

General Almond Says:

ORDERS FROM WASHINGTON KEPT U.S. FROM WINNING KOREAN WAR

From one of the fighting generals comes this story of how a sure victory in Korea got away from the American forces.

What one Senator calls "back-seat driving" in Washington played a decisive role for Lieut. Gen. Edward M. Almond in the field. Why did the men at the top hesitate when the alarm first sounded in Korea? Why were the Chinese Communists able to invade in force? Why were U. S. field commanders—ready to move and confident they could win—halted in their tracks by orders from above?

General Almond, who commanded the Tenth Corps at Inchon and later fought up to the Yalu, gave U. S. Senators his account of the frustrating war in Korea.



LIEUT. GEN. EDWARD M. ALMOND

Following are excerpts from the testimony of Lieut. Gen. Edward M. Almond on Nov. 23, 1954, before the Internal Security Subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

Mr. Carpenter [Alva Carpenter, chief counsel and executive director of the Subcommittee]: General, . . . Were you familiar with a man by the name of Tinio?

General Almond: Yes, sir. . . . Tinio was a nomad from a Turkestanian area. I could not even locate it myself, if I tried. He had a partisan band and to look at them you would immediately decide they were cutthroat pirates. This band was a band of his own. He was a nomad. He came to Italy and joined with one of my regiments. He became a very reliable patrol leader. He many times and on more than one occasion occupied a section of the front in the Apennines virtually unoccupied by regular military personnel, between my right flank and the left flank of the Brazilian Division, which was just beyond me or east of me in the winter of 1945.

He did such good work that he was known throughout my division. I think we gave him a certificate of accomplishment or something, just to be grateful about it.

“Back-Seat Driving”

But one day, soon after the war ended in Italy, in 1945, I was queried from General McNarney's [Gen. Joseph T. McNarney] headquarters—which he very properly did because he had the request from a Soviet mission that had come to Italy. Apparently, they heard about this Tinio. The specific query of me was: “Was there a Turkestanian by the name of Tinio with a band or group operating in my sector?” I said, “Yes, there was one, but where he is now, I don't know.” They said, “Is he in your area now?”

On investigation, I found he was still over there with the 370th Infantry, his friends. I got in touch with the colonel of that regiment. He said that he would and did talk to Tinio. He immediately discovered that he, Tinio, was very much alarmed, that the Soviets had queried about him. What he had done in his own country, I didn't inquire of him. I have no knowledge. He was a good fighter and on our side. But he was disturbed that the Russians wanted to know where he and his men were.

I also attribute it to the fact that he was not a convert of the Communists or Soviets and they were after him. I was ordered eventually to turn Tinio over to the Russians for transportation back to Russia. I did that with the complete conviction, based on the things I had gotten from Tinio and from those with whom he associated, that it meant his certain destruction and that of his band.

* * *

Senator Welker [Herman Welker (Rep.), of Idaho]: Are you at liberty to tell who ordered you to return this gentleman to the Russians?

General Almond: Well, as I recall, that was a routine understanding. Russia at that time had been our ally and was then, presumably. As soon as the war was over, I think it was their practice to send their delegations into every area. I suppose Britain and France. They certainly came to Italy. I suppose to all of Europe.

That was to find out what nationals they could claim title to within the bounds of what they said was Soviet Russia so that these people might be returned to their native land. I believe that that was the general policy that we followed, and I think that our being ordered to turn that particular band over to that group was a matter of routine.

Senator Welker: Granted that it was a matter of routine, can you give the Committee the name of the superior officer who ordered you to return them to Russia?

General Almond: No, I could not. But I might find that out. I know who the commander was. General McNarney was the commander. He was the Deputy Commander of the Allied, AFHQ, Allied Forces in Italy. It was a joint command. General McNarney was our American commander. He had many people under him and many bureaus. So I think a policy that had been decided would be something that would be transmitted to his headquarters and his staff would carry it out.

Senator Welker: And he was bound to do that because of the policy followed?

General Almond: I think so.

Senator Welker: There is nothing derogatory to General McNarney?

General Almond: No, not at all.

* * *

Senator Welker: General, will you describe to the Committee, sir, the opening days of the Korean war as viewed from your position as the Chief of Staff [of the Far East Command], including the first inspection trip, and the telecon [a conference conducted by teletypewriter]?

General Almond: Well, I recall right off the bat that those were very hectic days. They were particularly a jolt to me because, on Sunday morning, which was the 25th of June, having had a week of General Bradley [Gen. Omar Bradley] and Mr. Johnson [Louis Johnson, then Secretary of Defense] visiting to our area, we were concerned with almost a 20-hour schedule—to see that they got to the right places, that they had the right conferences, to do the preparing for these conferences where it was our function.

