AMERICAN SOCIETY AND THE AMERICAN WAY OF WAR:

KOREA AND BEYOND

by

JAMES H. TONER

Studies of American wars and American soldiers do not always take cognizance of the obvious fact that a nation's military methods and mores are rooted in the soil of the society in question. To be sure, the military establishment provides its recruits with basic combat training and seeks to discipline and motivate them, but no army can change entirely—either for better or for worse—the civilians to whom it issues uniforms, supplies, and rifles. As a man has lived as a civilian, so can he be expected to fight as a soldier. Americans in Korea displayed prodigious reliance on the use of firepower; they became unduly concerned with putting in their time and getting out; they grew accustomed to fighting on a level of physical luxury probably unparalleled in world history to that time. In stark contrast to the American reverence for the programs of "R&R" (rest and recuperation) and the "Big R" (rotation back to the US), Chinese Communist soldiers fought—much as they had lived—with little hope of leaving the frontlines until the war ended or until they became casualties. Whether the US can maintain the requisite balance between a liberal society which is the master of its armed forces and a professional soldiery which is free to preserve the military ethic is a vital question to which the American way of war in Korea offers limited but significant testimony.

Most military men seem to hold to a stricter understanding of what is virtue and what is vice than nonmilitary people. That is, of course, how it should be, if only because military men are called upon to perform those ultimate duties that the rest of us may only vaguely understand or identify with. In short, soldiers usually consider it more important than civilians that society inculcate discipline and self-reliance in its children. Consider, for example, the judgment of General Mark W. Clark:

> . . . Our high standard of living and our glorious system of political freedom permit us the luxury of spoiling our children, of protecting them from hard knocks which children in other countries accept as inevitable. We, in our homes, try to give our kids every advantage of the freedoms which we enjoy, and by giving them full advantage of these freedoms, by devoting our every effort to making things comfortable and easy for them, we make it that much tougher when they have to fight these Communists who are inured to hardship and privation from birth. . . .
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> The Army has to take youngsters out of these protected homes and make them tough in a short time, tough in the sense that the Communist soldier is tough. I remember a woman once wrote me that she hoped I would make a man of her son, who had just

> entered the Army, that I would develop his character. I replied to her that I would do my best, that I was sure his military service would help him, but that she should realize that we would have him for eighteen months and she had had him for eighteen years. I added that the job of developing character in our youth was primarily the responsibility of the home, the churches, and the schools.[1]

As it became painfully obvious in Korea that there had been serious shortcomings in the training of American recruits, one colonel made the remark,

> They'd been nursed and coddled, told to drive safely, to buy War Bonds, to avoid VD, to write a letter home to mother, when somebody ought to have been telling them how to clear a machine gun when it jams. They've had to learn in combat, in a matter of days, the basic things they should have known before they ever faced an enemy. And some of them don't learn fast enough.[2]

One of the reasons that American soldiers were "nursed and coddled" in their training is that truly realistic combat training entails injuries—and even deaths—which would likely prove unacceptable to the American public. Regrettably, General Van Fleet is right in arguing that while the tendency to insure perfectly safe training is understandable and commendable, it may at the same time defeat its own purpose by costing lives in combat. Van Fleet illustrates his point by telling how Americans in training are not permitted to hug their artillery's curtain of fire as they advance on an "enemy" position because it often costs casualties from friendly fire during the advance, even though in combat it would save lives during the subsequent assault. The result is that in combat US troops have to learn this tactic "on the job," resulting in much higher casualties than if they had been trained this way. But, says Van Fleet, "American public opinion would never allow it."[3]

As American combat operations began in Korea in July 1950, there was, as S. L. A. Marshall put it, "an air of excessive expectation based upon estimates which were inspired by wishful optimism."[4] One American soldier, expressing a common sentiment of the day, said, "Everyone thought the enemy would turn around and go back when they found out who was fighting."[5] But the North Korean People's Army refused to "turn around and go back," and before long, for the second time in five years, some Americans found themselves in the midst of savage combat for which, both physically and psychologically, they were unprepared. Marguerite Higgins vividly describes the first battle shock of the novice American soldier fresh from the "vanilla-ice-cream kind of world he has been brought up in." She reported that to steady the troops, field grade officers were at the front line, but that even they were unable to overcome the confusion and chaos which attended the first series of North Korean attacks.[6] The normal problems of "vanilla-ice-cream" American soldiers were aggravated by the type of duty from which they had come to Korea. The first contingents of US troops had come to combat duty from comparatively plush military occupation duty in Japan. One top sergeant expressed the problem as only that unique breed can:

> 'We can fight 'em,' said the top sergeant, who had a face that might have been carved with a blunt axe out of some very hard wood. 'We can fight 'em, but the boys are soft now. Whaddya expect? They're in the army for the Occupation and some of them are so goddam fat they can't hardly walk around. Most of them haven't had to put their pants on for years; always had a couple of geisha girls to do that for 'em."[7]

