery weapon, and suddenly a whole new range of tactical options was available to the UN forces. Despite President Eisenhower's best intentions, after many months of unproductive armistice negotiations, he was finally forced to threaten China and the Soviet Union that, unless an armistice was signed soon, the UN would abandon its self-imposed limited war concept, and would resume the offensive with air strikes beyond the Yalu – including the use of tactical atomic weapons against North Korea.[82] Not surprisingly perhaps, an armistice was signed at 10.00 a.m. on 27 July 1953, shortly after the issue of the US ultimatum by Secretary of State Dulles. However, Joseph Stalin, the principal architect of the Soviet Union and post-war communist empire, did not live to see this, as he had died in March that year.

In fact, Stalin's death did not have the immediate or momentous impact upon the Korean War that might reasonably have been anticipated by the West, other than perhaps emboldening Eisenhower to issue his 'sign or else' ultimatum to the Chinese and Soviet governments. There were three reasons for this. First, negotiations directed towards a ceasefire and eventual armistice had already been ongoing for some twenty months, even though

both sides had continued to wage a 'hot' war across and about the 38th parallel.[83] Next, although the Soviets had certainly condoned and supported the North Korean action, they had underestimated the US response to the NKPA invasion in 1950, and had certainly never wished the conflict to result in a direct clash of arms between the United States and the PRC north of the Yalu: a situation that would have posed for Moscow the critical problem of whether or not to intervene directly. Had they done so, it would have been difficult to avoid the use of nuclear weapons, with an escalation of the war into a regional and possibly global conflict. Lastly, the fundamental fact that had eluded the American consciousness ever since June 1950 was that the principal player on the communist side was not the Soviet Union working through a communist Chinese client state, but a communist Chinese state that was its own master, with policies, national interests and a culture all very different from those of its superpower neighbour. Even the communist ideology of Beijing differed from that promoted by Moscow. Therefore, although changes in the Soviet Union after the death of Stalin probably eased the achievement of an armistice in Korea, this event was by no means as significant in Korea as it was within the Soviet bloc countries in Europe.

What then were the principal lessons or experiences that emerged from the three years of war in Korea? For the military leaders in Washington, New York and the Western capitals, as well as in Beijing and Pyongyang, it had been a salutary experience. As the UN forces had failed to secure a North Korean surrender, and South Korean President Syngman Rhee had refused to sign the armistice document, the United States was faced with the fact that it had fought a three-year war without securing a definitive victory. Although the non-communist campaign had been conducted under UN auspices, nobody was under any illusions that the vast majority of the UN forces had been American, and that the whole force had been directed, led and extensively resourced by the United States.[84] Certainly these forces had (eventually) repelled the NKPA and PLA invaders, but 33,629 dead and 105,785 wounded American servicemen was a high price to have paid to restore the status quo ante; and of these casualties, almost half were sustained after the start of the armistice negotiations. Meanwhile, the financial cost of the war to the United States had been more than 22 billion US dollars.

The allies on the UN side had suffered proportionate casualties, with Britain and the Commonwealth countries losing 1,263 killed and 4,817 wounded, while the other military contingents lost a total 1,800 dead and 7,000 wounded. Of these, the Turkish contingent, whose military performance and professionalism had been exemplary, sustained almost half of the casualties. But whereas the combat performance of all of the non-American contingents was by no means insignificant, the political message that the

multinational UN force sent to the world was its most important contribution to the war. Although the US high command was undoubtedly frustrated by the command and control implications of alliance operations, the political advantages of having allies were clear to see in Korea. In later years, in Europe, this perception strengthened the structure and modalities of the newly formed NATO Alliance as it gained military strength and political stature.