In general, we had been pretty busy. So on that particular morning, I went down to my office with the idea of shuffling a few papers on Sunday and going home at least by 2 o'clock in the afternoon. I had been in my office only some 20 minutes when the first telegram came from Korea, from our little communication detachment we had over there with Ambassador Muccio's diplomatic group [John Joseph Muccio, Ambassador to Korea]. That message said that a border incident happened on the Ongjin Peninsula, which is at the mouth of the Han River, in Western Korea. In about 30 minutes we got another such message.

In the next two hours or two hours and a half we had five messages that stretched all the way across the 38th parallel, roughly. From the first one we were concerned, but we thought perhaps it had been a border raid. But when we got

“Back-Seat Driving”

them scattered all across the front, we knew that something unusual was bound to happen and was happening. We transmitted each of those, as I recall it, as rapidly as possible to the Pentagon to show that something was brewing. That has all been established, I am sure.

The next day—after the 25th of June—or the next two days, here in America, realization having taken place also of something unusual, we were directed to send a group to Korea as General MacArthur's [General of the Army Douglas MacArthur] reconnaissance party just to determine what was going on.

We sent Major General Church [Maj. Gen. John H. Church, who died in 1953] of our staff and 14 officers from our headquarters by plane, destination Seoul. They landed at Suwon, Korea. The condition of the Korean Army had deteriorated so in that period of two days that General Church never got to Seoul. On 29 June, General MacArthur and a small staff flew to Korea. We found General Church on the 29th, two days later, there at Suwon.

We had continued to observe the deteriorating situation on June 25, 26, 27 and 28. General MacArthur got query after query, wanting to know just what was happening. So, again, as he went to Formosa later on, he decided to go to Korea. He took the key members of his staff. I, as Chief of Staff, was a member of it.

We flew to Suwon airport and landed at almost the instant that two YAK North Korean planes dropped a bomb on the end of the runway. We sent our plane back to Pusan after we landed. It was to come back and pick up the group at 4 o'clock that afternoon, which it did.

At 20 minutes to 4, as we were coming down the road from the direction of Seoul, where we had been the latter part of the day, two YAKs came over again and dropped two more bombs on the end of the runway, which delayed General MacArthur's plane coming in to pick him up to take him back to Tokyo.

His purpose of going to Korea was to have firsthand information, not only of what the Korean Army was doing, but what the President of the nation thought about it, what our own U.S. Ambassador thought, what the Chief of Staff of the Korean Army was thinking about doing in the face of all of this debacle that was happening.

We arrived, I would say, at 10:30 in the morning. We went to a little schoolhouse where General MacArthur found General Church and his 14 officers from Tokyo, our officers. They had had two days to sense throughout the southern part of Korea what was going on.

There we met with Mr. Rhee [Syngman Rhee], the President of the Republic, Mr. Muccio, our Ambassador in Korea, the Chief of Staff of the South Korean Army, and a lot of lesser lights.

General MacArthur began his query by asking General Church to have his officers, or himself, give the situation as he understood it. To make a long story as short as possible, General Church gave us the current situation on 29 June, with the assistance of some of his officers who had been out and who had more intimate information than he had received in the last few hours.

General Church said, "This morning, we knew of 8,000 men in hand in the Korean Army, 8,000 out of 100,000." He said, "As far as we can tell, they are straggling all over South Korea, coming down all the roads and even across the mountains. They all had their rifles and ammunition, but apparently nobody is fighting." He said, "I have just received a report that we now have in groups standing along the road 8,000 more, and I hope to have 8,000 more tonight, all stragglers."

That made 24,000, if he got them out of 100,000 supposedly combat forces. That just gives you an example of how deteriorated that situation had gotten. That had a considerable bearing on our deployment into Korea within the course of the next week.

General MacArthur then asked Mr. Rhee what his concept of the condition was, and Mr. Rhee gave a very brief statement. To be a little facetious, it amounted to about the statement that "We are in hell of a fix."

Senator Welker: And he was in a hell of a fix.

General Almond: Undoubtedly. And we recognized it and so did he. General MacArthur then asked the Chief of Staff of the Korean Army what his plan was in the emergency. His reply was that he was going to mobilize 2 million youths in South Korea and repel the invasion, which had already happened. That was a little impractical.

Mr. Muccio then gave his impression, and he gave a very sound one. I have the highest respect for Mr. Muccio. I never saw him before, and I haven't seen him since, except during the Korean war, but he had real courage in the interpretations that he gave us and his attitude toward repelling the invasion. General MacArthur then said, "Well, I have heard a good deal theoretically, and now I want to go and see these troops that are straggling down the road."