The US Army, after World War II, relaxed its disciplinary standards on public demand. There seemed little danger of war, particularly to those caught up in the euphoria attending the end of the great crusade, World War II. There seemed to be no point in insisting on the kind of tough and realistic training that soldiers had undergone during the war. The recruits of 1945-50 had not enlisted in (or been drafted into) the

Army to fight Hitler and Tojo. They had joined for any of a number of reasons: to see the world, to get some technical training, to get away from home, to impress girl friends. T. R. Fehrenbach puts it bluntly:

> . . . The new breed of American regular, . . . not liking the service, had insisted, with public support, that the Army be made as much like civilian life and home as possible. Discipline had galled them, and their congressmen had seen to it that it did not become too onerous. They had grown fat.
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> They were probably as contented a group of American soldiery as had ever existed. They were like American youth everywhere. They believed the things their society had taught them to believe. They were cool, and confident, and figured that the world was no sweat.
>
> It was not their fault that no one had told them that the real function of an army is to fight and that a soldier's destiny—which few escape—is to suffer, and if need be, to die.[8]

An Army historian, Roy Appleman, offered a complementary analysis of the first days of US troops in Korea:

> A basic fact is that the occupation divisions were not trained, equipped, or ready for battle. The great majority of the enlisted men were young and not really interested in being soldiers. The recruiting posters that had induced most of these men to enter the Army mentioned all conceivable advantages and promised many good things, but never suggested that the principal business of an army is to fight.
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> When the first American units climbed the hills in the Korean monsoon heat and humidity, either to fight or to escape encirclement by the enemy, they 'dropped like flies,' as more than one official report of the period states.[9]

As months passed, American soldiers had time finally to contemplate the conflict in which they found themselves embroiled and the country in which and for which so many of them were dying. Such contemplation afforded little consolation. "I'll fight for my country," contended Corporal Stephen Zeg, "but I'll be damned if I see why I'm fighting to save this hellhole."[10] Of his fellow Marines, one American wrote, "Only the ones that died while saving the lives of others did not die in vain. The most disturbing thing of all is that not one of them knew why they were dying."[11] Roy Appleman's verdict that "the men and officers had no interest in a fight which was not even dignified by being called a war"[12] echoes that of George Kennan: "Those chaps came out of the war dominated by a bitter skepticism about the decisions which put them in there."[13] In a further elaboration of the soldiers' state of mind, General Clark expressed the belief that the "no-win" policy adversely affected the morale of the troops in Korea.[14]

CULTURE SHOCK AND THE NEED FOR DISCIPLINE

Some detractors of the American Army's performance in Korea can point to the usual examples of wanton destruction of civilian property and "target practice" (on livestock and windows, for example), and to instances of drinking excesses and rapes that armies have practiced since man first crashed club upon the skulls of other men. Of the American Army it can at least be said that acts of lawlessness against the population violated the military code and that, in John

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Dr. James H. Toner is Assistant Professor of Government at Norwich University and a fellow of the Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society. He received his master's degree from the College of William and Mary and his Ph.D. from the University of Notre Dame. He was formerly an assistant professor in the Department of Government and International Studies at Notre Dame. Dr. Toner served as an Army officer from 1968 to 1972. He has published numerous articles and reviews in such journals as *Army*, *Military Review*, *Review of Politics*, *International Review of History and Politics*, *Naval War College Review*, and *Parameters*.

Dille's judgment, "Only a small percentage of the men engaged in overt acts of destruction."[15] Defenders can point to the American custom of trying to make things a little easier for the Korean children, but, of course, there was never enough candy or sports equipment or GI clothing to make up for the loss of parents and home. That Americans were so drawn to the children may itself be a commentary on the American way of war.[16]

However, the point remains that American soldiers did not identify closely with the country they were fighting to protect. As one observer expressed it, "The attitude on the part of too many soldiers toward the country they are supposed to be rescuing from the enemy could best be summed up in one word: contempt."[17] To some extent, that American contempt was rooted in the "culture shock" of fighting in rice paddies that had been fertilized by human ordure. According to Robert Leckie, "When the sun shone, the Korean countryside steamed and stank like a giant diaper pail."[18] Moreover, there was a definite menace to health from the unburied dead, the half-empty tins of food, and the excrement "left lying all about the country." The Americans reacted with disgust (or, at best, condescension). Fehrenbach is right in the judgment that "few Americans, forced to live for an extended period in a land without safe drinking water or plumbing, can keep both equilibrium and an open mind."[19]

Some Americans never made the effort to open their minds. E. J. Kahn Jr. provides an example:

