

**Humanity Interrogated:  
Empire, Nation, and the Political Subject in U.S. and UN-controlled POW Camps of  
the Korean War, 1942-1960**

by

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*For my parents*

*Without whom, this never would have been written*

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## **List of Abbreviations**

DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
KPA	Korean People's Army
ROK	Republic of Korea
ROKA	Republic of Korea Army
U.S.	United States
UN	United Nations
UNC	United Nations Command
NC	Northern Command
UNTCOK	United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea
CIC	Counterintelligence Corps
USAMGIK	United States Army Military Government in Korea
NWYMA	North West Young Men's Alliance
USAFIK	United States Armed Forces in Korea
PRK	People's Republic of Korea
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SKLP	South Korean Labor Party
PW	Prisoner of War
POW	Prisoner of War
ACYL	Anti-Communist Youth League
CI&E	Civilian Information and Education
PsyWar	Psychological Warfare
JAG	Judge Advocate General
SD	Special War Problems Division
GHQ	General Headquarters
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
ATIS	Allied Translator and Interpreter Section
MIS	Military Intelligence Section
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
NSC	National Security Council
CM	Compound Monitor
KATUSA	Korean Augmented Troops United States Army
CI	Civilian Internee
PSB	Psychological Strategy Board
CID	Criminal Investigation Detachment
NNRC	Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission
UNCREG	United Nations Command Repatriation Group

DZ	Demilitarized Zone
CFI	Custodian Forces of India
CPV	Chinese People's Volunteers

## **Note on Language**

For all references to and mention of places and people in Korean that come from the files of the United States military or government at the time, I have kept the spelling of Korean and Chinese names according to the Romanized versions appearing in the archived documents for ease of possible later reference in the archives. U.S. military Romanization of Korean did not consistently follow any format at this particular time, so spelling can be highly idiosyncratic and vary greatly.

I have used the McCune-Reichauer system for the transliteration of the other references in Korean, with the noted exceptions of well-known figures like Syngman Rhee, who are often associated and referenced with particular renderings of their names.

“Orientals” or “Asiatics” were terms commonly used in the United States to refer to East Asians, whether in Korea, Japan, or the United States. Whenever archival material or an oral history employs such terms, I have kept the term intact. However, I do employ “Japanese Americans” in my discussion of the POW interrogators and their history. Using “Japanese Americans” for this time period is indeed anachronistic, as the term “Asian American” would later be created by student movements in the 1960s as a term for expressing the political solidarity of students from different Asian backgrounds. Although “Japanese American” is awkward to use in a sense, the use of only “Oriental” within this chapter would replicate much of the conflation between the Asian citizen of the United States and the Asian subject of U.S. projects in East Asia. As a result, I have decided to use “Japanese American” to help initially parse a divergent, but ultimately converging, history.



## **Abstract**

During the Korean War, a particular figure of warfare took center stage at the armistice negotiations – the “prisoner of war.” This once-marginal actor of war became the site of such controversy that the signing of the ceasefire was effectively delayed for eighteen months. At stake was who would lay legitimate claim to determining the correct interpretation and application of the moral humanitarian principles embedded in the 1949 Geneva Conventions on the Treatment of Prisoners of War. My dissertation argues that the POW controversy reveals how the Korean War pushed to the fore an international struggle over the “laws of war” during formal decolonization. After 1945, what did it mean to engage in “war,” when so many conflicts began to bear the monikers of “police action,” “intervention,” and “occupation”? In response to this question, “Humanity Interrogated” examines a familiar narrative – the rise of the nation-state system in the mid-twentieth century – through more unexpected readings of the different constructions of sovereignty in intimate encounters, whether in U.S. military interrogation rooms, moments of POW capture, or closed armistice meetings at Panmunjom.

Drawn from previously unstudied POW trial and investigation records and newly conducted oral history interviews with former prisoners of war and interrogators, “Humanity Interrogated” is at once a microhistorical study of encounters through interrogation, a history of multi-national and state policy-making over the POW, and an international story of how the Korean War heralded an era of reconfiguring warfare in front of decolonization, following two generations of people on both sides of the Pacific as they created and

navigated multiple shifting systems of warfare, racial formations, and interrogation from World War II through the Korean War. The dissertation opens with Japanese American internment and the U.S. occupation of Korea, follows a thousand Japanese Americans to Korea as the U.S. drafted them as interrogators for the Korean War, and then traces the journeys of the Korean prisoners of war as they were subsequently shipped by the United Nations to India, Brazil, and Argentina in the year leading up to the 1954 Geneva Conference on Korea and Indochina.

## Introduction

### The Prisoner of War, the Bureaucrat, and the Archive

It is no small irony of history that the most identifiable marker of the Korean peninsula to people outside of Korea is an abstract line that cuts across the peninsula in most maps of Korea. The 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, first drawn by two U.S. officials late at night on August 14, 1945 as the proposed line of division between the U.S. and Soviet military occupations on the Korean peninsula, had no correlation to any geographical or cultural boundary on the ground.<sup>1</sup> What was supposed to have been a temporary measure in 1945 has become one of the most militarized borders in the world, one that appears seemingly naturalized and even permanent due to the ritual war games and military security practices performed regularly around it. But the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel plays a role in the conflicts and politics surrounding the Korean peninsula that is much more extensive than simply being a site for military war games. It is the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel that has provided traction for the international public to imagine the shifting political conflicts on the Korean peninsula. In the days following the northern Korean People's Army's crossing over the

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<sup>1</sup> As Dean Rusk himself recollected in his memoir: "During a SWINK meeting on August 14, 1945, the same day of the Japanese surrender, Colonel Charles Bonesteel and I retired to an adjacent room late at night and studied intently a map of the Korean peninsula. Working in haste and under great pressure, we had a formidable task: to pick a zone for the American occupation. Neither Tic nor I was a Korean expert, but it seemed to us that Seoul, the capital should be in the American sector. We also knew that the U.S. Army opposed an extensive area of occupation. Using a *National Geographic* map, we looked just north of Seoul for a convenient dividing line but could not find a natural geographic line. We saw instead the thirty-eighth parallel and decided to recommend that. [...] SWINK's choice of the thirty-eighth parallel, recommended by two tired colonels working late at night, proved fateful." *from* Dean Rusk, *As I Saw It*, 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990).

38<sup>th</sup> parallel on June 25, 1950, the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel became the flashpoint for international public opinion on the war on the Korean peninsula. And even sixty years after the ceasefire signing in July 1953, the existence of a militarized 38<sup>th</sup> parallel is a reminder that the Korean War still has not officially come to an end.

The 38<sup>th</sup> parallel has had a surprisingly enduring hold on the imagination, given its official status as a temporary border from its inception as an arbitrary line to its current state as hypermilitarized ceasefire line. On June 26, 1950, when President Harry Truman delivered a statement explaining his decision to mobilize U.S. troops on the Korean peninsula, he focused on the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, lambasting the southward crossing of the northern Korean People's Army [KPA] on June 25, 1950 as “an act of aggression” and a “[threat] to the peace of the world.”<sup>2</sup> Responding to Truman's statement with their own press release, Soviet officials accused the “South Korean puppet government” of provoking the June 25<sup>th</sup> attack over the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, which in turn was clear evidence of the U.S. “imperialist warmongers.”<sup>3</sup> According to these accusations, the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel functioned both as a sovereign line in the ground on the Korean peninsula, and a symbol of the borders of the global order. In his June 27, 1950 telegram to American diplomatic officers, Secretary of State Dean Acheson seized upon the northern KPA's transgression of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel as a pedagogical opportunity to give shape to the meaning of U.S. involvement on the Korean peninsula, and instructed the diplomatic officers to frame the “[i]mportance” of the “Korean situation” in terms of how “vital” it was as a “symbol [of]

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<sup>2</sup> “Statement by the President on the Violation of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel,” dated 26 June 1950. Part of the *Public Papers of the Presidents: Harry S. Truman, 1945-1953* of the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, available at [www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers), accessed 21 May 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Report on Soviet official press release; Dated June 27, 1950. From *Mi Kungmubu Hanguk kungnae sanghwang kwallyŏn munsŏ: The US Department of State relating to the internal affairs of Korea* (Seoul: Kukpangbu Kunsu P'yŏnch'an Yŏn'guso, 2000-2002), Volume 1.

strength and determination of West.” The “Korean situation” was relevant to Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and “elsewhere,” according to Acheson.<sup>4</sup> The 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, in the early days of the Korean War, had already become an abstract “symbol,” a border representative of all borders in the world that could be transgressed, elided, or challenged.

The pedagogical force of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel as a key trope in shaping the narrative of the Korean War has maintained a stunning resiliency over the years. In U.S. historiography, the Korean War as a historical event, similar to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, holds significance for what it reveals “elsewhere” – in historical studies of U.S. militarization, the Korean War provided an opportunity for the development of the military-security complex in the United States, while in the annals of Cold War diplomatic history, the war heralded an important shift from rollback to containment diplomatic policy.<sup>5</sup> Historian

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<sup>4</sup> Outgoing Telegram from Department of State; To Certain American Diplomatic Officers; Dated June 27, 1950; Sent by Acheson; To: Europe, Plus South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand, Canada. From *Mi Kungmubu Hanguk kungnae sanghwang kwallyön munsö: The US Department of State relating to the internal affairs of Korea* (Seoul: Kukpangbu Kunsu P’yönch’an Yön’guso, 2000-2002), Volume 1.

<sup>5</sup> For works on militarization and how the Korean War provided a key impetus in the making of the military industrial complex, see Michael J. Hogan, *A cross of iron: Harry S. Truman and the origins of the national security state, 1945-1954* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and also Melvyn P. Leffler, *A preponderance of power: national security, the Truman administration, and the cold war*, Stanford nuclear age series (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992). For a broader historiographical view of the debates around the meaning of “Cold War” history, Hogan’s edited book still provides the best introduction: Michael J. Hogan, ed. *The End of the Cold War: its meaning and implications* (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Perhaps most relevant to the discussion at hand regarding the legitimacy of the “Cold War” frame for analysis are the essays by Hogan, Bruce Cumings, and John Gaddis included in this volume. Located squarely in this discussion as a military historian, Allan Millett provides perhaps the best concise overview of works on the Korean War in his bibliographic overviews, and he is quite clear about his own judgments on the quality of the works themselves: Allan R. Millett, “The Korean War: A 50-Year Critical Historiography,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 24, no. 1 (March 2001): 188; Allan R. Millett, *The Korean War: The Essential Bibliography* (Potomac Books Inc., 2007). Millett himself argues that June 25, 1950 should not be the starting point for understanding the war, and he begins his examination of the causes and dynamics leading up to war during post-1945 period: Allan Reed Millett, *The war for Korea, 1945--1950: a house burning*, Modern war studies (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2005). However, Millett and also William Stueck offer scholarship on the war that primarily remains at the level of military and diplomatic action and decision-making. Stueck in particular has worked towards framing the Korean War as an “international” conflict: William Stueck, “Cold War Revisionism and the Origins of the Korean Conflict: The Kolko Thesis,” *Pacific Historical Review* 42, no. 4 (November 1, 1973): 537-560; William Whitney Stueck, *The Korean War: an international history*, Princeton studies in international history and politics (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995);

Bruce Cumings effected a major paradigm shift with his work, *The Origins of the Korean War*, where he argued for scholarship that takes on-the-ground politics on the Korean peninsula seriously alongside an analysis of Washington politics.<sup>6</sup> Cumings meticulously demonstrates through his research that the Korean War was also a civil war, whose fissure lines were exacerbated and manipulated by the U.S. preoccupations with a binary Cold War politics and adamant, ideological anti-communist stance. Historians now agree the idea that the Korean War was both a postcolonial civil war and a conflict of the Cold War, but the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel has still been reified as the major axis along which historical change is affected.

This study presents a Korean War that breaks through the historiographical impasse between the national telos of the civil war and the predetermined binary politics of the Cold War, where the story is usually concerned with territorial shifts both on the peninsula and globally, and the primary actors in history are those in the elite echelons of the state and military. What has been lost in the histories of the Korean War is the human terrain of war and politics, a way of defining the global order by determining the order of relations – between states, between states and individuals, and between individuals and the international community. Rather than the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, it is a different trope of warfare that is the focus of this study: the prisoner of war. Instead of the usual battlefields, it is the intimate spaces of encounters, such as interrogation rooms, POW

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William Whitney Stueck, *Rethinking the Korean War: A New Diplomatic and Strategic History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War* (Seoul, Korea: Yuksabipyungsa, 2002); Bruce Cumings, *Child of conflict: the Korean-American relationship, 1943-1953*, Publications on Asia of the School of International Studies, University of Washington.no. 37 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983); Bruce Cumings, *Korea's place in the sun: a modern history* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997); Jon. Halliday and Bruce Cumings, *Korea: the unknown war* (London: Viking, 1988).

camps, and moments of surrender, that make up the landscape of my analysis. And most importantly, war itself takes on a different character within the pages of this study.

I historicize the discourses and practices of war by tracing the conflict, struggles and contradictions that manifested on the global stage of history as the demands for formal decolonization resulted in more and more newly independent nation-states. In 1950, “war” was not only a source of horror over the damages wrought by Western civilization – Western states also jealously guarded the right to engage in legitimate warfare. The Korean War was a war that was not supposed to be a war, a “police action” of the United Nations and the United States. After 1945, what did it mean to engage in “war,” when so many conflicts began to bear the monikers of “police action,” “intervention,” and “occupation”? I argue that the Korean War, seen from the vantage point of the POW, reveals how “war” itself was a central site on which the rise of the nation-state system occurred, where “war” was not simply about sovereignty in terms of territory and terrain, but rather fundamentally about sovereign power over making a subject for the new global order and decolonized nation-state. In other words, I argue that the Korean War was not simply a war about territory – it was also about subject-making.

The controversy over the prisoner of war, which erupted at the negotiating tables at the Panmunjom armistice meetings located within the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, eclipsed the debates over the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel during the Korean War. In 1952, all items on the negotiating agenda – including the location of the ceasefire line, which became the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel – had been decided, except for Agenda Item 4: POW repatriation. In January 1952, the U.S. delegate representing the United Nations Command placed a new proposal on the negotiating table – voluntary POW repatriation. In other words, the U.S. delegate was

proposing that each and every POW would be able to decide whether or not to “return” or “repatriate” to their home nation-state. Opposing the proposal, the Chinese and North Korean delegates pointed out that the 1949 Geneva Conventions, drafted only a year before the outbreak of the Korean War, required mandatory repatriation.<sup>7</sup> Who would lay legitimate claim to determining the correct interpretation and application of the moral humanitarian principles embedded in the 1949 Geneva Conventions on the Treatment of Prisoners of War? Prisoner of war repatriation became the most controversial issue at the Panmunjom truce talks, and it captured the attention of the international press and media as the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the state governments of India, Mexico, and Brazil entered the debate.

The prisoner of war, traditionally a rather marginal actor in war, became the site of such controversy that the signing of the ceasefire was effectively delayed for eighteen months. However, the POW controversy – circling out from the POW camps to the negotiating tables at Panmunjom to the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations – has usually been dismissed, footnoted, or shaken off by historians as a much-too-long propaganda ploy used by all sides of the armistice table. I contend that there is another necessary lens through which we must examine the issue: the POW issue during the Korean War could not have been manufactured earlier upon the world

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<sup>7</sup> The key scholarly monograph centrally focused on the armistice talks during the Korea War is Rosemary Foot’s *A Substitute for Victory: The politics of peacemaking at the Korean Armistice talks* (Cornell University: Ithaca, NY, 1990). Foot does have one chapter that examines the POW repatriation debate, titled “Victims of the Cold War: The POW Issue.” In the collection *Child of Conflict: The Korean-American Relationship, 1943-1953*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983) edited by Bruce Cumings, Barton J. Bernstein also provides analysis of the negotiations over the POW issue. His article is titled, “The Struggle over the Korean Armistice: Prisoners of Repatriation?,” and it provides a narrative overview of the different phases and choices made at the negotiating table regarding POWs. Also, Walter G Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front* (Washington, D.C: Center of Military History, United States Army, 2005), which is volume two in the series by the United States Army on the Korean War, provides information on Panmunjom and Koje, in addition to a narrative of the different military strategies on the battlefields in tandem with the negotiating tactics.



stage because it heralded the particular contradictions and limitations in the “laws of war” as they faced formal decolonization. At stake in this debate over the figure of the POW was the question of who defined war, who would then in turn determine the issue of recognition in the rise of the nation-state system, as the fallen empires and the emerging nation-states demanded a different global ordering of power. This study argues that the “prisoner of war,” which previously was only a temporary wartime status or category of personhood, had become a contested political subject on the world stage. Indeed, the most fundamental challenge to the notion of “war” during the twentieth century came not in the form of horror over mass violence, but rather in the form of anti-colonial movements and formal decolonization. The “great powers” faced an unanticipated quandary: to wage “war” with another entity implied a political recognition of its legitimacy, an act which the “great powers” wanted to defer as long as possible in front of its colonies and territories. Whoever could determine the legitimate subjecthood of the “prisoner of war” for the post-1945 global order would also lay claim to defining the legitimate parameters of warfare, and thus sovereignty.

The key significance to the Korean War and to the POW issue was the proliferation of demands being made upon the decolonized individual subject as a way to reconfigure the nation-state system. And the most-relied upon tool of the U.S. military for constructing, disciplining, and presenting the prisoner of war was the interrogation room. If, as Frantz Fanon later writes in 1961, “[d]ecolonization is truly the creation of new men,” then wars over decolonization demanded the creation of a new interrogation room.<sup>8</sup> At the heart of the POW controversy was the repatriation screening interrogation room – the U.S. delegate at Panmunjom proposed to have all Korean and Chinese POWs

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<sup>8</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2000), 2.

individually undergo “voluntary repatriation screening,” where each POW would be asked by a UNC military interrogator if he or she indeed wanted to repatriate, or not. Espousing the efficacy of such a bureaucratic approach, the U.S. delegate held up the “voluntary repatriation screening” interrogation room as exemplary of U.S. liberalism – the interrogation room was a space of democracy, freedom, and individual choice.

In April 1952, when a compound of 5,600 south Korean civilian internees in the largest U.S.-run POW camp greeted U.S. military interrogation teams and accompanying U.S. Army battalions with homemade cudgels and north Korean military songs sung in unison, immediately caused a crisis – the south Korean civilian internees refused to enter the interrogation rooms. Within hours, seventy-seven Korean civilian internees had died from wounds inflicted by concussion grenades used by the U.S. military and the south Korean ROKA soldiers. Indeed, what was at stake in this struggle over the interrogation room for the U.S. camp commanders, the Korean prisoners of war, the Republic of Korea Army soldiers, the delegates at Panmunjom, and the state officials at the White House in Washington, D.C.? This was more than a struggle over whose interpretation of “international law” would be valid – this was a conflict over who could lay claim to knowing the subjectivity, the desires of the “prisoners of war” amidst competing notions of citizenship, human rights, and sovereignty in the age of three worlds. As this study will demonstrate, the U.S. military interrogation room has historically played a critical role in the project of universalizing the vision of a U.S. liberal geopolitical order not through the production of information, but rather through the production of subjects. The work of the interrogation room was neither marginal nor isolated. It was, in fact, deeply embedded in

the struggles over fashioning subjectivities appropriate and desirous of particular political orders and systems.

However, the U.S. military interrogation room that one encounters in this study was neither monolithic nor absolute in its hegemonic project. Nor was it the sole form of interrogation that the Korean prisoner of war encountered in the years before, during, and after the three years of the Korean War. This study reveals a matrix of the interrogation rooms invented, mobilized, and maintained by groups as varied as the U.S. military, anti-communist rightist Korean youth groups, and even the India-led Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission. The invention of multiple, different types of interrogation serves as the central framing for this study, and I examine how these historically configured interrogation rooms reveal, in turn, multiple visions and interpretations of the project of formal decolonization and its relation to another project - modern warfare.

Beginning with the U.S. occupation of Korea in 1945, I trace how the policing practices over acts of language during the occupation affected and impacted the assumptions undergirding interrogation practices utilized by the U.S. military intelligence during the Korean War. During the war, many of the U.S. interrogators of POWs were Nisei (second-generation) Japanese American men, who had spent their adolescence in the WWII internment camps and were later drafted or assigned to interrogate Korean prisoners of war – I reconstruct the types of interrogation rooms these Japanese-American interrogators invented, what they resisted, and what they re-interpreted. Then, following Korean prisoners of war from their moment of surrender or capture to their often three-year stint behind barbed-wire fences as POWs, I delineate an entire landscape of constant interrogation the Korean prisoner of war encountered, where anti-communist Korean

youth groups created their own political economy of interrogation and violence and communist Koreans mobilized their own methods of collective surveillance. Then I examine the “explanation room” that the Indian delegation had essentially invented and configured as a resolution to the negotiation impasse at Panmunjom over the topic of POW repatriation. It was an interrogation room for “neutrality,” an early manifestation of nonalignment’s vision of an international nation-state system distilled into a moment of claiming a legitimate reading of the postcolonial Korean individual subject.

Stepping into the interrogation rooms of the Korean POW, I have discovered, opens up other international historical conversations about the future of Korea, which have been duly overshadowed or collapsed by the usual binary Cold War understandings of the Korean War around the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. There were other interpretations of the significance of the northern KPA’s crossing over the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel on June 25, 1950, and the Department of State followed the wide-ranging spectrum of reactions and narratives of the conflict that was escalating on the Korean peninsula. “Three of four Dehli English language papers ran prominent editorial comment on Korean situation June 27,” a telegraph from New Delhi addressed to the U.S. Secretary of State reported. The *Indian News Chronicle* stated, “The North Koreans have a cause to fight for – national unity and a Communist regime. The Koreans in the south are called upon to fight in defense of American capital – and human freedom. In these moves Moscow has scored over Washington.” The telegram report further noted that the *Hindustan Times* voiced its opinion that the “[d]issolution of South Korea [would be] blow to UN prestige but [would

have] ‘saving grace on bringing about Korean unity.’”<sup>9</sup> A different set of historical stakes in the future of Korea become apparent in these interpretations of the significance of the KPA crossing of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel for the post-1945 global order. From the vantage point of an independent India, the fate of the Korean peninsula held a great deal of weight in terms of the futures of newly independent Asian nation-states. India had been a member of the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea to oversee the 1948 elections that ended up establishing the southern Republic of Korea – and it was India that had voiced reservations about ultimately failing to remove the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel as a line of division. The question of how the U.S.-dominated Cold War vision would affect the postcolonial civil war on the Korean peninsula, not the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel per se, was the concern of the Indian government. India’s commitment and involvement in the POW controversy during the Korean War was part and parcel of this longer historical concern about the nature of the international nation-state system, and what would be the underlying ideologies guiding it.

Often, the histories of the Korean War stay within the parameters of a more typical top-down narrative analysis of the war’s events, personages, and consequences. The state officials, diplomats, and military personnel of those more familiar histories are within the pages of this study as well – however, the analytical frame of the interrogation room provides a unique opportunity to bring in a bottom-up history as well. The different abstracted visions of either Secretary of State Dean Acheson, Indian President Jawaharlal Nehru, or north Korean President Kim Il Sung regarding Korea’s significance to the post-1945 global order were contingent upon thousands of acts of interrogation, translation,

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<sup>9</sup> Telegram from New Delhi to Secretary of State. Date 1950, June 28. Sent by Henderson. From *Mi Kungmubu Hanguk kungnae sanghwang kwallyŏn munsŏ: The US Department of State relating to the internal affairs of Korea* (Seoul: Kukpangbu Kunsu P’yŏnch’an Yŏn’guso, 2000-2002), Volume 1.

and disciplining of possible subjects. It was interrogation that provided the proper narrative needed, that assured policy-makers of the availability of a willing, desirous subject. At the heart of this story are the prisoners of war themselves, the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) military guards, the U.S. military troops and administrative personnel, and the U.S. military interrogators; on the Korean peninsula, President Syngman Rhee, the U.S. and United Nations Command military delegates at Panmunjom, along with the Chinese and North Korean delegates at the table; the governments and even the militaries of the United States, India, Brazil, Mexico, Argentina and other members of the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross. These were not strictly defined or separate fields of action, as POWs, civilians, soldiers, along with diplomats and delegates claimed a space on the stage of history. This study proposes to take seriously the notions of liberation and decolonization that the peasant farmer turned POW held in the years after 1945, to take seriously the notions of war-making and survival held by Japanese American interrogators who had only recently been also behind barbed-wire fences in the United States, and to take seriously the lived experiences of constant violence on the Korean peninsula by the Korean people in the years following official liberation from Japan on August 15, 1945. War was not an abstract principal either within or without the interrogation room.

From within the interrogation room, the cast of unexpected historical actors within this story multiplies – Japanese American young men, who had spent their adolescence in the internment camps of World War II, were often the translators for or first-level interrogators of the Korean prisoners of war, the Korean prisoners of war themselves were from both sides of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel or even from the farther reaches of

the Korean diaspora, like Uzbekistan or northern regions of the Soviet Union. The vantage point of the interrogation room affords us a different time frame for the beginning and ending of this story of the Korean War. I posit the significance of the Korean War not within the usual Cold War binary power struggle, nor simply within the postcolonial civil war binary of the anti-communist south versus the communist north. Rather, I place the Korean War within a longer history of Japanese colonial legacies and U.S. imperial ambitions within a trans-Pacific frame, as both projects converged on the Korean peninsula in the middle of the twentieth century. A history of the interrogation room critically becomes a study of projects of subject-making, racial formations, and claims to sovereignty in the wake of 1945, as the former colony of Korea, the former empire of Japan, and the self-disavowing empire of the United States navigated how to present themselves as nation-states.

The dissertation opens with Japanese American internment and the U.S. occupation of Korea, follows a thousand Japanese Americans to Korea as the U.S. drafted them as interrogators for the Korean War, and then traces the journeys of the Korean prisoners of war as they were subsequently shipped by the United Nations to India, Brazil, and Argentina in the year leading up to the 1954 Geneva Conference on Korea and Indochina. The study follows two generations of people on both sides of the Pacific as they created and navigated multiple systems of warfare and interrogation from World War II through the Korean War.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Much of my own framing of the Korean War within a transnational, international landscape of the political comes from inquiries into the relationship between race, subjectivity, and imperialism in Asian Pacific Islander American Studies and also the tracings of the black political diaspora in U.S African American history, where the political solidarity imaginings of the Bandung Conference are taken seriously. For works in APIA studies, see the following scholarship that engages interdisciplinary methodology in the reading of texts: Jodi Kim, *Ends of empire: Asian American critique and the Cold War*, Critical American studies series (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Colleen Lye, *America's Asia: racial*

“Humanity Interrogated” presents a history of the Korean War through three distinct, but interconnected fields of action. First, it is a microhistorical study of encounters through a particular practice of war, interrogation, on the Korean peninsula and the United States from 1945 through 1960. Second, it is a history of multi-national and state policy-making over the prisoner of war as a site of struggle to claim the decolonizing subject. And thirdly, it is an international story of how the Korean War heralded an era of what jurist Carl Schmitt had termed “wars over humanity” in 1950, where nation-states no longer made wars, but rather wars made nation-states.

### **Interventions: War, Sovereignty, and the Political Subject**

I point out the overdetermined nature of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel to question explicitly whether or not the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel has severe limitations in its explanatory power over the war’s whole significance. To focus wholly on the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel as the pivotal point for the dynamics of the war, as much of Cold War historiography does, is to narrow one’s field of vision to only the stakes of geopolitical territory, whether framed as containment/rollback or national reunification/division. It is a group of stakes that have traditionally been associated with Westphalian sovereignty, where the sanctity of borders became the unspoken treaty pact between nation-states. What is crucially lost in this

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*form and American literature, 1893-1945*, Princeton paperbacks (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005); Sarita Echavez. See, *The decolonized eye: Filipino American art and performance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009). Two particular anthologies have been useful in thinking about the global and the hemispheric: Lisa. Lowe and David LLOYD, *The Politics of culture in the shadow of capital*, Post-contemporary interventions (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); Ann Laura. Stoler, *Haunted by empire: geographies of intimacy in North American history*, American encounters/global interactions (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). For works that provide examples of narratives of international claims-making in front of the decolonizing world, see Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race against empire: Black Americans and anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Kevin Kelly. Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black expatriates and the civil rights era*, The John Hope Franklin series in African American history and culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Gerald. Horne, *Black and red: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Afro-American response to the Cold War, 1944-1963*, SUNY series in Afro-American society. (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1986).



narrow frame is sovereign power, where the claims and authority of the sovereign are collapsed upon the individual subject. This study's focus on the issue of subject-making allows for an examination of how sovereignty itself became a fraught object of construction and claims-making at the crossroads of decolonization and war. I argue that nothing less than the question of decolonization was at stake in the debate over the prisoner of war during the Korean War. Nationalism, self-determination, and state-building are all important to this study; however, rather than beginning from the premise of examining the Korean War as a struggle over the emergence of the nation-state on the Korean peninsula, I propose to approach the Korean War as a struggle over the politics of recognition that were informing the shape of the rise of the nation-state system in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>11</sup> In other words, this study is looking slightly askance at the usual narrative of the Korean War, where instead of the "nation" taking the central role within the analytical frame, the construction of "sovereignty" becomes the crux.<sup>12</sup> A

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<sup>11</sup> Although I do depart from examining only historical actors who participate within nationalist discourse, I do engage with much of the more recent scholarship that has emerged out of the international history frame: Mark Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam and America: the making of postcolonial Vietnam, 1919-1950*, The new Cold War history (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2000); Matthew James Connelly, *A diplomatic revolution: Algeria's fight for independence and the origins of the post-cold war era* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian moment: self-determination and the international origins of anticolonial nationalism* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). Perhaps one of the most important scholars on U.S. empire and decolonization in the twentieth century is William Appleman Williams: William Appleman Williams, *The tragedy of American diplomacy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988); William Appleman Williams, *America confronts a revolutionary world, 1776-1976* (New York: Morrow, 1976). Much of my own theoretical framing of "decolonization" has come from the shores of postcolonial studies – in particular see: Prasenjit Duara, *Decolonization: perspectives from now and then*, *Rewriting histories* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2004). The writings of Frantz Fanon have, in particular, helped shape some of the methodological approach: Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated from the French by Richard Philcox ; Introductions by Jean-Paul Sartre and Homi K. Bhabha (New York: Grove Press, 2004).

<sup>12</sup> My particular use of "sovereignty" as a historical construction comes from two different bodies of scholarship: one of legal scholarship that has recently emerged on conceptions of legal warfare and international humanitarian law, and the other from works surrounding "states of emergency" and "states of exception." Much of the now-expanding scholarship on "states of exception" center upon this group of work: Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, Expanded ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, *Studies in contemporary German social thought* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1985); Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of*

nation-state's sovereignty only exists if the larger system of nation-states recognizes its legitimacy. Modern warfare and formal decolonization – two hallmarks of the twentieth century – challenged this particular ordering of the nation-state system.

The meaning of “war” itself was precisely fragmented, splintered, and multiple at this historical moment in time. I contend that over the course of the twentieth century alongside the move towards the criminalization and regulation of warfare (trends evidenced by the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 or the periodic revisions of the Geneva Conventions), Western states attempted to preserve “war” as a privileged right that only legitimate states could claim.<sup>13</sup> When confronted with the claims to self-determination and sovereignty being made in the colonies and territories, Western powers jealously guarded and circumscribed their language of “war.” The most fundamental challenge to

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*the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum* (New York: Telos Press, 2003); Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1998); Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Michel Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège De France, 1975-76* (New York: Picador, 2003). I do depart from Agamben's “state of exception” theoretical frame in that I insist that the interrogation room – or “state of exception” – was not an “extralegal” situation, but rather a “hyperlegal” one, where an extraordinary amount of labor was needed to maintain such a site. For an excellent example of tracing the historical legacies of the “state of emergency” within the colonial context, see Nasser Hussain, *The jurisprudence of emergency* (University of Michigan Press, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> The historicization of the legal constructions of “war” has occurred more often in the province of jurists, than historians – with the noted exception of Geoffrey Best, *War and Law Since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). Perhaps the most famous jurist who tackled the question of shifting legitimacies in the aftermath of World War II regarding sovereignty and warfare is Carl Schmitt with his opus published in 1950: Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum* (New York: Telos Press, 2003). For an excellent historicization of Schmitt's own assumptions within a *longue durée* intellectual history of international law and jurists, see Martti Koskenniemi, *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations: The Rise and Fall of International Law, 1870-1960* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002). The work of Nathaniel Berman also provides some key insights into the anxieties over shifting powers and hegemonies and their subsequent impact on the definitions of war: Nathaniel Berman, “But the Alternative is Despair”: European Nationalism and the Modernist Renewal of International Law. *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (June 1, 1993): 1792-1903; Nathaniel Berman, “Intervention in a ‘Divided World’: Axes of Legitimacy.” *European Journal of International Law* 17, no. 4 (September 2006): 743. Historians and scholars have, however, certainly challenged the notion of European claims to “legitimate” violence, and have demonstrated how practices of war were indeed developed also in tandem with colonial practices: see Isabel V Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2005); Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*, 1st ed. (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1999); Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1951).

the notion of “war” during the twentieth century came not in the form of horror over mass violence, but rather in the form of anti-colonial movements and formal decolonization. The “great powers” faced an unanticipated quandary: to wage “war” with another entity implied a political recognition of its legitimacy, an act which the “great powers” wanted to defer as long as possible in front of its colonies and territories. A historical convergence between the pressures of dealing with formal decolonization and the criminalization of “aggressive” war resulted in a peculiar lexical landscape for state-sanctioned mass violence in the latter half of the twentieth century. War could no longer be conducted sheerly and solely out of a state’s interest. Now, war would have to be conducted in the name of “humanity” – war itself had to be on the plane of the universal. War could now only be conducted as a disavowal of war itself.

The case of Korea pushed the issue of sovereignty and recognition to the fore as the discourses over decolonization and warfare converged upon the Korean peninsula in 1945 with the divided military occupations, and then again in 1950 with the outbreak of the Korean War. The fraught nature of sovereignty and political recognition was not a stranger to the Korean peninsula. Although the inscription on the Korean War Memorial in Washington, D.C., built in 1992, states: “Our nation honors her sons and daughter who answered the call to defend a country they never knew and a people they never met,” the United States had been making military overtures to Korea as early as 1871. Scholar Gordon Chang calls the 1871 event, “The 1871 American war against Korea,” an event that Chang notes as “one of the largest, if not the largest, and bloodiest uses of military force overseas by the United States in the fifty years between the Mexican-American War

of 1846-1848 and the Spanish-American War of 1898.”<sup>14</sup> U.S. Secretary of State, Hamilton Fish, had instructed Frederick F. Low, the U.S. minister of China, and the American fleet’s commander, Admiral John Rodgers, to execute an “opening” of Korea in the same manner that Matthew Perry had in terms of Japan. The result of the expedition was the violent death of at minimum two hundred-fifty Koreans – and absolutely no Perry-like success in forcing the “opening” of Korea. It would not be until 1882 that Admiral Robert Shefeldt successfully brokered a treaty of “amity and commerce” between the United States and Korea. However, the display of military power by the United States was most probably not the deciding factor in the change of Korea’s strategy vis-à-vis the insistent West.