“Back-Seat Driving”

U.S. INTERVENTION A SURPRISE

We got three old, broken-down cars and got them there at Suwon, 30 miles out of Seoul, the capital. We drove to the south bank of the Han River, where we could see the enemy firing from Seoul to targets on the south bank. We were within probably 100 yards of where some of these mortar shells were falling. It was safe enough, so we had no worry.

Going up that road from Suwon for a distance of 30 miles, we passed many trucks, many stragglers, many men in groups, all smiling, all with rifles, all with bandoliers of ammunition around them, all saluting—showing that they were disciplined, they recognized that some dignitary was coming along. We had some MP's with us, some Korean MP's, and some policemen clearing the road. They all smiled.

General MacArthur made the remark, “It is a strange thing to me that all these men have their rifles and ammunition, they all know how to salute, they all seem to be more or less happy, but I haven't seen a wounded man yet.” That indicated that nobody was fighting, that they had lost their leadership, and that is what happened. The best men in the world can't fight without co-ordination and determination.

Some fight better than others individually as guerrillas. But, anyhow, that gave him the idea of just how bad the situation was. We then returned to Suwon and took off, as I told you, between YAK bombings, and went back to Tokyo. I think that night we began a series of telecon conferences with our Government here, in the Pentagon, which enabled General MacArthur to personally, from personal observation, interpret how bad the situation was.

It was during that period, just before and during this trip to Korea, that it became known to us, much to our surprise, I will say, and much to General MacArthur's surprise, that this country was going to participate in armed action in Korea. None of our plans had involved this, had included this. Our plan and our mission was to evacuate our diplomatic and military training personnel from Seoul in case of adversity. We had done that by 28 June.

But in these telecons, it developed that it had been decided by the United Nations to intervene in Korea in some way. The first manner was by the way of supply. When we learned that we were to supply the Korean armed forces, the question went back, “Where do we land these supplies and how?”

As I recall it, it was stated that we would put these in at Pusan, the southern port. The reply that went back from our headquarters was to the effect that Pusan might not exist in our hands any too long, and perhaps not more than a day or two longer. “How would we land the supplies then?” The directive then came back—it must be remembered that in the meantime we had received the instructions that the U.S. Air Force and the U.S. Navy would assist the South Koreans in opposing the North Korean forces and in restoring order.

We knew from our trip to Korea on 29 June that the South Koreans had lost their capacity to restore order anywhere for the reasons that I have just recounted. Our rejoinder to that concept of “restoring order” was that this could be looked upon with little confidence. Whereupon, we were directed to place defense forces to protect the port of Pusan in Korea to the extent of one regiment of infantry, so that supplies to the ROK Government could be sent by us from Japan.

The rejoinder that the Pentagon received from that statement was that “that is totally inadequate.” That reply by General MacArthur caused a suspension of conversation over the telecon, to be resumed 30 minutes later.

In 30 minutes the telecon was resumed, whereupon General MacArthur was authorized to use the forces necessary in his opinion to protect the port of Pusan. The question then came, “Do you require any further instructions?” The answer was, “No.”

That terminated the telecon and General MacArthur immediately ordered three divisions under General Walker [Lieut. Gen. Walton H. Walker, later promoted to full General after he was killed in a jeep accident in Korea in 1950], the bulk of the Eighth Army, to Korea, because he knew the situation was so bad that nothing short of a fundamentally sound military movement would salvage it.

I don't think you have to have me to testify that even that wasn't enough for the next three months. The immediate action that was taken was barely enough to drag along so that General Walker could maintain the semblance of a continuous line in the defense of Pusan, called the Pusan perimeter.

“RESTRICTIONS” ON FIGHTING

Senator Welker: Now, General, I am sure you are familiar with an article appearing in the *Saturday Evening Post* on Aug. 22, 1953, written by General Bradley, which stated, and I quote, “By some miracle our forces held in Pusan and the ‘brilliant Inchon operation’ carried our forces northward faster than the Communists anticipated.”

OldMagazineArticles.com

“Back-Seat Driving”

Just how miraculous was that initial period?

General Almond: That article that you refer to, Senator, is the one entitled “A Soldier’s Farewell”?

Senator Welker: That is it, sir.

* * *

General Almond: I have read that. I have a transcript of part of it here, and I have written a comment on it which I would like to read.

Senator Welker: Very well, sir.

General Almond: My remark is that, “Our lines held in spite of the restrictions and limitations imposed by our own Government, and our casualty rates were enormous.” That is the first comment I have on that.