> Once, traveling by jeep from Taejon to Taegu, I saw a funeral procession moving along a paddy dike just off the road, and asked my driver to stop. It was a colorful sight. The deceased was being transported to his grave in an elaborate and many-hued casket, surmounted by a gaudy canopy, that was carried by fifteen pall-bearers, all marching in perfect step in keeping with a stately rhythm set by a bell-ringer who trudged ahead some fifteen feet ahead of the rest of the marchers . . . . My jeep driver remarked that it was the silliest damn funeral procession he had ever seen. I ventured the suggestion that to a Korean a convoy of polished Cadillac or Packard limousines might seem just as silly a performance, but the driver was unimpressed, and retorted that it was obvious that Korea would never amount to anything as long as its citizens persisted in such follies.[20]

Worse than this kind of cultural snobbery was an occasional tendency toward outright dislike of the Korean allies. This attitude expressed itself in the use of the term "gook," by which Americans referred to Asian soldiers, though Max Lerner has contended that through the use of the term "gook" the American soldier "was only expressing his sense of the strangeness of finding himself fighting for or against peoples so alien to his experience."[21]

Actions, sometimes tragically, speak louder than words. One American practice took the form not of amused condescension, but of actual malevolence. Some Koreans believe that certain of their late ancestors follow them on occasion in the form of evil spirits. What better way to rid themselves of the trailing spirits than to wait until an accommodating US Army vehicle bore down on them, and then to jump directly in front of the vehicle, perhaps even to be slightly grazed by it, but believing that the evil spirit was sure to be hit by the truck? Instead of driving all the more carefully in cognizance of this annoying religious "idiosyncracy," some American drivers seemed to join forces with the "evil spirits" and take aim at the superstitious Korean diving across the road.[22] The Army attempted to encourage safety and courtesy with a mimeograph campaign. Perhaps it was the best the Army could do to correct attitudes fostered in men years before in a society in which, somehow, to be different is to be inferior.

That Americans found Korea and the Koreans primitive;[23] that they contemptuously dismissed their hosts as "gooks";[24] and that they thought Asian soldiers in general to be inherently backward, especially in the mechanical field[25]—all contributed to

the gradual erosion of the store of goodwill Americans had earned at first with the valiant decision to intervene in Korea. A Korean Catholic priest made these telling remarks to René Cutforth:

> 'Do you know that if you held a plebiscite in South Korea the Communist vote would be more than seventy-five percent? We are sick of war and ruin. . . . Your armies have not behaved well to the people and we dislike you all cordially. It is impossible to keep these great theories of freedom in front of the eyes of simple people. They are afraid of the bombs and the burning and the raping behind the battle line. The Chinese understand us much better, I'm afraid. Your cause is good, but you have lost our good will, and though you all appear to despise us, that is a big thing to lose. In this country, manners count for everything.'[26]

However, after the first shock of battle, and after Army training schools were able to adjust their instruction to meet the challenge of Korea, Americans did begin to learn to fight on the soil of a foreign ally. In the early, dark days of the Korean War, efforts were made to bolster sagging morale with pep talks about the righteousness of the cause and the good intentions of the UN. And to the American fighting man, such considerations had often been important in the past. Just how important was noticed as long ago as the Revolutionary War; in seeking to explain the nature of the Americans to a former Prussian Army comrade, Baron von Steuben wrote, "In the first place the genius of this nation is not in the least to be compared with that of the Prussians, Austrians, or French. You say to [one of their soldiers], 'Do this,' and he doeth it. But I am obliged to say [to an American soldier], 'This is the reason why you ought to do that,' and then he does it."[27] Robert Leckie has expressed a similar opinion: "The citizen-soldier or nonprofessional who is the American ideal only kills for a cause. . . . Americans understand no war but the Crusade . . . or that total mobilization which means that 'everybody's in it.'"[28]

But the Korean War, of course, was no crusade. And not everybody was in it. Appeals to the higher and nobler purpose of the war often came across as transparent nonsense, and it soon became apparent that what was needed was not grandiloquence but the kind of demanding discipline and immediate response to orders that are the hallmarks of any army worthy of the name.

By all accounts, the discipline and professional esprit required by the Eighth US Army to get on with its job were supplied by General Ridgway when he took command of that sagging army in late December 1950.[29] Ridgway restored the "edge" to his command by insisting upon precisely those elementary aspects of military discipline and tactics that are known to every competent young sergeant. Yet, even Ridgway, a tough airborne soldier with no tolerance for nonsense, found himself explaining to his soldiers why they were in Korea. It was not enough, he found, simply to give the necessary orders and to follow up to insure their implementation; he came to mix the professional element—soldiers will do what they are told—with the more idealistic—soldiers are in Korea for noble purposes. This duality is evident in one of Ridgway's statements to the troops of the Eighth Army:

> The answer to the . . . question, 'Why are we here?' is simple and conclusive. We are here because of the decisions of the properly constituted authorities of our respective governments. As . . . General of the Army Douglas MacArthur has said: 'This command intends to maintain a military position in Korea just as long as the statesmen of the United Nations decide we should do so. . . .' The . . . question [What are we fighting for?] is of much greater significance . . . . 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.[30]