Finally, the ROK forces, always the primary focus of every communist offensive, suffered losses of about 415,000 killed and some 429,000 wounded. The ROK government had always set its sights on winning a comprehensive military victory, with the elimination of Kim Il Sung's communist regime and the establishment of a single non-communist Korean state. But it was clear from the outset of Eisenhower's presidency that this was both undesirable and unachievable. Eisenhower understood that implicit in these objectives was a commitment to carry the war into China and, possibly, into a direct confrontation with the Soviet Union. He also understood that in all probability the use of nuclear weapons could not be avoided. Therefore, right up to the point in 1953 at which he was obliged to use the threat of the new tactical nuclear weapons to break the deadlocked armistice negotiations, he continued to support his predecessor's concept of the limited war. By so doing, both Truman and Eisenhower had drawn a dividing line between the way in which military commanders had fought in 1939–45, where there had been no real constraints on how military commanders achieved their objectives, and the new way in war, with significant political direction and control imposed upon commanders in the field.

Of course, military commanders resisted this interference, but the key difference from the situation that obtained prior to August 1945 was the fact that the atom bomb was now in the weapons inventory. And the new generation of political leaders and rising military commanders began to understand that despite its obvious military applications, the real importance of this new capability was its power as a political weapon. This understanding was further informed by the first successful Soviet atom bomb test in 1949. Although some had advocated the use of the bomb against the Soviet Union prior to 1949, and later against the Chinese in Korea and north of the Yalu, the decisions not to do so were probably well-founded. Despite the theoretical use of nuclear weapons as an adjunct to campaigns hitherto fought exclusively with conventional weapons (and military planners routinely incorporated nuclear operations in parallel with or as an extension of conventional warfare) after 1945 the gulf between the comparative effects and conceptual applications of conventional and nuclear weapons was realistically unbridgeable. Indeed, if the atom bomb had not existed, the UN

forces could probably have used their immense conventional firepower to carry out MacArthur's wish to strike the PLA and other strategic targets in China with relative impunity, and certainly without risking a global nuclear conflict.

Although MacArthur was the most vociferous and high-profile advocate of carrying the war into China he was by no means alone in this view, and many senior American commanders in Korea resented the loss of life by their forces when (as they saw it) they possessed the means to avoid this. Even General Mark Clark, the former commander of the 5th US Army during the Allied invasion of Italy in 1943 and at Anzio in 1944, who had replaced General Ridgway as supreme commander in mid-1952, abhorred acceptance of anything less than a UN victory. Thus Korea was one of the earliest examples of nuclear deterrence in action, as it indirectly limited the scale of the conflict; yet at the same time it prolonged it, and finally resulted in a compromise settlement, plus the loss of significantly more UN lives than might otherwise have been the case.

But what of the losses sustained by the PLA and NKPA? Estimates of the communist losses vary, but were conservatively set at more than 500,000 for the North Koreans and about 900,000 for the Chinese. However, while North Korea had gained nothing from the war, the PRC had learned some valuable lessons from it, albeit at a huge price in human terms. First of all, in just a couple of years, communist China had emerged into the limelight from a position of relative obscurity, and one of the greatest failures of the West had been its disregard of the importance of the PRC. The presence of US forces close to the Yalu in 1950 could not have been viewed by the People's Republic other than as a direct threat to its national interests and territorial integrity and its armed response to the situation was therefore quite predictable. Remarkably, although 1950s China was militarily and industrially far behind the West and its Soviet neighbour, it nonetheless chose to confront the most powerful post-1945 nation in the world and, initially, overcame its military forces decisively.

Nevertheless, the early successes of the seemingly inexhaustible supplies of manpower that were flung against the ill-prepared UN forces did not last, and (even though Mao Tse-Tung continued to advocate the ideological view that low-technology massed forces would always overcome those of a non-communist Western power) the Korean War prompted the eventual modernisation and industrialisation of China and its armed forces, albeit that many of the PLA generals who identified and implemented these changes were then purged by Mao in later years. But the main lessons learned by Beijing were political, and these informed and extended their understanding of the nature of the West.