The second one is General Bradley sets up the same straw man as he has done on every other opportunity. That is, “Communists might attack us after we weaken our strategic air force.” That is a quote. He never seems to consider that we might gain by a strong reaction to Red Chinese aggression. Any military commander knows the tremendous risks the Chinese were taking by operating hundreds of miles away from their bases of supply. This comment applies to the situation after the Chinese had attacked. And so does General Bradley’s article, written after the Chinese attack.

Senator Welker: General, may I interrupt you? Would you repeat, please, your first comment on the question that I asked you?

General Almond: I would be glad to, yes, sir. You were speaking about how “our lines held.” Of course they held. American lines always will hold unless they are too much restricted in what the command away from the front imposes.

My comment, though, is that our lines held in spite of the restrictions and limitations imposed by our own Government, and our casualty rates were enormous. There isn’t any doubt about that.

Just take the record of the 24th Division, starting with General Dean’s [Maj. Gen. William F. Dean] battalion at Osan on 4 July, 1950, when he lost the whole thing, being overrun by NK [North Korean] forces. But that wasn’t “the line” that General Bradley was talking about, as I assumed. He talks about this line in the winter of 1950-51, “but our lines held.”

I was saying in the second comment, General Bradley sets up the same straw man as he has done on every other opportunity. “The Communists might attack us after we weaken our strategic air force.” He never seems to consider what we might gain by a strong reaction to Chinese Red aggression.

My own comment is “any military commander knows the tremendous risks that the Chinese were taking by operating hundreds of miles away from their bases of supply. What if we had defeated the Chinese? Why does he not consider this eventuality in his analysis? General Bradley was oriented towards Europe and nothing could budge him from it.”

Senator Welker: Would you repeat that, please?

General Almond: I say General Bradley’s analysis of the world situation was oriented towards Europe, he says so himself, and nothing could budge him from it. He could not visualize the effect on Russia or China in the logical supposition that we might win. As a matter of fact, the entire *Saturday Evening Post* article by General Bradley in my opinion was “an apology” for being wrong.

In his estimate of what we should have done in the Far East, General MacArthur’s wisdom and vision will endure as long as time runs. I doubt that many in the next generation will recall this apology entitled “A Soldier’s Farewell.”

* * *

Senator Welker: Now, General, considering the unrestrained criticism, the Veterans of Foreign Wars episode [when a message from General MacArthur outlining his views on Far Eastern military policy was ordered withheld by President Truman, but already had been released], and the failure of normal moral support and protection by the Pentagon from ill-informed press criticism, and attacks by our own allies, have you ever wondered whether we were meant to win [in Korea] or whether there were commitments made at that time?

Senator Hendrickson [Robert C. Hendrickson (Rep.), of New Jersey]: Commitments not to win?

Senator Welker: Yes, in the words of General Van Fleet [Gen. James A. Van Fleet], who appeared before this Committee. Commitments made that we were not to win at that time.

General Almond: Senator, I have no way of knowing what commitments were made. I can only answer to that to say that the things as they happened looked very strange in so far as the assurance with which the enemy appeared to operate.

I think it would have been a very hazardous thing for the Chinese to enter North Korea in the abundant numbers in which they did if they had thought that their bases of rice or ammunition, or any other base, would be subject to attack.

Is that what you mean?

OldMagazineArticles.com

“Back-Seat Driving”

Senator Welker: That is it. Thank you very much.

* * *

Mr. Carpenter: Could you tell us of British policy in the pre-Korean war period?

General Almond: . . . In December the British recognized the Red Chinese Government as being the *de jure* government of China.

It was explained to me very carefully once by the British Ambassador in Tokyo that there was a difference between the *de jure* and *de facto* status of the recognition—an explanation which he volunteered and I did not seek.

The following spring, in 1950, all British heads of mission throughout Asia and Southeast Asia were assembled in Singapore to meet with Mr. MacDonald [Malcolm MacDonald, Commissioner General for the United Kingdom in Southeast Asia], and there they had a two-day or three-day discussion.

I am sure, from the rumors I heard in Tokyo when those from our area returned there, that they must have been receiving a reorientation of policy, because the British Ambassador in Tokyo in his conversation with me, and there was nothing secret about it—he was very frank about it—assured me that the U.S. Consul General Angus Ward incident, which had happened in the early months of 1950 in Mukden, was very unfortunate, in that, had it not happened, both our Government, as well as his own, would have recognized Red China.

I was astounded as far as our Government was concerned, and I told the Ambassador so. I said in reply, “I have no idea what course your Government will take. I do not believe that my Government intends to recognize Red China. If it does that fact has not been communicated to me either formally or informally.”

Therefore, that seemed to me a very distinct reversal of policy as to how we could combat Communism in Asia.

TIP-OFF TO REDS?