It is irrelevant to accuse General Ridgway of hyperbole. He was trying to restore the morale of his men, even as a football coach might do in a tirade inciting his charges to "mayhem" against another football squad—all for the honor of the old school. After all, Ridgway knew what other statesmen have known for centuries: Few men are willing to "get out there and fight" for the balance of power. But to fight to the death against a Godless Communism which is intent upon engulfing one's loved ones is something else entirely.[31]

FIREPOWER AND DESTRUCTION

In mid-May 1951, the Communist armies made their most intensive effort to shatter the UN force, but promptly ran headlong into a typically American strategem of General Van Fleet, the new Commander of the Eighth Army. Van Fleet's reaction to mass Chinese attacks was to call for the "Van Fleet Load": UN artillery struck the enemy with five times the normal output from the guns. Remarked Van Fleet, "We must expend steel and fire, not men. I want so many artillery holes that a man can step from one to the other."[32] Van Fleet's concern for saving the lives of his troops was the same as that of any American commander in a similar situation.[33] It has long been a characteristic American belief that whereas machines can be replaced, men cannot. For any American commander to reverse those priorities is virtually unthinkable.

That such priorities are not universally subscribed to is demonstrated by the story that after World War II Russian generals were amazed to hear that Americans often cleared a path through minefields by setting off the mines through the use of artillery barrages. To the Russians, this seemed to be a waste of valuable artillery shells. But the Americans were equally astonished to learn that the Russian technique for clearing minefields was to march troops through them![34] The use of such a tactic by an American would almost certainly result in a mutiny. As General Clark once put it, "An American soldier is not a suicidal fighter. He wants an even chance."[35] T. R. Fehrenbach sums it up well:

> To Americans, flesh and blood and lives have always been more precious than sticks and stones, however assembled. An American commander, faced with taking the Louvre from a defending enemy, unquestionably would blow it apart or burn it down without hesitation if such would save the life of one of his men. And he would be acting in complete accord with American ideals and ethics in doing so. Already, in the Korean War, American units were proceeding to destroy utterly enemy-held towns and villages rather than engage in the costly business of reducing them block by block with men and bayonets, as did European armies. If bombing and artillery would save lives, even though they destroyed sites of beauty and history, saving lives obviously had preference. And already foreign observers with the United States Army—not ROK's—were beginning to criticize such tactics.[36]

In this connection, something should be said about the mass destruction caused by the Korean War. The charge is sometimes heard that Americans took particular delight in the carnage and holocaust of that war. Of some warped and twisted soldiers—and there are some in the uniform of every nation—this may well be true. Murder, mayhem, and other antisocial behavior, in battle, are glorified in the name of nationalism, and acts that might in peace be identified as felonious receive the nation's highest honors in war. Some Americans may have taken a sadistic delight in the havoc they wreaked,[37] but there is ample reason to believe that the violence done to Korea horrified most Americans. General MacArthur, for one, remarked: "I have seen, I guess, as much blood and disaster as any living man, and it just curdled my stomach, the last time I was there. After I looked at that wreckage and those thousands

of women and children and everything, I vomited."[38] Air Force Major General Emmett O'Donnell Jr. testified, not in the spirit of braggadocio, but as a statement of tragic fact, "Almost the entire Korean peninsula is just a terrible mess. Everything is destroyed. There is nothing standing worthy of the name."[39] Part of the problem, of course, was the unwillingness of administration leaders to carry the war into China; much of the conflict, therefore, was effectively confined to the territory of the Republic of Korea (although air operations were consistently carried on, with limitations, in North Korea).[40] During the Korean War, most Americans seem to have been sensitive to the political and moral ramifications of a broader bombing campaign.[41]

Of course, as some naive observers have pointed out, the carnage in Korea could have been averted had the Republic of Korea acquiesced in the North Korean invasion. Dr. John M. Chang, ROK Ambassador to the US, pointed out as early as 5 August 1959 that his "country today is a gigantic charnel house," but he was no less determined to resist flagrant aggression in Korea.[42] The US and UN could hardly have chosen to do anything other than resist by force the invasion of South Korea. For them to have met the Communist challenge with a yawn or mere words would have meant not only the political death of the Republic of Korea, but probably a permanent confession of impotence by the UN in the face of aggression anywhere.

THE CALENDAR AS CONSOLATION

During the Korean War, the American soldier's best friend may have been his rifle, but a close second was his calendar. American soldiers learned the three R's all over again—not readin,' 'ritin,' and 'rithmetic, but R&R and the Big R. The R&R program was, at least at first, distinctly successful. About halfway through their tour of duty in Korea, men were allowed a five-day rest period in Japan. Flights were arranged by the military from Seoul to Tokyo, Yokohama, or Kyoto for troops on R&R, and the program was a great morale booster. Fehrenbach explains how it later became known as I&I.