In a different re-enactment and remobilization of Perry’s opening of Japan, Japanese gunboats arrived at Kanghwa Island in 1875, purposefully entering an “area known to be off-limits to foreign ships.” Exchange of artillery took place, and eventually 400 Japanese troops landed on the shore after Chinese mediation failed. And although some advisors advised Kojong to mobilize the military, King Kojong decided on a different move – on February 27, 1876, Kojong did sign a treaty with Japan. As scholar Bruce Cumings notes, “Article 1 recognized Korea as an “autonomous” (*chaju*) state with sovereign rights the same as Japan’s. [...] The article really meant that Japan no longer found any Chinese position in Korea worthy of its respect.”<sup>15</sup> Korea had been a tributary state of China, a relationship that both granted a considerable amount of autonomy and

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<sup>14</sup> Gordon Chang, “Whose ‘Barbarism’? Whose ‘Treachery’? Race and Civilization in the Unknown United States-Korea War of 1871,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 89, No. 4 (March 2003), 1333.

“American officers claimed that they had killed some 250 Korean soldiers; the number may have been twice as high.”

<sup>15</sup> Other articles gave Japan rights to search for new ports in five Korean provinces, survey Korean waters, conduct business and trade without interference, and protect its merchants in Korean ports under extraterritorial privileges. See Bruce Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 102.

also recognized Korea as part of a cosmology centered upon China.<sup>16</sup> With Japan's re-interpretation of Korea's putative autonomy, King Kojong of Korea then turned to the Western system of sovereignty – the putative fiction of equal nation-states – as a way to possibly contain Japan.

With the defeat of China in 1895, Japan facilitated the sovereign status of Korea as a “nation-state” separate from China, but the fictive equivalence between “nation-states” in the Western sovereignty system also produced a different ambiguity – one in which Japan could become the superior translator of Western rational international law of a “less enlightened” Korea.<sup>17</sup> And in 1905, with the end of the Russo-Japanese War, Japan claimed Korea via international language of treaties – in the Portsmouth Treaty, Russia ceded to recognize that Japan could “protect its interests in Korea,” an agreement brokered by none other than President Theodore Roosevelt, for which he received the Nobel Peace Prize. In a later meeting between Roosevelt's Secretary of War William Howard Taft and Japanese Prime Minister Katsura Taro on July 29 1905, it was mutually agreed that the U.S. would not interfere in Japan's interests in Korea, and in turn, Japan would recognize U.S. interests in the Philippines. By the end of 1905, again with the threat and presence of military forces, Japan achieved the Second Japan-Korea

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<sup>16</sup> As historian Henry Em has succinctly put it - “The Chosŏn state was a dynastic state, and also a tributary state [...] The Chosŏn monarch observed ritual properties appropriate for a vassal vis-à-vis the Chinese emperor. On the other hand, the Yi dynasty also laid claim to a distinct, and indigenous, history of legitimacy that reached far back into the mythic past, to the days of the Chinese sage kings Yao and Shun.” [Quote from unpublished book manuscript. Many thanks to Henry Em for helping with these insights.]

<sup>17</sup> The core of Em's argument in his analysis of what he calls the “semantics of sovereignty” involved in the Japanese attempts at closing and controlling the space of ambiguity concerning Korean sovereignty lies in elucidating how the Japanese positioned itself as the “preeminent translator of the new semantics of sovereignty in East Asia.”

Agreement, which made Korea a Japanese protectorate and essentially “gave international legal precedent to Japan’s control over Korea’s foreign affairs.”<sup>18</sup>

In autumn of 1906, King Kojong sent three representatives to the Second International Conference on Peace at The Hague to protest the illegal nature of the protectorate agreement. The three – Yi Sangsöl, Yi Jun, and Yi Ŭijong – arrived in the Netherlands in June 1907, with a letter from King Kojong “detailing the invalidity of the protectorate and demanding international condemnation of Japan.”<sup>19</sup> The forty-three members at The Hague – which included Japan - ignored the demands of the three Korean representatives, and essentially rendered the possibility of a sovereign Korea an unimaginable prospect. But the publicity generated by the three envoys was enough for the Japanese to force Kojong to abdicate his throne to his son, Sunjong. The Korean military, disbanded by the Japanese, fought the Japanese troops in the streets of Seoul, and eventually joined “righteous armies” (ũibyöng) of guerrilla fighters. And on August 29, 1910, Sunjong gave up his throne – and Korea became a colony of Japan.

In 1943, when Korea actually came back within the purview of the United States, Britain, and China together at the Cairo Conference in 1943, Korea appeared as a colony, a part of the Japanese empire that had to be “dismembered.” According to the Cairo

Declaration of December 1, 1943:

[...]Japan shall be stripped of all the islands in the Pacific which she has seized or occupied since the beginning fo the First World War in 1914, and that all the territories Japan has stolen from the Chinese, such as Manchuria, Formosa & the Pescadores, shall be restored to the Republic of China. Japan will also be expelled from all other territories which she has taken by violence and greed. **The aforesaid three Great Powers, mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined**

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<sup>18</sup> Alexis Dudden, *Japan’s colonization of Korea: discourse and power* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’I Press, 2005), 7.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

**that in due course Korea shall become free and independent.** [my emphasis]<sup>20</sup>

Korea had been singled out in Roosevelt, Churchill, and Kai-shek's characterization of Japan, and became the territory upon which the Allied forces would demonstrate their moral claims to the postwar order.<sup>21</sup> And the interpretation of the clause "in due course Korea shall become free and independent" quickly took the shape of trusteeship under President Roosevelt. And thus, Korea entered the Allied-dominated conversation over the postwar global order via a longer conversation – the question of disposing the colonial possessions of an enemy power, one that had already been in motion with the League of Nations, "mandates" and the end of World War I.

In other words, Korea was about to move from the "enlightened" colonial practice of *naisen ittai* to the "enlightened" colonial/imperial practice of the international community – specifically, the League of Nations and the later United Nations, and mandates and later trusteeships. The *telos* would be the United Nations and the United States, according to Roosevelt's vision – one that still relied upon racial civilizational hierarchies and ideas about tutelage. In January 1944, when Roosevelt spoke with his Pacific War Council about his vision for the dismembering of the Japanese empire, he spoke of placing Korea under a trusteeship for a "forty year tutelage."<sup>22</sup> When Roosevelt later spoke with Stalin on the afternoon of February 8, 1945 at Yalta,

He [Roosevelt] said he had in mind for Korea a trusteeship composed of a Soviet, an American and a Chinese representative. He said the only experience we had had in this matter was in the Philippines where it had

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<sup>20</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States: 1943, Cairo and Tehran, 404.

<sup>21</sup> "The Cairo Declaration did not end the territorial questions; it intensified them. For the subject of international trusteeship, the significance of the Cairo Declaration is clear and simple: Japan would be stripped of her Empire." From William Roger Louis, *Imperialism at bay: the United States and the decolonization of the British Empire 1941-1945* (Oxford [Eng.]: Clarendon Press, 1977), 274.

<sup>22</sup> From the Pacific War Council Minutes, 12 January 1944, Roosevelt Paper [Quote taken from Louis, *Imperialism at Bay*, 355.]

taken about fifty years for the people to be prepared for self-government. He felt that in the case of Korea the period might be from twenty to thirty years. Marshal Stalin said the shorter the period the better.<sup>23</sup>

Korea was not only still within the “waiting room of history,” it had also become part of the American genealogy of overseas military projects and interests – one that included the U.S.-Philippines War and the previous negotiating with a different faltering empire – Spain – and its possessions.

With the Japanese surrender on August 15, 1945 and the official end of World War II, the United States found itself in front of the large question of decolonization. The United States government attempted to disavow its own imperial desires and structures by insisting on its own “nationness,” while simultaneously assigning itself the role of pedagogue to “teach” the Japanese empire to be a “nation,” and also “teach” the former colony of Korea to be a proper “nation.” What was to be the normative “nation” form in the aftermath of World War II? This lesson, as I demonstrate through this study, revolved around a reconceptualization of the “sanctity” of borders, a project achieved through the mobilization of the “state of emergency,” and thus the rise of the “national security state” as the normative actor within the international arena.

The Korean War began on June 25, 1950, when troops of the northern Korean People’s Army of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea crossed the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, a border that had originally been created by U.S. officials in 1945 to mark the division between the northern Soviet and the southern U.S. military occupations on the Korean peninsula upon its liberation from Japanese colonial rule with the Japanese official surrender in August 15, 1945. By June 25, 1950, the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel had become a line

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<sup>23</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States: 1945, Yalta, 770.



demarcating an ambiguous political state of a different nature – in 1948, two different regimes had been established on either side of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, the northern Democratic People’s Republic of Korea [DPRK] and the southern Republic of Korea [ROK]. However, neither state garnered full political recognition from the early Cold War nation-state community – for example, the United Nations, having sponsored elections in the southern half of the peninsula, did not recognize the DPRK as a legitimate, sovereign state. On June 26, 1950, when explaining his decision to mobilize U.S. military troops on the Korean peninsula, President Harry Truman rendered the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel as a sovereign border. Referring to the northern Korean People’s Army’s crossing southwards over the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, President Harry Truman stated, “Those responsible for this act of aggression must realize how seriously the Government of the United States views such threats to the peace of the world.”<sup>24</sup>

War, it turned out, was a rather complicated affair. In a press conference on June 29, 1950, President Harry Truman had to present to the American public a war that was not a war when he explained his decision to send U.S. military troops to Korea. To declare a war would not only require waiting for approval from Congress and possibly elicit disapproval from a public already war-weary from World War II, but it would also confer a certain political legitimacy to the northern Democratic Republic of Korea. So when asked by the press whether or not the United States was at war, Truman replied succinctly, “We are not at war.” He agreed with a later characterization of the military

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<sup>24</sup> “Statement by the President on the Violation of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel,” dated 26 June 1950. Part of the *Public Papers of the Presidents: Harry S. Truman, 1945-1953* of the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, available at [www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers), accessed 21 May 2011.

mobilization offered by a member of the press: a “police action under the United Nations.”<sup>25</sup> The Korean War was, according to Truman’s logic, a war that was not a war.

The oddly fangled construction of the Korean War continued - the United Nations became an official belligerent in the Korean War, a role the organization would not play again until 1991 with the First Gulf War. In 1950, the United Nations had an intertwined history with the Korean peninsula already – the United Nations had its inception in 1945, the same year as the liberation of the Korean peninsula, and the United Nations also adopted the Korean question as its first test of formal decolonization with the creation of the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea to oversee the U.S.-supported elections in the south in 1948. In other words, the legitimacy of the United Nations was intimately wrapped up in the Korean question as well.

A post-colonial civil war in a nation divided at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel by the occupying United States at the moment of liberation from Japanese colonialism, the Korean War had begun less than a year after the 1949 Geneva Conventions had drafted new “laws of war.” The figure of the prisoner of war – although far removed from the proceedings at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel - loomed large on the negotiating table at Panmunjom, and thus on the landscape of war. To dismiss the POW controversy as simple propaganda is to miss a much longer history of how sovereignty and warfare regarding the Korean peninsula had distilled into a question about sovereignty and the decolonized subject in a world of war. The politics of recognition were still at stake, and it was not a history that began with the June 25, 1950 transgression of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.

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<sup>25</sup> “The President’s New Conference,” dated 29 June 1950. Part of the *Public Papers of the Presidents: Harry S. Truman, 1945-1953* of the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, available at [www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers), accessed 21 May 2011.

## **Methodology: Language, Bureaucracy, and Violence**

The prisoner of war, I would like to propose, was a uniquely and emphatically *bureaucratic* figure of warfare. It was the white identification tag and the attendant paperwork – in the case of many Korean POWs, repeated paperwork over a period of a minimum of three years – that made, maintained, and produced the “prisoner of war.” I am arguing for an attentiveness to the significance of bureaucracy when analyzing the military archive. Narratives of the U.S. military in the Korean War have primarily focused on the literal “military tactics” on the battlefield or the political diplomacy occurring at the highest levels – however, this story of the war is much more interested in the military man as bureaucrat, the interrogator as bureaucrat, and interrogation as a template of bureaucracy. To step back and consider the vast reserves of archived papers the U.S. military has produced over the last half century, one can acknowledge the fact that the U.S. military has also become one of the largest bureaucratic institutions. Bureaucracy is crucial for our analysis in order to engage fully with the stakes involved and the multiple types of violence present – both literal and discursive – within and without the interrogation room.<sup>26</sup>

Bureaucracy, it would turn out, became essential for the liberal empire the United States envisioned in the wake of 1945. It would be both the soldier and the bureaucrat

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<sup>26</sup> An eloquent and compelling work arguing for a consideration of the relationship between history-writing and the nature of the archive is Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the past: power and the production of history* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1995). Much work within French cultural history provided ways to reflect methodologically on the nature of archive-making: Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the archives: pardon tales and their tellers in sixteenth-century France* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1987) and Roger Chartier, *Cultural history: between practices and representations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988) are two of many. Bureaucracy became a key pivot along which to examine the archival grain for this project. Although my own particular rendering of bureaucracy does differ from those found in these texts, Thomas Richards, *The imperial archive: knowledge and the fantasy of empire* (London ; New York: Verso, 1993) and C. A. Bayly, *Empire and information: intelligence gathering and social communication in India, 1780-1870*, Cambridge studies in Indian history and society ;1 (Cambridge, [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996) are both notable texts on the subject.

that shaped the subjects on and off the battlefields; and it was the politician, the soldier, and the bureaucrat who became a part of articulating decolonization. As such, in my research, I followed the different paper trails – following the discussion on prisoners of war through the U.S. Army, the Department of State, the United Nations, the ICRC, and the meetings at Panmunjom, while also following the petitions, letters, and demands of the prisoners of war, all sent to the White House, the United Nations, the ICRC or different countries. The POWs were clearly aware of the stakes embedded in the bureaucratic structures of the international community – the “politics of recognition” were also at the heart of this matrix of bureaucracies. And the POW was constantly negotiating how to become strategically visible within this matrix.

A key group of interrogation transcripts and files in my research are three hundred investigation case files created by the U.S. military during the Korean War for incidents involving the prisoners of war in their custody, which have never been before examined by a scholar. What makes this particular group of military papers rather different from the vast, seemingly infinite amount of papers from the Korean War housed at the National Archives is that these papers were created not only for the protocols demanded by the U.S. military, but also the “international community” housed in Geneva, Switzerland. The International Committee of the Red Cross, which held oversight power over the camps, as stipulated in Article 121 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions - all injuries and deaths suffered by prisoners of war must be investigated by the protecting power, was to be the recipient of copies of all investigative case files. How would the United States Army present its authority and control over the POWs to the ICRC?

The papers compiled in these files range from typescripts of written statements from U.S. Army personnel, to transcribed questioning or private interrogation of Korean POWs, handwritten statements in Korean signed with a red thumbprint from the POW, military doctor's reports on the autopsies or injuries, photographs of certain scenes of the incidents, or even mugshots of the involved or suspected POWs. What becomes strikingly clear from these over 300 case files is that although there was a standardized overall template eventually developed for investigating a POW incident case, there was constantly a great deal of variation in how "information" was obtained from a Korean POW, whether through statements, questioning, or even repeated interrogation, where the interrogators or board would bring in the same POW twice.<sup>27</sup>

At first glance, it appears that the anxiety over the development of a bureaucratic means of determining the "veracity" of the Korean POW's words was central to the hundreds of files – an anxiety that perhaps looms even larger when we take into consideration the issue of language and translation. Although most statements and questioning are presented in a straightforward English, Korean civilian interpreters or Japanese American military interrogators were the mediators and translators, their participation at times entirely unnoted in the record, and at other times, only their signature at the end of a translated document would mark their presence within the room. It becomes apparent that it is not the POW's "veracity" per se that is the cause of anxiety, but rather that the POW is not offering the type of statement the board would like. Belying the neatly typed scripts and number investigation "findings" is another story of

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<sup>27</sup> The citation for the case files is as follows: POW Incident Investigation Case Files, 1950-1953; Office of the Provost Marshall; Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1; Headquarter, US Army Forces, Far East, 1952-1957; Record Group 554; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

what occurs inside these interrogation rooms and questioning before the board – a moment of encounter that involves negotiation, exchange, and power.

The basis for my methodology in approaching these investigation files is to approach them as “acts of writing.” In other words, rather than beginning with the finalized text, I am invested in gleaning what was at stake in the interrogation room for all parties involved – to have a sense of the gestures, actions, and choices made, and what was involved in the seemingly simple act of translation. It is a methodology that challenges the presupposed, predetermined authority of the U.S. military’s bureaucratic language.<sup>28</sup> A specific collapse takes place between the expressive meaning of language and the authority of law – language itself must be self-evident of authority. In many ways, I consider this project as an attempt to pry open this very collapse, as the interrogation room becomes not a site of scripted relations, but rather a historical, material experience where a myriad of actions and choices either inform or are elided by the transcription and the translation. The focus on the writing as an act allows me to place the activities of the interrogation room in dialogue or in tension with the activities that were occurring outside of the interrogation room – on the battlefield, within the barbed-wire fence, on the negotiating table at Panmunjom. The interrogation room in this story is not isolated, exceptional, or removed – it is entirely implicated within the larger matrix of social relations and dynamics of power.

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<sup>28</sup> “Language is the sovereign who, in a permanent state of exception, declares that there is nothing outside of language and that language is always beyond itself. The particular structure of law has its foundation in this presuppositional structure of human language,” writes Giorgio Agamben. “To speak [*dire*] is, in this sense, always to ‘speak the law,’ *ius dicere*.” Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, ed. Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery, *Meridian: Crossing Aesthetics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 21.

When we step out of the interrogation room, we also find that writing and its very material companion – paper – is surprisingly ubiquitous. Another reason for my insistence on starting the analysis with the *materiality* of writing comes from a constant economy of paper, subjecthood, and violence in this landscape of war, which is not to say that paper was literally in ready supply because it was, in fact, quite scarce, but the importance of paper was undeniable. The prisoners of war carried UN surrender leaflets with them; ROKA soldiers ripped up identification papers found on the POWs. When International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC] delegate Frederic Bieri visited the camp on Koje-do, he noted in his report that the POWs requested more copies of the 1949 Geneva Conventions to read and post in their compounds. The POWs also asked for more writing utensils, more Japanese-English dictionaries, and more paper. When thirty Korean communist prisoners of war managed to capture the U.S. camp commander of UNC Camp #1 on Koje Island in early March 1952, one of their first requests was for 1,000 sheets of paper. The prisoners of war wrote essays, petitions, letters, sending these to President Eisenhower, the United Nations, and the ICRC. Others kept their own writing projects – in Case #68, a twenty-four-year-old POW named Lee Pyong Man, who had been attending college at the outbreak of the war, complained that his “notebook that contained the communist history was confiscated” during a search of his compound. And in Case #64, 200 leaflets had been allegedly picked up by the ROKA soldiers around the POW compounds before the Liberation Day incident. Japanese American translators pored over thousands of pages of text, translating for the Allied Translator and Interpreter Service (ATIS). The interrogator translated, created, and published for circulation his/her own interrogation transcript. On the Korean peninsula, a bit further back from the front

lines, the interrogator processed the POW, and gave the POW the first significant marker of POW status – the white identification tag with the POW number written in with a thick black marker.<sup>29</sup>

The stakes were high regarding how the POWs navigated and negotiated their role – and violence was not held in abeyance, but rather was a constant presence. Their physical selves, their bodies, were always a part of the equation, and “life” became the thing held in abeyance. I have found that to write a history about the interrogation room, one must step outside of the interrogation room as much as possible. Oral history interviews I conducted with Japanese American former interrogators, Korean former prisoners of war, and also Korean civilians who had lived in the surroundings of the POW camps during the war – these narratives became the basis for my decision to center questions of subject-making vis-à-vis the institutionalization of warfare. I attempted to mobilize different people’s accounts not as reserves of “truth,” but instead as reserves of “flashes” of experience and subjectivity that often exceeded the frame of the interrogation room and the bureaucrat’s pen.

## **Chapter Outline**

The study is divided into two parts. The first part, “Part I: States of Emergency” provides the critical elements of what I call the “trans-Pacific” history of war in the mid-

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<sup>29</sup> For works that make writing as an act a central focus of the analysis, please see: JaHyun Kim. Haboush, *Epistolary Korea: letters in the communicative space of the Chosŏn, 1392-1910* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); Jean Hébrard and Rebecca J. Scott, “The Writings of Moïse (1898-1985): Birth, Life, and Death of a Narrative of the Great War,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44, no. 2 (April 1, 2002): 263-292; Rebecca J. Scott, “Reclaiming Gregoria’s Mule: The Meanings of Freedom in the Arimao and Caunao Valleys, Cienfuegos, Cuba, 1880-1899,” *Past & Present*, no. 170 (February 1, 2001). A particularly animated analysis of bureaucracy and the materiality of paper can be found in Ben Kafka, “The Demon of Writing: Paperwork, Public Safety, and the Reign of Terror,” *Representations*, Vol. 98, No. 1 (Spring 2007), 1-24.



twentieth century, bringing together a history of the template of the U.S. military interrogation room on the Korean peninsula during the occupation and a history of the cohort of Japanese American youth who became the U.S. military interrogators of the Korean War. The second part, “Part II: The POW, War, and the Global Order,” specifically deals with the prisoner of war issue of the Korean War, tracing the debate, controversies, and stakes through histories of the different interrogation rooms and camps built and constructed for the prisoners of war.

Chapter One, “Manufacturing ‘Liberation’ through Counterintelligence: Defining Politics through the Long “State of Emergency” of Occupation and War, 1945-1953,” is the story of how “Korea” became a test case of U.S. Cold War decolonization via military occupation. How had sovereignty been constructed upon the Korean peninsula in the wake of liberation from Japanese colonialism in 1945? I argue how the state of emergency declared by General MacArthur at the beginning of the occupation in 1945 became the legal structure informing the entire occupation apparatus itself, as the Counterintelligence Corps becomes the organization that determined the application of U.S. military ordinances, while language – or more specifically, slander – becomes the act most egregious to the U.S. military government, punishable by death. Against this background, the interrogation of POWs conducted by the CIC during the Korean War is analyzed regarding how the constructions of “language” during the occupation were now in play regarding the evaluation of POW’s “choices” during interrogation.

Chapter Two, “The Babel of Interrogation: A history of Japanese Americans from ‘Enemy Alien’ to ‘POW Interrogator,’ 1942-1953,” follows a cohort of Japanese Americans from their time in internment camps during World War II, experiences in

wartime Japan as a result of a “hostage exchange,” recruitment as interrogators in postwar Japan, and later draftees or volunteers working in POW interrogation during the Korean War. On the broader scale, this chapter analyzes the negotiations between two empires – the U.S. and Japan – vis-à-vis two products of 1945: racial liberalism as personified by the Japanese Americans, and decolonization as personified by the Korean peninsula. This chapter explores how ultimately interrogation encompasses the changing racial formations as the supposed product of racial liberalism – the Japanese American – must evaluate the reliability of the product of American military occupation and decolonization – the Korean. The interrogation room reveals dynamics of power not previously examined: the element of persuasion in interrogation rooms, as interrogators try to convince the interrogated to occupy a specific subject-position vis-à-vis the United States; the dependence of the U.S.’s legitimacy on the decolonized subject to articulate a desire for the U.S. form of political subjectivity and free-market capitalism; the negotiations on the part of Korean prisoners of war and also Japanese American interrogators that locates the encounter within longer historical frames of occupation, war, and imprisonment.

Chapter Three, “Making a Prisoner for War: Practices of War and Decolonization in the POW Controversy of the Korean War,” demonstrates how the Korean War effectively brought the 1949 Geneva Conventions to a crisis through the figure of the prisoner of war. The chapter begins on the ground with the construction of the largest POW camp run under U.S. military auspices – the camp on the island of Koje was to hold almost 170,000 prisoners of war. Charting and analyzing the different practices of violence within and without the barbed-wire fence of the camp, I illustrate the presence

of three different conflicts on the Korean peninsula in 1950 – a postcolonial civil war, a Cold War turn from rollback to containment, and an anti-imperial revolution – all three of which confounded the imaginaries of war embedded in the assumptions of the 1949 Geneva Conventions. As the battle raged on within the camps to determine a prisoner for each of these wars, the newly created Psychological Strategy Board created the proposal for voluntary repatriation as a way for the United States to lay claim on the principles of the Geneva Conventions in the face of decolonization. This chapter is both the story of the prisoner of war as a historical actor experiencing multiple wars, and the story of the prisoner of war as a discursive figure of warfare.

Chapter Four, “A Mutiny of Sovereignty: The kidnapping of Brigadier Francis Dodd by Korean communist prisoners of war,” examines the most explosive event within the POW controversy and camps during the Korean War – on May 7, 1952, thirty Korean communist prisoners of war kidnapped Brigadier Francis Dodd, the camp commander at Koje Island, the largest POW camp run under U.S. military auspices. This chapter moves from the negotiating tents at Panmunjom to Compound 76 at United Nations Command Camp #1 on the island of Koje. A close reading and microhistorical study of the Panmunjom negotiations over POWs and the Dodd incident itself reveal that the conversation and conflict effectively revolved around the structural legacies of the 1945 division of Korea at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and the subsequent foreign occupations on the peninsula by the United States and the Soviet Union. The stakes were about the meanings of effective postcolonial liberation and sovereignty as the legitimacy of the 1948 elections held in the north and south respectively was forced onto the table of war by both the POWs at Koje and the negotiators at Panmunjom. The chapter is also

simultaneously about the fashioning of the “fanatic Oriental Communist” and the development of the “uncontested control” policy within the U.S. camp command, as a marked shift in military practices of violence takes place within the camp on Koje Island.

Chapter Five, “An ‘Experiment in Neutrality’ for Decolonization: The POW, India, and the Global Geopolitics of the Unending Korean War,” focuses on the final iterations of the POW camp and interrogation room created during the Korean War – in the form of the repatriation POW camp and explanation rooms at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. The debate over POW repatriation at the armistice negotiation table only subsided when three agreements were made: 1) the POWs would be given “explanations” on why they should repatriate or not by representatives of both the southern Republic of Korea and the northern Democratic People’s Republic of Korea; 2) there would be an overseeing committee made up of representatives from Swiss, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, and Poland – with a representative from India presiding over this “neutral nations repatriation” oversight committee; 3) the POW would have a third option aside from North and South Korea – they could choose a “neutral country,” although the country itself had not been determined. This chapter examines the multiple imaginaries of possible decolonized futures present at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel in 1953, which came out in full force in the struggles over defining, practicing, and even embodying “neutrality” at a site that was also the frontline of the global Cold War, the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Moving from inside the explanation rooms to tracing the journeys of seventy-six Korean prisoners of war who had chosen a “neutral country,” this chapter tells the story of diasporic imaginings of decolonization, as POWs eventually find their way to Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, and India.

What follows is a story about the Korean War that breaks from the old narratives of the Cold War and the civil war. In this story, the notions of war, sovereignty, and the global order are not merely the stuff of conversations, policy-making, and backroom negotiations. Instead, it is the thousands upon thousands of human encounters – sometimes over a military negotiating table, sometimes in front of the barrel of a gun, other times inside an interrogation room - that have become the terrain upon which people must struggle for the legitimacy of their ideas. The site of this struggle is at once bigger and smaller than the usual “Korea” serving simply as the backdrop for the war in most Cold War histories; the decisions of the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the Indian government are implicated in the choices made by Korean prisoners of war, Japanese American interrogators, and American military personnel in the POW camps and interrogation rooms of the war. It is a tale of the Korean War where global history converges with the microhistorical encounter.

This story of the Korean War begins with the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, but with a decided twist. This story has two beginnings, in fact. One begins in the year 1946 with a Korean peasant farmer named Sung Sum Chang and his plot of land located within the area of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. The other beginning takes place in the year 1942 with a young Japanese American boy named Sam Miyamoto living in southern California at the time of President Roosevelt’s “Day of Infamy” speech after Pearl Harbor. These two beginnings bring together two projects of the twentieth-century within the same field of vision – war-making and formal decolonization – with which to examine the implications and significance of the Korean War. The 38<sup>th</sup> parallel in this story is more than a border; it is

someone's land, an ideological marker, and even now, a reminder of the most pressing questions of modern history – how to end a war and how to achieve decolonization.

*Part I: States of Emergency*

**Chapter One**

**Manufacturing “Liberation” through Counterintelligence:  
Defining Politics through the Long “State of Emergency” of Occupation and War,  
1945-1953**

During April 1946, the U.S. Counterintelligence Corps [CIC] was concerned about a Korean farmer named Sung Sum Chang and his home, which was in the village of San Su Nai Bi in the province of Mak Chang Dong – or, in other words, the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.<sup>30</sup> According to a CIC intelligence report dated April 19, 1946, Chang had posted a sign over his house that declared in Korean, English, and Russian: “Beyond this house is South Korea.” Two groups of visitors came to Chang’s home after he put up the sign. The first group consisted of a soldier from the Soviet Union and four north Korea soldiers. Stopping in front of Chang’s home, this group called out to Chang, who was working in his fields, farming. “Hearing their call,” narrated the report, “[Chang] went to the house and the Russians asked him, Why are you taking this American rice ration? Don’t you know they are going to take over Korean property in turn for the rice they give you?” At an unspecified time later, a group consisting of a U.S. CIC corps member and

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<sup>30</sup> I have given the details and spelling of Sung Sum Chang’s home according to what this particular G-2 weekly summary has provided (see footnote below). However, according to today’s spelling and administrative unit breakdown, Chang’s home is not located in the currently existing 38<sup>th</sup> parallel: Sangsunae-ri, Nam-myeon, Inje-gun, Gangwon-do, Republic of Korea. The 1945 38<sup>th</sup> parallel had been further south than the current one.

south Korean soldiers/translators visited Chang to ask him to verify and provide details of this previous conversation with the Russian and North Korean soldiers.<sup>31</sup>

This brief yet detailed report of the CIC focused not on the usual episodes of sporadic shooting or shouting matches between various military units stationed at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, but rather on specific episodes of conversation between a Korean peasant farmer and different military troops. The tri-lingual sign above Chang's home, the conversation about rice rations and property, and the later questioning about the previous conversation – all three acts of language were the focus of the CIC report. Military troops were periodically engaged in contests over the proper demarcation of an abstract boundary – the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel – using the threat of gunfire and violence. In the case of Chang and his home, military troops and intelligence officers waged their battle over Chang himself with language – and also the threat of possible violence. Just as the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was difficult to discern, the political leanings of Koreans like Chang were a source of great anxiety for the U.S. occupation military forces: What had the Russians and North Korean soldiers said to Chang? How had Chang replied to them? Chang's own trilingual sign was a clear attempt on Chang's part to pre-empt any ambiguity – however, the CIC apparently still found it unnerving that Russian and North Korean soldiers had engaged Chang in conversation so casually.

The extent to which the U.S. CIC would go to ascertain what questions the Russian and North Korean soldiers had asked a Korean peasant farmer reveals, in turn, the degree to which the individual Korean subject was a source of anxiety, confusion, and

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<sup>31</sup> Mi kunjǒnggi chǒngbo charyojip: CIC (Pangch'ǒptae) pogosǒ, 1945.9-1949.1 (Kangwǒn-do Ch'unch'ǒn-si : Hallim Taehakkyo Asia Munhwa Yǒn'guso, 1995), Volume 1, report dated April 19, 1946 included in 971<sup>st</sup> CounterIntelligence Corps Detachment Annual Progress Report for 1947, 331. [hereafter *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*]



frustration for the U.S. occupation forces – one that reflected the peculiar nature of U.S. occupation on the Korean peninsula. In 1945, U.S. military officials arrived on the Korean peninsula to effect “liberation” through military occupation. What kind of subject was the Korean individual? Was Chang a “liberated” subject, and how did one treat a “liberated” subject? Whom did he consider to be his primary authority? Did he recognize U.S. military authority? Chang’s trilingual sign – “Beyond this house is South Korea” – demonstrated a recognition of the politics in the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, but the concern on the part of the CIC authorities about whether or not a mere conversation with Russian and North Korean soldiers could influence Chang – or other Koreans – demonstrated an uncertainty about whether or not Koreans fundamentally respected the authority of the U.S. military government.

This chapter plots out a different analytical terrain on which to explore the question of how an “occupation of liberation” ended in a “war of intervention.” In 1945, the U.S. state had deemed the Korean people as liberated, but not independent, and in 1950, the U.S. entered a war dubbed a “police action” against a nation-state it did not officially recognize. The Korean peninsula became the experimental testing ground for a new conception of “occupation” and also “war” in the face of a movement that later proved to be much bigger than U.S. hegemonic projects themselves – decolonization.

Land, rice, and the question of distribution – this triad of concerns lay at the heart of the post-liberation political landscape on the Korean peninsula. Peasant farmers like Sung Sum Chang were a part of what scholar Bruce Cumings has called “the most numerous of the Korean classes and the class that gave the liberation period its dual

characteristics of extensive participation and widespread resistance.”<sup>32</sup> Under Japanese colonial rule, land and labor had become commodified. Japanese colonialism had both forcibly moved Korean peasants into industrial labor and vastly increased the percentage of land tenancy among the peasants. After August 15, 1945, a mass movement in Manchuria and Japan began as Koreans returned to villages in Korea. In conjunction with this movement of people, Korean peasants themselves began organizing ways to redistribute land and to dismantle colonial structures.<sup>33</sup> “Liberation” – the definition, the achievement, the process – hinged upon these very questions of subsistence, sustenance, and self-governance. It was this very human drama of decolonization and social revolution into which the U.S. military government officials entered – and their arrival was markedly late also. August 15, 1945 had marked the beginning of liberation from Japanese colonialism – September 9, 1945 was the day U.S. Army officials arrived at the port of Pusan to commence the military occupation of the southern half of Korea.<sup>34</sup>

This chapter traces a history of the U.S. military occupation by examining how Koreans and Americans were engaged in a struggle over claims to sovereignty in the wake of 1945. The chapter begins with the U.S. military’s initial proclamations to the Korean populace, announcing the start of the occupation as essentially a “state of emergency.” I contend that the “state of emergency” fashioned by the U.S. military government created not a total, but rather a specific suspension – one that strategically aimed to undermine the possible claims by Korean political groups upon sovereign

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<sup>32</sup> Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, v. 1: Studies of the East Asian Institute, Columbia University (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, c1981-c1990), xxii.

<sup>33</sup> Bruce Cumings discusses this mass movement’s impact on the demographics and thus the political potentialities of the southern half of the peninsula in *Origins of the Korean War*, volume I.