Mr. Carpenter: General, I believe General MacArthur has indicated that the neutralization of Formosa was a tip-off to the Chinese Reds that they would enjoy unprecedented sanctuary, and that the Chinese Reds must have known our efforts would be limited before they crossed the Yalu. Do you agree?

General Almond: Well, I can only judge by what I saw on the 25th of July when General MacArthur and his staff, of which I was one, went to Formosa. I saw the face of the Generalissimo and Madame Chiang and his Chief of Staff and other Chinese staff officers, the consternation with which they accepted the ruling that Formosa or an invasion of the Chinese coast was forbidden to them. When we got down there their whole theme was, “How much can you help us to get back to China?”

To answer the second part of your question, I am sure that if I were a military commander of a squad, or up to the size of a field army, if I thought that I could block any particular section of my problem out, it would make it easier for me to operate on the balance of my front.

Therefore, the neutralization of Formosa, in my opinion, was a facility which the Chinese took advantage of in order to concentrate all of their troops, their worthwhile troops, in the north, having no concern about the south.

It may not have been contemplated that way when the decision was made, but contemplations, in my opinion, ought to be tempered by the probable result.

Mr. Carpenter: To a military commander that was very obvious, was it not?

General Almond: Very, to me.

Mr. Carpenter: General MacArthur has also stated that his orders to bomb the Yalu bridges were countermanded within a matter of hours. From your extensive experience would you say this was extraordinary promptness on the part of the Pentagon?

General Almond: Yes, I think it was pretty prompt.

Mr. Carpenter: Does it suggest a decision based on commitments which may have been taken earlier in anticipation of such an eventuality?

General Almond: Not necessarily. That prohibition might have been issued in following out or carrying out a policy within which it would fall. Therefore, if the policy was well established, it might have been very easy to answer yes or no. If it was indicated that the policy would cover it, that is. On the other hand, a complicated problem, even though in conformity with the policy, might require much longer to reply to or evaluate.

* * *

Mr. Carpenter: General Almond, are you familiar with an article by Gen. Omar Bradley appearing in *U. S. News & World Report*, and could you comment on it?

General Almond: I read that over. We have to remember

OldMagazineArticles.com

“Back-Seat Driving”

that this was March 28, 1952, eight months after I left the Korean front. But the significant part of those remarks, as they struck me, was his statement, the first paragraph of the excerpt, maintaining that the American people were solidly behind our decision to oppose the outright aggression in Korea.

A FRACAS—OR A WAR?

My comment on that is if this was so why did our Administration insist that it was a police action when it could have stated the seriousness of it and mobilized sufficient forces? For one, I don't appreciate the Korean war, having fought in it, being termed a “fracas,” as was done by General Collins [General J. Lawton Collins], then Chief of Staff, U. S. Army, in the Senate hearings in May, 1951. It was a great deal more than a fracas, as it has been termed by witnesses that have appeared before congressional committees who have talked about “the fracas occurring in Korea” and the great problem of Europe.

The problem wasn't in Europe, then, in an actual way. The problem was in Korea where we had a quarter of a million men engaged. And with the result that we now know of, 142,000 casualties and some 20 billion dollars. That didn't start as a fracas; it didn't start as a police action from the 29th of June, four days after it started, when General MacArthur saw the condition of that South Korean Army. It was never a police action to us. That is my comment.

Mr. Carpenter: General, when you testified before the Subcommittee of the Committee of the Senate on Armed Services in April, 1953, you stated, on page 33: “I became conscious of what we call the sit-down war about the 1st of May, before the Chinese attack on the 16th of May, 1951.”

Were our forces north or south of the 38th parallel at that time?

* * *

General Almond: They were south of the 38th parallel, I believe . . . The Chinese made three distinctly large attacks in Korea, in my opinion. The first one was in early December against the Eighth Army and against the Tenth at the Chosin Reservoir, in 1950. That attack eventually resulted in the Eighth Army withdrawing as far south as Seoul.

When this first attack occurred the Tenth Corps was over here from Wonsan and Hamhung and on up toward the Chosin Reservoir. The Eighth Army was in this vicinity [pointing to map].

Mr. Carpenter: Would you identify that?

General Almond: This vicinity is south of the crossings of the Yalu River at Antung, Sinanju, Sinuiju, and south of Manpojin on the Yalu River, where we found so many Commies had crossed unknown to our forces, even unknown to our Air Force reconnaissance. But that concentration of some 8 or 10 or more divisions against the Tenth Corps initially was done at night very surreptitiously, and the Eighth Army was also suddenly confronted with great masses of Chinese against the South Koreans on its right flank with a strong attack.