> It was only later, when the pressure in Korea was not so great, that men going to Japan turned R&R into the great debauch that came to be known as I&I—intercourse and intoxication. Men coming out of weeks and months of hard combat are too tired and beaten down to seek trouble. Men leaving months of filthy living and screaming monotony tend to seek something else again.[43]

During World War I, US soldiers sang, "We won't be back till it's over, over there"; in World War II, many enlisted "for the duration." But during the Korean War, soldiers were able to look forward to the Big R—rotation home. A system was set up under which a soldier received a certain number of points per month according to the kind of duty he experienced; the more hazardous assignments, such as frontline combat duty, earned more points.[44] When the required number of points was achieved, the man went home. While the program was understandably popular among the troops, most senior military men were, at best, ambivalent about the policy of rotation.

There is no denying that some eccentric combat actions were the result of the rotation program. To the GI on line, the most important aspect of the Korean War became his ability to stay alive until he had accrued the magic number of points.[45] A kind of tacit policy developed in American units under which men with a high number of points were generally passed over for the more dangerous combat assignments. Such men, who were close to having it made, were looked after by the newer arrivals in Korea, who could look forward to such treatment themselves as their point totals increased. How this practice affected combat actions can be seen in this illustration:

> One night Corporal Charles Gordon of Liberty, Mississippi, led a patrol into enemy

territory. Halfway out, his radioman overtook him and said: 'I just talked to the CO. He says for you to lay down right where you are and wait for the patrol to come back. That's orders. You're going home tomorrow.'[46]

Thus, one of the results of the rotation program was that arrivals fresh from training in the US, lacking the savvy that comes with combat experience, were thrown immediately into the fray, while seasoned troops who might have shown them the ropes were often spared the dangers of combat assignments. "Rotation is also a killer of men rather than a saver," wrote S. L. A. Marshall: "There are never enough experienced men to fill the rugged assignments and let the new hands break in gradually."[47]

Seen from this perspective, rotation may very well have cost extra lives in Korea. In addition, rotation reinforced the American desire to use firepower instead of men to accomplish certain military objectives, and it contributed to the development among the troops of a short-timer's attitude, described by Walter Hermes:

> The difference between the enemy and [the UN force] attitude toward defense . . . was similar to that between a homeowner and an overnight guest at a hotel. The enemy became well-acquainted with the neighborhood and took every precaution to protect his property, while the [UN] forces adopted the short-term, casual approach of the transient.[48]

Despite these drawbacks, the policy was undeniably a great booster to morale, and, as S. L. A. Marshall put it, the Army soon found itself "stuck with its own brainchild."[49] As the policy was slowly worked out during the course of the war, it became apparent that rotation was a matter of great public interest. The difficulties that Army administrators were having in trying to work out an equitable and militarily practicable rotation policy were reflected in this revealing exchange between Senator Harry Cain and General J. Lawton Collins, then Army Chief of Staff, during Senate hearings:

> General Collins: . . . I am not sure that this cable [concerning the details of the rotation program] has been published to the troops, and I would suggest that—this is not a matter of national security, but it is a matter of good, sound internal administration, because very frankly if we publish this whole thing, just as it is, every soldier on the line is going to start figuring out when he gets home, and that is going to have an effect on the fighting efficiency of this force.
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> Furthermore, the question of the rotation of key specialists is a very difficult one.
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> Senator Cain: I understand that.
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> General Collins: These are general criteria, and a man will not be released, particularly a key man, unless we get a man in place of him. We just cannot wreck the fighting efficiency of the Eighth Army.
>
> On the other hand, the bulk of the men that really do take the pounding are going to be rotated, and we are doing it now, at the rate of 20,000 a month.
>
> Senator Cain: I think you can appreciate, General Collins, why I asked that question.
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> The substance that you have given us, in response, will be exceedingly helpful to a Senator, all Senators, for example in answering their mail—
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> General Collins: For goodness sake, don't answer it specifically.
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> Senator Cain: If we use discretion in the way in which we answer it, we can certainly look into particular cases deserving of preference against that general outline.
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> General Collins: Frankly, I would ask you not to do it, please do not do it.
>
> We have got field commanders 8000 miles away from here; and just like I say, in a broad way we depend upon the discretion of the field commanders on combat operations. When you get into anything as specific as this, you have to trust the honesty and integrity of the men on the spot; and I really ask you not to interject for special cases.[50]

Despite the many problems and liabilities of the rotation program, it could hardly have

been eliminated after its inception. Something about rotation appealed to Americans as "fair": No one was stuck in Korea permanently; everybody took his turn. One need not labor the point that in the Chinese Army, there was no rotation; but in the American Army, the development of the rotation policy during the Korean War set a pattern—one carried on, of course, throughout the Vietnam War—that will be hard to break. General Collins later wrote: "I was never happy about the process of rotation which we had to follow in Korea and Vietnam. However, I am afraid we will be faced with the same system in any unpopular limited war of the future."[51]