<sup>34</sup> For work on U.S. policies towards Korea before and after liberation, see Chŏng Yong-uk, *Haebang chŏnhu Miguk ūi Taehan chŏngchaek: kwado chŏngbu kusang kwa chungganpa chŏngchaek ūl chungsim ūro* (Sŏul : Sŏul Taehakkyo Ch’ulp’anbu, 2003).

legitimacy to the basic questions over land, rice, and distribution. An analysis of the myriad legal codes, ordinances, and orders issued by the United States Army Military Government [USAMGIK] reveals an occupation force that was profoundly anxious about its own dearth of legitimacy on the ground – and thus, the USAMGIK was extraordinarily concerned with the individual Korean person. Unable to control effectively the actions and activities of the Korean people, the U.S. military government began to assert its control over defining the parameters of the political public sphere. Establishing an “occupation of liberation” necessitated the invention of a language that restricted “undesirable” behavior on the part of the decolonized Korean subject – and soon, it was language practice itself that became the most strategically constrained and criminalized by the U.S. occupation.

From the “occupation of liberation” through the later “war of intervention,” a single question was a common thread through this period – what constituted legitimate politics on the Korean peninsula, and who would determine its legitimacy? It is around this central question that we must begin our analysis of how the occupation and subsequent war attempted to provide answers. In order to glean the history of the struggles around this question of politics, I analyze the contested nature of the political public sphere in post-1945 Korea through different acts of language enacted by the U.S. military government, Korean political groups, and the mediating power of the U.S. military intelligence units, namely the Counterintelligence Corps [CIC]. The military intelligence branch of the U.S. Army – otherwise known as “G-2” – played a critical role in the interpretation and application of the “state of emergency” on the ground. Mere criminalization via codes and speeches left U.S. power in the realm of the theoretical and

rhetorical. An occupation of liberation required apparatuses that could establish the lines of legitimacy and transgression on the ground. This was the function of the Counterintelligence Corps; this chapter examines not just the intelligence gathering function of the CIC , but also its more essential and strategic project of “knowing” the Korean individual subject.

Language itself became the realm of concern to the CIC, and as it established lines of communication, alliances, and patronage locally, the authority and power of the CIC grew, as did the authority and police power of the USAMGIK. The aura of confidence in asserting a complete knowledge of the internal will and desires of the Korean people was painted by the CIC, one that, I argue, was entirely contingent and dependent upon a close, working relationship with an extreme rightist youth group – the North West Young Men’s Alliance [NWyMA]. The “professionalization” of the CIC in Korea consisted of rather paradoxical labor. The work of the CIC provided the USAMGIK a certitude in its claims about the political landscape, but this certitude came by framing the political dynamics and activities on the ground as a “war of espionage.” The transgression on the part of Koreans did not lie in acts of violence but rather in their acts of intent. All Koreans were rendered essentially “suspicious” under this rubric, and the U.S. military government reserved the right to hold all political claims in abeyance. Sovereignty, according to the model of “occupation of liberation” created by the U.S. military government, was something for the U.S. military government to mete out to the Korean population.

When the Counterintelligence Corps began their work again on the Korean peninsula in 1950 under the auspices of a war of intervention, they quickly re-

encountered what the U.S. military occupation had rendered. In the month of February in 1951, towards the close of the first year of the Korean War, the Masan Sub-Detachment of the 704<sup>th</sup> CIC Detachment learned of “approximately thirty Korean Nationals posing as members of a G2 Office in Masan.”<sup>35</sup> It was perhaps startling to learn that these Koreans had been effectively running a “G2 office” ever since the month of October in 1950. When questioned by the CIC on whether or not they knew about the G2 office, the Masan Police replied that “they believed that the organization was authorized by the United Nations forces.” The presence of U.S. and UN forces on the peninsula had provided the possibility to imagine a particular multiply layered sovereignty – the “war” had triggered the multiple “states of emergency” as had been practices during the U.S. occupation, and as other scholars would also argue, throughout the 1948 through 1950 years also under the Syngman Rhee regime.

This Masan G2 case was a double-edged sword for the CIC regarding the legacies of U.S. military intelligence work on the Korean peninsula. The case demonstrated that the U.S. military had indeed created a sovereign, exceptional plane of activity and authority on the ground in Korea; however, at the same time, it also demonstrated that the Korean people did not necessarily consider it sacred or inviolable. The Counterintelligence Corps later in their retrospective history of the CIC called the Korean War simply an extension of a war they had already been waging during the U.S. occupation period – the “war of espionage.” The contradictions undergirding the U.S. occupation period were both unresolved and constantly surfacing.

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<sup>35</sup> Migun CIC chŏngbo pogosŏ : RG 319 Office of the Chief of Military history. (Sŏul : Chungang Ilbo Hyŏndaesa Yŏn’guso, 1996), Volume 2; “Korean War: CI Activities,” Investigative Records Repository (IRR), Box #99/Case #ZF010482. Agent Report: Masan G2 Office, dated 14 March 1951. [hereafter *CIC RG319*]

In histories of the Korean War, the history of struggles over the meanings of decolonization on the peninsula has been subsumed by the Cold War frame manifested by the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Much of the literature on the Korean War either takes the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel for granted, or charts the character of the war primarily as movement over the physical terrain, with the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel highlighted in the center of the Korean peninsula. By charting out the landscape of “states of emergency,” which focused the question of legitimacy on the individual Korean subject, I challenge the historical primacy scholars have granted to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel in narratives of the Korean War. In the latter half of the chapter, I examine the CIC’s return to the Korean peninsula with the outbreak of the Korean War, and argue that an understanding of the relationship rendered between language, interrogation, and the political sphere by the U.S. military government during the post-1945 occupation is crucial to understanding the dynamics of the prisoner of war camps of the Korean War. In other words, the question of the political had a long, continuous history through the occupation years and even in the activities behind the barbed-wire fences of the U.S.-controlled POW camps of the war.

### **“I Am Government”: Sovereignty, Authority, and Liberation**

Three hundred thousand leaflets poured out from the sky over the southern part of the Korean peninsula from September 1 to 5, 1945. U.S. Commanding General John Hodge, appointed by MacArthur to command the military occupation of Korea, had ordered the airforce to distribute these leaflets in advance warning of the occupation to the Korean people. The leaflet, addressed “To the People of Korea,” began as follows:

The armed forces of the United States will soon arrive in Korea for the purpose of receiving the surrender of the Japanese forces, enforcing the

terms of surrender, and insuring the orderly administration and rehabilitation of the country. These missions will be carried out with a firm hand, but with a hand that will be guided by a nation whose long heritage of democracy has fostered a kindly feeling for peoples less fortunate. How well and how rapidly these tasks are carried out will depend on the Koreans themselves.”<sup>36</sup>

A subsequent Proclamation Number Two was issued on September 7, 1945 – clearly, there was a concern about how the Koreans might receive the U.S. occupiers. This time it was MacArthur who addressed the “People of Korea.” Invoking his position “as Commander-in-Chief, United States Army Forces, Pacific,” he proclaimed the following:

Any Person Who:

Violates the provision of the Instrument of Surrender, or any proclamation, order, or directive given under the authority of the Commander-in-Chief, United States Army Forces, Pacific, or does any act to the prejudice of good order or the life, safety, or security of the persons or property of the United States or its Allies, or does any act calculated to disturb public peace and order, or prevent the administration of justice, or willfully does any act hostile to the Allied forces, shall, upon conviction by a military Occupation Court, suffer death or such other punishment as the Court may determine.<sup>37</sup>

This pair of Proclamations would become a part of the slender file of documents given to the U.S. military personnel arriving on the Korean peninsula on September 9, 1945 to guide them through inventing a “military occupation” in Korea. “[E]ach officer did receive a copy of the Cairo Declaration, of MacArthur’s three proclamations to the Korean people, of the secret operational military government plan that had been hastily improvised by a joint-staff committee of the XXIV Corps and the Seventh Fleets, and of those dozen or more ordinances, general orders, and notices thus far printed by Military

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<sup>36</sup> Mi Kunjǒngch’ǒng kwanbo: Official gazette, United States Army Military Government in Korea (Sǒul: Wonju Munhwasa), Proclamation No. 1. [hereafter *Official gazette*]

<sup>37</sup> *Official gazette*, Proclamation No. 2.

Government.”<sup>38</sup> These Proclamations heralded – and positioned – the U.S. occupation of Korea as a form of rule between benevolence and death. In the most fundamental sense, these Proclamations introduced the U.S. military forces to the Korean people – it was a twinned self-introduction of the nature of rule that would be enacted on the peninsula.

Both Proclamations also belied a concern about the behavior and reactions of the Korean people to the U.S. military forces, as benevolence and death were meted out as the parameters for reward and discipline within the U.S. occupation. And on September 10, 1945, the Korean populace quickly made it known to the U.S. occupation officials that they also had ideas about what the U.S. military occupation should look like as they filled the streets of the capital city, Seoul, to protest the first decision announced by the U.S. military occupation authorities: the “United States Army orders leaving temporarily in office Japanese overlords who have ruled the little empire for thirty-five years.” Demonstrations were extensive, and Associated Press journalists noted that the Koreans had “plastered walls with posters of protest” – the Koreans were speaking back to the U.S. military forces through these writings that took up public space in the capital. “Only yesterday thousands of Koreans massed at the palace grounds of the Governor General, Noboyuki Abe,” commented the journalists, “and roared their approval as the hated ensign of Japan was hauled down.”<sup>39</sup> However, Abe and administrative officials were to be maintained in their positions, and as the *Chicago Daily Tribune* described, “The hopes of the Koreans that independence was immediately at hand were dashed[.]”<sup>40</sup> Or, as the

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<sup>38</sup> E. Grant Meade, *American Military Government in Korea* (New York: King’s Crown Press, 1951), 67.

<sup>39</sup> Associated Press Article, “Koreans March in Protest Against Keeping Japanese; Officials in Washington Amazed at Army Action – State Department Disclaims Any Part in Move – MacArthur Bars Disorder,” *The New York Times*, September 11, 1945.

<sup>40</sup> “Hodge Quiets Koreans’ Fear Japs will Stay: ‘I Am Government,’ He Tells Them,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 11, 1945.



U.S. military intelligence G-2 office reports observed, “The general feeling of the Korean people seemed to be that they had at last been liberated, and they were now free to proceed with the organization of the Korean government under direction of the occupation forces. When it was announced that the Japanese government would remain in office there was a violent denunciation of the policy by Koreans professing to be leaders in the various political movements.”<sup>41</sup>

Confronted by this public mass protest on the streets of Seoul, Lieutenant General John R. Hodge, the commander of the XXIV U.S. Army Corps, declared in a press conference, “In effect, *I am the Korean government* during the transition period. [...] Abe will take orders. I am making use of the Japanese governmental machinery because it is the most efficient way of operating now.”(my italics) By declaring himself the sovereign, where one person of the American military occupation forces could embody the authority of the Korean government (at least south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel), Hodge, the U.S. Army commander, effectively suspended both Korean claims to independence and also Japanese ties to autonomous decision-making. Hodge’s assertion that he was the “Korean government” was an attempt to wrest away possible authority from the masses in the streets, but it also belied an unsettled anxiety on the part of the U.S. military authorities – such an utterance put forth the legitimate authority of the U.S. Army as assumed, as *a priori*, but as the posters, parades, and clamoring press attested, authority was anything but assumed in this moment.<sup>42</sup> The question of what liberation would look

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<sup>41</sup> G-2 Periodic Report /United States Army Forces in Korea. Headquarters. G-2. 1945-1948 (Kangwŏn-do Ch’unch’ŏn-si : Hallim Taehakkyo Asia Munhwa Yŏn’guso); report dated September 12, 1945.

<sup>42</sup> I draw here upon Derrida’s notion of the “mystical foundation” of authority. Please see Jacques Derrida, “Force of Law: The ‘Mystical Foundation of Authority’” in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, eds. Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld, David Carlson (New York: Routledge, 1992). The particular analysis of Montaigne is applicable to the situation under analysis in this study:

like under U.S. military occupation was at stake, and the answer to that question was still uncertain.

Many more proclamations, declarations, and ordinances would be issued, and many more directives to the press would be given in the coming months. Charting the story of these “acts of language” on the part of the U.S. military authority, I argue, also allows to chart the construction – albeit unwieldy at times – of the “state of emergency” that was called “military occupation” in Korea. The elements of the “state of emergency” were a crucial aspect in understanding the particulars of the U.S. military occupation of Korea. At the end of World War II, the United States had set up “military governments” all throughout the globe – Germany, Italy, Austria, France, Japan, Saipan, Tinian, Guam, the Philippines, and Korea. Korea, in particular, presented a rather different quandary than the other settings for U.S. military government: military occupation occurs on the basis that one is occupying enemy territory; however, with Korea, the U.S. would be occupying a former colony of an Axis power – Japan. How did one “occupy” a former colony of a wartime “enemy” who had surrendered unconditionally? For the group of “all professional soldiers and none with any training or experience in civil affairs” who arrived on the Korean peninsula to begin the occupation, the Cairo Declaration “provided the only statement of high policy available at the time, the single sentence: ‘The aforesaid three great powers, mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined

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“And so laws keep up their good standing, not because they are just, but because they are laws: that is the mystical foundation of their authority, they have no other....Anyone who obeys them because they are just is not obeying them the way he ought to.”

*Here Montaigne is clearly distinguishing laws, that is to say droit, from justice. The justice of law, justice of law is not justice. Laws are not just as laws. One obeys them not because they are just but because they have authority. (12)*

that in *due course* Korea shall become free and independent.”<sup>43</sup> Or in other words, as according to the *History of the United States Armed Forces in Korea* [HUSAFIK], “Koreans were to be treated as liberated people, but liberation was to be given gradually.”<sup>44</sup> The period of military occupation was to be one of granting, one of becoming, and one of suspension. The space of the “state of emergency” was concomitant with the project of “decolonization” as envisioned by the Western imperial and colonial powers – and the United States. The history of the U.S. occupation of Korea – and its particular insistence on the “state of emergency” - must be placed within a much longer history of mandates, trusteeships, and decolonization. This main characteristic is what makes the element of the “state of emergency” so crucial to our analysis.

On November 2, 1945 when Ordinance No. 21 was published by the U.S. military, it became clear that the “suspension” heralded by the “state of emergency” espoused by U.S. military officials was not a suspension or break from Japanese colonial rule per se:

Until further ordered, and except as previously repealed or abolished, all laws which were in force, regulations, orders, notices or other documents issued by any former government of Korea having the force of law on 9 August 1945 will continue in full force and effect until repealed by express order of the Military Government of Korea.<sup>45</sup>

The text of the ordinance was essentially specifying what was being “suspended” during the state of emergency – and essentially, it was not Japanese colonial law or the force of law that was suspended or eradicated. What was suspended was any competing claim to

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<sup>43</sup> Philip H. Taylor, “Military Government Experience in Korea; Part I; Administration and Operation of Military Government in Korea,” in *American Experiences in Military Government in World War II*, ed. by Carl Friedrich (New York: Rinehart, 1948), 357.

<sup>44</sup> *History of the United States Armed Forces in Korea* (United States, Far East Command, Published in 1948). Part III: Chapter 1, “Creating Military Government,” 11. [hereafter *HUSAFIK*]

<sup>45</sup> *Official gazette*, Ordinance 21.

the “force of law.” Legitimacy was something to be granted by the American forces. Sovereignty and self-determination were promised, and on the basis of that promise Ordinance No. 21 was clearly an attempt to render the authority of the U.S. military government as assumed – as the sovereign. In this early phase of the occupation, the U.S. military government was not interested in creating a normative legal framework for state-building, but rather much more concerned about holding competing claims to the “force of law” in abeyance, as that became the object supposedly in the hands of the USAMGIK that would then be granted as Korea gains independence.

The USAMGIK also held in abeyance, along with Korean claims to sovereign power, a legally legible status of subjecthood for Koreans. To quote from the introduction to the Selected Legal Opinions compilation from the U.S. occupation, “Since Korea had been a part of the Japanese empire until the surrender of the Japanese and the latter’s sovereignty over Korea had been terminated by the Potsdam Declaration of July 1945, in fact, Koreans ceased to be Japanese nationals. Korea being still a state in the making, it became necessary to devise a test and definition of Korean nationality[.]”<sup>46</sup> As the HUSAFIK stated in retrospect, “Technically, according to international law, until a peace treaty was signed, all Koreans were subjects of the Japanese Empire. It was suggested by Foreign Affairs that the JCS Directive be changed so that Koreans at least need not be considered enemy aliens, but there was no such thing as Korean citizenship, and there could not be until Korea was recognized as a free and independent sovereign power.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Migunjŏnggi Chŏngbo Charyojip: Pŏmmuguk Sabŏppŭi Pŏphaesŏk Pogosŏ, Selected legal opinions of the Department of Justice, United States Army Military Government in Korea : opinions rendered in the role of legal adviser to the military government of Korea, and covering a period from March 1946, to August 1948 (Seoul, Korea : Department of Justice, Headquarters, United States Army Military Government in Korea, 1948; reprint, Kangwon-do Ch`unch`on-si : Hallim Taehakkyo Asia Munhwa Yonguso, 1997), 5. [hereafter *Selected Legal Opinions*]

<sup>47</sup> HUSAFIK, Foreign Affairs Section – History 1, 43.

Or in other words, “The Koreans were to be treated as liberated people, yet the liberation was to be accomplished gradually.”<sup>48</sup> The subjecthood of the Korean people and their claims to self-governance were the target of the state of emergency during the U.S. occupation – Japanese colonialism itself, its manufactured force of law, its administrative and police network systems, its massively overgrown and ponderous bureaucracy, all of these would continue under the “guidance” of the U.S. forces as decolonization became more a process of deferral than state-building.

Inventing the “occupation” of Korea did not merely involve creating a certain framework for the occupation activities; in fact, the most crucial aspect of “occupation” for the U.S. military authorities was claiming the authority of “I am the Korean government” – the “force of law” as expressed by a sovereign authority. To chart the story of the U.S. occupation is to chart the construction of a “state of emergency” as the years between 1945 and 1948 see a series of declarations of emergency. In Opinion Number 239 dated 19 April 1946, the legal advisor bureau to the USAMGIK recognized that Proclamation No. 2 issued at the beginning of the occupation heralded a “state of emergency” on the Korean peninsula; however, the very same legal advisors went on to note that if the power of “state of emergency” was stretched or applied too widely or broadly in “Mother Hubbard” style, then the force of law upon which the “state of emergency” was based will no longer retain its force. In other words, as the legal advisor bureau astutely observed, the “state of emergency” frame for U.S. occupation did not necessarily immediately give license for absolute power over matters on the peninsula – the “state of emergency” would have to be created, shifted, and reinvented as a project of

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<sup>48</sup> HUSAFIK, Part III, Chapter 1, “Creating Military Government,” 11.

very particular politics vis-à-vis activities on the ground that would lead, in due course, to Korean independence and sovereignty.<sup>49</sup>

U.S. military authority over the occupation on the southern half of the Korean peninsula was one created not only through the display of force with a military presence, but also through a great deal of paper – ordinances, proclamations, and published speeches. However, as the 300,000 papers from the September 1945 airbombing fell to the ground and as the ordinances issued by the U.S. military were posted to walls throughout Seoul and distributed to offices throughout the countryside, two problems became apparent immediately: first, it was not clear whether or not Koreans were reading these publications, and if they were, how they interpreting them. The U.S. military government was having a crisis in readership, so to speak - if authority speaks, it only has authority because someone is listening. A G-2 Weekly Summary dated 9 October 1945 stated, “Civilians interviewed state that the proclamations issued by the US occupation forces reach only a few of the people. Some of these orders have been misunderstood because civilians are not able to either read or interpret the proclamations.”<sup>50</sup> And although MacArthur had declared English to be the official language of the U.S. occupation – the question of reception was not resolved. The second problem was that those who were indeed reading and following the different statements and proclamations issued by the U.S. military authorities were issuing their own statements on paper – “Posters and pamphlets continue to appear in INCH’ON and SEOUL criticizing and denouncing the U.S. Army occupational policy in KOREA. [...] These writings are identified with different radical political parties associated with the Communistic

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<sup>49</sup> *Selected Legal Opinions*, Opinion #239.

<sup>50</sup> G-2 Weekly, dated 9 October 1945, 74.

group.”<sup>51</sup> The assertion of sovereign authority through the act of language, an utterance of *a priori* power, was being challenged by acts of language by the Koreans themselves.

Much to the chagrin of the U.S. military forces, Koreans had formed their own ideas about how the occupation should be carried out. An earlier intelligence report in JANIS 75, “which had been the chief source of basic intelligence upon which the XXIV Corps staff had to depend in drawing up the ‘Baker’ plans,” noted the following about the Korean people’s possible reactions to U.S. occupation:

[The Korean people] would prefer initial inefficiencies of administrative inexperience to the danger of extended control...[they] would favor an international regime rather than one of a single nation...Korean cooperation [is] likely to be proportioned to Korean belief in the strictly temporary and short terms nature of such control...Appointment of a non-Korean official to a post for which a Korean is available, however, may have an unfavorable effect on public opinion.<sup>52</sup>

In his work reflecting upon the U.S. military government’s work, activities, and policies in the first year of occupation, Edward Grant Meade, himself a participant in the U.S. military government, noted that there was indeed a “*de facto* government” on the Korean peninsula even before the arrival of the American army personnel in early September 1945.<sup>53</sup> This government was called the People’s Republic of Korea (Chosen In Min King Hwa Kuk). The development of this organization began with the immediate pre-liberation period, when the governing Japanese officials, predicting a possible surrender to the more physically near military forces of the Soviet Union, looked for Koreans to contain order when the Japanese surrendered. Needing someone who held legitimacy in the eyes of the Korean peasant masses especially, the Japanese officials chose Lyuh Woo

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<sup>51</sup> G-2 Weekly, dated 23 October 45, 109

<sup>52</sup> HUSFIK, Part II, Chapter II, “Setting up a National Government, Provincial Administration,” 10.

<sup>53</sup> Meade, *American Military Government in Korea*, 72.

Hyun,<sup>54</sup> a central leftist with a deep history of involvement with the independence organizing and movement in Shanghai and founder of the Korean Restoration Brotherhood, who accepted the offer.<sup>55</sup> Under Lyuh, the Committee of Preparation for Korean Independence coalesced into existence, each province holding its own committee. In preparation for the arrival of the U.S. troops on September 9, 1945, the Committee of Preparation for Korean Independence convened in the capital city of Seoul, with the representatives who were elected in the prior provincial assemblies. On September 6, 1945, the “delegates formed a national government with jurisdiction over all of Korea.”<sup>56</sup> The People’s Republic articulated and developed its platform based on five elements: 1) unification of different political groups, 2) a land distribution program in which current tenants could afford to buy their farms, 3) the purging of collaborators and Japanese from official positions, 4) extension of suffrage across the population, 5) minimization of government monopoly. It was a platform on which to begin the restructuring of postwar liberated Korea.

Koreans had formed People’s Committees all throughout southern Korea. After August 15, 1945, members of the People’s Committees, who would later become part of what would be called the People’s Republic, had stepped in to help manage and organize the rice collection and food stock in the midst of Japanese officials fleeing the peninsula. “After the Koreans drove the Japanese police out [the KPR leaders] took over the rice

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<sup>54</sup> “Lyuh Woo Hyun” is the spelling used by the USAMGIK during the occupation. In McCune-Reischauer format, his name would be as follows: Yŏ Unhyŏng.

<sup>55</sup> G-2 Weekly, Vol. 1, report dated 25 September 1945. This particular report scrutinizes and narrates Lyuh’s history, and notes that Lyuh only accepted the Japanese colonial state’s offer “under the following conditions: 1) The food for the coming three months should be guaranteed; 2) Political prisoners should be released; 3) Freedom of the press and speech should be guaranteed; 4) There should be no mobilization of the students for maintenance of peace; and 5) No interference from the Japanese.”

<sup>56</sup> Meade, *American Military Government in Korea*, 59.



collection machinery and were operating it successfully when the Americans arrived.”<sup>57</sup>

The question of land, rice, and distribution were not simply abstract mechanisms for state-building for the majority of Koreans – it was immediate and material. In 1945, the average caloric content of the Korean diet had dropped to between 1000 and 1800 calories a day from the prewar average of “approximately 2077 a day,” which was “little more than a slow starvation diet,” according to the HUSAFIK.<sup>58</sup> When we look at the picture of land tenancy in 1945 provided by historian Bruce Cumings, we can see the problems underlying the difficulty in obtaining fundamental means of subsistence: “[A]bout 80 out of every 100 Korean farmers were tenants or semi-tenants.” And this situation had resulted from the rapid increases in tenancy under Japanese colonial rule.<sup>59</sup> A decolonized Korea would need to address these fundamental issues, and the People’s Committees had begun to do so.

Much anxiety surrounded these Korean peasant “masses” on the part of the U.S. intelligence sections. “The population of Korea is almost wholly in the lower social scale,” observed U.S. military intelligence personnel in a weekly summary dated 23 October 1945. “It consists mainly of peasants and laborers whose lot has been bad from any standard. In any form of popular government this is the class of people who will swing an election. This is the class which every political party will woo and in which the radicals will find the most fertile ground.”<sup>60</sup> In a “Memorandum to Public Safety Officer” dated November 7, 1945, an assistant public safety officer I made the following

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<sup>57</sup> HUSAFIK, Vol. 3, Chapter 4, Part I, 50. (Also quoted in Cumings, *Origins*, Volume I, 201-202)

<sup>58</sup> HUSAFIK, Part III, Chapter III, “American Arrival,” 89.

<sup>59</sup> Cumings, *Origins*, Volume 1, 420. “From 1914 to 1938, the total number of famers increased 11 percent but the number of tenants increased 66 percent. During the same period the proportion of tenants to the total number of farm households increased from 35 to 53 percent.”

<sup>60</sup> G-2 Weekly, dated 23 October 1945, 120.

observation regarding the People's Committee in his particular area of leftist Koksong and rightist Yongkwang:

My further opinion is that the People's Committee in the more rural districts is well organized and has a large and influential membership....they do not appear to be gangsters, hoodlums or [a] "bad element" organization, but on the contrary a representative group of Korean people.<sup>61</sup>

The fact that this assistant public safety officer had to insist that the People's Committee in his region were not "gangsters" or "hoodlums" clearly indicates how within the first two months of the U.S. military's arrival on the peninsula, the higher level officials retained a suspicion of these mass, peasant-based political organizations. Meade himself addresses this characterization of the People's Committees directly in his book:

Charges of radical tendencies leveled against many of the leaders can be easily substantiated, but they merit further explanation. The original heads of the movement were, for the most part, respected men of the community, who had little or no association with either the Japanese administration or the organized Korean underground movements. [...] The members of the underground, on the other hand, were acutely aware of the people's desires and attitudes and allowed their knowledge of the public mind to mold their politics. If the People's Republic exhibited radical tendencies, it only reflected with reasonable accuracy the views of the Korean majority."<sup>62</sup>

Meade quite pointedly remarked on the fact that many of the People's Committees leaders were men who did not have experiences prior to liberation that could be easily labeled as either "rightist" or "leftist." If on a certain level the People's Republic did indeed "[reflect] with reasonable accuracy the views of the Korean majority," why within a matter of less than two months had the U.S. military occupation forces begun to dismiss the "People's Republic" as – to take the words of the afore-quoted assistant public safety officer – "gangsters, hoodlums or [a] 'bad element' organization"?

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<sup>61</sup> Quote is from Meade's *American Military Government in Korea*, 188.

<sup>62</sup> Meade, *American Military Government in Korea*, 72.

Scholars have argued that the Cold War anti-communist stance and usual disregard for grassroots, popular politics contributed greatly to the harsh repression of the People's Republic and the general political left in south Korea during U.S. occupation.<sup>63</sup> While building off this important scholarship, I argue for a different approach to this development through an analysis of a different piece of writing – a handbill titled “A Message to U.S.A. Citizens” dated October 5, 1945, a month after the arrival of the U.S. military. The Central Committee of the People's Republic of Korea were the authors of the handbill that was circulated in Seoul, and eventually the G2 officials obtained a copy – however, judging from the handbill's title, all members of the U.S. military government were the intended readers of the handbill. It is important to note that the People's Republic of Korea actually did welcome the U.S. military government. The handbill did indeed position the U.S. military as a supporter and aide in the liberation of Korea, and explicitly pointed to Lt. Gen. Hodge by name and referred to Proclamation No. 1:

At last our eagerly waited helper of the oppressed and guardian of liberty arrived. In his first message, General Hodge declared that one of three missions of the armed forces of the United States in Korea is to “rehabilitate Korea.” We took his message in gratitude and with respect because we believed in his commandership – the general of the nation of Washington, Lincoln, and Roosevelt.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> The work of Bruce Cumings provides the most in-depth insights and research on the repression of the left on the Korean peninsula during the occupation years through the first year of the war. See Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes 1945-1947* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981) and Bruce Cumings, *The origins of the Korean War II: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947-1950* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990). Scholar John Merrill also provides critical scholarship into the U.S. development of the Korean constabulary and other elements of a Korean national security state during U.S. occupation. See John Merrill, *Korea: The Peninsular Origins of the War* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1989). For an anthology of essays on occupation polices, see Bonnie B. C. Oh, ed., *Korea under the American Military Government, 1945-1948* (Westport: Praeger, 2002). Within Korean scholarship, there is a vast amount of work on this subject. The two volumes of Sō Chung-sōk's work are indispensable. See both volumes of Chung-sōk Sō, *Cho Pong-am kwa 1950-yōndaek*, (Sōul-si : Yōksa Pip'yōngsa, 1999). See also Tūk-chung Kim, “Ppalgaengi” *ūi tansaeng: Yōsun sakōn kwa pangong kukka ūi hyōngsōng*, (Sōul-si : Sōnin, 2009).

<sup>64</sup> “Message to U.S.A. Citizens” signed by “The Central People's Committee of the People's Republic of Korea.” (Dated October 5, 1945, Seoul.) In *G-2 Weekly*, Vol. 1, included in report dated 30 October 1945. 154-57.

The Central Committee also took special care to position a particular equivalence between “Korea” and “America” by emphasizing a shared enmity against Japan: “You know Japanese, their ambitions, their cruelty and their treachery. However, if there is any people who have a deepest grudge against the Japanese, it is the Koreans who have lived with them for thirty six years. [...] Your loss was our loss; your triumph, our triumph.”<sup>65</sup>

But the authors took this question of colonialism to another level by narrating an unbroken line of political will and subjectivity from the colonial period through the present – a narrative argument, essentially, against the idea that decolonization would require the United States and Western powers to teach “politics” to the decolonized Korean: “If any Korean remained mentally normal during the war, he was a fool. Koreans made themselves split personalities. They showed obedience in the presence of Japanese and they did just the opposite thing in reality. Without any munitions, revolutionists fought bravely in fields and in factories.” The liberation period – the moment of August 15, 1945 – was to herald a time when Koreans would no longer have to be “split,” when they could be whole political subjects. Political desire and historical agency was already the realm in which Koreans acted and made decisions.

But the objective of the handbill becomes clear – this “Message to U.S.A. Citizens” is intended as a corrective to the “mistakes” or concerning tendencies of the U.S. military occupation as viewed by the Central Committee. “A few days ago,” stated the handbill, “the Military Government of U.S. Army in Korea issued a decree that says, ‘No gathering, no procession or parade should be held without permission of the

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

government authority.’ [...] Suppose the decree is true, our aspiration and agitation will be in vain. Do you think it is possible to build a new nation in democratic way without freedom of speech, without freedom of mass meeting without freedom of all political activities?” Published and circulated less than a month after Hodge’s declaration of “I am the Korean government,” this handbill reveals the surprising escalation of events of the U.S. military occupation during the month of September 1945. October 5, 1945 – the date of the handbill’s publication – also was the date of Ordinance No. 9 issued by the U.S. military, which contained the first “National Emergency” declaration over the southern Korean peninsula.<sup>66</sup>

The U.S military government came to characterize the People’s Republic as an illegitimate and subversive organization because the People’s Republic insisted that there was not a “state of emergency” on the Korean peninsula. There was not to be any deferral of political agency, according to the Central Committee’s handbill:

Suppose the Military Government of U.S. Forces in Korea oppose the will of the Koreans and ignore their desires, this would bring the tragedy of the century. American public opinion certainly will not allow it! Let the Koreans govern themselves. Protect us, but do not try to rule over us. We know what is the best government for us; we are intelligence enough to manage our own affairs. The people’s Republic of Korea needs your unlimited sympathy and help in her development. Your sympathy and your help will make an imperishable record in the glorious history of New Korea.”<sup>67</sup>

It is a remarkable final paragraph of the handbill – the Central Committee argues that the U.S. military government is in danger of “[ignoring]” the political desires of Koreans, and in turn also explicates what it believes should be the desires of the American people

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<sup>66</sup> *Official gazette*, Ordinance No. 9.

<sup>67</sup> “Message to U.S.A. Citizens” signed by “The Central People’s Committee of the People’s Republic of Korea.” (Dated October 5, 1945, Seoul.) In *G-2 Weekly*, Vol. 1, included in report dated 30 October 1945. 154-57.

(“American public opinion certainly will not allow it!”). Rather than the United States providing the stage of history upon which the decolonization and liberation of Korea would occur, the Central Committee is presenting the stage of history-making that they have already claimed and built – “the glorious history of New Korea.” Within the text of this handbill, the U.S. military occupation has been allowed to maintain its “benevolent” character – but only up to an extent.

General Hodge, in his report to General MacArthur, commented on the attitudes of the Korean populace towards the U.S. military government. “The Koreans are the most politically minded people I have ever seen,” Hodge wrote. “Every move, every word, every act is interpreted and evaluated politically.”<sup>68</sup> The close scrutiny and high level of attention paid by Koreans to the activities of the U.S. military government seemed to have somewhat surprised Hodge. However, Hodge drew a line between an interest in politics, and then what he judged to be a mature capacity for politics: “The Koreans want their independence more than any one thing and want it now. This stems from the Allied promise of freedom and independence which is well known by every Korean without the qualifying phrase ‘in due course.’ I am told there are no Korean words expressing ‘in due course.’”<sup>69</sup> Hodge essentially reduced the demands for immediate independence by Koreans as an impossibility of translation – that the Korean language itself was incapable for holding the more complex meaning of a deferred temporal process of indeterminate duration. *In due course* – the operative phrase of the

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<sup>68</sup> Letter from Commander in Chief, U.S. Army Forces, Pacific to Joint Chiefs of Staff, dated 16 December 1945; Folder: Papers of Harry S. Truman, SMOF: Selected Records on Korean War, Pertinent Papers on Korea Situation; Box 11; SMOF: National Security Files; Papers of Harry S. Truman; Harry S. Truman Library. Although the letter itself is from MacArthur to the JCS, he had enclosed a report made by Hodge on the current situation in Korea. The quote above is from Hodge’s report.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

Cairo Declaration that placed Korea within the “waiting room of history” along with other mandates, colonies, and trusteeships – had become, according to Hodge’s logic, a concept indicative of mature and enlightened political thinking.