In Korea, the Chinese learnt that howsoever an armed intervention might be described – as nationalism, as counter-colonialism, as a war of liberation or whatever – it should never again allow itself to be identified as the aggressor or supporter of an aggressor. Just as importantly, the Chinese also recognised the fundamental difference between the Western perception of time and their own. In the West politicians and their national armed forces became increasingly wary of any conflict that was open-ended or in which there was no certain prospect of winning an unequivocal victory. In parallel with this, there was a growing reluctance by Western politicians to accept that casualties are an inescapable consequence of war. In later years, particularly since 1990, this trend became even more marked. The Chinese judged, quite correctly, that in any future conflict with the non-communist West they could use human attrition and time to offset the technological imbalance between the two sides. But for this strategy to work, the general population of the enemy Western state had to be kept constantly aware of the losses sustained by their forces: the so-called 'body bag factor' which was so vividly, diligently (but often inaccurately and unhelpfully) reported by the television news agencies and photo-journalists throughout the post-1950s era, particularly in Vietnam. Accordingly, Korea spawned a concept of media reporting that dominated later conflicts, and also alerted those on both sides of the Iron Curtain (or 'Bamboo Curtain' in Asia and the Far East) to the almost infinite possibilities presented by the manipulation of the media to support their divergent political and military aims. Thus what later became known as the 'CNN factor' was born and this, together with the many other military and political lessons learned by Beijing in Korea, were soon utilised against the French in Indochina, and subsequently to even more telling effect against the Americans in Vietnam.

For their part, the United States and its allies had also learned important military lessons from the Korean experience. That Western technology and firepower had eventually triumphed over the huge but technologically inferior PLA was not in doubt. But the politically attractive deduction that superior technology would therefore invariably prevail over such forces in the future was naïve, and this flawed appreciation was an important contributor to the American failure in Vietnam twenty years later. While the British did not make the same mistake in Malaya between 1948 and 1960, their access to high-technology military assets could never have remotely approached that of the United States in any case, given the national indebtedness and economic crises that afflicted successive post-1945 British governments.

Nevertheless, for the United States and Great Britain, Korea provided a timely warning, and varying levels of rearmament, an extension of conscription and improvements to all manner of military training and equipment

followed the conflict. All of this had important spin-offs for their NATO forces in Europe, and sweeping improvements were made in the wake of what had been in a number of respects an unsatisfactory campaign. Sadly, the United States subsequently ignored or forgot the lessons of Korea by the time of their next South-east Asian conflict, so that a senior American veteran of Korea and Vietnam commented after 1975: 'We went into Korea with a very poor army, and [consequent upon the lessons learned from that experience] came out with a pretty good one. We went into Vietnam with a pretty good army, and came out with a terrible one.'[85]

Once the Korean conflict had reached a stalemate in 1951, it became an increasingly forgotten and unpopular war, while civil rights and anti-war movements gained more and more support in America and elsewhere in the West as the months of static warfare dragged on. Although on a much lesser scale than that seen during the Vietnam War in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the disregard and sometimes open hostility displayed by some (but by no means all) US communities and citizens to the returning Korean veterans in 1952 and 1953 was a sad comment upon the changing attitudes in America. Similar reactions were also encountered by certain other UN force contributors, but the scale of this was insignificant compared with that experienced by the returning American soldiers and repatriated prisoners of war in parts of the United States.

Meanwhile, the seeds of discord and disillusion had also been sown within the US armed forces early in the piece by inequities in the mobilisation system and drafting of personnel to fight in Korea. Subsequent attempts to provide a fair system of rotation and tour length through a points system actually reduced combat effectiveness. After the first eight months of the war, moreover, the morale and motivation of many US servicemen was also adversely affected by a perception that they were being required to fight and possibly die in a war 'whose purpose was not clear, which they were not supposed to win, and which just seemed to go on and on'.[86]

Another such issue within the American forces was the fact that in 1950 the army, the navy and the marines were still generally segregated into white and non-white units. The inequities of this situation attracted increasing attention in Korea, and from 1954 desegregation of the US armed forces moved on apace, although the legacy of segregation and the bitterness that it engendered persisted long after that.