SHOPPING CARTS AND THE BATTLEFIELD SUPERMARKET

As men live, so do they fight. Accustomed to a level of comfort and luxury practically unparalleled, Americans are generally unwilling as soldiers to give up the pleasures and perquisites they knew as civilians. General Maxwell Taylor said of this phenomenon during the Korean War: "To make our men as comfortable and contented as possible in a distant war for which many had not volunteered called for post exchanges, snack bars, ice cream factories, and other excrescences which certainly did not meet the criterion of 'putting blood on the enemy's shirt.'"[52] For the American Army, the problem of the proper ratio of "teeth to tail" has resisted solution for decades. In Korea, to keep the affluent and highly mechanized Western forces going required that each man on line have four or five men supporting him. Each UN soldier in Korea required about 60 pounds of supplies a day; the Communist soldier needed only about 10 pounds.[53] As David Rees observed, "By the end of the conflict American troops were fighting on a level of physical luxury and comfort unique in world history."[54] But such comfort did not, of course, include a free issue of beer. Although it was the practice for a time to give the men a beer ration, when the home front learned about it, the beer issue became a national controversy. Various temperance, church, and civic groups raised a howl of protest about this corruption of American youth. The Pentagon, under such bombardment, soon surrendered, and the beer issue was stopped.[55] With such ironic flourishes do Americans send their sons off to kill the enemy.

WAR AND THE FOURTH ESTATE

The problems encountered by the military in its public relations efforts were not limited to questions about rotation and logistics. Perhaps the main problem took the form of conflicts between the necessity of a free press to have access to information and the military's need at times to deny the press the freedom it sought. The role of the press in a free society may never be satisfactorily established, whether it involves the publication of stolen classified documents, front-page publicity for social misfits who try to assassinate public leaders, or censorship in matters of war and national security. Far better, however, to continually worry the problem and seek rapprochement—than to implement decisively lopsided solutions in either direction.

The story of the press in Korea, of course, cannot be told in a few sentences. One might note that experienced journalists requested that censorship be imposed during the Korean War to prevent them from accidentally revealing military information of potential use to the enemy, and to relieve them somewhat from the demands of editors at home.[56] On the other hand, the desire of some reporters to get the sensational headline was characteristically strong.[57] Melvin Voorhees records the amusing story of the correspondent who went among exhausted GI's seeking (one supposes) a profound answer to his question, "Soldier, what are you fighting for?" The GI's answer—"What the hell do you think? I'm fighting for my life"—was less than transcendent.[58]

As an illustration of the sensitivity of the Pentagon to public opinion during the Korean War, there is probably no better example than that of Operation Killer. In

February 1951, General Ridgway selected this fitting label for his drive up the battle-scarred Korean peninsula. Ridgway here describes the Pentagon's reaction:

> When the code name Operation Killer, which I had chosen, was imparted to the Pentagon, there was a quick but courteous protest from Joe Collins, Army Chief of Staff, pointing out that the word 'killer' was deemed to have struck an unpleasant note as far as public relations was concerned. I did not understand why it was objectionable to acknowledge the fact that war was concerned with killing the enemy. Years later I was told that . . . in view of heavy United States casualties, it was felt that such a goal [the killing of Chinese] lacked political sex appeal.[59]

Had Ridgway read I. F. Stone's account, *The Hidden History of the Korean War*, he might have had more sympathy with the Pentagon's concern. To Stone, Operation Killer was an "obscene advertising slogan."[60] But if Ridgway had employed some inane euphemism—Operation Roses and Lollipops?—he would have been indicted just as quickly for dissembling. Still, however, the notion that senior military officers are always oblivious to public sentiment and to public pressure is demonstrably false. If anything, military leaders sometimes appear to be altogether too subservient to the court of public opinion.

TO CONCLUDE

A dominant theme emerging from an analysis of the American way of war in Korea was best expressed nearly two decades ago by Samuel Huntington in his classic study, *The Soldier and the State*. In that book, Huntington advanced his theory of "objective control" of the military, which aims at a reinforcement of military values and culture, while ensuring proper deference to the civil authority. Yet, since World War II Americans seem to have become more intent upon promoting the idea of "subjective control" of the military, whereby soldiers are required to assimilate civilian standards. In light of Huntington's admonition that the civil society customarily attempts either to extirpate or to transmute military values,[61] one begins to understand the reason that the US was unprepared for combat in Korea in 1950.

But the Army's lack of preparedness was merely a symptom of a deeper national security problem, one firmly rooted in the American style. For after World War II, Americans insisted, as they will continue to insist, that soldiers should be responsive to the times and to society. The American people have been, and will continue to be, uncomfortable with and among professional soldiers if only because Americans traditionally tire easily of the things and thoughts of war. They prefer to turn their minds to the blessings of peace.