Such a denial of the Koreans’ capacity for and ability to understand and participate in the political sphere continued at various high levels of the U.S. military government. On October 10, 1945, U.S. Major General Archibald Arnold, the military governor of occupied southern Korea, responded to the activities of the People’s Republic – perhaps with the handbill specifically in mind - with his own statement, one that would resonate with Hodge’s previous declaration. In front of the Korean press in Seoul, Arnold prefaced his remarks by saying a few words pointedly addressed to the press: “What I say and hand to-day must be given a prominent place in the front page of every newspaper. This is a request with the force of an order.” He then, without directly denouncing the People’s Republic of Korea, stated the following, “There is only one government in Korea south of 38 degree north latitude. It is the government created in accordance with the proclamations of General MacArthur, the government of Lt. Gen. Hodge, and the Civil Administration Orders of the Military government.”<sup>70</sup> The U.S. military government’s authority relied on the “mystical foundations” of the proclamations issued by MacArthur and the successive ordinances issued by Hodge’s military government. It was, according to Arnold, these very acts of language performed by the U.S. military government that conferred it the exclusive authority of sovereignty. Arnold continued by selectively undermining the authority of the Korean political organizations already in place on the peninsula: “Self-appointed “officials” and “police groups,” big (or little) conferences “representing all the people, the (self-styled) government of the

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<sup>70</sup> G-2 Weekly, speech included in report dated 30 October 1945.

Republic of Korea, are entirely without any authority, power or reality. If the men who are arrogating to themselves such high-sounding titles are merely play-acting on a puppet stage with entertainment of questionable amusement value they must immediately pull down the curtain on the puppet show.”<sup>71</sup> In these early days of the U.S. occupation, U.S. forces were consumed with establishing control over public rituals, speech acts, and the symbolic realm. The fact that Maj. Gen. Arnold had to go to such lengths as to call Korean political organizations “a puppet show” not only reveals the more obvious condescension towards the possibility of Koreans being able to comprehend the essence of “politics,” but also demonstrates the degree of anxiety along with the frustration that Koreans were not – as instructed in Proclamation No. 1 – simply passive recipients of a liberation fashioned out of a military occupation. The Koreans – via handbills, posters, conferences, parades – were creating their own political space, and published their own English-language pamphlets addressed the U.S. military officials, instructing them how to participate in the project of decolonization.

### **“The movement had started”: The Criminalization of the Grassroots Political Movement**

Land, rice, and the question of distribution had been the central concerns of the conversation between Chang and the Russian and North Korean soldiers at the threshold of his home on the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel in April 1946. The widespread challenge to the calculus between “benevolence” and “death” expressed in the two Proclamations issued at the beginning of the U.S. occupation was triggered by a rice crisis – and the CIC’s concerns over Chang’s conversation belied the U.S. military government’s own anxiety over the Korean populace. On October 5, 1945 – the same date of publication as the handbill

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.



issued by the Central Committee of the People's Republic – the U.S. military government published two different ordinances regarding land tenancy and the rice market. The first ordinance – Ordinance 9 - declared a “national emergency [...] by reason of oppressive rents and interest rates payable under existing contracts by tenants of farm lands.”<sup>72</sup> This ordinance's professed objective to declare a maximum ceiling on land rent costs was popular among the Korean tenant population, but ordinance – and the “national emergency” – failed in practice due to the fact that it was landlords on-the-ground who were supporting U.S. military government, and the U.S. military had no effective means of regulating and enforcing the ordinance itself. The second ordinance – called General Notice No. 1 - declared, “[A]ll laws and regulations having the force of law described below are hereby abolished to the end that Korea may have a free market in rice,” and ended with disastrous consequences.<sup>73</sup>

U.S. military intelligence noticed a change in the activities they usually reported from week to week. “Many people are out of work and are encountering some difficulty in obtaining food,” stated a report dated 9 October 1945. “An increasing number of instances were reported of Koreans forcing Japanese employers and factory owners to pay bonuses and advance pay even though the plants are closed.”<sup>74</sup> By the end of the month, U.S. military intelligence reported “12 disturbances in widely scattered localities though S Korea[.]” Korean laborers were beginning to demand that Japanese employers hand over ownership and control of businesses. “Force was used to obtain compliance with many of these demands,” the report went on – “No organization of labor in general or of employees were caused by employees of individual plants and who are capitalizing

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<sup>72</sup> *Official gazette*, Ordinance 9.

<sup>73</sup> *Official gazette*, General Notice No. 1.

<sup>74</sup> G-2 Weekly Report, dated 9 October 1945, 74-75.

on the defeat of Japan and the opportunity to put pressure on Japanese civilians who are being forced evacuate Korea.”<sup>75</sup> Labor organizations were seemingly absent from these incidents – and U.S. military intelligence seemed to concede that these demands were indeed more spontaneous than meditated.

The effort to expel Japanese factory owners rapidly developed into the demanded expulsion of all Japanese administrative officials and also policemen all over the southern half of the peninsula. For the period between October 23rd and 30<sup>th</sup>, 1945, “22 disturbances by political parties in widely scattered localities throughout S Korea were reported[.]”<sup>76</sup> These disturbances were “directed against Japanese soldiers and civilians who are still in public positions, such as policemen[sic], school teachers, local officials, etc.,” and all were associated in some form with the Korean People’s Republic. In Hadong, the Korean People’s Republic moved to take over the local government, and “refused to recognize the Military Government.” As a seeming pattern emerges, the U.S. military intelligence G2 summary concludes, “It is believed that disturbances will continue in communities where Japanese or former Japanese collaborators are in office or are used as advisors by US Military Government.”<sup>77</sup> Utilizing the network of People’s Committees already in place on the ground, the Korean populace had clearly decided to act upon the structural change they wanted to see happen, which was the immediate replacement of markers of Japanese colonial sovereignty with local Korean authority. The Korean populace was not waiting for the U.S. military to “grant” them their independence.

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<sup>75</sup> G-2 Weekly Report, dated 30 October 1945, p. 131.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

Confronted with a population who had apparently deemed the U.S. military government as inadequate and insufficient for their demands for change, on October 30, 1945, the U.S. occupation forces published Ordinance Number 19 – and Section One was titled, “Declaration of National Emergency.” Significantly, the text of the ordinance begins with a re-introduction of the American Forces to the Korean people, a move reminiscent of Proclamation Number 1: “After four long years of war, from which they emerged victorious, American Forces landed upon your shores the friends and protectors of the Korean people.” The theme of the “benevolent sovereign” had re-entered the frame. But the lengthy ordinance also very pointedly commented on “certain groups” which the authors of the ordinance portrayed as mercenary – the opposite of the “benevolent” U.S. military government: “In addition, certain groups, with the sole idea of acquiring the wealth of the Korean people for themselves, have prevented labor from returning to employment, children from returning to school, and farmers from selling the produce of their lands. Such conditions,” the ordinance continued, “have created within Korea an emergency[.]” Following such a statement that essentially denied any agency or will on the part of the strikers and resisting farmers, the next sentence brought the benevolence front and center of its self-portrayal of the Military Government:

As all of the people know the American Nation is a powerful nation. Its people, however are gentle with the true gentleness that come only through an appreciation of their own good fortune and in their desire to protect others against adversity.<sup>78</sup>

And although the ordinance did not stipulate what the national emergency entailed, the ordinance declared that “[r]igid emergency controls are therefore hereby established, in

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<sup>78</sup> *Official gazette*, Ordinance 19.

order to prevent such conditions from existing which will harm the people.”<sup>79</sup> The U.S. military government declared yet another “state of emergency” in an attempt to create a strategic severance between any collective political organizing and widespread popular political recognition. This ordinance, in a sense, was a strategy to render the U.S. military government as *relevant* to the Korean populace.

But Section II of the ordinance brought the other element of the “state of emergency” - death - more squarely to the fore. An act that challenged the Military Government’s authority was construed as an act that threatens the “People’s Welfare” – and the three stipulated “unlawful acts” revealed the difficulty the Military Government had encountered in establishing legitimacy on the ground. The three “unlawful acts” encompassed an almost infinite range of actions – from language, physical action, to political intent. For example, the first unlawful act was “Knowingly making any false statement orally or in writing to any member of or person acting under the authority of USAFIK or the Military Government”; the second unlawful act consisted of any “[attempt] to obstruct, or contravening any orders or announced program of the Military Government; and thirdly, “directing or participating in acts of discipline, threats, coercion or any other form of intimidation or victimization (including boycotting) against any person cooperating in any form directly or indirectly with USAFIK or the Military Government of Korea.”<sup>80</sup> In essence, the U.S. military government was ordering the Korean populace to at least act and behave as if they had accepted the legitimate authority of their presence, while also broadening its state power of oversight.

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

Six months later, on May 4, 1946, the U.S. Military Government published a nine-page ordinance— and Ordinance Number 72’s title was “Offenses Against the Military Government.” Apparently, the three “unlawful acts” stipulated in Ordinance Number 9 of October 30, 1945 had not been sufficient to quell the rising movement of Koreans demanding for change on their own terms. Ordinance Number 72 outlined *eighty-two* specific behaviors that were considered as “Offenses Against the Military Government.” Stating that the specificity with which these offenses were enumerated did not “[limit] the provisions of Proclamation Number 2, GHQ, USAFPAC, 7 September 1945,” Ordinance Number 72 became the purveyor of the “state of emergency” framed by the threat of death.<sup>81</sup>

The “force of law,” in effect, that was the province of the “state of emergency” had been broken down into behaviors that the U.S. military government wanted to control. And the extensive enumeration of forbidden “behaviors” rather than being a show of force and authority, instead revealed the different fractures and fissures in the U.S. military government’s own self-presentation and narrative of power. Twenty seven out of the eighty-two stipulations dealt with language, paper, and the performance of authority – such as slander, rumors, fraudulent documents, false statements, forged identity cards or any other type of permit pass, “concealing” papers from authorities,

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<sup>81</sup> *Official Gazette*, Ordinance 72.

To quote again from Proclamation Number 2:

Any Person Who:

Violates the provision of the Instrument of Surrender, or any proclamation, order, or directive given under the authority of the Commander-in-Chief, United States Army Forces, Pacific, or does any act to the prejudice of good order or the life, safety, or security of the persons or property of the United States or its Allies, or does any act calculated to disturb public peace and order, or prevent the administration of justice, or willfully does any act hostile to the Allied forces, shall, upon conviction by a military Occupation Court, suffer death or such other punishment as the Court may determine.

falsifying contracts, and even impersonation of military government personnel.<sup>82</sup> The “offenses” demonstrated both the extent to which U.S. military authority could be mimicked and the extent to which U.S. military authority was fragile and still not established. This ordinance specifically attacked the elements of language in the political, public sphere – and the handbills of the Central Committee of the People’s Republic no longer would be permissible. Number 22 stated,

Acts or conduct in support of, or participating in the formation of, any organization or movement dissolved or declared illegal by, or contrary to the interests of, the occupying forces, including publication or circulation of matter printed or written in aid of any thereof or the possession thereof with intent to publish or circulate same, or the provocative display of flags, uniforms or insignia of any such organization or movement.<sup>83</sup>

Number 30 addressed “[r]emoving, obliterating, defacing or altering written, printed or typed matter posted by or under authority of Military Government”; Number 31 forbade the publishing and distribution of material that is “detrimental or disrespectful to the occupying forces or to the United Nations [...] or any person acting under their authority”; the dissemination of rumors that “undermine the morale of the occupying forces” or any purposeful “inciting to or participating in rioting or public disorder.”<sup>84</sup>

The more the authorities specified which actions were forbidden, the vaguer the terms seemed – and what became clear was that the USAMGIK was not simply interested in stipulating which actions and activities would not be tolerated during U.S. occupation, but it was also intending to assert its power of defining the “state of emergency.” The last four articles of the Ordinance illustrate this effect, where the final four elements widen the scope and power indefinitely in terms of what the USAMGIK can condemn:

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<sup>82</sup> The twenty-eight stipulations are as follows: Numbers 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22,30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 57, 58,59, 60.

<sup>83</sup> *Official Gazette*, Ordinance 72.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

79. Acting in contravention of terms imposed by the Allies upon their enemies on their defeat or surrender, or of any orders supplementing such terms.

80. Violating or disobeying any proclamation, law, ordinance, notice, directive or order of the Military Government or of any person acting under the authority thereof or pursuant thereto, where a penalty is not expressly imposed.

81. Engaging in acts to the prejudice of good order or to the interests of the occupying forces or any member thereof.

82. Violating in any way any of the laws of war or acting in aid of the enemy or endangering the security, safety or operations of the occupying forces, any member thereof, or any person acting under their authority in the performance of his duties.<sup>85</sup>

And the Ordinance went on to state that no one would be allowed to claim a defense that “the offense charged was committed under instructions or orders of any civil or military superior of any former government of Korea or of any person purporting to act as an official or member of any dissolved or illegal organization or movement, or that the offense was committed under duress, by reason of threats or through fear.” To not be able to claim that one had acted under duress or fear was to collapse accountability for action – language was not trusted, and only a singular “self” and will was recognized. And that will had to be in line with the U.S. military government.<sup>86</sup>

August 15, 1946 was the one-year anniversary of Korean liberation from Japanese colonial rule. The leftist Korean political organizations, in Hodge’s own words, “boycotted” the Joint American-Korean surrender anniversary ceremonies,

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> My own summary breakdown of the 82 stipulations follows:

1-4 about physical harm to occupying forces; 5-10 about bribing and looting; 11-21 – any acts of communication or ownership of any communication means; 22-27 – any act assisting those imprisoned by the USAMGIK; 28-29 – movement and transportation; 30-34 – altering printed material, or participating in riots; 35-36 – possession of arms; 37-41 – damaging property of USAMGIK – railroads to documents; 42-46- stealing; 47-48- willfully destroying records or archives; 49-60 – falsifying or forging – either identity, documents, or property ownership; 61-65- interference in market; 66-67 - interference in voting 68-72 – public health; 73-failing or refusing to collect taxes; 74. circulating without permit; 75. criminal persecution; 76-77- obstructing USAMGIK persecution; 78. abduction of USAMGIK officials; 79 – 82 – violation of laws of war.

instead “[holding] a mass celebration of their own in another part of town where they passed 16 political resolutions including at the top of the list opposition to prolongation, expansion or strengthening of MG [Military Government].” Hodge vented his frustration with the Korean left in this memorandum, writing, “The Leftist elements felt that they have been cheated out of a social revolution, with MG merely perpetuating a traditional social order that had been maintained by the Japanese.”<sup>87</sup> The twinned ordinances that the U.S. military government had issued back in October 5, 1945 regarding the issues of land tenancy and the rice market had not resolved the demands of the Korean people – the ambition of the land tenancy ordinance had been thwarted by the landlords who worked closely with U.S. military government officials, and the rice market ordinance had opened up a disaster in incredible market inflation. The “traditional social order” that Korean leftists were criticizing the U.S. military government of upholding was the basic social control by landlords, factory owners, and the administrative and police officials

“Disturbances” kept on occurring, and with incredibly inflated prices and the hoarding of rice, the “occupation of liberation” was looking more and more like occupation rather than the “liberation” the Korean people had hoped for. And September 22, 1946, “eight thousand employees of the railroad system in Pusan (1200-1340) declared the complete strike in that area making as demands: 1. Opposition to the daily wage system. 2. Raise wages. 3. Distribute food. 4. Start the government rationing system

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<sup>87</sup> Letter from CG USAFIK, Seoul, Korea from Hodge for Langdon thru GHQ SCAP, dated 25 Aug 46; Folder: Papers of Harry S. Truman, SMOF: Selected Records on Korean War, Pertinent Papers on Korea Situation; Box 11; SMOF: National Security Files; Papers of Harry S. Truman; Harry S. Truman Library.



again. 5. No discharge.”<sup>88</sup> The railroad workers at Taegu and Inchon soon joined the Pusan workers in a strike. Workers at Seoul Electric Company were supposedly about to join in the strike, and the Printers Union along with factories in “several districts went on strike either presenting their demands or merely stating that they were striking in sympathy with the railroad workers.”<sup>89</sup> The widespread protests gave way to challenges to the police force by the Korean populace – as the CIC report commented, “It must be conceded that police methods are brutal in cases, and the Korean people, seeing the police in action during the strike breaking, fell easy prey to agitators. On 1 October 1946 a crowd of about 4,000 strikers from factories and railroad yards stormed a police box near the Taegu railroad station, claiming that they were starving and that the police were trying to kill them.”<sup>90</sup> One policeman died from a beating, a striker was proclaimed dead, and five other strikers were “allegedly killed.” The next morning, 2200 people carried the body of the dead striker through the streets of Taegu to the Central Police station, where they overtook the station until three U.S. Army tanks arrived. The CIC report for that event simply indicates “13 confirmed deaths among the rioter files” – cause of death was not noted. The CIC reported other events in the wake of the demonstrations – a “minor demonstration by housewives demanding more rice” in Chonju, and in Kyonggi-Do province, “the student bodies of several schools staged walk-out strikes.” “The movement had started,” stated the CIC.<sup>91</sup> Over the next few weeks, Korean peasants began to target “policemen, magistrates, landlords and their agents.”<sup>92</sup> And as scholar Bruce Cumings has noted, “When a local office was seized, records of rice and grain

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<sup>88</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 2, CIC Monthly Information Report, 1947.1.17.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

collections were the first objects destroyed.”<sup>93</sup> These uprisings “were the predictable and logical culmination of more than a year of unheeded Korean demands for meaningful reforms, labor unions, peasant unions, and self-governing organs of power.”<sup>94</sup>

### **Interpreting the “Peculiar situation of Korea”: The CIC’s Manufacturing of “Korea”**

“Nothing in the three years of the Occupation so shook Americans at all levels as the autumn uprisings of 1946,” scholar Bruce Cumings commented. And indeed at the Joint Korean-American Conference called by General John Hodge and Major General A.E. Brown to allow “Koreans present to the US authorities for discussion and consideration the major problems confronting the Korean people,” a major agenda element was “The Causes and Background of the October Riots and the Anti-Police Feeling.” The CIC was asked help prepare a report for G-2 Colonel John N. Robinson, who would then present it at the conference. In essence, the CIC had been given the assignment and responsibility for gleaning a narrative significance – a discernible pattern – and thus an explanation for the autumn uprisings. The title of the report perhaps succinctly conveyed the CIC’s conclusions about the uprisings: “Case Against the Communist Party, Disrupting the Peace of South Korea.” “Based upon investigation of the riot and disturbances incidents as they occurred, it was evident that the riots were not spontaneous reaction of the people, but were planned political moves led and agitated by political leaders and henchmen. [...] [I]t was necessary to show that the Communist Party, itself, through a long series of mis-education, propaganda, and false incidents, had

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<sup>93</sup> Cumings, *Origins*, Vol. 1, 368.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

fomented and guided the physical violence against police and civil elements of South Korea.”<sup>95</sup>

The CIC’s collapsing of the more complicated dynamics of what had been essentially a peasant uprising in September and October 1946 to the simple puppeteering of the Communist Party is certainly a story that resonates with many projects of the U.S. military and intelligence organizations through the globe in the early Cold War period. My analysis though contends that such a conclusion that the Korean peasant movement was essentially a Communist plot opens up the opportunity to examine how the CIC manufactured the “Communist enemy” by the end of 1946. Members of the Korean Communist Party had indeed been organizers and leaders of certain parts of the uprising, but local people’s committees and labor and peasant unions provided the majority of the leadership. The “Communist enemy,” as painted by the CIC, was a puppet of the Soviets, smaller Communist cells who received instruction from either Pyongyang or Moscow.<sup>96</sup> Bruce Cumings, in his analysis of the Autumn Harvest uprisings, notes that the uprisings themselves did not occur simultaneously, but rather in waves as “one rebellion touched off another in contiguous areas.” “The evidence suggests,” Cumings writes, “that South Chōlla peasants rose up not because of Communist agitation, but because of deep grievances arising from land conditions and relations, grain collection inequities, and the local interlocking of landlord, government official, and policeman.”<sup>97</sup>

The project of making the “Communist enemy” was a denial of both indigenous claims

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<sup>95</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 2, CIC Monthly Information Report, dated 1947.1.18.

<sup>96</sup> “The Korean governor of North Kyōngsang could write with equanimity that there were in his province some 3,000 native leftist leaders, “strong men, ingenious, courageous, and ready to die.” Americans could not stomach suppressing such people unless they could perceive a tie to the Soviets.” From Cumings, *Origins*, Vol. 1, 375.

<sup>97</sup> Cumings, *Origins*, Vol. 1, 367.

and grievances and the possibility of a local form and application of communism. And it was not simply a project of finding and making the “communist enemy” – it was also a project of knowledge claims. The CIC, in this 1946 report, had asserted its abilities to discern, understand, and narrate the political landscape of U.S. occupied Korea. In other words, the CIC “knew” the Korean better than the Korean herself.

In essence, the professionalization of the CIC reflected the larger professionalization of the U.S. occupation of Korea. And this very “professionalization” lies in the interpretative claims of the CIC about the “peculiar situation of Korea.” Or more explicitly, as Dow states in the SOP about the objectives of the “Political Section” of the CIC: “Proclamations of the Supreme Command for the Allied Powers and Ordinances of USAMGIK will be used as a guide in connection with the investigation of persons involved in subversive activities other than U.S. military and civilian personnel.”<sup>98</sup> It is this very space through which the CIC found a possible space for legitimatization and professionalization.

Developing this “knowledge” was highly mediated. The CIC gathered and read both people and paper – interrogation and the constant translation of handbills, posters, and leaflets were at the center of the CIC operation. However, one needs to go one step further in examining the CIC, and ask the question of how the CIC found people and paper to interrogate. The North West Young Men’s Association, an organization

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<sup>98</sup> The full mission of the “Political Section” is as follows: 1) Initiate investigations on all known political, social and other organizations to determine their objectives and activities and control and coordinate such investigations and process reports thereto. 2) Initiate investigations on all underground and secret organizations in insure that their activities are not inimical to Military Government and control and coordinate such investigations and process all reports pertaining thereto. 3) Collect and compile all information of a political nature and about political personalities. 4) Arrange for the contact and the gaining of the confidence of influential local persons whose cooperation will be helpful. 5) Make political analysis and prepare reports of political trends. From *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 1, US Army Intelligence Center, History of the Counter Intelligence Corps Volume XXX, “CIC During the Occupation of Korea (1959.3), 158-159.

comprised of young men who had crossed over the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel to the south, became the critical element to the daily operations of the CIC. These young men, among whom many came from the landed class in North Korea, created one of the extremist rightist youth groups in Korea.

On September 9, 1945, when agents of the 224<sup>th</sup> CIC Detachment arrived at the port of Inchon on the USS Chilton, they were coming from the campaigns in Leyte and Okinawa. But despite this previous experience of U.S. military and imperial projects in the Philippines and Japan, these agents of the “CIC had come to Korea without much preparation and with little idea of what to expect,” according to the official military history of the CIC in U.S.-occupied Korea – “No precedents for CIC from previous occupations were available as guides for action [...] As CIC acquired special missions and unusual conditions developed, the organization of the 971<sup>st</sup> was changed to meet the new conditions.”<sup>99</sup> The CIC agent who had visited Chang and his trilingual sign in April 1946 was one of only a few handfuls of CIC agents scattered across the southern Korean peninsula. The “total authorized strength” of the CIC was 126 agents, but in September 1946, the number of agents actually only amounted to 89. The CIC – to take one very important organization of the G-2 – was indeed a day-by-day operation run by people on the ground, not necessarily the streamlined military intelligence teams we have come to imagine regarding the Cold War. There were concerns about the constant turnover of the agents themselves, resulting in a situation where the agents themselves “do not remain in Korea long enough to become thoroughly oriented in the situation or in the importance of security measures.” And MacArthur had forbidden “fraternization” between the U.S.

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<sup>99</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 1, CIC, vol. 1, US Army Intelligence Center, History of the Counter Intelligence Corps Volume XXX, “CIC During the Occupation of Korea (1959.3), 15.

military personnel and Korean civilians - "In a country where fraternization is 'taboo' the lonely and homesick young soldier will talk at length with any Korean who can speak English and who wants to talk with him."<sup>100</sup> Cautionary warnings like "Don't Brag about your Last Case"<sup>101</sup> to explicit capitalized directives like "GET OUT AND GET IT!!!" regarding the leftist organizations that had gone underground – a gamut of concerns over the professionalization and effectiveness of the CIC appeared in the CIC monthly reports.

Two elements that would facilitate the operations and activities of only 89 agents in 21 field offices to cover the entire southern half of the Korean peninsula: interpreters and paper. Native Korean interpreters were "motivated by strictly mercenary impulses and could not be trusted to any great extent," while second generation Korean and Japanese Americans numbered at most at twelve. Paper also was in short supply – "Paper, an essential for any intelligence agency was particularly scarce. The USAFIK supply people did not seem to understand why a CIC District Office needed more paper than the orderly room of an infantry company."<sup>102</sup>

But the Korean population was wary of the CIC, reluctant to talk freely with them:

Many Koreans believe the CIC is the American counterpart of the Japanese Kempei Tai, and, as a result of this misunderstanding, CIC agents find it advantageous to represent themselves as G-2 personnel, Office of Public Information personnel, members of the Political Advisory Group (PAG), or as novices who have developed a curiosity of and an interest in Korean politics.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 1, CIC, vol. 1, US Army Intelligence Center, History of the Counter Intelligence Corps Volume XXX, "CIC During the Occupation of Korea (1959.3), 90.

<sup>101</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 1, 971<sup>st</sup> CounterIntelligence Corps Detachment Annual Progress Report for 1948, 470.

<sup>102</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 1, CIC, vol. 1, US Army Intelligence Center, History of the Counter Intelligence Corps Volume XXX, "CIC During the Occupation of Korea (1959.3), 17.

<sup>103</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 1, report dated April 19, 1946 included in 971<sup>st</sup> CounterIntelligence Corps Detachment Annual Progress Report for 1947, 386.

The Counter Intelligence Corps found itself with a more immediate difficulty in carrying out operations – establishing its own legitimacy. And even though we may usually imagine CIC agents as working discreetly undercover, the annals of the CIC attest otherwise – “since CIC was outfitting its men in a uniform worn by no other organization, agents were open to compromise on all occasions.”<sup>104</sup> And, “[t]he distinctive uniform of CIC agents in Korea was only one factor contributing to the unsought notice given to CIC operations in Korea.”<sup>105</sup> As mentioned earlier, the CIC was actually a very public operation, and not the clandestine operation one would assume of a Counter Intelligence Corps. In the first place, the CIC’s objectives and mission resonated with the Korean population – but not in the way that CIC had hoped. In short supply were “reliable” interpreters – the native Korean interpreters were “motivated by strictly mercenary impulses and could not be trusted to any great extent,” while second-generation Korean and Japanese Americans numbered at most at twelve.<sup>106</sup>

As a result, the CIC had to rely on Korean agents for their “information” “because of the language barrier, and the customs of the Korean people, and the physical difference between the Oriental and the Caucasian.” Korean “nationals employed as interpreters, detectives, and undercover agents” often carried around “passes for identification purposes to entitle them entrance into the CIC office and to assure them immunity in cases where, on a special assigned task, they may be apprehended by the police for suspicious activities.” Approximately 180 Korean nationals worked as regular agents for

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<sup>104</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 1, CIC, vol. 1, US Army Intelligence Center, History of the Counter Intelligence Corps Volume XXX, “CIC During the Occupation of Korea (1959.3), 21.

<sup>105</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 1, CIC, vol. 1, US Army Intelligence Center, History of the Counter Intelligence Corps Volume XXX, “CIC During the Occupation of Korea (1959.3), 22.

<sup>106</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 1, CIC, vol. 1, US Army Intelligence Center, History of the Counter Intelligence Corps Volume XXX, “CIC During the Occupation of Korea (1959.3), 17.

the CIC, a number that did not include special operations. Of those 180, 150 worked as informants within leftist organizations, and 30 other informants worked within political parties.<sup>107</sup> But a combination of 89 CIC American agents with a minimum of 180 Korean informants would not necessarily provide the type of coverage that the official military history had boasted about. The CIC also had developed a network that depended on paid agents of various sorts, youth organizations, and the interrogation of refugees who were picked up by this section when they entered South Korea.<sup>108</sup> Over 1946 and 1947, the element that became central to the CIC operations were the “Use of Youth organizations.” The CIC weekly report for June 19, 1947 noted that rightists organizations had set up their own “networks of agents and their own intelligence section for the purpose of working against Communism,” and the “most valuable of these organizations was one made up of individuals who, themselves, had fled from the Communist Police State, North Korea” – the North West Young Men’s Association [NWyMA].<sup>109</sup>

The NWyMA, according to the CIC, had “complete coverage of each district” in the city of Seoul, and had men stationed in each section: “they know almost all of the people in their areas; they know when new persons move in or others move out, and they know the reasons for this moving. They become acquainted with the activities of almost every individual in their area and are able to report on anything suspicious.”<sup>110</sup> The surveillance system set up by the NWyMA became crucial to the CIC’s own claims to

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<sup>107</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 1, 971<sup>st</sup> CounterIntelligence Corps Detachment Annual Progress Report for 1948, 461.

<sup>108</sup> Among the refugees, only those persons willing to talk were considered to be of any use to the Positive Intelligence Mission. *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 1, 971<sup>st</sup> CounterIntelligence Corps Detachment Annual Progress Report for 1947, 259.

<sup>109</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 2, Weekly Information Bulletin dated 1947.6.19, 259.

<sup>110</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 2, Weekly Information Bulletin dated 1947.11.6, 505.



knowing what was happening on the ground. Seemingly little attention or concern was paid by the CIC to how the NWYMA was exactly defining who was an anti-Communist or Communist, or rightist or leftist. What does come across in the CIC reports is the CIC's enthusiasm for the potential exploitation and usage of the NWYMA's surveillance system. The reports suggests giving the youth groups "small sums" to create surveillance over "suspicious persons," and that the youths could also be used to watch "Koreans in high MG positions" as well as the "interpreters and translators" who worked with the military government. The NWYMA – as well as the other rightist youth groups utilized by the CIC – enabled the maintenance and development of the "exceptional" reach and landscape of the Counterintelligence Corps and its activities, as the CIC carved out its own niche within the Military Government apparatus in terms of claims over "knowledge."

The increasing intimacy between the NWYMA and the CIC developed as the CIC itself was attempting to professionalize itself through the creation of standards and objectives. Indeed, [i]t was not until 29 March 1947 that a permanent SOP [Standard Operating Procedures] could be drawn up."<sup>111</sup> A 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Harry H. Dow, who had been one of the members of the arrival CIC corps in 1945 and stayed with the CIC in Korea until 1947, was responsible for what the military history described as "adapting CIC organization and operations to the peculiar situation in Korea." Before turning to the "peculiar situation in Korea," a brief look at Dow's 1947 SOP for the Counterintelligence

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<sup>111</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 1, CIC, vol. 1, US Army Intelligence Center, History of the Counter Intelligence Corps Volume XXX, "CIC During the Occupation of Korea (1959.3), 10. The following information is pulled from the same document history:

"1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Harry Dow, one of the handful of men who had come to Korea with the 224<sup>th</sup> and remained with the 971<sup>st</sup>, was responsible for this SOP. Lieutenant Dow was Operations Officers for the 971<sup>st</sup> until leaving Korea in mid-1947. His work in adapting CIC organization and operations to the peculiar situation in Korea earned for him an Oak Leaf Cluster on the Army Commendation Ribbon and a Letter of Commendation from Lieutenant General John R. Hodge, Commanding General, XXIV Corps."

Corps provides a sense of how the CIC had come to understand its particular “mission” in Korea:

The basic mission of Counter Intelligence Corps is to assist in the maintenance of military security. The mission has now been enlarged to require special investigative activity in both the Positive Intelligence and Counter Intelligence fields involving political groups and social organizations and the collection of information relating to adjacent areas to insure the successful completion of the over-all mission of the U.S. Forces in Korea to set up a democratic form of government as outlined in Headquarters XXIV Corps letter TFOIE dated 15 January 1947.<sup>112</sup>

The SOP signaled a significant development in the objectives of the CIC – the organization that had began the first two months of the occupation engaged in activities similar to the other forces of the USAFIK – “assembling all Japanese nationals preparatory to their repatriation; and maintaining law and order”<sup>113</sup> – had explicitly acknowledge that the parameters of maintaining “military security” grew to include both positive and counter intelligence. Indeed, if we take note that Dow has explicitly singled out a particular activity of the CIC regarding the “peculiar situation of Korea,” we can see how the “political groups and social organizations” have become the main object of the CIC’s activity – and, I would argue, sense of purpose.

This space of legitimatization and professionalization was the realm of “espionage.” The NWYMA would become central to the operations of the “Espionage, Sabotage, and Miscellaneous Section.” And “espionage” – along with all its attendant miscellany – began to become an object that the CIC attached a myriad of fundamental

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<sup>112</sup> This quote is pulled from the “USAFIK letter AG 322 (TFGBI) dated 30 April 1946.” This document is one of four cited as explicating the “mission of the Counter Intelligence Corps” in Dow’s SOP: a) War Department letter AG 322, CIC (31 October 1944) OB-S-B-M dated 13 November 1944, Subject: Counter Intelligence Corps. B) AFPAC regulations #100-10 dated 1 August 1945. C) AFPAC letter AG 322 (22 March 1946), CI.

<sup>113</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 1, CIC, vol. 1, US Army Intelligence Center, History of the Counter Intelligence Corps Volume XXX, “CIC During the Occupation of Korea (1959.3), 1.

meanings. “Espionage” became the all-encompassing term for the supposed realities of the activities and individuals involved on the ground in Korea – and it would have a profound afterlife in the Korean War, as mobilized and identified by the CIC:

In many respects, the armed conflict that broke out in Korea in June 1950 was simply a new phase of a way that had been going on silently, insidiously, for five years. In its earlier phases, this war made few headlines and drew little attention. But CIC agents in the Korean occupation had known the quiet struggle. It was a war of espionage.<sup>114</sup>

The insistence on parsing the Korean population for “espionage” agents was, I argue, parallel and resonant with the December 1946 report on the Communist party machinations as being the overdetermined impetus for all strikes and uprisings during the period from late September through October 1946. Similar to the ordinance stipulations on the eighty-two behaviors that fell under U.S. military government sovereignty authority to punish, discipline, and judge, “espionage” became the category of behavior under the auspices of the CIC that effectively depoliticized and distracted the stakes involved in the conflicts on the ground. In other words, the lines of conflict became either pro-America or anti-American, collapsing the issues of land, rice, and distribution as demonstrated by the investigation around Chang’s sign in April 1946. Those who were viewed as anti-USAMGIK became “espionage” agents – people who were deemed beyond the protective norms, and also essentially rendered “foreign” in a sense to the project of state-building in Korea. As Ordinance 21, dated November 2, 1945, declared that all previous laws – except for those noted by the USAMGIK – retained their force of law – thus moving the conflict over control over the on-the-ground situation not as one who defines and applies the law, but rather about who laid claim to the “force of law” –

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<sup>114</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 1, CIC, vol. 1, US Army Intelligence Center, History of the Counter Intelligence Corps Volume XXX, “CIC During the Occupation of Korea (1959.3), 24.

the issue of “espionage” also rendered the People’s Committees and other organizations as suspended. No other organization could claim authority – and only the United States could grant authority.<sup>115</sup>

A tension developed though, between the CIC and the NWYMA – though it is not over the escalating violence that the NWYMA increasingly was involved in all over the southern peninsula, but rather the question of police actions – and who has claims over police actions on the ground. The NWYMA, in sum, refused to only be an instrument of procuring, gathering, and purveying “information.”