That attack resulted in the Eighth Army's right flank, where the South Koreans were, being crushed. It caused a readjustment of Eighth Army forces to the extent that they withdrew—in the face of the superhuman odds; you might say, in numbers, up to 20-to-1 odds—gradually down into the vicinity of Seoul along and south of the 38th parallel. That was the first attack.

The second attack occurred on the 22d of April, 1951, and this attack was on the front of the First Corps and in the vicinity of Uijongbu and some 20 miles north of Seoul. That attack involved about 38 Chinese divisions. Twenty-four of these were badly handled, and the Chinese withdrew from the 22d of April to about the 30th.

On the 8th of May, 1951, General Marshall [Gen. George C. Marshall] testified before a committee of Congress that the Chinese were so badly handled in that attack of the 22d that their forces probably wouldn't be employed again in an important attack for months.

In exactly eight days from the time he made that statement the Chinese moved five Army corps across the front, from the front of the First Corps to the front of the Tenth Corps, which corps I commanded. One hundred seventy-five thousand Chinamen attacked the Second Infantry Division here north of Hangye with the idea of destroying that division, splitting the ROK [Republic of Korea] Army, on the right of the Second Division, away from the Eighth Army, driving a wedge through there and blocking off the Eighth Army from its base at Pusan.

That attack materialized on the 16th of May. In that effort the Tenth Corps, composed of three American divisions and four ROK divisions, sustained 14,000 casualties, 7,000 Americans and about 7,000 ROK's.

For six days while this battle was going on, day and night, after the second day we withdrew each night to a new line and bent with the wind or the breeze of the enemy attack.

“Back-Seat Driving”

If you ever read “The Three Bamboos,” an intriguing Japanese story, that is what the Three Bamboos, three powerful Japanese brothers, did. They accept every situation in the best possible shape, readjusted to meet the next situation, and that is what we did. But we also captured many prisoners during that battle.

When my intelligence officer indicated to me that this great force of 175,000 men which had turned our flank, virtually enveloping the Tenth Corps, when they had consumed most of their rations and a great part of their ammunition—well, that is when we struck back at them. It has always been my concept of battle that “if our force is tired the enemy might be tired as well.”

With that philosophy and the pretty certain knowledge that his supplies were running low, if not exhausted, and with General Van Fleet’s full co-operation and understanding—he being present on the battlefield or always nearby—it seemed time to go to a counteroffensive.

General Van Fleet and myself discussed this at great length. Most of the reserves were either in the line or just behind it, including his own.

I asked him to give me the 187th Airborne Regiment, his last reserve, a fine outfit, with close to 5,000 men in that regiment, including the supporting artillery.

On the 22d we started the attack. We drove across the enemy’s rear on an axis of attack from Hongchon to this point called Inje, and in the next two or three days this complete enemy force, down here, reversed itself and started hiking for the rear. They lost every piece of transportation that they had in this area. We captured groups of pack mules and pack animals which they should have been able to get out—except that the horses and mules were poor and the supplies were exhausted.

With this result, by the 1st of June we had regained much of this territory that we had lost in December and January 1950-51, and more besides.

About that time, I will say between the 1st of June and the 1st of July, when we were readjusting this line, a thing happened to me that I had never experienced before. By private conversation with my commander—the Eighth Army commander, General Van Fleet—I was told to halt my troops on that line and advance no further and only take action in an aggressive way that would either straighten out and stabilize that line or protect the lines of my men.

In other words, it was decided somewhere, above General Van Fleet’s head, and where I do not know—I complied with the orders—that, when we had defeated this huge force that General Marshall didn’t think could be employed, but it showed that the Chinese not only had 36 divisions over here, 12 of which could be deployed, and were according to my map, but they had more, and did employ them to the extent of 137,000 Chinamen and 37,000 or 38,000 North Koreans against this one sector—that, when they did that, they were using the cream of their army, and, when we defeated that cream, I think we were entitled to capitalize on it.

In defense of this line I had told my men—I not only told them but I landed in a helicopter along their line in every battalion, 11 battalions across this front, with the Tenth Corps—I told them that they would stay in their established positions until somebody in authority ordered them to leave, which they did.

I have no hesitation in the interest of my country in ordering men to battle if I think that it is worth while and that something useful will result from it.

VICTORY “PREVENTED”

I have a great resentment when I find that 7,000 of my own men and 7,000 of my allies, the Koreans, including a French battalion and a Dutch battalion—with four nations being involved—in finding that I am not permitted or I am prevented from obtaining recompense for those losses when the mission of any battlefield commander is to win in the field and not be denied a victory for his forces.

* * *

Senator Welker: When Secretary of State Acheson [Dean Acheson] testified on the investigation of the military situation in the Far East, in the first week of June, 1951, he stated that “area” should be defined as the territory of the Republic of South Korea, and the settlement of the war at the 38th parallel would constitute victory.