A paradox arising from the circumstances and setting of American national security is that it is precisely that most commendable and perennial American concern with peace—a streak in the American political tradition that is only slightly utopian (but utopian nonetheless!)—that mandates that Americans take special care about the adequacy and upkeep of their armed forces. A second paradox ensues from the first: Americans are customarily unhappy with professional military forces, despite an imperative need to preserve the power, prestige, and professionalism of their armed services; they thus energetically set about to civilianize their soldiers and their soldiers' ethic. A third and final paradox deals with the nature of strategic reality in the post-1945 world. In a world in which the righteous war on a global scale—the idealistic crusade—is precluded on pain of human extinction, the type of unglamorous, utilitarian wars which Americans must fight is precisely the type they will have none of, and for which they adamantly refuse to prepare their armed services.

Military customs and discipline are, and always will be, at odds with the liberal society. It is difficult to decide, however, who is more mistaken: those who want to civilianize the military order or those who want to militarize the civil order. Somehow,

we have come to the incorrect notion that the tension existing between a liberal society and a conservative military is evil or counter-productive. It is in fact a highly advantageous and healthful tension which has the single drawback of requiring constant vigilance and adjustment—like a system of checks and balances—to insure the complete triumph of neither militarism in society nor civilianization in the military.[62]

Any civilization preoccupied with humanitarian ideals will always struggle with the problem posed by that necessary evil, its own armed forces. True, there is no easy way to maintain the desired equilibrium. The adjustment of the proper relationship between a strong civil control of the military (never to be lost) and the accord of necessary latitude to the military (also never to be lost) is a matter calling for the most prudent statesmanship. But in the post-World War II world, as T. R. Fehrenbach has expressed it,

> It was time for free, decent societies to continue to control their military forces, but to quit demanding from them impossible acquiescence in the liberal view of life. A 'modern' infantry may ride sky vehicles into combat, fire and sense its weapons through instrumentation, employ devices of frightening lethality in the future—but it must also be old-fashioned enough to be iron-hard, poised for instant obedience, and prepared to die in the mud.
>
> If liberal, decent societies cannot discipline themselves to do all these things, they may have nothing to offer the world. They may not last long enough.[63]

NOTES

1. Mark W. Clark, *From the Danube to the Yalu* (New York: Harper, 1954), pp. 192-93.
2. Marguerite Higgins, *War in Korea: The Report of a Woman Combat Correspondent* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1951), p. 221.
3. James A. Van Fleet, "25 Divisions for the Cost of One," *Reader's Digest*, 64 (February 1954), 5.
4. S. L. A. Marshall, "Our Mistakes in Korea," *The Atlantic*, 192 (September 1953), 46.
5. Quoted in US Department of the Army, *United States Army in the Korean War*, Vol. I, *South to the Yalu*, by Roy E. Appleman (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 70.
6. Higgins, pp. 83-92.
7. Quoted in Rene Cutforth, *Korean Reporter* (London: Allan Wingate, 1952), p. 33.
8. T. R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War: A Study in Unpreparedness* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1963), p. 100; see also pp. 92-93, 126, 152-53.
9. Appleman, p. 180.
10. Quoted in William Manchester, *The Glory and the Dream: A Narrative History of America, 1943-1972* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), p. 539.
11. Martin Russ, *The Last Parallel: A Marine's War Journal* (New York: Rinehart, 1957), p. 293.
12. Appleman, p. 181.
13. Quoted in Elting E. Morison, ed., *The American Style: Essays in Value and Performance* (New York: Harper, 1958), p. 376. In "The Way It Is in Korea," *Reader's Digest*, 62 (January 1953), James A. Michener contended, "Almost every American hates being there" (p. 2).
14. Personal communication to the author, 25 January 1974.
15. John Dille, *Substitute for Victory* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1954), p. 131.
16. See, e.g., Fehrenbach, pp. 664ff.
17. Dille, p. 130.
18. Robert Leckie, *The Wars of America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 866.
19. Fehrenbach, p. 40.
20. E. J. Kahn Jr., *The Peculiar War: Impressions of a Reporter in Korea* (New York: Random House, 1952), pp. 167-68.
21. Max Lerner, *America as a Civilization: Life and Thought in the United States Today* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1957), p. 922. Kahn (p. 165) contends that the term was used simply to connote "foreigner," but the explanation does not adequately take into account the manner in which the term was often used as a racial epithet.
22. Dille, pp. 129-30; Melvin Voorhees, *Korean Tales* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1952), pp. 149-51.
23. Fehrenbach (p. 37) avers, "No matter how cultured or ancient the civilization, no average American is going to condone the absence of flush toilets. Not now, not ever. The United States Government and international planners may as well face that simple fact."
24. Harold R. Isaacs, *Scratches on Our Minds: American Images of China and India* (New York: John Day, 1958), pp. 104, 199ff.
25. See, e.g., Walter Sullivan, "G.I. View of Koreans As 'Gooks' Believed Doing Political Damage," *The New York Times*, 26 July 1950, pp. 1, 5.
26. Quoted in Cutforth, pp. 189-90. There is an obvious parallel in this regard to Frances Fitzgerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam* (New York: Vintage-Random House, 1972).
27. Quoted in J. Lawton Collins, *War in Peacetime: The History and Lessons of Korea* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), p. 394.
28. Robert H. Leckie, *Conflict: The History of the Korean War, 1950-53* (New York: Putnam's 1962), p. 89.
29. See, e.g., Edgar O'Ballance, *Korea: 1950-1953* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon-Shoe String, 1969), pp. 150-51.
30. Matthew B. Ridgway, *The Korean War* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967), p. 264.
31. For a discussion of the comparative techniques of melding and molding armies, see Alexander L. George, *The Chinese Communist Army in Action: The Korean War and Its Aftermath* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 25ff.
32. Leckie, *The Wars of America*, p. 909; or *Conflict*, p. 289. The notion of "human wave" attacks by hordes of fanatics during the Korean War is a much-overdone theme.