By 1946 the CIC had also garnered certain powers of jurisdiction; basically, it “had all the prerogatives of a police agency, including search and arrest.”<sup>116</sup> As the official history noted, “The police prerogatives and functions given CIC endowed the organization with power never intended for a confidential investigative organization. Some of the members of the organization have described the 971<sup>st</sup> as a rough and ready outfit that probably interpreted this unusual power too liberally, and have stated that, especially early in the occupation, operations were too ‘high, wide, and handsome.’<sup>117</sup> By the end of 1947, however, in its report titled “Statistical analysis of Terrorism, 1947,” the CIC had a problem on their hands. The tally of the different acts of terrorism reported was as follows:

Rightists instigated – 223  
Leftist -74  
Neutral – 5  
Unknown – 203

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<sup>115</sup> *Official gazette*, Ordinance 21.

<sup>116</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 1, CIC, vol. 1, US Army Intelligence Center, History of the Counter Intelligence Corps Volume XXX, “CIC During the Occupation of Korea (1959.3), 24.

<sup>117</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 1, CIC, vol. 1, US Army Intelligence Center, History of the Counter Intelligence Corps Volume XXX, “CIC During the Occupation of Korea (1959.3).

Descriptions culled from interviews with Captain Kenneth E. MacDougall, 5 October 1954, Fort Holabird, and Lieutenant Colonel Elbert H. Keller, 20 October 1954. The last quote is from MacDougall.

Total: 505  
Killed – 90  
Injured – 1100<sup>118</sup>

This “rise in terrorism,” under the analysis of the CIC falls into multiple categories – firstly, the “terrorism conducted by the Right Wing is directed to the absolute suppression of the Leftists” and also to the “consolidating efforts” of certain rightist groups. On the other hand, the leftist activities were primarily marked by “malicious propaganda and force” deployed to “sabotage the rice collecting program and other Military Government sponsored activities.”<sup>119</sup> How, where, and on whom would the CIC focus its police action capabilities? Or what would be the overall strategy in front of these statistics?

The NPYMA emerged as one of the rightist youth groups most involved in the violence. “Numerous reports of the Terroristic activities of the North West Association have reached this office during the past weeks,” stated the CIC report dated April 23, 1947.<sup>120</sup> “Numerous reports on terrorism were received from almost every office. In Taegu, Taejon and Ongjin the North West Youth Association seemed particularly on the rampage,” a report from May 22, 1947 stated.<sup>121</sup> And by August 28, 1947, the CIC report revealed an escalation in the situation: “Kangnun sent in a copy of the MG weekly report in their area giving an account of the activities and organization of the North West Youth Association. Their acts of terrorism are innumerable as they are staging a fight for control and complete extinction of the leftists. The rightists are believed to be capable of much more trouble in this area than the leftists, and in some instances they may even resist

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<sup>118</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 1, 971<sup>st</sup> CounterIntelligence Corps Detachment Annual Progress Report for 1947, 348.

<sup>119</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 1, 971<sup>st</sup> CounterIntelligence Corps Detachment Annual Progress Report for 1947, 347.

<sup>120</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 2, Weekly Information Bulletin dated 1947.4.23, 174.

<sup>121</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 2, Weekly Information Bulletin dated 1947.5.22, 221.

American personnel, if called upon to maintain law and order.”<sup>122</sup> What becomes apparent through these surprisingly detailed accounts of the NWYMA by the CIC is that the violence itself did not pose a problem to the CIC, but rather the moments when the NWYMA usurped police actions of the CIC, and refused to only be a conduit of information.

The leader of the NWYMA in the area encompassing Taegu, Taejon, and Ongjin was brought into the CIC offices, where CIC agents “lectured [him] on his responsibility for the activities of this organization.” The leader, in turn, “pleaded that his group were mostly boys and really not bad boys at that.”<sup>123</sup> Lecturing, reprimanding, and warning were the extent of the CIC’s commentary on the NWYMA’s activities and violence – and only occurred when the violence was an extension of the organization’s assumption of certain sovereign, surveillance powers for example, the CIC had been preparing a raid to “apprehend three visitors from North Korea only to find that the North West Association had beat CIC to the punch and had abducted these men.”<sup>124</sup> The CIC prepared a meeting with the leader to make them “understand that they have no powers along this line.” And in September 11, 1947, the CIC reports revealed that the NWYMA in Seoul was continuing the exercise of police powers – members of the NWYMA had attempted to kidnap an employee of the CCIG-K headquarters, claiming that he was a leftist and wanted to investigate him further at their headquarters. “Orders for this kidnapping were given by the head of the Inspection Section of their group. The leaders of this group were

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<sup>122</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 2, Weekly Information Bulletin dated 1947.8.28, 364.

<sup>123</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 2, Weekly Information Bulletin dated 1947.5.22, 221.

<sup>124</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 2, Weekly Information Bulletin dated 1947.4.23, 174.

brought to CIC headquarters, lectured on their responsibilities, and warned to stop their terrorist activities and the assumption of police powers.”<sup>125</sup>

The transgression lay, then, not in the acts of violence, but rather in a realm elsewhere – it was not about excessive violence. Instead, it was about excessive claims to authority – it was the kidnapping, the threats, the wielding of death in its most potent, abstract form that was the transgression. Villagers – and even policemen – began to take matters into their own hands. Coming under constant harsh criticism from leftists for essentially facilitating rightist young group’s terrorism, the police, according to CIC reports in May 1947, began a different policy towards the youth groups. Arrests began to be made, and in one town the “NWYA were ordered out of town by the Police and in another many members of the NWYA were placed aboard a train and shipped from the province; place the burden on some one else – you know.”<sup>126</sup> In late August, there were reports coming in from Pohong that leftists had sent a petition to “General Hodge asking for the abolishment of the Northwest Young Men’s Association and other terrorist youth groups[.]”<sup>127</sup> However, abolishment never came – only in [date] was a specific rightist youth group dissolved, and it was not the NWYMA. In Taejon, after “approximately 29 members of the Northwest Youth Assn, some of whom were armed, had attacked a small village in their area the villagers gathered together and drove the youths away.” The youths took shelter in a Police Box in the village, and the villagers surrounded the police station. As the NWYMA members began throwing stones, the villagers threw some stones also – and soon the “Police fired into the crowd – killing three villagers.”<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 2, Weekly Information Bulletin dated 1947.9.11, 397.

<sup>126</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 2, Weekly Information Bulletin dated 1947.5.22, 221.

<sup>127</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 2, Weekly Information Bulletin dated 1947.8.28, 367.

<sup>128</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 2, Weekly Information Bulletin dated 1947.8.21, 353.

The NWYMA, observed the CIC, had “increased faster and become of more significance than any other rightist youth group,” by early 1947.<sup>129</sup> The NWYMA, observed the CIC, had “increased faster and become of more significance than any other rightist youth group” by early 1947.<sup>130</sup> And in a report dated September 11, 1947, the CIC noted another trend concerning the NWYA: “Terrorism by the right wing, for the most part, continue merrily on its way. An apparent all out attempt to eradicate the leftists is under way.” Observing that the police in these situations “were either afraid to act against this society or were in complete accord with their actions,” the CIC wrote that the NWYA’s activities were often condoned or supported by the police. “It will serve only to make the left to underground[sic] entirely,” stated the CIC.<sup>131</sup> And, indeed, the CIC’s statement proved to be prophetic.

### **The “War of Espionage”: Suspicion and the Political in the U.S.-controlled POW Camps**

The declarations and statements made by both the United Nations and the United States framed June 25, 1950 as a turning point – a specific break with the past, a past that had been supposedly stable and “peaceful.” The announcement of war effectively “normalized” the pre-war situation and the existence of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. A border and a state that was the result of unpopular elections had become “what had been there before” – the assumed normative plane of politics on the Korean peninsula. The U.S. occupation had not only successfully pushed the left underground, but the tide of the conversation had now become flattened to a conflict between two “states” – and the stakes involved in

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<sup>129</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 2, Weekly Information Bulletin dated 1947.5.1, 184.

<sup>130</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 2, Weekly Information Bulletin dated 1947.5.1, 184.

<sup>131</sup> *CIC 1945.9-1949.1*, Volume 2, Weekly Information Bulletin dated 1947.9.11, 397.



the war became a question of which state was legitimate, which state expressed the will of the Korean people.

On June 25, 1950, the Security Council of the United Nations, with the U.S.S.R. delegate conspicuously absent, adopted a resolution, which noted the “armed attack on the Republic of Korea by forces from North Korea [and determined] that this action constitutes a breach of the peace.”<sup>132</sup> On June 26, 1950, President Truman released a statement to the press, where he described the “lawless action taken by the forces from North Korea,” and underlined how “[t]hose responsible for this act of aggression must realize how seriously the Government of the United States views such threats to the peace of the world.”<sup>133</sup> The next day, Truman announced his authorization for the mobilization of U.S. forces to support Republic of Korea troops.

On June 29th, at a press conference, the following question was posed to President Truman: “Mr. President, would it be correct against your explanation, to call this a police action under the United Nations?”

“Yes. That is exactly what it amounts to,” the President replied. “We are not at war,” President Truman emphasized at the very same press conference. And according to the notes of George N. Elsey, Truman’s press secretary, “The President later called the North Koreans ‘a bunch of bandits.’”<sup>134</sup>

The harsh reprimand of the DPRK military by President Truman and the United Nations was to evoke a feeling among the public of a horror over a violation of a fundamental trope of international “law,” and that, thus, the DPRK had placed itself

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<sup>132</sup> UN Security Council, Resolution 82 (June 25, 1950) (S/1501).

<sup>133</sup> “Statement by the President on the Violation of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel,” dated 26 June 1950. Part of the *Public Papers of the Presidents: Harry S. Truman, 1945-1953* of the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, available at [www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers), accessed 21 May 2011.

<sup>134</sup> George N. Elsey, Oral history. Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, NARA. Independence, Missouri.

outside of the bounds of “law.” But the most significant aspect of this condemnation was that it also effectively created the impression that there was a normalized “international law,” when, in fact, such normalization or consensus was exactly at stake in the conflict itself. To take the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel at face value would be to miss the point entirely, which is that the basic formulations of “war,” “sovereignty,” and “occupation” were contested, conflicting, and even clumsy at turns on the longer project of decolonization on the Korean peninsula.

Two critical experiences of pre-war history effectively fall away from the frame of the Korean War narrative – the U.S. military occupation of “state of emergency” and the leftist political organizations. As the Truman administration was busy inventing the “Korean War” for the benefit of the global stage, the war over decolonization on the Korean peninsula had absolute continuity with the occupation itself. The “war of espionage” was indeed continuous from the U.S. occupation period through the Korean War – and instead of the war operating over a boundary like the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, this war was operating over individual Korean subjects. The U.S. military intelligence agents and the leftist political organizations and networks encountered each other in a very familiar terrain – a “state of emergency” that was now called a “police action.”

On the ground on the Korean peninsula, the Counter Intelligence Corps had returned, and the approach of the CIC to the “war of espionage” and the navigations on the part of the Koreans revealed surprising continuity with the 1945 to 1947 period. In November 1950, on the Korean peninsula, the 704<sup>th</sup> Counter Intelligence Corps continued their activities in the southern region of the peninsula. “The former and present are of responsibility [...],” states the historical report, “is the territory within the arc of the

perimeter formed by the following towns, Pohang-Dong, Kyongju, Taeju and Masan, with the headquarters organization located at Pusan.” This area was the same region the CIC had covered during the U.S. occupation of Korea – and its objectives seemed to present an uninterrupted continuation between the occupation period and the war: “The primary mission is the protection of the Port of Pusan and the entire area by all counterintelligence measures available and the detection of former and present South Korean Labor Party members within this area of responsibility.”<sup>135</sup> The SKLP and the guerilla fighters were the same characters in the conflict over sovereignty and decolonization in the pre-1950 occupation era.

The “thirty Korean Nationals” that had established a false U.S. military intelligence local headquarters in the city of Masan – complete with the sign “Branch Office, Namhang Commercial Company, Telephone Masan 19” – were clearly familiar with the performance needed to establish a semblance of U.S. sovereign authority on the Korean peninsula. Paper, uniforms, English-language writing, and a perfectly calibrated performance were all that was needed – with “false G2 passes, permits to wear military uniforms, and travel authority permits,” the members would at times also disguise themselves as members of the CIC.<sup>136</sup>

The personal histories of the Koreans involved in the case demonstrate a longer history of engaging in the struggle over the political public sphere. One of the members, Kim Chi Kyu, illustrates the continuity from the late colonial period through 1951. Arrested on 17 July 1944 for “disturbing the peace,” he was later released. In April 1946, after liberation, he joined the Masan Branch of the Democratic Youth League and began

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<sup>135</sup> Historical Report for Period 1 November to 30 Number 1950; Folder: Historical Rpt 704 CIC Nov 1950; Box 4677; Army AG Commercial Reports; Record Group 407; National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>136</sup> *CIC RG319*, Volume 2, Agent Report: Masan G2 Office, dated 14 March 1951.

working with organizing students at the Masan Commercial school, whom he led in a strike on October 7, 1946. Supposedly around June 30, 1950, he “called a meeting of all students who were from Kyongsang Namdo Area and who were then attending Tongkuk University in Seoul.” He “[p]osted street posters welcoming the North Korean People’s Army (NKPA) and denouncing the American Far Eastern policy.” He joined the NKPA and later returned to Masan to help establish the G2 Office.

The strategy of these Korean Nationals to establish a G2 Office not only as a front to their activities, but to actually facilitate their activities is a testament to the type of sovereignty and “state of exception” the U.S. military government had established on the peninsula. It was apparent that the Korean people simply assumed that the U.S. or UN forces would operate on a parallel plane of activity similar to how they had during the occupation, but as evidenced by this investigation case, this plane of activity did not inspire the complete fear or respect that the United States had assumed it was due. The “war of espionage” was thus at heart a conflict of the unresolved contradictions of the post-colonial era – or, to put it differently, a conflict that aimed to keep those contradictions unresolved. Although a “state of emergency” is an abstract concept, it had immediate material consequences upon the Korean people. The deferral that was the state of exception had created novel forms of warfare.

It was onto this stage that the “prisoner of war” entered. The “prisoner of war” was certainly a figure of warfare, a temporary category that would cease to exist supposedly once the war stopped. Prisoners of war were brought within this rubric, not as a new category per se, but rather as contiguous with the SKLP and the guerilla fighters: “Sub-Team #2, during the month of November 1950, continued to interrogate Prisoners

of War, primarily to gain information of subversive activities, knowledge of atrocities or war crimes, locations, strength and armament of units of the North Korean Army and Guerilla Units. Worthwhile information has been secured by this team during the course of its activity with its present project.” Another Sub-Team of the CIC, Number 4, was reported to have “maintained constant liaison with the Korean Law Enforcement Agencies, with the emphasis on the detection of subversive elements, such as South Korean Labor Party members and guerillas. Good liaison has been made by this team with the police.”<sup>137</sup> The POW camps of the Korean War must be understood and inflected through the prism of the political landscape as shaped by the policies, experiences, and violence of the U.S. occupation period.

The frame of the “war of espionage” was especially applicable to the U.S.-controlled POW camps, and the parameters of “benevolence” and “death” still operated within the barbed-wire confines of the camp. But a close examination of the U.S.-controlled POW camps reveals a crucial change from the U.S. occupation “war of espionage” – in the POW camps of the Korean War, all Koreans were considered to be “suspicious.” In other words, the U.S. military – despite, or perhaps even because of, the previous years of occupation – was even more unsure and uncertain of which Korean was leftist, rightist, communist, anti-communist, or any other category along a “political” axis. And with the mass movements of soldiers, civilians, refugees, and also prisoners of war, the Counterintelligence Corps faced a particular challenge in locating and identifying the “war of espionage” on the ground. For Agent Reports, the CIC had

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<sup>137</sup> Historical Report for Period 1 November to 30 Number 1950; Folder: Historical Rpt 704 CIC Nov 1950; Box 4677; Army AG Commercial Reports; Record Group 407; National Archives at College Park, MD.

developed a key for marking the political affiliation of all Korean subjects who appeared in the report narrative, including the interrogated Korean subject:

RM-CP – Reported Member of Communist Party  
KM – Known Member of Communist Party  
PM-CP – Probably Member of Communist Party  
A-C – Anti-Communist  
U – Communist Affiliation Unknown/Political Affiliation Unknown<sup>138</sup>

For the period of early 1951, the agent reports titled “Location and/or Apprehension of Espionage Agents” all contain a striking similarity – the key “U,” or “Political Affiliation Unknown” was used as labels for almost every Korean subject interrogated by the CIC or other affiliated military intelligence teams.<sup>139</sup> Even with cases that seemed to present a straightforward case of affiliation with the northern Korean People’s Army, the CIC suspended immediate political categorization. For example, the case of Pak Ik Soo was one illustration of the denotation: “On 6 June 51 Pak, Ik Soo (1) (U) was apprehended by elements of 5<sup>th</sup> Marines 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division. At the time of capture Pak was wearing a NKPA uniform.”<sup>140</sup> Pak had been captured by Chinese Communist Forces in February 1951, and later became a prisoner of war under the custody of the Korean People’s Army. Pak then volunteered to serve with the NKPA. However, possibly due to Pak’s divulgence of information – details about other members in his KPA battalion and description of military plans – the CIC labeled Pak with a “U.” Other details similar to Pak’s report abound: Chong Do Yong, age 23 and from “Kyong Sung Nam Do,” was

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<sup>138</sup> *CIC RG319*, Volume 2. This particular key was used in most of the Agent Reports filed by the CIC during the first year of the war.

<sup>139</sup> *CIC RG319*, Volume 2, Agent Report: Masan G2 Office, dated 14 March 1951.

<sup>140</sup> *CIC RG319*, Volume 2, Agent Report: Location and/or Apprehension of Espionage Agent, dated 8 June 1951.

“wearing an NKPA uniform under a ROKA uniform” at the time of apprehension by the Marine CIC agents on June 6, 1951.<sup>141</sup>

Or in the case of Chung Nak Sam, age 29 from “Kangwon-do,” had joined the South Korean Labor Party in early 1948, went to North Korea for further training with the North Korean Labor Party, organized a guerilla fighter band in September 1950, and then supposedly helped with military intelligence work on United Nations activities. The “Agents[sic] Note” for the report states, “During the course of interrogation Chung uttered various statements which were contradictory to earlier statements made by him. Chung talked openly about his own actions but was very reluctant to implicate other agents working with him.”<sup>142</sup> Regarding the two other Koreans Chung does identify as having taken the “indoctrination” course in North Korea, the CIC special agent, George Yamamoto of the 181<sup>st</sup> CIC Detachment, also labels them as “U”: “Che Bong Sul (Korean) (U), age 32 [...] Yu Uk Sam (Korean) (U), age 30.”<sup>143</sup>

The pattern of assigning “Political Affiliation Unknown” to the different Koreans suspected of having ties with North Korea or leftist organizations demonstrates two important elements of the “war of espionage” – first, the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was not considered a determining factor in whether or not one was a radical “communist” Korean, and secondly, the vast application of the “U” category was not necessarily a political reprieve, but rather an indication of the extent of the overall suspicion the CIC and U.S. military intelligence harbored regarding Korean subjects. Just as difficult to pin down was “anti-

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<sup>141</sup> *CIC RG319*, Volume 2, Agent Report: Location and/or Apprehension of Espionage Agent, dated 8 June 1951.

<sup>142</sup> *CIC RG319*, Volume 2, Agent Report: Location and/or Apprehension of Espionage Agent, dated 9 June 1951.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.* George Yamamoto is listed as being part of the 181<sup>st</sup> CIC Detachment.

communism” – if it was difficult to ascertain exactly who was a “communist,” then how would one be able to determine who was an “anti-communist”? Although there was a great deal of ambiguity in the political categorization of the interrogation Korean subjects in the reports on potential espionage agents, ambiguity was neither sustainable nor possible politically in terms of survival during the Korean War. At this point in the war in the year 1951, all Koreans along the political spectrum were potentially suspicious.

As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, the economy of violence that undergirded the “state of emergency” worked in tandem with an economy of information that facilitated the U.S. military government’s claims to “knowing” the Korean, and thus legitimating its assertions to articulate the political desires of Koreans, on behalf of the Koreans. During the U.S. occupation, the North West Young Men’s Association had become critical to the operations of the CIC – during the Korean War, a newly formed organization within the U.S.-controlled POW camps came to play a similar role vis-à-vis the U.S. military: the Anti-Communist Youth League.

The ACYL became the dominant youth group organization in the U.S.-controlled POW camps, appearing in the POW camps during 1952. In a report based on interviews with twenty-four Korean POWs leaders involved with the ACYL, the report’s author – the Psychological Warfare Section – mentions that earlier types of youth groups such as the “Students National Defense League” or “Corps” or the “Korean Youth Association” had been formed with the “aid of CIE personnel, to provide the framework whereby security might be maintained ‘so that the common POW had nothing to worry about.’”<sup>144</sup> These youth groups later were subsumed into the overall organization of the ACYL, the

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<sup>144</sup> *Interviews with 24 Korean POW Leaders*. Prepared by Research, Analysis, and Evaluation Division, Psychological Warfare Section, United States Army Forces, Far East, Headquarters. Dated 13 May 1954. Unpublished manuscript.



formation of which had been encouraged by the Republic of Korea Army. As I demonstrate in later chapters, much of the activity of the ACYL – in terms of surveillance, education, violence, and interrogation – much be seen as sovereignty-claiming practices. Or in other words, the ACYL functioned as a proxy in many ways for the anti-communist Korean state. A later chapter tackles the issue of political recognition within the struggles of the leftist communist Korean prisoners of war – however, political recognition was also fraught on different levels for the rightist, anti-communist Korean prisoners of war also.

Although the Civilian Information and Education and the Psychological Warfare Section of the U.S. military both worked very closely with the ACYL, the U.S. military both condoned the majority of the physical beatings and interrogations the anti-communist youth groups administered on fellow prisoners of war. Violence was, once again, not the issue. However, the report on the twenty-four POW ACYL leaders did express a discontent with one particular finding:

The anti-communist leaders seem so eager to establish their own role in the creation of the anti-communist phalanx that they tend to minimize, or even deny, the contributions of CIE toward their success in the internal political struggle. What these leaders regret is that CIE (and the Camp Command generally) did not take an active physical part in destroying the communist groups, that is this sense its position was, to the leaders, “too neutral.”<sup>145</sup>

The difficulty here was that the ACYL leaders, although anti-communist, did not willingly express a gratitude for the “benevolence” of the U.S. military activities. Even the rightist leaders, although in a different vein from the leftist leaders of earlier sections of this chapter, asserted a claim to a political subjectivity that was not fundamentally shaped by the policies and agendas of the United States.

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

But the CIE and the Psychological Warfare Section should not have so easily dismissed the violent practices of the ACYL. As demonstrated earlier with the “espionage” agent reports from the CIC, all Koreans were rendered suspicious, and the usual markers of identity, personal history, or self-narrative were no longer sufficient or deemed reliable. Language was no longer reliable. And what could be rendered visible within the political public sphere during the Korean War was in terms of the other parameter of the “state of emergency” – death. The terrain of the political had been collapsed onto the individual Korean subject – and in turn, one could only render oneself visible by expressing one’s own relationship to U.S. sovereign power.

In other words, from the “occupation of liberation” through the “war of intervention,” the U.S. military state had demanded a type of Korean subject – one that answered directly to the sovereign, exceptional authority embodied by the United States. And just as the United States posited itself as a “universal” liberal power, the subject it demanded was, in turn, also a “universalized” decolonized subject – but here, “universalized” had come to mean a divestment of all particular material histories in order to sublimate a direct relationship between the individual postcolonial subject and the United States. A blood petition created by the members of the ACYL in the U.S.-controlled POW camp located at Yongchon perhaps best exemplifies this collapsing in the political public sphere between the U.S. “state of emergency” and the political struggles on the ground. There were three sets of petitions – addressed specifically to President Eisenhower, General Clark, and Lt. Gen. Harrison, and each one was dated May 10, 1953, the petitions meticulously written in Korean and translated into English by the POWs themselves. For the text of the petitions, the POWs had used a sharp, dark

pencil, meticulously forming the Korean and English characters. For signatures, the POWs had used their own pierced fingers, and the signatures that covered the entire width and breadth of these sheets of paper were signed in blood.

The petition was a request for the release of the members of the ACYL from the POW camps – and thus from the category of “prisoners of war” – so they might fight against communist Koreans on the battlefield. Beginning the petition with an excoriation of Stalin as the “son of a worthless shoe repairer,” the petition writers lament the misrecognition of themselves as “prisoners of war,” writing,

Our sad fortunes is that today still double fence weight heavy on us and fall asleep with detention and get disappointment at surrounding when we wake up, moreover, why and how comes we are punished as a guiltlessness and vexatious PW?<sup>146</sup>

At Panmunjom, there had been discussion on the part of the U.S. Army to release the anti-communist Korean prisoners of war in south Korea proper.

We make a petition by our own warm blood. Dearest Your Excellency! Even though these bloods are not worthwhile to see and a little quantity but it is an expression of our real determination Sir. It is our crying that give us an opportunity of releasing just like what Your Excellency said. It is our real sincerity.”<sup>147</sup>

“[R]eal determination” and “real sincerity” was to be communicated via the medium of blood, where the blood would more transparently and directly convey the true intentions and sentiments than any language or text itself. In the end, it was the blood that mattered the most.

The members of the ACYL insisted on their political will by framing their commitment in terms of their willingness to die for their state:

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<sup>146</sup> Due to its fragile and “unclassifiable” medium of blood and paper, this blood document is filed in a vault at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland. Due to the idiosyncratic spelling and writing, I have kept all of the original spelling.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

Estimate the tremble recollection of long time from five years we, the all members of Anti-Communist Young Men who are would opposed against the Reds, have been fighting continuously and how many times was it go over the point of death?<sup>148</sup>

The expression of their political desires was couched in a vocabulary of bodily sentiment, where pain, tears, and their hearts were evidence of their loyalty:

But our hearts which waiting with impatience for UN Forces and ROK Army in pain and how many times do we dropped tears looking upon the UN airplanes!<sup>149</sup>

The medium of blood itself was to reinforce the collapsing of the intention, desire, and body into a “sincere subject,” where the blood itself expressed the “real determination.”

Translation, in a sense, was circumvented by the medium of blood – there was no denying or misrecognizing the intent of the prisoners of war:

We make a petition by our own warm blood. Dearest Your Excellency! Even though these bloods are not worthwhile to see and a little quantity but it is an expression of our real determination Sir.

It is our crying that give us an opportunity of releasing just like what Your Excellency said. It is our real sincerity.<sup>150</sup>

Each of the proclaimed demands of the prisoners of war was also positioned between two types of “deaths” – that of the anti-communist Korean prisoner of war and that of the communist Korean. The earlier mentioned report on the POW leaders made a pointed comment on the “extreme feelings of the POWs toward communism and their desire for a martyr’s role,” and attributed “[t]heir assumption of the hero’s role” to a need to “[compensate] for their ‘degrading’ POW status.” But before “shame” solidifies as the operative incentive behind these seeming exhortations of “till death” pronouncements, it

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

is important to pause and consider this as an “act of writing.” Who was the intended readership of this blood document?

Similar perhaps to the Korean peasant farmer Chang with his trilingual sign over his home in 1946, these prisoners of war in 1953 were preempting any ambiguity in how they could be read by the U.S. military and state – the POWs were already performing the “collapsing” work of the demands of the United States in order to present a political demand. I also believe that again similar to Chang’s sign, the writing was an act that signaled a definite position vis-à-vis the neighbors, or in the case of the prisoners of war, their fellow prisoners and other Korean personnel in the camp. For 478 different, individual Korean prisoners of war sign their names with blood on large, separate sheets of paper, each act of signing must have been witnessed by the collective group. With language sorely insufficient, the blood itself perhaps transformed the text into something more of a performance – a performance of one’s subjecthood, perfectly attuned to the demands upon it:

1. We opposed to the death against prevail upon us to be repatriated which is under negotiation at cease-fire talks at Pan-Moon Jeom, because as we had been in N.K. under Red puppet regime for five years we well know their deception.
2. We opposed to the death against Armistice without unification of our fatherland which be about to repeal the blood shedding during the Korean War for three (3) years. Let’s attack up to the North Korea.
3. Even if end us to a neutral nation or a neutral zone on ROK land for the purpose of bringing the temporary Armistice, we think it is one of deception policy of cruel Red for the forced repatriation, therefore to kill ourselves we dare in that case at ROK land.
4. Give us an opportunity of releasing so that we may be able to going to front lines to fight against Red and make revenge on Red and washed a triumphal knife with the water of the Doo-Han River.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

But what kind of performance was this petition, which was carefully rendered into 3 separate copies with 487 signatures written in blood? To refer back to an act of writing mentioned earlier in this chapter: “If any Korean remained mentally normal during the war, he was a fool. Koreans made themselves split personalities. They showed obedience in the presence of Japanese and they did just the opposite thing in reality. Without any munitions, revolutionists fought bravely in fields and in factories.” This reflection on the demands on Korean subjectivity by the Japanese colonial rule within the pages of a leftist text from the U.S. occupation has, I argue, a resonance with the text and medium of the blood petition signed by the ACYL in 1953 during the Korean War. The Koreans were still having to render themselves strategically as “split personalities,” performing a recognition of the benevolence of the United States in order to gain a certain breadth of limited political recognition in return, as death still hung in the balance, a continuous threat and reminder of the high stakes in this performance.

## **Conclusion**

What kind of politics were possible within the public realms of the U.S. occupation? How did the U.S. occupation profoundly impact the contours of the political during the Korean War? The G-2 – and the CIC in particular – was at the heart of the epistemological project of the U.S. occupation – in order for the U.S. occupation to derive legitimate authority, the occupation forces must have been able to claim to know the “true intent” – the political desires - of the Korean people. The U.S. occupation forces must purport to know the Koreans better than they do themselves – and it is in this very claim that the military intelligence enters the historical stage.

The foremost relationship that the U.S. military government was concerned with was the relationship between the individual Korean and the U.S. military government – did the average Korean recognize the authority and legitimacy of the USAMGIK? What happened was that the U.S. occupation – and its subsequent structural and discursive legacies through the war – essentially collapsed the parameters for political discourse in Korea by distilling the question of power and the political into one that is the relation between the sovereign and the “bare life” individual. Not the state and the citizen, nor the nation and the subject – but the sovereign and the “bare life” individual. The profound material question of the nation-state itself – and the more immediate concerns surrounding the issues of land, rice, and distribution – would be swept under the rug, with all eyes focused on the meanings of Chang’s sign, rather than on his interests in terms of land distribution.

## Chapter Two

### **The Babel of Interrogation: A History of Japanese Americans from “Enemy Alien” to “POW Interrogator,” 1942-1953<sup>152</sup>**

In the files of the 500<sup>th</sup> Military Intelligence Service [MIS] in the National Archives located in College Park, Maryland sits a mimeographed copy of an article written by Associated Press journalist John Fujii. The article itself never made it to press, as the MIS had deemed that it contained compromising material for the U.S. military efforts during the Korean War. Fujii had written an article on an interrogation scene on the battlefield of the war.

John Fujii begins his never-published article, which was dated October 23, 1952, with this introduction to the interrogation scene: “There is a babel of tongues on this much fought over ridge – a babel of Chinese dialects, Korean, Japanese and one soft Louisiana drawl.” The Louisiana drawl belonged to Lieutenant Henry J. Picard, “who [headed] a frontline interrogation team the Allies have whipped into shape to question prisoners.” The team functioned as follows, according to Fujii’s description:

Four languages are employed on each operation by the interrogation team.

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<sup>152</sup> Using “Japanese Americans” for this time period is indeed anachronistic, as the term “Orientals” was the commonly-used one during this period. “Asian American” would later be created by student movements in the 1960s as term for expressing the political solidarity of students from different Asian backgrounds. Although “Japanese American” is awkward to use in a sense, the use of “Oriental” within this chapter would replicate much of the conflation between the Asian citizen of the United States and the Asian subject of U.S. hegemonic projects in East Asia. As a result, I have decided to begin with the differentiated landscape of race and racializations by using “Japanese American,” rather than to begin with the flat, one-dimensional plane of “Orientalism,” since it is the argument of this chapter that one type of racialization project is used to delineate another.



Prisoners are interrogated in their native dialects by Hsiao Shu-len, a Chinese civilian, and Yun Bong Chun, a former Korean policeman. Their findings are written in English.

Lieutenant Picard, who learned fluent Korean in a U.S. Army Language school, and his assistant First Lt. Thomas Shiratsuki, a Nisei from Salinas, Calif., who speaks fluent Japanese and English, translate the English into Korean for officers.

It sounds like a cumbersome way of doing things but the team functions smoothly with Pvt. Kenjiro Fred Wakugawa, another Nisei, of Honolulu, acting as a sort of jack of all trades.<sup>153</sup>

In fact, there were even more people involved in this “babel” of interrogation: when the Chinese prisoners of war began speaking quickly, “South Korean Lieutenant Pak Chan Be, who was born in China and educated in Japan, explained the proceedings in Japanese to Lieutenant Shiratsuki and in Korean or English to Lieutenant Picard. They pieced together the information they were after.”

The officials in the MIS stated that they did not want the article to be published since it mentioned the names of the interrogators.<sup>154</sup> But perhaps Fujii’s interrogation scene was also a potential threat to the integrity of the U.S. military in that it exposed the tremendous labor and contingent variables involved in producing a single document of “military information” or intelligence. Six people and three languages were involved in this post-battle interrogation scene. Fujii interpreted the scene as an example of the congenial, collaborative work between military allies. But I argue that it is more of an example of how the activity of “interrogation” itself was entirely bound up in the histories of two empires – Japan and the United States – and the wars over the Pacific in the twentieth century. Shiratsuki and Wakugawa were from Salinas, California and

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<sup>153</sup> AP Dispatch 148 by John Fujii; Folder: ITGP – 500; Journals – 500<sup>th</sup> Military Intelligence Group; Box 6177; Army AG Commercial Reports; RG 407; National Archives and Records Administration; College Park, Maryland.