When were you informed that the 38th parallel would constitute victory?

General Almond: I was never informed of that fact or decision. I was only informed that my troops, which I considered victorious and which were prepared to destroy the enemy—this means the Tenth Corps acting in conjunction with the rest of the Eighth Army and with the help of the Air Force and Navy in Korean areas—that could have been easily done. The only knowledge I had of that statement by Mr. Acheson is the fact that we were ordered not to advance farther than that line as a matter of procedure on the

“Back-Seat Driving”

battlefield.

Senator Welker: According to the records of the 1951 hearings, the 38th parallel was first crossed by advancing U. N. forces about the middle of October, 1950. American casualties up to October 13, 1950, were 26,083, of whom 4,036 were dead, 4,336 were missing and the rest were wounded. Were you then advised that the military job in Korea was accomplished?

General Almond: I was not, and I have the distinct concept from no less than General MacArthur, whose subordinate I was, and operating under his instructions—and I believe General Walker had the same concept—that we were there, we had just about defeated the North Korean Army, and we were going to finish it up, and that we were going to clear up Northern Korea and do what the United Nations had intended, so they say, to reunite Korea as a free, democratic republic as quickly as possible. We were in the process of doing that.

Senator Welker: When was the mission changed, General?

General Almond: Never, as far as I know.

Senator Welker: And you have already testified that we did not defeat the North Koreans? Is that correct?

General Almond: That we did.

Senator Welker: You did?

General Almond: We did defeat the North Koreans.

* * *

Senator Welker: General, you have stated to the Committee that we defeated the North Koreans. Did we defeat the Chinese Communists?

General Almond: Not at all, no, sir.

Senator Welker: Do they not now occupy more territory than they did in November of 1950?

General Almond: Decidedly. When they first attacked the front of the 8th Army they were pretty well up above Pyongyang. Now they are pretty well below it.

Senator Welker: I will ask you if it is not a fact that the Communist Chinese are a greater power today than they were then.

General Almond: I think decidedly so, sir. I think they have learned a lot from us in military operations that they will never forget. They have a finer Army. I wouldn't hesitate to say that they have a fine Army.

* * *

Senator Welker: General, did you know, for example, that as early as October of 1950 the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was writing about “The Defense of South Korea” and telling the world that “Korea is not an area of first-class strategic value”?

If, as an enemy commander, you had heard that address with the assurances it contains as to what we would regard as local wars, in which we would limit our efforts, would it not have affected your strategy?

* * *

General Almond: Yes, sir, it certainly would have affected it.

Senator Welker: As a matter of fact, it would make you quite happy, would it not?

General Almond: Very, sir.

Senator Welker: You could not have lost, in other words?

* * *

General Almond: My comment on that is, where it says that Korea is not an area of first-class strategic value—of course, everybody is entitled to his own opinion—I say it just so happens that for the brand of Communist expansion with which we are confronted, Korea is a first-class strategic area of value in which to contest such expansion.

Nowhere in the world could we have found a better area, except for the individual hard fighting, in which to oppose Chinese hordes of men. I am talking about the isolation of the area. Nowhere could we have found a better area in which to oppose these Chinese. Nowhere could we have found a battleground where the base facilities for supply, air and naval support are better present than Korea, with the areas of Japan, the Philippines, and Formosa virtually secure from Chinese or Soviet attack, except air attack on Japan from Soviet Asia. There are many places closer than Japan, Okinawa and the Philippines, but what I say is the areas in which this is so isolated, where they could not get to us, except on the Korean Peninsula.

This statement shows that the Washington concept excluded what might happen in Asia.

There is another comment that I have. Today, because the Communist temper is revealed by the aggression in Korea, we think our fleet should patrol the waters between Formosa and Communist China. I say General MacArthur's statement, *New York Times*, Feb. 1, 1953, on the result of the utilization of Korea, is important. Events now past have proven that General MacArthur was right and General Bradley was wrong.

I need add nothing to this series of facts. Their noise is deafening to those who listen. The opportunity to deal a death blow to expanding Communism presented itself in

OldMagazineArticles.com

“Back-Seat Driving”

Korea. But I don't believe General Bradley ever could see it.

He could never see that victory in our grasp in Korea would be the one beacon to anti-Communism throughout the world. We are exactly where we started in 1950, on the 38th parallel.

Senator Welker: I am not a military man, General, but I would like to ask you this: As a matter of fact, had you been permitted to win the war in Korea, in that event you would have saved Indo-China also? Is that a correct assumption?

General Almond: I think so, sir, decidedly. I think the failure to win has given the Chinese Communists great incentive to proceed farther than they ever hoped to proceed at this time.