In the United Kingdom the call-up of reservists for Korea was also mishandled in many hundreds of cases. Men who had been classified medically unfit were recalled to active duty, and hundreds of ex-prisoners of war of the Japanese and Germans in the Second World War found themselves once again in uniform, just as they were beginning to rebuild their

post-war lives.[87] Indeed, the thoughts of those men who had recently suffered years of captivity as prisoners of the Japanese can only be imagined, as their imminent capture by another oriental foe became a distinct possibility. However, just as had been the case from 1939–45, the British soldier's attitude to the war was generally less political than that of his American counterpart, and the concept of fighting for his country, his regiment, or simply for his comrades more often than not superseded any abstract notions of conducting an ideological struggle or crusade against communism in Korea.

So it was that the Korean War took its place in the history of the Cold War as the first direct armed conflict between a major communist power and non-communist powers. This, together with the crucial military-political policy decisions taken in Washington, New York, London, Beijing and Moscow which flowed from the crucial debates over the expansion of the war and options for the use of nuclear weapons, conferred particular significance upon an unpleasant and generally inglorious war. But perhaps the single most important matter to emerge from the Korean conflict was the adoption by the United States of the concept of the limited war as its war-fighting solution for any future campaigns to contain the communist threat. For better or worse, the United States had shown the PRC and the Soviet Union just how far it was prepared to go in its use of armed force in regions that lay beyond its areas of vital interest. It had also provided its own military leaders with an unequivocal signal that, other than in a general war, they could not henceforth expect to exercise the almost total control of their forces in the field that their predecessors had enjoyed during the Second World War. Korea heralded new ways of using armed force, but not all the political and military leaders necessarily understood, or were prepared to accept, the changes this implied at what was still an early stage of the Cold War.

Meanwhile, as the fighting on the Korean peninsula flowed back and forth, the British had been involved in their own separate war against another communist threat in South-east Asia ever since 1948. Here also Chinese involvement was an important factor. Unlike the compromise settlement that ended the war in Korea, however, the outcome of the Malayan Emergency was a clear military and political victory for the armed forces of Britain and Malaya.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MALAYA, 1948–60

Origins of an Insurgency

The conquest of Malaya by the Japanese during the Second World War and the post-war communist victory in China together enabled and encouraged the growth, from 1948, of a communist insurgency in the British colony of Malaya. During the pre-war years large numbers of workers had emigrated from China to the various European colonies that had been established and developed in South-east Asia during the previous two centuries. In the 1930s and 1940s these immigrants inevitably included many communists, including those with ambitions to export the form of communism that was then being advocated by Mao Tse Tung and his followers in their struggle against Chiang Kai-shek's nationalists in the post-1945 period. Although the pre-war effectiveness of the embryo communist movement in Malaya was limited, the war actually enabled the communists to acquire the means to prosecute an armed struggle. They were sufficiently organised to constitute the main core of the resistance movement following the Japanese invasion of the Malayan peninsula, and consequently they gained popular support within the country as well as formal recognition and matériel support from the Allied forces combating the invaders throughout the region.

The armed element of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) was equipped with weapons discarded during the 1942 fighting and with new weapons air-dropped into their jungle bases. Yet despite their combat potential, the communist fighters were not employed against the Japanese on a large scale or in set-piece battles. Rather, they remained as a guerrilla force in waiting – one that was already planning for the post-war era. To that end, when the Japanese defeat came in 1945 the MCP accepted the disarmament of its units and a return to the political arena. Many of its weapons, however, remained hidden in the jungle, while in the populated areas the MCP had over time established its members in key positions within several Malayan institutions, notably in the trade unions, schools and throughout the sizeable population of landless Chinese workers. Also, in a foretaste of what was to come, while it was still in open possession of its arms the MCP utilised the months between the defeat of the Japanese and the return of the British administration to eliminate a number of Malays who opposed their objective of a communist Malaya.

In 1945 the main MCP power base lay within the Chinese Malay population. For that reason it never achieved the blend of communist and nationalist appeal and support that occurred (for example) in its near neighbour