<sup>154</sup> Folder: ITGP – 500; Journals – 500<sup>th</sup> Military Intelligence Group; Box 6177; Army AG Commercial Reports; RG 407; National Archives and Records Administration; College Park, Maryland.

Honolulu, Hawaii respectively, both Nisei second-generation Japanese Americans who were members of a larger cohort of an estimated 4,000 Japanese Americans who worked as interrogators, translators of captured documents, or interpreters for diplomatic military meetings during the Korean War.<sup>155</sup> In a war that has been often heralded as the marker of different beginnings – the early Cold War, the first military mobilization on the NSC 68, the first official “hot war” of the U.S.-Soviet developing standoff – the histories of Shiratsuki and Wakugawa reposition the Korean War within the currents of much longer histories.

This chapter follows a cohort within this generation of Japanese Americans as they move from being the “enemy aliens” of World War II to being drafted as “POW interrogators” for the Korean War. Tracing their experiences provides a history of the interrogation room, by placing the interrogation room within longer histories of how “military necessity” was constructed within the U.S.-East Asia transpacific relationship within shifting constructions of race, empire, and nation. The terms “internment,” “hostage exchange,” and “repatriation” join the “interrogation room” in this grounded history of military necessity. In order to historicize the interrogation room, the interrogator and the templates of interrogation themselves must also be historicized.

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<sup>155</sup> With President Truman’s executive order for the desegregation of the U.S. Army in 1948, the categorization and identification of military personnel by “race” was no longer used, although according to some of my interviewees, the U.S. Army circumvented the order by using photographs attached to personnel files. With such archival challenges, I have culled this number of “4,000” from the estimates given by members of the Japanese American War Veterans of the Korean War. The war veterans have invested a great deal of time tracking down Japanese Americans who had served in World War II and the Korean War, examining both archival material of the U.S. military and also relying upon community memory. The number of “4,000” could be considered rather conservative by some standards – in his book on Japanese American linguists who had served with the Military Intelligence Service during World War II, James McNaughton notes that “[b]y the spring of 1946 the school [Military Intelligence Service Language School] had graduated nearly 6,000 military linguists in the Japanese language.” (from James McNaughton, *Nisei Linguists: Japanese Americans in the Military Intelligence Service during World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 2007), preface.) Not all of the 6,000 graduates would have been Japanese American; however, a sizable percentage was called back into service for the Korean War, as well as new draftees and volunteers.

The U.S. military's reliance on Japanese American translators and interrogators was expressly recognized in a hearing held by the U.S. Subcommittee on Korean War Atrocities, a subsidiary of the larger Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations headed by Senator Joseph McCarthy. On December 4, 1953, Colonel James M. Hanley, the former head of the War Crimes Division, expounded on the process of interrogation utilized to guarantee the veracity of the reports and cases filed by his Judge Advocate General (JAG) teams:

You might be interested in how we interrogated these prisoners. We used Koreans, of course, to carry on the preliminary interrogations of the prisoners, and in the case of the Chinese used the Chinese or at least Chinese-speaking Koreans. Some of the work, interrogation, was done by American Nisei, speaking Japanese, with the Koreans who understood and spoke Japanese, many of whom did.<sup>156</sup>

Hanley emphasized that in order to verify the accuracy of the information given; the protocol required that the POWs “swear to them before an American officer in all cases, or subsequently getting the document translated into English. Those documents were sworn to in the native tongue of the prisoner so he had an opportunity to read it and know exactly what he signed.” For Hanley, the procedural bureaucratic nature of the process was clearly fundamental to the presentation of the interrogation room as a site that would, in turn, produce “objective truth” or “information.” Distortion – as in all possible human variable elements – was supposedly eliminated through the checks and balances of bureaucracy.

Bureaucracy plays a central role in this chapter's story of subject-making, as I first examine the extensive practice of list-making by the U.S. Department of State in the surveillance over the Japanese American population in the United States. The Japanese

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<sup>156</sup> Subcommittee on Korean War Atrocities, *Korean War Atrocities*, 83rd Congress, First Session, December 4, 1953 1953, 152.

American had become the object of bureaucratic rule and surveillance during World War II, but in the Korean War, the Japanese American interrogator became the small military bureaucrat in the role of the POW interrogator, responsible for assessing the “reliability” of the Korean prisoner of war. By moving from President Roosevelt’s Executive Order in 1942 through the Korean War until 1953, I demonstrate how the figure of the Japanese American moved from being a subject created by U.S. anti-Asian exclusionary immigration laws, to the subject of “enemy alien” emergency measures, to the redemptive post-WWII figure of U.S. racial liberalism, and then became the bureaucrat who would determine the “reliability” of the postcolonial Korean subject.

But this very same story is also a history that reveals that the interrogation room may have looked nothing like what Colonel Hanley asserted in front of the House Subcommittee in 1953. Even the U.S. military interrogation room had its own history, one embedded in a longer temporality of multiple imperial projects across the Pacific. In 1950, second-generation Japanese American Sam Miyamoto found himself on the Korean peninsula, after having been drafted by the U.S. military to work as a POW interrogator. According to Miyamoto, the Korean communist prisoners of war would, almost without fail, spit upon the interrogation room floor before entering. However, when they arrived at his interrogation room, they would instead want to ask him questions – and Miyamoto did allow the Korean POWs to ask him personal questions. In essence, one could say that the interrogator allowed the interrogatee to interrogate him.

There was one particular question the Korean POWs all seemed to want to ask Miyamoto. The Korean prisoners of war wanted to learn about the internment camps that

the U.S. government had created for the Japanese American population during World War II after Pearl Harbor. The exchange, in Miyamoto's words, unfolded as follows:

Well, they know that I was in a concentration camp in America during World War II, and they said, 'You know, if I was in a concentration camp, I won't be in the army here. I won't be fighting under the U.S. Army.' [And] I told him the truth. I said, 'I'm here because I was ordered to come here. I didn't come here by choice. I was ordered to join the army and I was ordered to study the Korean language, and I was ordered to come here and talk to you about this.'<sup>157</sup>

"I told him the truth," the seventy-year-old Sam Miyamoto said in reflecting upon his experiences as an interrogator during an oral history interview he gave in February 2008. It was an extraordinary gesture – a former interrogator in reflections upon interrogations he had conducted over a half-century before was insisting that he had told the "truth" to the prisoners of war in his interrogation room.

Miyamoto's "truth" was one of a man who had been made a subject of multiple projects of empire, namely Japanese and American imperial ambitions. But Miyamoto's insistence that he had told the "truth" also belies his insistence that he had made a choice. Miyamoto's experience as an interrogator must be understood within his own history of constant negotiations with U.S. state bureaucracies. Miyamoto's own life story frames the Korean War within a series of different "state of emergency" policies fashioned and mobilized by the United States. Born in California, Sam Miyamoto was fourteen years old when Roosevelt's "Day of Infamy" occurred and his family subsequently sent to the internment camp in Poston, Arizona. Within less than a year, Miyamoto and his family found themselves aboard the S.S. Gripsholm as parties to a hostage exchange, where Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans were exchanged for white American businessmen, journalists, and missionaries. Upon arrival at the port at Yokohama in

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<sup>157</sup> Sam Shigeru Miyamoto, interview by author, March 1, 2007, Monterey Park, California.

Japan, Miyamoto's own strangely rendered "statelessness" would take yet another twist – because his parents had not registered his birth in Japan, he was therefore not recognized as a citizen in Japan. Unable to attend Japanese schools and struggling to survive in a war-devastated Japan, Miyamoto left his family to try to make his own way, and eventually came to Tokyo. A witness to the U.S. military firebombing of Tokyo and later to the post-atomic landscape of Hiroshima, Miyamoto was an American citizen legally, but was essentially a stateless person, an enemy alien to two different empires. In 1949, after attending Christian missionary-run schools in Japan, Miyamoto enrolled at UCLA, but wanted to pursue studies in law, which at that time were only offered at UC Berkeley. While he was waiting for his transfer, the U.S. military drafted him for the Korean War, and within a few months, Miyamoto found himself on the Korean peninsula, instructed to interrogate Korean prisoners of war.

When we examine the Korean War from inside the military interrogation room, the Korean War gains significance as yet another development in a series of "states of emergency" as mobilized by the United States. The presence of defiance and reluctance in Miyamoto's interrogation room revealed not only how the subject-making was a two-fold project, involving both the interrogator and the interrogatee, but also how both people were negotiating shifts of "personhood" – moving from colonial subject to national citizen, or, in case of Miyamoto, from enemy alien to citizen-soldier. In essence, the story is about subject-making by the U.S. empire.

More crucially, this story is about how the interrogation room, symbolic of the liberal bureaucratic military of the U.S., has its own history in a trajectory longer than the standard temporal frame of 1950 to 1953 for the Korean War – this story will instead

span the years from the 1920s through the early Cold War. Formal decolonization had arrived, and the United States, along with the United Nations, had proclaimed itself the “beacon of light” for the postwar world. After 1945, the former colony of Korea was to become a nation-state via trusteeship under the United States, Japan would be a former empire domesticated into a nation-state by the United States, and the United States would emerge as a hegemonic power firmly ensconced in its disavowal of its own imperial ambitions. The individuation of “nation-states,” and the normalization of the fiction of the nation-state system demanded also a reinscribing of who was the proper individual subject of a nation-state. The interrogation room’s particular production of “information” was simultaneously revealing of the shifting discourses around sovereignty, liberal individualism, and racial formations in the wake of formal decolonization; and the interrogation room exposed how all three ideas were fundamentally implicated and informed by each other in the newly-fangled post-1945 U.S. empire.

This chapter, I aim to denaturalize notions of “military necessity,” “information,” and “interrogation,” by gathering and reading a myriad of materials to suggest multiple histories and subjective interpretations of what happened in an interrogation room during the Korean War. By presenting the histories, negotiations, and power dynamics in the interrogation room, I hope to present a methodology for reading the U.S. military bureaucratic archive, both against and along the grain. From the military records of different interrogation units during the Korean War to the records concerning the U.S.-Japan hostage exchange conducted by the U.S. State Department, bureaucratic records play a crucial role in the telling of the story. Because this chapter is also a reflection on the workings and assumptions of “bureaucracy,” and ultimately locates “military

necessity” as an ideal of liberal bureaucratic U.S. imperial workings, the oral history interviews with Japanese American former interrogators form the key material as the former interrogators themselves narrate the process, the decisions, and their actions. In turn, their attention to process and production informs the overall methodology of this chapter.<sup>158</sup> The oral history interviews create a productive tension with bureaucratic records, illuminating not only how the bureaucratic record collapses gestures and labor involved in the interrogation process, but also a different set of stakes involved in the act of interrogation. If, as this chapter argues, interrogation was ultimately a moment of subject-making in terms of both the interrogator and the interrogated, how did the interrogator negotiate this project? And, indeed, why did Sam Miyamoto, a half century after his experiences interrogating on the Korean peninsula, insist that he had told the “truth” to a Korean POW?

### **A Hostage Exchange to Herald the “War”**

On December 8, 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt stood in front of the U.S. Congress and delivered a speech that would herald the entrance of the United States into World War II. “Yesterday, December 7, 1941 – a date which will live in infamy – the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.” He ended the speech with a request: “I ask that the

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<sup>158</sup> The interviews conducted for the Japanese American Living Legacy Oral History Project are housed at the Center for Oral and Public History, California State University, Fullerton. Susan Uyemura has been the driving force behind the JA Living Legacy initiative. I thank her and the rest of the people with JA Living Legacy for their generosity in helping me contact different veterans, while also teaching me an enormous amount on the local histories of Japanese American communities in southern California.



Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, a state of war has existed by the United States and Japanese Empire.”<sup>159</sup>

“War” was most immediately heralded by two actions taken by the U.S. government in December 1941: the arrest of over 2,000 Japanese Americans in the United States and the sending of a letter to Japan regarding a potential exchange of U.S. civilians in the Japanese empire for Japanese nationals and Japanese American citizens in the United States. Agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) came directly to the homes of Japanese American families, and the arrests of 2,000 Japanese American men affected the families of young adolescents like Toro Isobe and Sam Miyamoto. On December 7, 1941, Toro Isobe was fourteen years old. Born in San Francisco, Toro had moved with his parents to Los Angeles in 1939 to seek work during the Great Depression. His father found employment managing a small hotel called the Victorian Hotel, and they leased a small residential unit in the hotel itself. “On the night of December 7<sup>th</sup>, the FBI came and took my father away, so mother was left by herself with four kids.”<sup>160</sup> Sam Miyamoto remembered the visit of the FBI to his family home also: “I still recall two FBI agents who came to our home on February 19, 1942 with sirens piercing the small farming community in Imperial Valley. It was frightening. My father was stunned.” Miyamoto’s father showed the FBI his passport to prove that he was a legal immigrant. In response, the FBI stated that they “were not questioning his loyalty, rather they were rounding up the community leaders.” The FBI took Miyamoto’s father away, and froze the family’s bank account. “Financial ruin and fear of an uncertain future for the family finally took its toll on my father. When Dad joined the family in

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<sup>159</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: Japan, 1931-1941*, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), 793-794.

<sup>160</sup> Tohoru Isobe, interview by author, February 27, 2007, Los Angeles, California.

July of 43, all his hair had turned white, and suddenly he looked old beaten and withdrawn. He showed pain when I told him we lost everything; the farm, equipment, car, home, truck, and all our personal belongings.”<sup>161</sup>

By June 27, 1942, the infamous Public Proclamation No. 8 was posted on the walls and telephone poles of different communities all throughout the military zones:

The present situation within these military areas requires as a matter of military necessity that persons of Japanese ancestry who have been evacuated from certain regions within Military Areas Nos. 1 and 2 shall be removed to Relocation Centers for their relocation, maintenance and supervision and that such Relocation Centers be designated as War Relocation Project Areas and that appropriate restrictions with respect to the rights of all such persons of Japanese ancestry, both alien and non-alien, so evacuated to such Relocation Centers and of all other persons to enter, remain in, or leave such areas be promulgated [...]<sup>162</sup>

For the next three years, over 120,000 Japanese Americans would be forcibly removed by the U.S. government into internment camps located in sites as various as Heart Mountain, Wyoming to Poston, Arizona. “Although two thirds of the internees were American citizens, they were incarcerated without any charge, trial, or evidence against them.”<sup>163</sup>

Most of this study’s cohort was shuttled through the Santa Anita racetrack camp eventually, and then was sent to camps scattered all over the United States: Manzanar in California - Jerome, Arkansas – Gila River near Phoenix, Arizona - Rohwer, Arkansas – Poston, Arizona - Heart Mountain, Wyoming. Arnold Yoshizawa, twelve-years-old at the time, was living in the Boyle Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles – he was sent to Manzanar. Robert Shiroishi, an eleven-year-old growing up on Long Beach, was shuttled

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<sup>161</sup> Miyamoto, interview.

<sup>162</sup> From the Japanese American War Veterans online digital archive: [www.javadc.org](http://www.javadc.org). Accessed May, 25, 2010.

<sup>163</sup> Michael Robinson, *By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 4.

with his family through Santa Anita and finally to Jerome, Arkansas.<sup>164</sup>

Another displacement would soon take place within the Japanese American communities, and Sam Miyamoto along with the members of his immediate family would find themselves on yet another list. The names of all the members in the Miyamoto family appear within the pages of a different U.S. government list dated September 2, 1943. Sam Shigeru Miyamoto at age 15, along with his parents and three other siblings, found himself on a sailing list with a simple title: “Japanese Embarked for Second Voyage of Gripsholm.”<sup>165</sup> They became part of a “hostage exchange” between the United States and Japan.

627.	<i>Miyamoto, Shinichi</i>	<i>M 53</i>	<i>United States</i>
628.	"	, <i>Masu (Mrs. Shinichi)</i>	"
629.	"	, <i>Arata</i>	"
630.	"	, <i>Shigeru</i>	"
631.	"	, <i>Atsushi</i>	"
632.	"	, <i>Ayako Lily</i>	"

For the Miyamoto family, another document in addition to the Executive Orders, Proclamations, and the Constitution would be brought to bear – or held in abeyance – onto their experience: the 1929 Geneva Conventions on Prisoners of War. A different calculus in determining the proper subjecthood for people like the Miyamoto family came to the fore – and this time it was a certain formulation of sovereignty. In other words, there was yet another project of “military law” and “military necessity” being worked through the Japanese American population.

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<sup>164</sup> Arnold Yoshizawa, interview conducted by Susan Uyemura for the Japanese American Living Legacy Oral History Project, December 2, 2006, Carson, California. Robert Shiroishi, interview conducted by Susan Uyemura for the JA Living Legacy Oral History Project, November 22, 2006, Cypress, California.

<sup>165</sup> From a narrative and archival document compilation given to me by Atsushi “Archie” Miyamoto, the younger brother of Sam Miyamoto. Compiled and written in October 2006, Miyamoto titled the report, “The Gripsholm Exchanges: A short concise report on the exchange of hostages during World War II between the United States and Japan as it relates to Japanese Americans.” Atsushi “Archie” Miyamoto, interview conducted by author, February 26, 2007, Harbor City, California.

On December 8, 1941, the same day as President Roosevelt's "Day in Infamy" speech, the U.S. government transmitted through the Swiss Minister in Tokyo its initial proposal for the treatment and eventual exchange of Japanese government officials in return for American government officials. In 1942, according to U.S. naval intelligence calculations, there were approximately 3,000 U.S. citizens in the Far East, of whom 1,000 to 1,500 were missionaries. The Japanese military in its large sweep down from Manchuria to the south of the Asian continent – to Singapore and the Philippines - had taken prisoner these 3,000 American citizens.<sup>166</sup> Businessmen, journalists, and missionaries composed most of this "hostage" population – they were the "non-officials." And they were the locus of the U.S. government's concern.

On December 10 1941, Japanese officials in Tokyo received the U.S. proposal to exchange non-official American citizens who were within the reach of the Japanese empire, especially Manchuria, along with government officials. But one question remained: under which legal precedent or rubric would the exchange take place? On December 17 1941, Max Huber, President of the International Red Cross, "answered a Japanese inquiry on this very point: 'We think that [the] fact Japan is not party [to the] 1929 conventions relative to war prisoners does not prevent carrying out above-mentioned scheme provided reciprocity agreed upon by parties of war or provided these parties declare themselves prepared apply de facto provisions contained in 1929 war prisoners convention.'<sup>167</sup> As both the Japanese and U.S. governments agreed to follow

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<sup>166</sup> Letter from Frank Knox to Mr. Joe J Mickle, Secretary, Committee on East Asia. Folder: Japanese Govt Agreement; Box 81; Special War Problems Division; Department of State; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>167</sup> Quote from Bruce Elleman. *Japanese-American Civilian Prisoner Exchanges and Detention Camps*. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 14.

the provisions of the 1929 Geneva Conventions, the phrase “reciprocity” soon became a basis for much of the negotiations to follow.<sup>168</sup>

Soon members of the U.S. Department of State were becoming upset over the treatment of “Americans” by the Japanese. BL (most possibly Brekendridge Long, the assistant Secretary of State) wrote in a memo, “It has come repeatedly to my notice, and for sometime I have had the intention of recording the thought that according to the terms of our exchange agreement with Japan the whole affair was to be on a reciprocal basis.”

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The Japanese military had sequestered American citizens into certain sections of cities, or camp-like areas. However, the anxiety provided a moment of reflection on the “reciprocal” aspect of the exchange, members of the Department of State acknowledged that American actions with Japanese Americans had undermined a possible case for protest against Japan’s sequestering of American citizens in camps:

February 16, 1943

SD[special division] does not feel that this Government is in a position at this time to protest the mass internment of American nationals on the basis of the four reasons outlined by the Swiss in Bern’s 1028, February 13.

One: Many Japanese were moved to relocation centers before camps were completed.

Two: The aged and infirm and sick, as well as pregnant women and small children, were moved by trains and buses to relocation centers.

Three: Many Japanese were removed from their homes on only a few hours notice.

Four: Many of the relocation centers to which Japanese were removed are in remote inaccessible areas.

No reasons have been given by the Japanese for the mass internment of American nationals in and near Shanghai. It can be assumed that if we

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<sup>168</sup> The Spanish government became the mediating power on behalf of the Japanese, and the Swiss government became the mediating power on behalf of the United States.

<sup>169</sup> Re: Expense of keeping Japanese officials in the United States prior to exchange, dated September 28, 1942; Folder: Japanese Int – United States Nov-Dec 1942; Box 86; Subject Files, 1939-1955 Gripsholm-Repatriation to Japanese Internees – United States; Special War Problems Division; Department of State; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

were to protest that action the Japanese would be justified in replying that this Government has already taken similar action in regard to Japanese nationals, which is true.<sup>170</sup>

The significance of the various interpretations, frustrations, and preoccupations with “reciprocity” on the part of the Special Division of the Department of State lies in the longer history of the United States and Japan negotiating their imperial ambitions with each other. This concern over “reciprocity,” I contend, demonstrates another set of stakes involved in the “hostage exchange” with Japan.

The conflict over political recognition – or to put it more directly, the position of Japan within white, Euro-centric systems of imperial hegemony, namely British and American – was one that had its own history. Scholar Bruce Cumings has charted what he termed the “archaeology of Japan in the twentieth-century world-system,” where he analyzes how Japanese officials and diplomats had to negotiate with both Britain and the U.S. in their claims for hegemony in Asia, ambitions that were supported and encouraged by the two Western states as long as Japan remained “Number Two,” to further borrow from Cumings’ terminology.<sup>171</sup> Japan, in the opinions of prominent Anglo Americans, was uniquely positioned to extend the “civilizing mission” and “enlighten” the other areas of Asia, such as China and Korea. The Taft-Katsura agreement of 1905 made the stipulation that Japan would be able to claim Korea as a colony, only if Japan would not impede American efforts in the Philippines. As Japan increased in ambition, expansion, and control over the Asian region, the fiction of equal nation-state actors or nation-bound

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<sup>170</sup> Letter from Special Division; Box 86; Subject Files, 1939-1955 Gripsholm-Repatriation to Japanese Internees – United States; Special War Problems Division; Department of State; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>171</sup> Bruce Cumings, “Archaeology, Descent, Emergence: Japan in British/American Hegemony, 1900-1950,” in *Japan in the World* ed. by Masao Miyoshi and Harry Harootunian (Durham: Duke University Press: 1993).

entities came to the fore in the treaties in which Japan participated. Attempting to use leverage to claim itself as a recognized power with the Euro-American sphere of influence, Japan put forth a series of proposals, most importantly the racial equality clause for the Treaty of Versailles. But the proposal set forth by an Asian empire shone too much light on the inherent contradictions of Euro-American imperialism and colonial systems. The racial equality clause was not adopted – and Japan also found itself negotiating the Gentleman’s Agreement with the United States in the face of the Asian exclusion act, which followed from the earlier anti-Chinese immigration era.<sup>172</sup>

In addition to the realm of migration and labor, war and sovereignty became also the arena in which questions of recognition and subjecthood were negotiated between Japan and the United States. The most notable – and also most important for my analysis in this chapter – was the Stimson Doctrine in 1931. On September 18, 1931, Japanese imperial forces moved to occupy cities and towns in southern Manchuria. Over the next two months, members of the U.S. State Department debated over the proper stance to take vis-à-vis Japan. The most immediate concern – besides U.S. access to markets and materials in China – was the breach of the Kellogg-Briand Pact. A resolution to the issue came in the form of a note written and sent by Stimson – later to be known as the Stimson Doctrine – stating that the United States would not, in fact, recognize the

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<sup>172</sup> Louise Young, *Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the culture of wartime imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). As historian Louise Young has charted in her work: “By the end of World War I, the [Japanese] empire included Taiwan, Korea, the Pacific island chains the Japanese called Nan’yo, the southern half of Sakhalin, as well as participation in the unequal treaty system with China.” (from page 2 of *Japan’s Total Empire*) After the 1931 Manchurian Incident, Japan would move aggressively to expand its territory to China and Southeast Asia, engaging in challenges to the British Empire, the United States, and Russia. The mobilization of a “total empire” – to use Young’s phrase – involved a great deal of labor, and labor would also be a focal concern of another empire across the Pacific – the United States. The Russo-Japanese War, the conflict that had launched the Japanese empire into a full engagement with Euro-American hegemonic empire, had occurred in 1905, three years after the end of the Philippine-American Wars in 1903. U.S. diplomats and missionaries were continuously traveling to Japan, while the era of Asian exclusion continued in the United States.

territories acquired by the Japanese in Manchuria. The fiction of the nation-state system was asserted in this moment of non-recognition, and the Stimson Doctrine drove home the point that Japan was not to be an empire on par with the Western nations.

Within the much longer history of treaty-making and exchanges between the U.S. and Japan, this particular “hostage” exchange would present an age-old dilemma in a new light: how does the U.S. engage in a hostage exchange with an enemy it does not want to recognize as its equal? The language of “reciprocity” would become critical to the dialogue over the exchange, laying bare the fiction of the equality of sovereign nation-states. According to scholar Bruce Elleman on the stance of Japanese officials over the hostage exchange: “In the midst of World War II, the Japanese negotiators were determined not to allow any inequalities between enemies. To make matters worse, at the beginning of the war there were many more American officials and ordinary citizens being detained by Japan than there were Japanese officials and citizens being held in custody by the United States. This made a truly ‘reciprocal’ exchange very difficult.”<sup>173</sup> The calculus of the politics of recognition – each nation-state being an equal actor on the world stage – was also the calculus determining the logistics of the hostage exchange: one Japanese subject for every American citizen.

But who was a “Japanese” subject, and who was an “American” citizen? And what happens when one does not have enough “Japanese subjects” to exchange? The international language of treaties and warfare had officially become the framework that bound the exchange – and the language of “prisoners of war” had been adopted for application to the exchange of official and non-official civilians. In this moment, the Japanese American was being interpolated not simply by one state, but rather the politics

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<sup>173</sup> Elleman, 12-13.



of recognition; the Japanese American was not firmly a citizen of a state, but rather a subject of two empires, on whom the conflict of political recognition would play out.

The Japanese government had already given a list to the U.S. of different Japanese nationals residing in the United States whom they would deemed as acceptable “reciprocal” exchanges with the American citizens in its custody. The list-making was fraught with difficulties. In a telegram dated May 18 to Bern, the Special Division stated: “United States Government thus confirms that it expects to repatriate upon the contemplated voyages of the Gripsholm (numbering possibly three) all Japanese internees or detainees or other Japanese nationals expressing desire for repatriation whether that desire is first expressed by the individual or by the Spanish Embassy in charge of Japanese interests.”<sup>174</sup> Here, it is crucial to note that the United States government was now beginning to turn to find Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans detainees who were not on the list sent by the Japanese government.

The Japanese American internees did not respond as the U.S. Department of State had anticipated. According to a Department of State Special Division document titled, “Individuals Named by the Japanese Government for Repatriation Who Have Refused to Go to Japan,” three thousand one hundred and one of those individuals had refused repatriation. Another fifty-six had refused to respond to the question regarding repatriation all together. In response to these large numbers of repatriation rejections – and those who had refused to take the survey at all – George Brandt of the Special Division wrote that the Japanese individuals might reconsider repatriation once they

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<sup>174</sup> May 18 Telegram to Bern; Box 86; Subject Files, 1939-1955 Gripsholm-Repatriation to Japanese Internees – United States; Special War Problems Division; Department of State; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

realize that “their emperor” had requested their repatriation, since they were, as he noted, an “obedient race.”<sup>175</sup>

But “obedience” and “loyalty” would not map out according to the expectations of those in the Department of State. According to Bruce Elleman, the infamous loyalty questionnaire was one method the U.S. Department of State employed to find more willing “repatriates” among the Japanese Americans. But in the end “only 4 Japanese from the relocation centers were included on the first exchange in 1942, while 314 others were included in the 1943 exchange.”<sup>176</sup> The loyalty questionnaire had supposedly produced “a total of 20,161 Japanese citizens and American citizens of Japanese ancestry [who] offered to participate in the official U.S.-Japanese exchange program by returning to Japan.” Of this group, over 15,000 elected to remain in the United States at the war’s end – and the Japanese government, in its insistence upon “reciprocity,” rejected the exchange of primarily working-class Japanese nationals for the American officials in its care. On the other hand, 3,101 of the Japanese and Japanese American citizens requested by the Japanese government refused “repatriation.” “Loyalty” and “obedience” were clearly not the ideologies framing this choice of “repatriation.” And yet, the constant reassessment, the constant list-making of the loyal versus disloyal continued.

The project of racial liberalism had taken on many different forms.<sup>177</sup> From the internment camps to the SS Gripsholm, it is clear that the United States had no problem

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<sup>175</sup> Note dated March 27, 1943; Box 86; Subject Files, 1939-1955 Gripsholm-Repatriation to Japanese Internees – United States; Special War Problems Division; Department of State; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>176</sup> Elleman, 6.

<sup>177</sup> Historian Mae Ngai’s argument in her scholarship that the project of the internment was, in fact, at the crossroads of differently inflected political projects, rather than the object of a monolithic power, opens up a consideration of other projects concomitant with those she has already delineated and analyzed. Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: illegal aliens and the making of modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) and also Mae Ngai, “An ironic testimony to the value of American democracy” :

with rendering people “stateless.” For Miyamoto, citizenship would take on another dimension of “statelessness.” List-making, categorization, making more lists, and re-categorization was also at the heart of the Japanese American internment project. “Military necessity” in this instance did not mean simply the nullification of citizenship – and the claims therein – but “military necessity” also meant the exercise of sovereign power. Holding people’s subjecthood in abeyance was not the problem confronting the Department of State’s Special Division – rather the constant ability to - the sovereign practice of – hold a person in abeyance was the point, in fact. It was a “politics of recognition” being played out upon a highly differentiated population of Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans.

### **The Choice of an “Enemy Alien” between Two Empires**

In September of 1942, armed guards arrived at the Poston camp to escort the people who were to be exchanged on the SS Gripsholm. “It was not an adventure which I either desired or volunteered for,” said Miyamoto. Upon arriving in New York, a few protested and refused to board the ship, but according to Miyamoto, “those who refused were told that they would be tied and loaded on the ship with the baggage to be shipped to India.”

We sailed south hugging the South Pole view the magnificent large icebergs. Avoiding the war, we finally approached India. We were hypnotized by the beauty and mystic calmness of the Indian Ocean – sometimes when I see a beautify[sic] sunset, I am haunted by the memory of one Japanese American who jumped overboard into the Indian Ocean – what was he thinking? Was he a romanticist or was he grieving?

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assimilationism and the World War II internment of Japanese Americans,” in *Contested Democracy: freedom, race, and power in American history*, ed. by Manisha Sinha and Penny von Eschen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

The choice to “repatriate” was one that was fraught with the unknown. For Sam Miyamoto, a young fifteen-year-old Japanese American who did not speak Japanese, going to Japan was unimaginable. And although we cannot answer Miyamoto’s question of what the Japanese American man who had thrown himself overboard into the Indian Ocean was thinking, we can delve further into inquiring what this “choice” of pseudo-repatriation entailed for the non-official Issei and Nisei Japanese Americans.

Among the multitude of lists of Japanese Americans in the Special Division archives is a series of excerpts from and summaries of letters sent between Japanese American family members, especially those families residing in Hawaii whose fathers had been taken to U.S. mainland camps for closer surveillance. A close reading of the excerpted letters demonstrates that the choice of whether or not to go to Japan as the Special Division was encouraging was debated in terms of family reunions and imaginings of what the postwar world would like.<sup>178</sup> Questions of loyalty, nationalism, and the Japanese empire were absent, at least from the excerpts. Instead, the question on the table for these families was: What kind of life would be possible for the Japanese American after the war, and where?

Fort Sill, Oklahoma held many of these Japanese American men from Hawaii’s communities, and the letters addressed to the men interned at Fort Sill illuminates how these families were attempting to use “repatriation” as a possible way to reunite the family. Hirayoki Okaji from Hawaii wrote to Toyomi Okaji in Fort Sill, Oklahoma: “clothing ready to be packed for trip to Japan, mother could go too. Sanehiro and I could

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<sup>178</sup> All excerpts from and summaries of letters are located at the following: Box 86; Subject Files, 1939-1955 Gripsholm-Repatriation to Japanese Internees – United States; Special War Problems Division; Department of State; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

remain here, we can always have any amount of cash sent to you.” A T. Shoda from Maui wrote to Mr. Seichi Shoda: “If you go we might as well follow, if possible,” an implication that the family would join Shoda in Japan, if necessary. The Special Division noted that in the letter from Mrs. Yasu Hino of Hilo, Hawaii to the Reverend S. Hino, “Writer says that her friends are assured that they are to be sent to Japan, and requests her husband to take steps to secure her evacuation to Japan.” Yoshinao Kokuzo also of Hilo, Hawaii may have been one of Mrs. Hino’s friends – the Special Division noted that in her letter to Reverend Zenkai Kokuzo at Fort Sill, the “[w]riter looks forward with complete assurance to her return to Japan and eventual reunion with husband.”<sup>179</sup>

Anticipating and imagining the postwar era was a crucial part of the decision-making process. Toraichi Uyeda in Camp Livingston wrote a very revealing letter to Mrs. Masaye Uyeda in Honolulu: according to the summary done by the Special Division, “Husband tells wife why he wishes to be repatriated. Has aged mother and son in Japan and can return more quickly from Japan to the Islands than from U.S. to the Islands, after the war.” Others noted the current treatment of Japanese Americans within the United States. T. Sekiguchi in the WCCA Center in Pinedale, California wrote to a Mr. B.A. Ploe in Canada: “Dissatisfied with treatment received in Assembly Center American-born does not like to be treated as alien.” Sekiguchi’s letter was condemned, but other letters echoed similar sentiments, expressing wariness about the postwar future for Japanese Americans in Hawaii or the United States. Mr. Hoshida in Lordsburg, New Mexico wrote to Mrs. Tamae Hoshida in Hawaii: “We’ll have bery[sic] little opportunities left in Hawaii after the war and believe will be better to start over in Japan.”

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<sup>179</sup> All letter recipients in this paragraph were interned at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

Miyamoto did not know exactly why his father had decided to bring the family to Japan, but it is clear that the question of “repatriation” was a crucial moment in the “transnational” imaginary of the Japanese American community. And “transnational” for these Japanese Americans was not about “transcending” the national, as Eiichiro Azuma has asserted in his scholarship – “transnational” was an important element of the Japanese American communities’ strategies for negotiating their place within the competing “politics of recognition” outlined earlier in the chapter.<sup>180</sup> Only for the Japanese Americans, the “politics of recognition” had already been playing out in terms of a particular claims to personhood – labor.

In his noted work, *The Issei*, historian Yuji Ichioka stated, “Japanese American history is labor history,” and this frame of labor is crucial to our analysis in this section as we follow the histories of the young Japanese Americans through the postwar era.<sup>181</sup> Their own family histories spanned an era that is significant in the policy changes rendered - from the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the 1907 Gentlemen’s Agreement, through the 1913 Alien Land Act, the 1924 Immigration Act, and the 1931 Stimson Doctrine. In this section, I argue that we must view the displacement of Japanese Americans via internment camps and the “hostage exchange” within a longer history of negotiated migration and labor.