Mr. Carpenter: General, will you comment on views expressed by General Bradley on April 17, 1951?

General Almond: General Bradley, after having said previously that Korea was not a first-class strategic area, said on the 17th of April, six days after he recommended General MacArthur's relief to President Truman:

“It is hard to realize that our relatively small-scale operations in Korea hold the key to the success or failure of our world-wide strategy.”

If that doesn't constitute strategic importance, I don't know what does. He had learned the error of his thoughts in October, and from the great strategist, General MacArthur, whom he had agreed should be relieved of his command.

Another comment goes on:

“Furthermore, because we seek peace and an end to this war in Korea, our Government is cautious in every decision . . .

“And, third, every decision we have recommended has supported United Nations unity in the conduct of war. With these principles in mind, we of the United Nations are now doing an outstanding military job.”

He said these three factors that I cited in talking about world-wide strategy show how far the JCS could go, under General Bradley's guidance, to avoid conclusive victory in the Korean war by force of arms. He said we were not making use of the Air Force to attack Manchuria. He failed to mention the bridges which, if destroyed, would leave a million Chinese Communist forces stranded in Korea.

He said the U. N. is now doing an outstanding military job when, as a matter of fact, on the 17th of April, we were clinging to our lines like drowning men to a sinking raft, awaiting a huge Chinese attack that came on the 22d of April, five days after he made this statement, and it came again on the 16th of May, one month later, only eight days after General Marshall had testified that “the Chinese would not attack in strength for months to come.”

Either General Bradley did not know the situation, or he was careless in his interpretation of the real facts in order to suit the trepidations and fears of our American people, who should have been given the true picture.

One more comment—about the role of diplomacy. When you are in battle and war, I say these are just words for public consumption and all of these actions at the present cost of more than 20 billion dollars to the Treasury, and 142,000 American casualties, and we are now just where we were then, on the 38th parallel.

Senator Welker: You might add the enemy is stronger now than he was at that time. You have taught him to fight. Is that a correct assumption?

General Almond: In my opinion, yes, sir.

Senator Welker: Could we have won the war in Korea in November and December of 1950 had reinforcements been sent and had authorizations for bombing across the Yalu been granted?

General Almond: Well, in my opinion, yes. I don't know whether the reinforcements were available in the degree that we would have needed them. I believe, as many of the people that I discussed it with, as the situation developed, as more force was brought in by the Chinese, we might have had to expend more force, but we had the opportunity by the use of all our facilities—Air, Navy and ground, with a little more ground effort and the intensification of air and navy, especially planes—to destroy the bases which were sustaining this great force, and that, in my opinion, constituted the potentiality to win.

But the thing that frustrated that was the fear of something that we in the Far East did not think was likely to happen, has not happened yet, and I do not think it is going to happen until the Soviet decides in his own mind that he is ready to accomplish something by force, which he is now accomplishing by threat.

Senator Welker: . . . Could we have won the war in 1951 with, for example, the casualties we subsequently had during the protracted armistice negotiations?

General Almond: I think so. I have shown on one of these maps that we lost 14,000 ROK's and Americans, Frenchmen

“Back-Seat Driving”

and Dutchmen in defending for six days. We had the opportunity with a reasonable estimate of casualties to return to the offensive, certainly with a few more troops than we had, if the go sign had been given. They could have been secured. Our failure to do that at, I would say, a cost of 25,000 or 30,000 casualties at the most, has now cost us 52,000 since that stabilization took place. We had lost 52,000 casualties from the time I left Korea on the 15th of July, after this battle, until the time the armistice was negotiated.

Senator Welker: I think you have already testified to this, but do you believe an all-out effort to win in Korea would have led to World War III, as propagandized all over the country?

General Almond: I have no such idea, sir.

IF RUSSIA MOVES—

Senator Welker: Do you believe with me, a nonmilitary man, that if Russia wanted to move in Western Europe she could move in two weeks and take it?

General Almond: I don't know the facts on that, Senator. I could not answer that, sir. She could move, but whether she could take it or not, I haven't the slightest idea. I don't believe she could.

* * *

Senator Welker: General, would you care to fight another war under the same inhibitions, with the same back-seat drivers, and with the same channels of information open to the enemy as you had to fight in Korea?

General Almond: I will always contribute as much as I am capable of as a soldier of this nation. I would deplore being sent on a mission which was foredoomed or developed into foredooming where my mission originated to gain a decision and I was in any way hampered. We have a philosophy in the Army, and all military services, that sums up what I mean: It is bad enough to have to fight the enemy; it is terrible to have to fight both the enemy and those that you are supposed to have support from.

U.S. News & World Report