Although such attacks did occur, they were not the common occurrence that one sometimes sees implied, particularly in the popular literature about the Korean War. Harold Isaacs asks in *Scratches on Our Minds* (p. 236), "Did the phrase ["human wave"] evoke the strong sense of difference between one's own side and those fanatic masses of *gooks* or *chinks*, subhumans, indifferent alike in killing or in dying?"

33. Generals Ridgway and Taylor, e.g., were anxious not to see lives spent to buy Korean territory, especially toward the end of the war when peace seemed to be at hand. See Ridgway, p. 222.

34. "Each side used what it had in abundance," wrote Stephen Ambrose in *Rise to Globalism* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 27.

35. Clark, p. 196.

36. Fehrenbach, p. 234.

37. See, e.g., I. F. Stone, *The Hidden History of the Korean War* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1952), p. 259.

38. US Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Foreign Relations, *An Inquiry into the Military Situation in the Far East and the Facts Surrounding the Relief of . . . MacArthur . . ., Hearings*, 82d Cong., 1st Sess., 1951, Part I, p. 82. Hereafter cited as *MacArthur Hearings*.

39. Ibid., Part IV, p. 3075.

40. Courtney Whitney, *MacArthur: His Rendezvous with History* (New York: Knopf, 1956), p. 326; John Spanier, *The Truman-MacArthur Controversy and the Korean War* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1965), p. 207.

41. R. F. Futrell, with L. S. Mosely and A. F. Simpson, *The United States Air Force in Korea 1950-1953* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1961), pp. 41, 626.

42. Mimeographed statement from the Korean Embassy, 5 August 1959.

43. Fehrenbach, p. 537.

44. For a more complete explanation, see "Point System Given for Troop Rotation," *The New York Times*, 29 October 1951, p. 3; or Fehrenbach, p. 537.

45. Greg MacGregor, "U.N. Army Morale Good Despite Mix-Up in Korea," *The New York Times*, 2 December 1951, p. 4E; Murray Schumach, "Morale of G.I. is High But He Wants to Go Home," *The New York Times*, 20 May 1951, p. 4E. However, John Dille reported, "It was nothing short of magnificent to see the number of American kids who did *not* keep their heads down, who *did* take chances, and who were willing, when the chips were down, to stand up and fight, whether the war seemed to make much sense to them or not" (*Substitute for Victory*, p. 32).

46. Leckie, *Conflict*, p. 368.

47. Marshall, p. 48.

48. US Department of the Army, *United States Army in the Korean War*, Vol. II, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, by Walter G. Hermes (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1966), p. 351.

49. See, e.g., Kahn, pp. 13, 146; Leckie, *Conflict*, p. 287; Dille, p. 32; and Marshall, p. 47.

50. *MacArthur Hearings*, Part II, pp. 1329-30.

51. Personal communication to the author, 15 August 1975.

52. Maxwell D. Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), p. 160.

53. David Rees, *Korea: The Limited War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964), pp. 189, 375.

54. Ibid., p. 387.

55. Fehrenbach, p. 246.

56. Rutherford Poats, *Decision in Korea* (New York: MacBride, 1954), p. 19; Higgins, p. 96.

57. Voorhees, p. 82.

58. Ibid., p. 88.

59. Ridgway, p. 110.

60. Stone, p. 255.

61. Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (New York: Vintage-Random House, 1957), pp. 80ff, 155.

62. James H. Toner, "The Military Ethic: On the Virtue of an Anachronism," *Military Review*, 54 (December 1974), 9-18. See also the useful (if truculent) study by R. A. Gabriel and P. L. Savage, *Crisis in Command: Mismanagement in the Army* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978).

63. Fehrenbach, p. 706.