The story of labor begins with sugar cane, steel, lumber, and fish along the Pacific. The sugar cane plantations established by white American settler colonists in the U.S. colony of Hawaii, the expanding railroad system in the American West, and the

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<sup>180</sup> Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: race, history, and transnationalism in Japanese America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>181</sup> Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: the world of the first generation Japanese immigrants, 1885-1924* (New York: Free Press, 1988).

fishing and lumber industries in the northwestern states were often the initial labor markets available to Japanese at the turn of the century. The parents of Thomas and Harry Tanaka, two brothers who were born in 1927, had come to Hawaii from their home in Fukuoka, Japan to work in the sugar cane fields.<sup>182</sup> The railroad companies had relied heavily on Chinese laborers, but with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, some Japanese migrant laborers began filling the ranks, as did Howard Okada's grandfather: "You know the Santa Fe railroad that goes down to LA? He worked on that. Like a lot of Chinese laborers did."<sup>183</sup> Roy Shiraga's father and Jim Yanagihara's father both went north. Shiraga's father arrived in San Francisco in 1905 at the age of sixteen, but after the Great Earthquake in 1906, went north to work as a lumberjack in the mills of Oregon and Washington, later working on the northern railroads. Yanagihara's father first worked in the fishing industry in Seattle, and later settled in Imperial Valley, in southern California, similar to Okada's grandfather.<sup>184</sup>

In 1907, in an attempt to extricate and exceptionalize Japan in the face of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, the "Gentlemen's Agreement" was reached between the U.S. and Japan, allowing for the travel of Japanese students and diplomats to the United States with the understanding that Japan would prevent further emigration to the United States.

1908 would herald a shift in the strategies of the *Issei* who were already residing in the

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<sup>182</sup> Thomas Takane and Thomas Tanaka, interview conducted by Susan Uyemura for the Japanese American Living Legacy Oral History Project, November 9, 2006, Honolulu, Hawaii.

<sup>183</sup> Howard Okada, interview conducted by Susan Uyemura for the Japanese American Living Legacy Oral History Project, November 9, 2006, Honolulu, Hawaii.

<sup>184</sup> Roy Shiraga, interview conducted by author at the Japanese American Veterans Association 2007 All Wars Conference, February 24, 2007. Roy Shiraga, interview conducted by author, March 2, 2007, Hacienda Heights, California. Also based on an interview conducted by Susan Uyemura of the Japanese American Living Legacy Oral History Project on August 10, 2006, also in Hacienda Heights, California. The information about Jim Yanagihara's father is from an interview with Reverend Jim Yanagihara "Gopher," conducted by Susan Uyemura for the Japanese American Living Legacy Oral History Project, January 14, 2006, at San Diego Buddhist Church. Yanagihara later became a medic during the Korean War.

United States – and they changed from being a primarily labor-contracting source of labor to inhabiting what scholar Eiichiro Azuma has called a “settler colonist” identity.<sup>185</sup> The *Issei* became permanent settlers as a way to counter the anti-Japanese and anti-Asian movement in the States, and agriculture in turn became the primary strategy.

The decision to move to southern California became a common one among the first-generation Japanese Americans. Cultivating “niche crops that white farmers tended to neglect – such as asparagus, berries, celery, onions, potatoes, and cantaloupes,” Japanese Americans were able to create a living.<sup>186</sup> Okada’s father specifically cultivated strawberries and vegetables outside of Fresno; Roy Matsuzaki’s parents worked on a strawberry farm, and in the winter, they grew cucumbers; Katsuya “Kats” Nakatani’s father had a stall in the 9<sup>th</sup> Street, City Market in Los Angeles, where he would sell produce, primarily cabbage, grown by the other farmers who lived around them.<sup>187</sup>

But this period was quickly followed by a series of legal actions that furthered disenfranchised the Japanese American communities. California’s first Alien Land Act was enacted in 1913, and it declared that “aliens ineligible for citizenship” were limited to land leases of up to three years, and all ownership by “aliens” were banned.<sup>188</sup> The period between the 1913 California Alien Land Act and the 1924 Immigration Act was one characterized by multiple legal challenges by the Japanese American community, all

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<sup>185</sup> Azuma, 2.

<sup>186</sup> Azuma, 64.

<sup>187</sup> Okada oral history interview; Roy Matsuzaki, interview conducted by Susan Uyemura for the Japanese American Living Legacy Oral History Project, March 3, 2006, Japanese American Museum and Library in San Jose, California; Katsuya “Kats” Nakatani, interview conducted by Susan Uyemura for the Japanese American Living Legacy Oral History Project, November 29, 2005, Pico Rivera, California. Oral history interview with Nakatani also conducted by author, February 24, 2007 at the All Wars Conference for the Japanese American Veterans Association in Los Angeles, California.

<sup>188</sup> Azuma, 63. . As Eiichiro Azuma has noted, “Japanese dependency was the most common pattern of racial subordination, especially in rural districts of the West, where a majority of *Issei* engaged in agricultural pursuits. Prior to 1941, the nature of relations between *Issei* and whites was often predicated on a shifting mode of farming and land tenure.”



concurrent with the rapid adoption of similar Alien Land Acts in Arizona (1921), Oregon, Idaho, and Montana (1923). The legal challenges garnered the most attention with the historic *Ozawa v. U.S.*, but in 1922 the Supreme Court decided to uphold the continuation of denying naturalizable citizenship to Japanese Americans. Historian Azuma characterizes the 1920s as a moment for significant change in the strategies of the Issei in the United States: “While most Issei chose to stay, many immigrants rejected lives under the command of another race. In order to break away from such social conditioning, they left the United States for their homeland, or for third countries, where they believed they could remain “the people of a first-class nation.”<sup>189</sup> During the years 1923 and 1924, the U.S. census reported the highest rates of Japanese farmers leaving the United States. Although George Taniguchi’s father was on the very last boat from Japan to the United States in 1924, he would later take his family to Brazil. Taniguchi’s father had been a student, and therefore allowed under the Gentlemen’s Agreement to emigrate to the United States, but the 1924 Immigration Act prevented any further immigration from Asia. Faced with the legal racism in the United States, Taniguchi’s father decided to find work with a Japanese construction company as an engineer in Brazil – another site for Japanese settler colonists within the hemisphere.<sup>190</sup> From Brazil, they would later sail for Japan on the eve of the World War. Other families moved to settled in places such as

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<sup>189</sup> Azuma, 79. The Issei – as they repositioned themselves within the Japanese empire and the American one – created a “racialized reinvention of a collective self – concomitantly as American frontiersmen and as Japanese colonists/colonialists – acceptable to both their adopted country and homeland.” (90)

<sup>190</sup> With better luck, some Japanese founded similar colonial enterprises in Brazil, a popular destination of emigrants from Japan after the Gentleman’s Agreement. Nagata Shigeshi, a one-time Issei who had taken over Shimanuki Hyodayu’s emigration society called Rikkokai, was most responsible for the remigration of these Issei to South America. [...] Following the passage of the 1924 Immigration Act, Nagata had a tight network of Issei Rikkokai alumni spread propaganda to encourage Japanese to leave racist America for friendly Brazil, where experienced Issei farmers could take the lead in creating a colonial utopia with their compatriots from Japan. (from Azuma, 81.)

Mexico or Manchuria, the latter being the latest acquisition of the Japanese empire in 1931.<sup>191</sup>

Families had begun discussing possibly moving away from the United States – Katsuya Nakatani recalled that his parents thought about moving to Japan, since they could not buy land in the United States.<sup>192</sup> The Alien Land Act influenced the parents of George Tsuda, a Japanese American who had grown up around Salinas, California and whose grandfather had come to the United States sometime before 1910 to work on the railroad and eventually moved back to Japan. In 1937, due to the war between Japan and China, Tsuda remembered the growing anti-Japanese sentiment.<sup>193</sup> Tsuda's father also had other thoughts on their family's future in the United States. According to Nakatani, his father wanted "to be paid for the work we do around the farm. He felt that [this] family value needed to be instilled. I also believed that the lease was up on the farm, and the owner wanted a bigger share. These consideration[s] help my folks decide to go back to Japan, at least temporarily." At age thirteen, Tsuda and his family boarded the *Taiyo Maru*, a Japanese passenger ship, at San Francisco on February 3, 1938.

The diaspora present in the Americas and Japan also shaped the population aboard the later *SS Gripsholm* – Peru, Panama/Costa Rica, Mexico, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Bolivia were among the places of residence for those aboard the exchange ship. After the *SS Gripsholm* departed from New York on September 2,

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<sup>191</sup> George Taniguchi, interview conducted by author, March 6, 2007, phone interview.

<sup>192</sup> Nakatani, interview conducted by author.

<sup>193</sup> George Tsuda, interview by author, February 28, 2007, Fullerton, California. "We had been encouraged to collect tin foils from the cigarette packages, make them into a ball and take it to the hall on designated days. These were sent to Japan where they were used for airplane construction, we were told. Around 1937, some of the guys who discard the packing would spit into it before discarding to prevent us from collecting." George Tsuda who had served in ATIS in U.S.-occupied Japan and also the Korean War has also written an unpublished autobiography. Extensive in length and detail, he also included a chronology of his life in the typescript copy of the autobiography. Although I have not directly from the autobiography itself, I do draw much information from Tsuda's autobiography.

1943, it made a few more stops – at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and Montevideo, Uruguay to pick up more passengers – and at Port Elizabeth, South Africa to replenish supplies. The destination for the SS Gripsholm was actually Goa, the one location in south Asia that was under Portuguese colonial rule, and thus deemed neutral territory. Mormugao, Goa was to be the site of the exchange. The exchange took place on October 20, 1943. The passengers from both the Teia Maru, the ship from Yokohama, and the SS Gripsholm, the ship from New York City, had disembarked onto the shore. “During the exchange, passengers of both ships [...] walked past each other in a line and boarded the other ship.”<sup>194</sup> One “Japanese” subject for each “American” subject.

### **Labor History Meets the U.S. Military**

When Sam Miyamoto and his family disembarked at the port of Yokohama in Japan, Miyamoto’s family began their travels to his father’s hometown village. But the food shortage was severe, and Sam Miyamoto decided to leave his family to ease the burden of feeding yet another mouth. He set off for Tokyo, telling his parents that he would return once he had made a life for himself. In Tokyo, Miyamoto would witness the U.S. firebombing of the almost completely wooden-structure Tokyo, and there he would also discover that because he was not a Japanese citizen, he could not attend any schools or use any of the public hospitals.<sup>195</sup> A Catholic missionary school became his refuge, where in exchange for English lessons, he received shelter, food, and an education. But when he heard that the United States had dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Sam

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<sup>194</sup> From Atsushi “Archie” Miyamoto’s report on the SS Gripsholm exchange.

<sup>195</sup> By reporting the births of their children to the administrations of their home village of town, many *Issei* parents were able to create a dual citizenship for their *Nisei* children. However, Sam Miyamoto’s parents had not reported his birth to their hometown local administrative authorities – and thus, Miyamoto and his siblings did not have Japanese “citizenship.”

Miyamoto and his older brother decided to leave Tokyo to witness Hiroshima themselves:

In August of '45, America dropped the atomic bomb. It is very difficult to find holiness in this ugly war; especially when you witness the aftermath of the atomic bomb. [...] I wanted to see Hiroshima. I arrived at the outskirts by train and walked into the city. There was total destruction of the city by the atomic blast as far as I could see. [...] Sometimes I still have nightmares of this hideous “living hell.” Of those who survived the initial blast, their bodies were disfigured and burnt beyond any form of medical help. They survived only to suffer and die a few days later. I learned the hard way that the screams and fears of a suffering victim are the same in any language. It is ironic that 45 years after my visit to Hiroshima, I became ill with a brain tumor the size of a lemon. Was it the radiation from the atomic bomb or just a coincidence?<sup>196</sup>

Sam Miyamoto was sixteen years old when he “wanted to see Hiroshima.” Traveling by train with his older brother from Tokyo to Hiroshima, Sam moved through a landscape devastated by the fire-bombing and warfare. One may wonder why two Nisei Americans felt compelled to witness the aftermath of Hiroshima directly. But if we linger in Hiroshima and look around, we would realize that Miyamoto’s presence is neither unexpected or a necessarily a contradiction. The interstices of empire that Azuma had talked about were present in Hiroshima and other prefectures of Japan also.

Hiroshima, on the day of the bombing, held its own populations that complicated both Truman’s lens of Hiroshima as the “enemy population” and Japan’s own lens of proper subjects of empire. In Hiroshima and Nagasaki, among the victims of the “total destruction” were “as many as twenty-thousand conscripted Korean workers,” laborers from the Japanese colony of Korea, annexed in 1910. “One or two dozen Caucasian American prisoners of war” were also in Hiroshima. But there is a final population statistic still to be taken into account – “probably three thousand U.S. citizens of Japanese

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<sup>196</sup> Miyamoto, interview conducted by author.

background were residing” in Hiroshima, according to scholar John Dower, at the time of the atomic bombing. And at least one of them, a young woman named Judy (Aya) Enseki, had arrived in Japan via the *SS Gripsholm*, the very vessel that had taken Miyamoto and his family to Goa.<sup>197</sup>

Enseki was born in Delano, California, the fifth of eight children in a farming family. After Roosevelt’s “Day of Infamy,” Enseki found herself at the Manzanar Relocation Center, where she gave birth to a child. Her husband, also a Nisei, renounced his American citizenship, and decided to “repatriate” to a Japan that neither of them had known very well. Once they arrived in Hiroshima, her husband was soon drafted by the Japanese Imperial Army, and the Soviets took him prisoner in Manchuria.

Judy Enseki described her experience in wartime Japan as being like a “fish out of water.” Like many other Nisei Japanese Americans in U.S.-occupied Japan, she later turned to the postwar U.S. occupation forces as a possible way to both make a living and to return to the United States. “There were many opportunities available as interpreters for older Nisei who still remembered English. Enseki left Hiroshima on a special occupation train for Tokyo,” writes scholar Rinjiro Sodei.<sup>198</sup> And indeed, GHQ was aware of the utility of these Nisei individuals and families for the U.S. occupation. On May 8, 1946, GHQ “ordered the Japanese government to compile and submit to American authorities lists of all Japanese Americans residing in Japan during the war, those who had obtained Japanese citizenship, and those who had served in the Japanese military or government institutions.” The GHQ would determine not only who would be

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<sup>197</sup> Rinjiro Sodei, *Were we the enemy? American survivors of Hiroshima* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998). Smaller numbers of Chinese, Southeast Asian, and Europeans numbered among those killed.

<sup>198</sup> Sodei, 50.

eligible to work for the U.S. occupation, but also who would be eligible to cross the Pacific one more time – to the United States.<sup>199</sup>

The year 1948, according to a history of southern California Japanese published that year, the highest number of Nisei came from U.S.-occupied Japan to southern California.<sup>200</sup> But in 1948, the United States treatment of Japanese Americans had taken a marked turn. And the memory of Japanese internment had been cast differently by another story of Japanese American involvement in World War II, where through military heroism and sacrifice, Japanese Americans had demonstrated both loyalty and assimilation into the American nation.

On June 5, 1948, *The Los Angeles Times* and *Washington Post* published articles detailing a funeral for two Nisei soldiers in Arlington National Cemetery, their respective headlines announcing, “Arlington Honor Paid to Two Heroic Nisei” and “Tribute Paid to Nisei Heroes.” The articles focused on the loyalty of these two Japanese-American soldiers. The *Los Angeles Times* reported,

The Army buried two Japanese-American soldiers in Arlington National Cemetery today with a general’s graveside declaration that ‘they proved their loyalty and devotion beyond all question.’

The two privates were Fumitake Nagato of near-by Arlington, Va., and Saburo Tanamachi of San Benito, Tex. [...]

Gen. Jacob L. Devers, chief of Army Field Forces and one of several high-ranking officers who paid final honors to the two Nisei, said:

‘There is one supreme final test of loyalty to one’s native land. This test is readiness and willingness to fight for, and, if need be, to die for one’s country. These Americans and their fellows passed that test with colors flying.’<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Sodei, 53.

<sup>200</sup> According to Sobei, “since this figure was only for southern California, where there was the largest concentration of Japanese Americans on the mainland, we might estimate the total figure for the mainland United States at roughly five thousand.” (57)

<sup>201</sup> “Arlington Honor Paid to Two Heroic Nisei,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 5 1948. and “Tribute Paid to Nisei Heroes,” *Washington Post*, June 5 1948.

With the Nisei soldiers, their military deaths do not signal a continuation of the “unfinished task” of battling for an American ideology of liberal individualism; rather, their deaths prove their adherence to such American ideals. The battlefield is the “one supreme final test” for the Japanese-American soldiers, a place where “they proved themselves to be ‘Americans first class’,” according to General Devers. Within the media portrayal and official military speeches, the “test” was not about the Nisei soldiers defeating German troops in the Vosges Mountains – instead, the ultimate “test” was whether or not they could sacrifice themselves “for one’s country.” The accomplishment of the soldiers was an isolated, internal one, where they proved their desire to be assimilated into the abstract ideal of “Americanness.” The experience of internment, however, was not recognized.

The politics of visibility had a particular relevance to the shifting racial formations around Japanese Americans. The constructedness of racial ideologies would be blasted into high relief as the U.S. government employed a host of shifting characterizations of the “Oriental” to buttress the projects of Japanese American internment camps, postwar occupation of Japan, Korea, and the Philippines, and the manufacturing of a racially harmonious U.S. society for the “world.” The Japanese American would become the model figure for successful assimilation and internalization of American values – a discourse of liberal individualism was mobilized in order to focus attention on the dynamism of American democracy, rather than the dynamism of racial orders.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Caroline Chung Simpson. *An Absent Presence: Japanese Americans in postwar American culture, 1945-1960* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001). For further work on the anxiety on the part of the U.S. government concerning the contradictions between domestic race relations and its putative benevolence abroad in foreign policy, see Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War civil rights: race and the image of American*

On July 20, 1948, *The New York Times* reported, “President Truman started the draft today with a proclamation requiring 9,500,000 youths to register during seventeen designated days of August and September.” With Proclamation 2799, President Truman had effectively begun the increased militarization of the U.S. global presence, later articulated in NSC 68. The Cold War had become the rallying cry for rapid militarization within the United States, as President Truman delineated a global drama between two binary forces of anti-communism versus communism.

But for the Japanese American young men who had spent their adolescence in the internment camps of World War II, the draft meant something altogether different. Education and family ended up being the most important factors affecting how they rationalized participating in the U.S. military. For example, Arnold Yoshizawa had settled in Chicago after getting out of Manzanar. Still unsure about college, Yoshizawa was working two jobs – one as a shipping clerk and the other with a Christmas tree light company. Another Nisei named Tom Honda, who had been in Manzanar with him, had helped him get these jobs. Yoshizawa recalled that his sister had dared him to join the army:

The next morning I go down there and they told me if I sign up for three years they’ll send me to any part of the world the Army has people. I could go to Germany, I could go to France, Puerto Rico at that time, Persian Gulf, Japan – Ooooooh. What if I go to Japan and find grandpa? I said, ‘Oh. Japan.’<sup>203</sup>

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*democracy*, Politics and society in twentieth-century America (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000); Thomas. Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the color line: American race relations in the global arena* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), [http://hdl.handle.net/2027/\[u\]:mdp.39015053489244](http://hdl.handle.net/2027/[u]:mdp.39015053489244).

<sup>203</sup> Yoshizawa, interview.



For Jim Yanagihara, enlisting in the U.S. Army was a strategic move: “I got the draft notice, but didn’t want to do two years and five years of reserve time.”<sup>204</sup> Yanagihara simply enlisted. Even Roy Shiraga, who had enlisted in the U.S. Army a year before Truman’s 1948 proclamation, had not signed up for the U.S. Army with the growing Cold War in mind. In 1947, Roy Shiraga graduated from high school in Washington state. “My parents wanted me to go to college, but I didn’t have any money,” Shiraga recalled. He had planned to work on the Great Northern Railroad similar to his father who was dismissed from his railroad job after Pearl Harbor. But Shiraga soon had a conversation with a Nisei WWII veteran, Spady Koyama, who was also a friend of the family. Koyama encouraged Shiraga to join the army “because he said you could pick any school you want and they’ll send you there.” On August 4<sup>th</sup>, Shiraga enlisted.

“As I recall I signed up for photography school. I wanted to be a photographer,” Shiraga said. But during the tenth week of basic training, Shiraga and another Nisei enlistee were sent to Presidio, Monterey for a test. “This lieutenant comes in and he made a little speech, said that you’re going to take this test. He handed out a page that was all in English and he says write in Japanese.” The other Nisei in the room

wrote down his name, rank, and serial number. Then he put it aside. He picked up a magazine as I recall. I said hey, aren’t you going to take that exam? He says, hell no, I don’t want to go over there. I said, oh, I don’t either. I want to go to photography school. So I did the same thing.<sup>205</sup>

The lieutenant came back twice, but each time, the papers in front of Shiraga and the other Nisei were blank. Afterwards, they were both sent to basic training, and at the end

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<sup>204</sup> Yanagihara, interview.

<sup>205</sup> Shiraga, interview.

of the thirteenth week of training, both Shiraga and the other young man received their assignments. They were both going to Presidio, Monterey for language training.<sup>206</sup>

Arnold Yoshizawa was also sent to Presidio, Monterey for language training. If at all possible, the U.S. Army attempted to funnel Japanese American enlistees and draftees into the language programs; the U.S. occupations of Japan and Korea demanded a large corps of translators, interpreters, and interrogators. Most of the Japanese American men did indeed find themselves at the language school in Presidio, Monterey – and those who passed the intensive language training then usually found themselves shipped to Camp Zama in Japan, where they received further training and began their work with the Allied Translator and Interpreter Service (ATIS). Yoshizawa, in his own words, “flunked” out of the Presidio language school, and moved to the engineering corps in the army.<sup>207</sup> Roy Shiraga, on the other, explained that he was sent to the Presidio language school, and eventually was assigned to go to Hokkaido, Japan, where his older sister, Ayako, lived.

She was an interpreter. She was thirteen when she went back to Japan but she maintained her English with her brother George. [...] Every weekend I used to go into town and talk to her. She used to be an interpreter for the officers of the 7<sup>th</sup> Division, 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment because they found out she could talk both English and Japanese.<sup>208</sup>

The year 1950, before the outbreak of the Korean War, found the Japanese American communities on both sides of the Pacific profoundly altered by the experience of World War II. Language, the U.S. military, and citizenship became the triangulated matrix in

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<sup>206</sup> The magazine-reading Nisei was from Fresno, as Shiraga could recall. It was most likely that although Shiraga, who was from Washington State, did not have to go to the internment camps during World War II, the other Nisei in the room had gone to the camps and later returned when California was again open to Japanese Americans.

<sup>207</sup> Yoshizawa, interview.

<sup>208</sup> Shiraga, interview.

which young Japanese American men found the means to make claims on their futures within the U.S. and Japan. Their labor, though, would be utilized in ways they may have been familiar with already: truth itself had a racial hierarchy.<sup>209</sup>

### **The Choice of an “Oriental” in an Interrogation Room**

On June 26, 1950, when President Harry Truman announced that the United States would not tolerate the “act of aggression” of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the nature of war had changed considerably since FDR’s “Day of Infamy” speech in 1942. In 1948, the year Miyamoto had left Japan for University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), the United States had made a crucial decision regarding its occupation of the Korean peninsula south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. As the previous chapter laid out, the United States, unable to find a large population of Koreans who were willing to accept a U.S.-dictated government, moved to hold elections in the southern part of the peninsula. With the northern half of the peninsula also having held elections, two governments soon were claiming sovereignty over the peninsula. The United States and the United Nations only recognized the southern Republic of Korea as a legitimate sovereign body.

Stimson’s doctrine of nonrecognition had come into play again. Previously, the United States had been insistent upon perceiving Japan as a nation, not an empire (although one can note that being a “nation” is not mutually exclusive of being an “empire”). But now, a former colony of Japan was on the map, one divided by trusteeship and a 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. How did one enter war with an entity one

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<sup>209</sup> McNaughton’s *Nisei Linguists* provides a detailed history of the Military Intelligence Service and Japanese American linguists from the perspective of an official, Department of the Army narrative. His access to both archival material and select interviews is wide-ranging. Eiichiro Azuma, “Brokering Race, Culture, and Citizenship: Japanese Americans in Occupied Japan and Postwar National Inclusion,” in *Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, Vol.16, No. 3 (Fall 2009), 183-211.

did not recognize? Previously, the question revolved around repatriation and putative “citizenship.” Now, the question would revolve around repatriation and the figure of the “prisoner of war.” And the Japanese American interrogator would be the key figure in facilitating and mediating this particular alchemy of sovereign power in this era of formal decolonization.

In effect, as the Korean War escalated on the peninsula, and the U.S. Army scrambled to find translators and interrogators, a new geography had been mapped for the drafted and enlisted Japanese Americans. From the language school at Presidio, Monterey to Camp Zama in Japan to G2 headquarters in Pusan, Korea, yet another mapping of U.S. empire had become the frame for the movements of this cohort of Japanese Americans. And in 1950, Miyamoto found himself back yet again in East Asia – first in Japan, and then later in Korea. Another war that involved the United States and East Asia had determined his life trajectory. But there was a critical difference between the time he had arrived in Yokohama in 1944 and when he arrived in Pusan in 1950. The Japanese Americans in this particular cohort who became a part of the U.S. military in 1950 were almost all drafted – and almost all had undergone internment. Howard Okada, who had been born in Fresno, California and later sent with his family to the camp in Jerome, Arkansas, was drafted in November 1950.<sup>210</sup> Jim Yanagihara, born in San Diego, California and sent to the camp in Poston, Arizona, remembered receiving his draft notice on his nineteenth birthday – November 30, 1950.<sup>211</sup> The US. brought Katsuya Nakatani to Maryland in November 1950 – and one of the first things he was obligated to do was an FBI test that consisted of a thorough self-history narrative. “They wanted to

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<sup>210</sup> Okada, interview.

<sup>211</sup> Yanagihara, interview.

know what I've been doing my whole life," recalled Nakatani. "And then my father's too – they want to know his history. And my grandfather." During his class time, one of his superiors brought him out of the classroom, and asked him pointedly about the information he had provided. The exchange that followed challenged Nakatani's superior's understanding of what had happened during World War II, as Nakatani explicitly brought up the "concentration camps" in which the United States had placed him:

An officer said, "Where were you from 1942 to 1945?" And I said, "I was in prison." And he said, "What were you charged for?" And I said, "I don't know." He said, "Soldier, you don't say I don't know to the officer. What were you charged for?" Again I said, "I don't know. I don't know. I've never been charged for anything." [...] Then they asked me, "Where was this?" "Arkansas." [...] "Arkansas?" I said, "Yeah, Arkansas. "Arkansas State Penitentiary?" I said, no. [...] I finally told them that it was an American concentration camp. And he got mad. He said, "Soldier, we have no such thing in this country." [...] And I said, "Well, you call it whatever you want to. Well, that's what it is."<sup>212</sup>

Nakatani was summarily tossed into the stockade for insubordination, but his "insubordination" made it clear that this generation of Japanese Americans were bringing their experiences and memories of a previous war in the trans-Pacific into the Korean War. How would this generation negotiate their experiences with internment and the hostage exchange within the interrogation room, the battlefield, and the administration offices of a war the U.S. was waging on the landscape of a former Japanese colony?

This section aims to historicize the modes of assessment involved in the interrogation room during the Korean War within the longer history of U.S. state practices of categorization – one being namely determining the "loyal" and the "disloyal"

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<sup>212</sup> Nakatani was later sent to Korea as part of a team who did highly dangerous activities during war: defusing bombs.

Japanese Americans. In tandem with such an analytical context, I will also focus on the question of what type of labor Japanese Americans were doing in these interrogation rooms. Instead of taking the interrogation process as a transparent, self-evident fact, I will be examining the multiple negotiations involved in the process of interrogation. At heart of this section will be the question: What was the purpose of interrogation during the Korean War? During the war, interrogation was utilized in a myriad of settings, but there were certain new types of interrogation created also, namely the repatriation screening interrogation room.

In the end, interrogation became an exercise in imperial knowledge – the assertion that the U.S. could and did know how to read the more “naïve” postcolonial Korean. A racialized labor hierarchy was mobilized in order to assert and “ensure” that “truth” would be end-product of any interrogation report. Interrogation was an incredibly flexible practice. It was a tool of persuasion and hegemony – and in the end, it was much more about how the United States perceived itself, than about the information held by the Korean postcolonials.

### **How to Interrogate an “Oriental”**

Japanese American interrogators and translators worked in all aspects of U.S. military work, ranging from the diplomatic to the bureaucratic, from the battlefield to the field offices. Primarily though, Japanese American interrogators worked with the Allied Translation and Interpretation Service (ATIS), Military Intelligence Service (MIS), and Interrogation of Prisoner of War Teams (IPW). The language of “military necessity” – earlier encountered in the form of internment and a hostage exchange – returned to the

lives of these Japanese American young men in the form of “information” – the purpose of interrogation was to procure “information.” However, despite the seemingly straightforward depiction of the bureaucratic processes of garnering and verifying information provided by Colonel Hanley in front of the House Sub-committee, procuring and verifying “information” from a Korean prisoner of war was not a simple straightforward bureaucratic procedure. According to a widely-circulated U.S. military pamphlet on interrogating “Orientals,” a certain cultural finesse was necessary. Interrogation was performance, although the question of “for whom?” remains to be answered.

Interrogation training for the Korean War drew extensively upon previous experiences – not from the U.S. occupation of Korea, but rather from the Asia-Pacific Wars. One particular lecture given by Lieutenant Commander Samuel C Bartlett, Jr., a U.S. Naval Reserve Interpreter who had been present at the Japanese surrender at Iwo Jima, gained considerable traction and circulation within the Military Intelligence Sections. The lecture had most probably been given by Bartlett to the interrogators working in U.S.-occupied Japan, but due to the multiple copies of the lectures – the original lecture draft with Bartlett’s notes in the margins, as well as the distillation of Bartlett’s lecture into a comic-book format for easier consumption – present in the files of the ATIS and MIS archives for the period of the Korean War, one can surmise that this lecture also had relevance in the interrogation training of those deployed to Korea.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> “Some Aspects of Interrogation of Oriental POWs,” Lecture notes and transcript delivered by Bartlett, Folder: Trainee Interrogation – General 0131; Box 18; Office of Naval Intelligence – POW Desk, Operational Section, 1949-54; Records fo the Chief of Naval Operations; RG 38; National Archives and Records Administration; College Park, Maryland.

At heart of Bartlett's lecture, titled "Some Aspects of Interrogation of Oriental POWs," was a template for the process of procuring "information" from an "Oriental" prisoner of war. Mr. Jack Alberti, an interrogator who had worked with German POWs, specifically in terms of submarine warfare, was scheduled to talk with the class later in April. Deferring to Alberti's expertise, Bartlett prefaced his lecture by saying that his comments would simply supplement those of Alberti.

The first part of Bartlett's lecture is a lesson in how the interrogator must conceive of the interrogation process, and the process hinges upon the successful objectification of the POW as a receptacle of information. He then delineated what he considered to be a few key differences between Alberti's experiences and "ours," meaning that Alberti had interrogated Europeans, not "Orientals." The "purpose of POW explanation," which Bartlett noted "hardly needs to be said," was "To obtain information which the POW has and which we need." "While the process is not always quite so simple," began Bartlett's notes, "it may be likened to a drink out of a coconut – cut the top off with a machetti[sic] and pour it out. There are six steps even in this simple process: 1. Get coconut 2. Make sure there is milk in it, 3. Cut it open, 4. Remove milk,. 5. Taste milk for potability, 6. Give it to the thirsty party."

U.S. military history in the Pacific during World War II impacted the construction of the interrogation room at the most fundamental level – in the conceptualization of the process and "target" himself. In the collapsing of the coconut (a symbol of the tropical landscape, void of people and rendered ready for conquest) and the "Oriental" mind (the Japanese POW), Bartlett had, in fact, offered to the interrogators working in U.S.-occupied Japan and later the Korean War an analogy of racial violence. Through the



language of “paradise” and “conquest,” Bartlett offered a characterization of interrogation as a standardized relationship between two subjectivities. What I will argue though is that the interrogation training and manuals for the soon-to-be-interrogators did not so much theorize the mind of the interrogated as much as it presented a certain subjectivity for the interrogator to inhabit. In the end, the interrogation training was not so concerned with the “Oriental” as it was with controlling and shaping the agency and subjectivity of the U.S. military interrogator. Interrogation training was about subject-making – making the interrogator.

What makes an interrogator, according to Bartlett? In “Screening or Testing” or “Shaking the coconut to see if it’s dry,” Barlett suggests a preliminary examination of “ALL” prisoners to determine which POWs may have information and which ones would be most willing to “yield up his information.” In determining the latter, Bartlett states that the interrogator must evaluate the “Nature of the POW,” meaning his “personality – Security, tractability – intelligence – language.”

There is an assessment of power that occurs in the interrogation room – and the successful interrogator would create the correct dynamics, not through what is actually spoken, but rather through the unspoken. Bartlett’s lecture – although highly simplified through a collapsing of different geo-racial ideologies and imaginaries – is primarily about how to read and hide intent. The interrogator must be able to successfully “read” the POW, be able to assess the “reliability” of the POW, be able to ascertain the “intent” of the POW. The issue of judgment is at the core of the interrogation practice.

In the next step, called “Conditioning the Prisoner” or “Cutting open the coconut,” Bartlett mentions eight different methods to start the prisoner of war talking.<sup>214</sup>

1. Self-starters, or naturally talkative prisoners frequently occur.
2. Matter-of-fact approach
3. Rough approach
4. Kindness approach
5. Combination or alternate approach
6. Appeals to pride of prisoner of war
7. The willingness of most human beings to correct mistakes can sometimes be used to advantage
8. Saving the POW’s face

For “self-starters,” Bartlett cautions the interrogators-in-training about “plants,” POW who are purposefully giving incorrect information in order to mislead the U.S. military.

The other “approaches” are primarily templates or scripts for the interrogator to follow to direct the POW’s attention away from the interrogator’s intent or objective. For example, in the “matter-of-fact approach,” Bartlett suggests beginning the session with a seemingly purely bureaucratic matter, such as the filling out of forms or simply obtaining very basic information from the prisoner of war. The bureaucratic approach – or the “matter-of-fact” approach – seems to set the stage for an emotionally-detached encounter, one where the interrogator is not a subjective person, but rather simply carrying out orders. In the “kindness approach,” medical care, food, water, cigarettes are all part of a possible exchange – but Bartlett cautions that “the prisoner of war should be made to realize (by indirect suggestion) that any favors he receives come from the hands of the interrogator. (any pup wags his tail for the hands that feed him.)” Upending the expectations the POW has of the interrogation is key to a few of the approaches recommended by Bartlett – a strategic disorientation of what the interrogator’s

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<sup>214</sup> Derived from both copies of the lecture and also the subsequent pamphlet created.

expectations might be. In the “combination or alternate approach,” Bartlett recommends for the interrogator to switch between two or more different methods of interrogation, or to literally alternate the interrogation with another interrogator. The last two aspects – “Appeals to pride of prisoner of war” and “The willingness of most human beings to correct mistakes” – are methods that intend to give authority to the POW in a particular strategic moment, the illusion of choice in a sense.

Further theorizing on the “coconut” itself – or the Oriental POW – can be found in other supplemental documents on interrogation within the archive on training and education. In a document titled “Techniques of Interrogating Orientals,” the author states that the techniques discussed in the document “will be mainly concerned with the Japanese, since much of our experience during World War II has been concerned with this particular group of ‘Orientals.’”<sup>215</sup> Indeed, “an interrogator must first understand the background of the particular people with whom he is dealing, and, most important, the racial psychology of the people in order for him to understand the behavior pattern of his subject which will, therefore, result in a successful interrogation.”

“Many Orientals,” stated the document, “believe themselves to be inferior to Americans and are easily kept in their proper places as prisoners.” During World War II, there were three different configurations of interrogation teams:

- a. An American who spoke Japanese interrogated PW’s.
- b. A Nisei (American-born Japanese) soldier interrogated PW’s.
- c. A Nisei interpreted for an officer interrogator.

In reflecting upon the relative effectiveness of these different configurations, the author concludes that “(a) was considered to be the best. [...] When the Nisei interrogated the

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<sup>215</sup> “Techniques of Interrogating Orientals”; Folder: Trainee Interrogation – General 0131; Box 18; Office of Naval Intelligence – POW Desk, Operational Section, 1949-54; Records of the Chief of Naval Operations; RG 38; National Archives and Records Administration; College Park, Maryland.

Japanese PW, a psychological advantage had been lost to a degree, in that the average Oriental feels inferior to an American (Caucasian) and when a Nisei confronted the PW, this advantage was lost, and they were on an equal footing.”<sup>216</sup> What is striking about the document is the racial ideology that frames the subjectivity of the Japanese “Oriental” – the author insists upon how the Japanese Oriental essentially has no sense of agency due to a low intelligence level: “[T]he average intelligence of Orientals is lower than that of Caucasians, and the illiteracy rate precludes any possibility of a high standard of intelligence being achieved for some time to come. The knowledge of the average Oriental will therefore amount to little more than what he has seen or has been told.”

The “average Oriental” according to this document would give only naïve, straightforward answers, and yet a racialized hierarchy of labor would be instituted to insure the accuracy of the “truth” provided. In the interrogation scene provided by John Fujii’s AP article that had been censored and therefore never published, six different people were involved in the interrogation of Chinese prisoners of war after a battle on the Korean peninsula, resulting in an interrogation report written simply in English. And language – the supposed medium for communication – was itself mediated by the negotiations and imaginations of all six people present. Fujii’s interrogation scene was potentially a threat to the integrity of the U.S. military in that it exposed the tremendous labor and variables of contingency involved in producing a single document of “military information,” or intelligence. But perhaps single most important variable to the integrity of the information was Lieutenant Henry J. Picard from Louisiana, trained in Korean by the U.S. Army. The racialized labor hierarchy of producing “truth” in the U.S. military intelligence bureaucratic structure became clearly evident in this scene. Picard, the final

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<sup>216</sup> “Techniques for Interrogating Orientals.”

overseer of the interrogation, heads this team, consisting of “middlemen,” such as the “jack of all trades” Wakugawa. The Nisei, although perhaps now “loyal” and considered more “reliable” than the Korean, still operated within the checks and balances of a white superior. And indeed during World War II and Korean War, officers of interrogation teams and divisions, who primarily “checked” and “evaluated” interrogation reports were white, while those conducting interrogations and writing the reports were Korean civilians or Japanese American interrogators.

Let us now return to Sam Miyamoto, after he completed his language training both at Presidio and Camp Zama. Schooled in basic Korean, Miyamoto had now also become fluent in Japanese, thanks to the experience under the hostage exchange. With three languages – and a fraught relationship with each one of them – Sam Miyamoto began his work on the Korean peninsula as an interrogator of Korean prisoners of war.

### **The Babel of Interrogation**

“You had to know history to survive,” remarked Miyamoto in his interview as he reflected upon his experiences living between the U.S., Japan, and Korea. History, to Miyamoto, was an awareness of the relationships between different states. And because of his insistence on this type of historical consciousness, language was the first and foremost concern of Sam Miyamoto in his interrogation room. Interrogators would usually commit a crucial mistake, according to Miyamoto, by launching into Japanese immediately with the Korean POW. “Most of the well-educated [Korean] people they know Japanese because a lot of them went to universities in Japan,” said Miyamoto in his interview. “They speak Japanese but if you just went out and asked them from the direct

start, ‘Do you speak Japanese?,’ they would say no.” Speaking from the perspective of the Korean prisoner of war who would have been sitting across from him, Miyamoto continued, “For five years now, we’ve been speaking the Korean language, we were no longer part of Japan, so why would you expect me to speak Japanese, and we’re not going to do it.” 1945 had been the year of liberation for Koreans from Japanese colonialism, and in 1950, Miyamoto was navigating between the years of liberation and the years of colonialism in the choice of language to use in the interrogation room.<sup>217</sup>

Miyamoto was able to converse in Korean due to Korean language courses at the U.S. Army language school, but he was still not completely comfortable conducting an interrogation in Korean. He recounted his usual method for beginning an introduction; with the POW in front of him, Miyamoto would call out over his shoulder to a fellow Japanese American serviceman in Japanese purposefully:

I call out in Japanese, “There’s coffee and donuts, so can you bring us some coffee and donuts? And put a lot of sugar and cream in. Coffee for him, and make mine black.” And we were just talking Japanese so that the prisoner would know that I speak Japanese.

Then, he strategically would begin speaking in Korean:

And I would ask [the prisoner], “Would you like another donut?” And I call out again [to my friend], “Hey, bring a couple more doughnuts. Maybe he can take one back to his friends.” Then I would go up and then offer a cigarette. I say something like, “중국어를 모르겠습니까? [Spraken] Deutsch? Francais?” And then I would think to myself in Japanese [out loud]: “But I know that all the educated Korean people they speak two or three different languages so I wonder what other languages he speaks.” And then I would say something like, “일본어를 모르겠습니까? [...]Do you speak a little Japanese?” And he would say, “Oh yeah, I speak Japanese.” And then from there you pick it up and that doesn’t hurt their sensitivity.

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<sup>217</sup> Miyamoto, interview.

Reflecting on the other Japanese American servicemen who had also served as interrogators during the Korean War, Miyamoto claimed a certain exceptionalism in terms of his experience. His own experience – and those of his brother, Archie – resulted in experiencing discrimination not only from the U.S. government, but also from the Japanese government. “And so we understand what other people had to go through, so we understand their sensitivity,” said Miyamoto. Miyamoto attributed the moments when other Japanese Americans encountered resistant Korean POWs during interrogation to the Japanese Americans’ own ignorance of the histories – or “sensitivities” – of the Korean POW.

Miyamoto’s interrogation room was essentially created by a strategic performance on Miyamoto’s part – a performance of his own language skills, a performance that was also contingent upon the presence of another Japanese American. He had created a situation where the prisoner of war could feel that he “knew” more than the interrogator. It is a situation that differed, perhaps, in one crucial way from the “cutting open the coconut” interrogation room illustrated by Bartlett. Miyamoto was offering the interrogated prisoner of war a seeming *choice* of language in which the interrogation would be conducted.

Miyamoto recognized that his interrogation methods and process were different than those used at the frontlines of battle during wartime. Those on the frontline were “asking different questions.” His preoccupations were different from the IPW [Interrogation Prisoner of War] teams who followed combat units, similar to the team described in Fujii’s AP article: “Because people like me, I don’t care how many soldiers were up in the hill over there with him. I mean, if you’re on the frontline and you’re

shooting in the frontline, you want to know how many people are up there because your life is at stake.” He then described the interrogation done by the ATIS interrogation teams, who primarily interrogated POWs in order to gain information and maps of areas in China and North Korea: “If a war breaks out with China, because MacArthur wanted to sort of encourage to go into China, we got to know where all the targets are. So there are different questions there.”

This section examines the different interrogation rooms – the IPW, ATIS, MIS, and the repatriation interrogation room – of the Korean War through the experiences and bureaucratic records left by this cohort of Japanese American interrogators. Although, as Miyamoto’s statement has demonstrated, we often think that the type of information needed shapes, or is, the purpose of the interrogation, this section will take a different conceptual approach. In an attempt to destabilize our assumptions about interrogation and its embedded aims, I will demonstrate how persuasion was actually at the heart of the interrogation pushed to the fore by the U.S. government. In other words, the Japanese American interrogator often had the task of “persuading” the “Oriental” POW of accepting and inhabiting a specific positionality vis-à-vis the United States. The most high-profile interrogation room during the Korean War was the repatriation interrogation room, and this section will locate this interrogation room within a genealogy not simply of “military necessity” but rather of subject-making.

Miyamoto, even before setting foot in his own interrogation room, would find out the military rank of the prisoner of war before the interview. For example, if the POW was a second lieutenant, he would put the markings of a first lieutenant rank on himself. In his words: “if you’re a second lieutenant and some private or corporal questioned you,



I mean that's an insult for me. I had a picture here of Tojo and he was asked 'When did you finally realize that Japan lost the war?' and he said, "When I was in Sugama Prison when the Japanese American soldier came up and simply told me to come.' There were multiple genealogies for the interrogation rooms set up by the Japanese American interrogators, ones that Bartlett's lecture and Bowles' interrogation memorandum did not encompass.

Mamoru "Steve" Yokoyama was one of the Japanese American interrogators who were assigned to Hideki Tojo in Sugama Prison. In 1943, Mamoru "Steve" Yokoyama, born and raised on Maui, was eighteen years old. And instead of finishing high school, Yokoyama decided to enlist in the U.S. Army, since at that time, the U.S. government had decided to recruit Japanese Americans for the military. Although he was initially brought into the Army as a possible replacement for the 442<sup>nd</sup>, Yokoyama recalled his motivations for enlistment differently: "And the reason why I wanted it was, it would fulfill all my dreams. I got my shoes; I never had shoes. I never had pants. I mean I would wear my brothers' pants or something, my brother's shoes. We never had anything good and then all of sudden we had army chow!" Yokoyama recalled that it was during basic training when officials began testing the Japanese Americans for their proficiency in the Japanese language. The U.S. Army sent Yokoyama to Camp Savage in Minnesota for language training – and soon, Yokoyama was being flown out to Australia.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Mamoru "Steve" Yokoyama, interview conducted by Colleen Wakai for the Japanese American Living Legacy Oral History Project, October 14, 2006, California. Yokoyama was present at the Japanese surrender in the Philippines, and as a Hawaiian-born Japanese interrogator, he witnessed the end of Japanese empire.

At the war's end, Yokoyama was sent to be an interrogator at Sugamo Prison in Japan. The man to whom he was assigned was Hideki Tojo, a general in the Japanese Imperial Army and Prime Minister of Japan for much of World War II. "Nice guy, I mean he acts nice when we interrogate him and stuff," recalled Yokoyama.

We had to see him about five times because we needed him to be the bad guy that caused all the problems for the officers below him. And he would smile and say this or that, but he would never take the blame for any... what we needed from him was to say [...] 'Hey look, I take responsibility and by doing so, you guys lay off all the higher generals. They weren't the guys that decided all those rules and those kinds of things that they had to do.' [...] As for the information that I needed to get from him, it wasn't necessarily military strategies or anything, it was a question of 'Can you take the blame so that all these lower class guys don't get hanged?' He said, 'No.'"<sup>219</sup>

Yokoyama's interrogation was not one of military information, but rather one of persuasion. His interrogations began in a manner reminiscent of Miyamoto's: "[Let's] have a chat, won't you sit down? You give him a cigarette and give him an extra pack and you smoke and he smokes. That the beginning of the end for him. Because there's nothing he can do other than to say, 'Hey, thank you for being polite to me, I'm an officer.'" Yokoyama's experience as an interrogator of Tojo is significant for my analysis of Korean War interrogation because it points to a different end point of interrogation than merely "information." Rather, Yokoyama was attempting to persuade Tojo to inhabit a particular subjectivity, one where American legal "disciplining" of the Japanese military imperial ambitions also reflected a larger project of disciplining the empire of Japan into a nation-state construct determined by the United States. If Tojo had taken responsibility and blame for the war crimes, the United States would have been

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<sup>219</sup> Yokoyama, interview.

able to state more effectively that it had meted out “justice.” Persuasion, not information, was the basis of the “military necessity” in this form of interrogation.

“Reliability” as a category to be assessed by the interrogator also had its own history in the U.S. occupation of Japan. Many Japanese American interrogators within the U.S. Army worked primarily on screening Japanese repatriates from during the Asia-Pacific Wars – and most of the repatriates were former prisoners of war from Russia. George Taniguchi was one of these interrogators - “Reliability is a factor when we analyze the information we get,” he remarked, and for him “reliability” was defined along Cold War ideological lines. Describing some of the Japanese repatriates as “brainwashed,” Taniguchi noted, “We were talking with them just for ‘information,’ not there to convert them out of communist thinking. [But] we would make a notation on the report that the guy was left-leaning,” said Taniguchi.<sup>220</sup> The notation of a POW’s possible leftist sympathies was a marker of the “reliability of the information.” And indeed, Taniguchi’s standard of “reliability” inflected with Cold War ideology had a legacy in the Korean War also, as the question of whether or not an “Oriental” was capable of rendering the truth would converge with a concern over “communism” and individual “agency.”<sup>221</sup>

George Tsuda also had been an interrogator working with ATIS in interrogating the repatriated Japanese POWs – both Tsuda and Taniguchi were deployed to Korea to work with the frontline IPW teams. As Tsuda recalled, “Right after the Inchon landing, they needed some translators. So they threw me in, and when I got to Pusan, there was a

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<sup>220</sup> Taniguchi, interview.

<sup>221</sup> For more on the history of Japanese repatriates, see Lori Watt, *When empire comes home: repatriation and reintegration in postwar Japan*, Harvard East Asian monographs (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center : Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2009).

sergeant waiting for me. And they put me on a bus that ran on the rail. They took me to the outskirts of Tongnae.” From there he was moved close to the Chosin Reservoir.

There were many, many Korean prisoners of war. As Taniguchi also remembered from his experience in a POW compound located in Ascom City near Inchon right after the Inchon landing, “The marines were bringing in thousands of prisoners of war. Of course, this was right after the Inchon landing, so they were surrendering by the thousands.”<sup>222</sup>

At this point, interrogators such as Tsuda and Taniguchi were primarily responsible for registering the prisoners of war, taking down names and assigning serial numbers.

But these prisoners of war were also considered a source of “information.” And according to Tsuda, when he was working at the 10<sup>th</sup> Corps Headquarters near Tongnae, he worked with a Korean interpreter while talking with the prisoners of war. Often, the POWs came to them in groups of twenty or thirty. The immediate task at hand was to divide those who might have “information” from those who might not have “information.”<sup>223</sup>

When there’s a whole bunch of them, then you have to immediately separate them. And the way they do it is look at them – he looks smart; if he looks dumb; or if he looks clean-shaven; or after you talk with them, maybe he seems smart. There could be as many as three hundred.

But, as Tsuda recalled, the challenge “was the guy who knows, and you’re pretty sure that he knows, but he won’t speak up.”

You try to let them relax. Give them a cigarette or candy. [chuckles] It’s a sort of bribing. It doesn’t matter if it takes thirty minutes or an hour. You talk about the family, where his hometown is. Things like that. And gradually, you see if you can go into key parts. But you can’t take too long [...] because there are too many of them.

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<sup>222</sup> Tsuda, interview and unpublished autobiography.

<sup>223</sup> Tsuda tells the following with a laugh, in recognition of how random this process was.

Regarding what he meant by “key parts,” Tsuda explained that the higher command would give them the questions, the agenda. The “hakujin” officer would tell Tsuda and his colleagues which questions to ask. Interestingly, one question that Tsuda remembers being of high priority was asking the prisoners of war “what they thought about colored troops.” “I think that what they wanted to hear was that they weren’t too good of a fighter. But a lot of them said that, ‘They’re black, and it’s the first time I see them, so I’m afraid.’ And then the lieutenant said [to me], ‘You sure they said this?’ In other words, he doesn’t like the answer.”

Tsuda’s recollection of this particular “key part” is revealing because it illuminates two important aspects of interrogation: the racialized hierarchy, and the role of interrogation as “feedback” on the performance of the United States military. The military “information,” although encompassing questions such as numbers, types of weapons, and identification of higher command members, also included a crucial aspect – the prisoners of war were to provide feedback on the effectiveness of different military tactics employed by the U.S. military. What kind of “image” and “performance” was the United States hoping to portray and enact in front of the Korean and Chinese soldiers?

But the performance and image of the United States in the U.S. military interrogation room could be at times precarious, and Taniguchi expressed particular frustrations regarding the dearth of qualified translators with whom to work. When the U.S. military began taking in Chinese prisoners of war, no one was prepared in Taniguchi’s unit to interrogate the POWs. Quickly, they looked for available Mandarin speakers in the local, surrounding villages. According to Taniguchi, they were only able to locate two men: one was a “skinny, old guy” named “Mr. Wong.” He was sixty-five-

years-old, and spoke Chinese, Korean, and some Japanese. “The other guy was sixty-years-old,” said Taniguchi. “He could only speak Korean and Chinese.” Using yet another interrogator who could speak Korean and Japanese, Taniguchi showed different pictures of Russian weapons to the two elders, and explained how they were going to be asking prisoners of war if they had used or seen any such weapons.<sup>224</sup> And as a group of four, much like the team of six in Fujii’s article, they began interrogating Chinese prisoners of war.

But, as Sam Miyamoto has noted, the interrogated prisoner of war was not a simple, naïve recipient of the questioning – or to use Bartlett’s terms, the “Oriental mind” was not simply a “coconut” that needed assessment and opening. The prisoner of war himself or herself often attempted to control the interrogation process itself – a story perhaps best exemplified in the following interrogation report on the most famous Korean prisoner of war, Senior Colonel Lee Hak Ku of the Korean People’s Army.

### **The Most Famous “Reliable Oriental”**

The Allied Translator and Interpreter Section (ATIS) was responsible for publishing an extensive series of “Interrogation Reports: North Korean Forces” throughout the Korean War. These reports, according to ATIS, “represent consolidations of individual interrogations obtained from the on-the-spot interviews with North Korean prisoners-of-war and deserters and Republic of Korea refugees.” The “eighth volume in the series,” which contained “individual ATIS Interrogation Report Nos. 1300 through 1399 inclusive,” a very significant interrogation report was included. ATIS Interrogation

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<sup>224</sup> Taniguchi, interview.

Report No. 1293 dated 29 September 1950 was the interrogation of DPRK Senior Colonel Lee Hak Ku, conducted by a “Sgt Hayashida” from ATIS.

In an earlier ATIS interrogation report, one where the interrogator was “not named,” dated 24 September 1950 (based on a field report conducted by the MISDI 164 at 0930 on 21 September 1950), the “circumstances of surrender” regarding Lee Hak Ku are given. Given that the date of Ku’s capture was September 21, 1950, following excerpt was most probably from his “intake” POW interrogation.

PW surrendered to US troops on his own volition. [...] PW left his unit in the mountains (south of TABUDONG) and approached the American lines at night. He approached two American soldiers sleeping on a roadside, and roused them by gently shaking them; and they brought him in as a PW. PW was disgusted with the Communist doctrine and system and consequently surrendered.<sup>225</sup>

In the follow-up ATIS interrogation report dated 29 September 1950 (based on a field report conducted by ADVATIS dated 25 September 1950, 0900), Sergeant Hayashida made the following “assessment”:

PW was intelligent and very cooperative. No attempts were made at evasion and answers were given without hesitation. Although PW at one time was in position of great responsibility in the NKPA, he did not show any signs of being a Communist. PW is of a higher than average caliber, and, from all indications, highly ambitious. He may have surrendered because he believed that the NKPA is fighting a losing battle without possibilities of active foreign support. **Reliability – good.** [my emphasis]

Lee Hak Ku was a Senior Colonel in the Korean People’s Army, and Chief of Staff of the 13<sup>th</sup> Division. He gave the following personal timeline: Born in “HOI-Dong” on January

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<sup>225</sup> ATIS interrogation report no. 1293 dated 24 September 1950, contains Field Report (164-MIS-0930) dated 21 September 1950. From an unpublished data research collection compiled for a special documentary series produced by MBC [Cultural Broadcasting Company] in the Republic of Korea in 2004. The documentary special was called “Han’guk Chōnggaenggwa Poro [The Korean War and the Prisoner of War],” and it was a series special on a program called “Igaenūn Marhalsu Itta [Now We Can Speak].” [Hereafter “Now We Can Speak compilation”]

18, 1921, he then graduated primary school in 1936, and then farmed “at place of birth.” He then taught Japanese at his home in HOI-Dong during 1937, after which he attended HONAM Primary School, and later passed the National Teachers Examination. He became a Japanese teacher at Yanghwa Primary School, and supposedly on the day of interrogation Lee still carried a valid teacher’s certification of his appointment at Yanghwa. After liberation from Japanese colonialism in 1945, Lee Hak Ku was “[e]mployed by the North Korean People’s Government Ministry of Interior as Chief of Public Security (Police) Section, MYONGCH’ON).” He then would become a member of three critical organizations: the Peace Preservation Corps at NANAM, the NK Democratic Youth League, and the North Korean Labor Party.

In light of Lee’s personal timeline, the comment that Lee “did not show any signs of being a Communist” raises the simple question of exactly what a “Communist” would show or demonstrate. In fact, if we continue to follow the paper trail of Lee’s interrogation reports, we come upon a report sent by Frank E. Lowe, a Major General in the U.S. Army, to President Harry Truman. The introductory letter, dated 3 May 1951, begins,

Dear Mr. President,  
Colonel Lee Hak Ku, as of 6 October 1950 and since that time as far as I know, the highest ranking NOK officer captured as well as those voluntarily surrendering.  
Attached hereto is a copy of his interrogation which is both interesting and significant. I believe that overall it is as significant today as it was on 6 October 1950.  
Yours faithfully,  
Frank E. Lowe

Lowe had attached a narrative of the interrogation an interrogator named Edward L.

Bowles had conducted with Lee on “Friday, 22<sup>nd</sup> of September, in the detention area at



Pusan.” It was a day after Lee’s initial intake interrogation report, and two days before the later tactical interrogation report. “The man answered my questions forthrightly and willingly so far as I could observe,” wrote Bowles. “I had the impression that he was an able person.” As for the actual process of interrogation, Bowles briefly mentions that there was a translator of some sort – “The interpreter seemed unusually able in his translations” – and attributed the fluency of the translation to Lee’s character. “[He] gave one the feeling that he is precise not only in his manner of speech but his thinking.”

Interestingly, Bowles began his conversation, at least according to the provided narrative, with a question about the North Koreans. “Several times during the interrogation I questioned the prisoner as to what it was that caused the North Koreans to fight with such fever. His answers pointed consistently to the conclusion that the soldiers, at least, believed that they were fighting for the unification of Korea without Russia.” The issue of the Russians clearly loomed large for Bowles – the discussion soon turned again to the Russians:

I [...] asked why it was that the North Koreans were not given more aircraft by the Russians. He stated quickly that it was because the North Koreans had no pilots for the aircraft. I then asked why if the Russians sent guns, tanks, munitions, and radar and communications equipment, they did not send pilots. He explained that this was different. He made this statement as if it had aroused an intense feeling in him. I tried to develop the subject further, and he went on to explain that equipment was a ‘thing,’ whereas the pilot was a ‘man, and that the Russians were concerned with United Nations action (he actually referred to the United Nations as such). He went on to say that the Russians were worried about world opinion.

It is a moment in the narrative where Lee Hak Ku supposedly becomes impassioned – and it is a moment that seems to indicate that Lee is not the passive “Oriental” imagined

either by Bowles or Bartlett. He was insisting on explicating the Russians' actions even within a U.S. military interrogation room.

In his letter to President Truman accompanying a copy of Bowles' narrative, Lowe asserted that the interrogation "is both interesting and significant," and goes so far to say, "I believe that overall is it as significant today as it was on 6 October 1950." Similar to Hanley's characterization of the interrogation room, Bowles' interrogation room – and the success of the interrogation – was dependent on the seeming transparency of two major aspects: language, and the intent of Lee Hak Ku. Language, according to Lowe's report, was not an issue – and the translator, who had most probably been either a Korean civilian translator or a Japanese American interrogator/translator, was rendered immediately invisible. Indeed, even the complex bureaucracy and multiple interrogations surrounding Lee Hak Ku's surrender were hidden – the intake interrogation done by MIS, the reports filed by ATIS, the tactical interrogation done by ADVATIS. But the omission of these multiple types of interrogation was perhaps significant in itself – each type of interrogation was conducted with the objective of extracting a specific type of information. But what type of "information" was being produced supposedly in Lowe's interrogation?

I would argue that the reason Bowles sent the interrogation memorandum to President Truman was to demonstrate how U.S. interrogators were able to discern and gain insight into the "North Korean mind." The ability to note and judge Lee Hak Ku's character was on full display in the 3-page typed narrative written by Bowles. There is also an element of spectacle present in the narrative as we watch vicariously through Bowles the particular physical gestures and verbal emphases Lee supposedly does during

the interrogation. Bowles' parenthetical notation that Lee had actually noted the United Nations by name juxtaposed with observations of Lee's emotional reactions conveys the positionality of the interrogator all too well – detached, the interrogator notes with some surprise that Lee is aware of the United Nations, and also pays attention to his physical gestures, often characterizing them as somewhat naïve. Lee Hak Ku, a Senior Colonel in the DPRK's military, was supposedly a rather intelligent, but ultimately unsophisticated and naïve Oriental. He was an anti-communist Korean.

Bowles' interrogation was a portrait of an anti-communist Korean, to convey to President Truman what manner of “man” – and what kind of human intelligence substance – the United States was involved with in both war and occupation. And perhaps there was even a measure of reassurance in the sending of Bowles' interrogation narrative to Truman by Lowe – it was reassurance that the United States could indeed render transparent the will and desires of the Korean, and, more importantly, that the Korean would render himself willingly as a transparent subject in front of the United States.

But I would also argue that Lee Hak Ku was very consciously insisting upon the agency and autonomy of the North Korean army and state – throughout the interrogation, Ku again and again reiterated his belief that the North Korean soldiers were fighting on behalf of unification, not because of Russia. After his time in the detention center in Pusan, the U.S. Army made Lee Hak Ku a “prisoner of war.” Later chapters will delve more deeply into Lee's experiences as a POW during the Korean War, but he later becomes the lightning rod for much of the U.S. Army's frustration with Korean communist prisoners of war, as they refuse to participate in U.S. military interrogation.

He will be characterized as an “Oriental Communist fanatic,” a man with no regard for human life – and Lowe’s letter to Truman was most probably quietly disregarded. The desires of an empire are much too vulnerable in the interrogation room – and the desire to claim knowledge over Lee Hak Ku is all too bare in Bowles’ interrogation narrative. But even in the archival, bureaucratic record of the U.S. military, Lee Hak Ku’s insistence opens up the possibility for recognizing the agency of Korean communist POWs in Miyamoto’s interrogation room – the significance of the spitting on the floor and the awareness of racial projects being undertaken by the United States. The “Oriental” who was being read by the U.S. military was also aware of the different projects taking place.

## **Conclusion**

“I told him the truth,” said Sam Miyamoto during his reflections upon his work as an interrogator of POWs during the Korean War. Miyamoto had told the Korean POW that he had been drafted, that he was only acting under orders, that he had not chosen to be an interrogator. In essence, Miyamoto was attempting to carve out space for his own autonomy in the interrogation room, a space where the subject-making project also included him. The “truth,” although perhaps not of structural consequence in the interrogation room, held significance because of Miyamoto’s insistence that his own history and experience were not collapsed in the U.S. military interrogation room.

The interrogation room was to produce an interrogator and the interrogated POW – two differently inflected subjects of U.S. empire. But as the case with POW Lee Hak Ku and interrogator Sam Miyamoto, consent was not always assumed or given. Instead, through this close history of the interrogation room and the Japanese American

interrogators, a different story about war, states of emergency, and military necessity emerged, where the United States rendered “statelessness” strategically in their program of “repatriation.” As the re-ordering of power between the rising empire of the United States and the now falling empire of Japan occurred, this cohort of Japanese American young men had become one of the sites for this re-assignment of racialization, subjecthood, and labor. And as the re-ordering of global power continued through the Korean War, another proposal of “repatriation” would be placed upon the negotiation tables at Panmunjom – voluntary POW repatriation. Persuasion in the interrogation room would be transformed and heightened in the newly created “repatriation screening interrogation room.” The creation of the “prisoner of war” and this “repatriation interrogation room” is the subject of the next chapter.

## *Part II: The POW, War, and the Global Order*

### **Chapter Three**

#### **Making a Prisoner for War: Practices of War and Decolonization in the POW Controversy of the Korean War**

It was October 1, 1950, and twenty-year old Oh Se-hui was making his way back to his home in north Kyongsang Province, after multiple stints with the Korean People's Army [KPA]. After General MacArthur's successful landing at Inchon a month before on September 1<sup>st</sup>, the KPA had been in steady retreat, and Oh had seized upon a chance to return home. Oh stepped out of the wooded hills onto a road that wound around a cabbage field and began to walk north.

A voice barked out from behind him – “Hands in the air!” Oh raised his hands slowly in the air. He had already deemed it inevitable that he would eventually run into a soldier of the Republic of Korea Army [ROKA], the United Nations Command [UNC], or even the KPA again - and in preparation for such encounters he had stashed away four different pieces of paper in strategic places on his body. The first, a hand-written “patriot certificate” attesting to his true dedication to the KPA, had been folded carefully and placed into the lining of his beret-like hat, one worn often by guerilla fighters. The second, a leaflet dropped by UN reconnaissance planes, guaranteed his safe surrender, and he had placed it, like “precious cargo,” in the inside pocket of his coat. The third, tucked away in the right back pocket of his pants, was his student papers stating that he was enrolled at Seoul University, the prominent, national university of South Korea. In

the left back pocket of his pants the fourth piece of paper – a slim notebook - contained the registered names of his students when he had been a middle school teacher in the countryside. He had rehearsed over and over in his mind what he would do when he met a member from the KPA, or a U.S. soldier, a guerilla fighter, or an ROKA soldier. The certificate would hold him in good stead with the KPA and the communist guerilla fighters; the UN surrender leaflet appeared to have the most wide-ranging application since the military forces of sixteen different nations, including the Republic of Korea, were operating on the Korean peninsula under the auspices of the UNC, led by the U.S. military; the student and teacher papers attested to his civilian status and ROK citizenship, possible necessary evidence for someone of the ROKA.

Car brakes screeched to a halt. An ROKA soldier stepped out of the jeep, pointing his rifle at Oh. “What are you?” barked the soldier. Taking out the “precious cargo” of the UN leaflet from his jacket, Oh gave the leaflet to the ROKA soldier, who promptly scoffed at him, declaring, “This doesn’t mean anything here,” and ripped up the paper. Oh then gave him his student paper, and the soldier yelled out, while ripping up the paper, “What the hell is a college student doing here?” Not knowing if he would live or die, he then offered the teacher papers to the soldier. “What’s a teacher doing here?” the soldier stated, and tossed aside the papers. Impatient, the soldier pointed his rifle at Oh’s chest and commanded, “Take off your hat!” Nervously, Oh removed his hat, praying that the Communist certificate would not fall out. It did not. The ROKA soldier examined Oh’s hair, which had grown quite long and unruly during the past few weeks, unlike the short, cropped hair of the guerilla fighters. Thus satisfied that Oh was not an enemy, the soldier finally called out to the others in the jeep: “Someone come take care

of this!” “This” was Oh Se-hui – he had now become a prisoner of war.<sup>226</sup>

Oh Se-hui had attempted to barter for another moment of life with four pieces of paper, as he tried to render himself legible within at least one of the multiple types of “war” occurring on the peninsula. The Korean peninsula was the site of a civil war between North and South Korea, the first “hot war” of Cold War containment, and anti-imperial revolution. The United States, the United Nations, and the people of Korea were well-acquainted with each other, as the official liberation of Korea from Japanese colonialism, the official beginning to the United Nations as an entity, and the official start to U.S. military occupation on the divided peninsula all began in 1945. The legacies, violence, and struggles over who would claim and decide the project of decolonizing Korea was also the crux of the Korean War, as the United States, the United Nations, the Soviet Union, and different groups in Korea fought over the power to define the war. The Korean War was a war over decolonization.

A particular piece of paper became crucial to this war over the Korean War – the 1949 Geneva Conventions on the Treatment of Prisoners of War. At the armistice meetings at Panmunjom, the debate over prisoner of war treatment became the issue on the table that delayed the signing of the ceasefire for eighteen months. The postcolonial states of the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, international entities such as the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross, a rising hegemonic power like the United States, and even the Korean prisoners of war themselves became embroiled in a debate about the proper application of the 1949 Geneva Conventions in the Korean War to the POWs on the ground. The crisis over the prisoner of war during the Korean War brought the “laws of war” – or

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<sup>226</sup> Oh, Se-hui. *Suyoungso 65 [Compound 65]* (Taegu: Maninsa, 2000), 61-62.



international humanitarian law, as it is now commonly called – into its own crisis, as multiple genealogies of empire, conceptions of nation-states, and legacies of anti-colonial movements converged on this one figure of the mid-twentieth century institutionalizing of war – the prisoner of war. This chapter tells the story of how the United States military and the Korean prisoners of war – both communist and anti-communist – began to engage in a struggle over defining the “prisoner of war,” a struggle that was effectively, I argue, a struggle over making a subject for decolonization.<sup>227</sup>

The successful landing at Inchon on the western coast just south of the parallel, in tandem with the Eighth Army moving swiftly north from the Pusan Perimeter in the southeast part of the peninsula, had resulted in the unexpected capture of many prisoners of war. The numbers of Korean prisoners of war coming under U.S. military custody increased exponentially week to week, month to month. At the end of August 1950, before the Inchon landing operation, a total of 1,745 Korean POWs were under U.S. custody. By the end of September, the number had jumped to 10,819; the end of October saw the total of 62,678, November saw 98,143, and December’s total tallied up to 137,118.<sup>228</sup> In total, the number of POWs under U.S. military custody for the duration of the Korean War reached 170,000, and Oh Se-hui became part of that statistical population.

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<sup>227</sup> Although there is still a lack of scholarship on the application of international humanitarian law during the Korean War specifically, there is a great deal of scholarship examining and analyzing the development of international humanitarian law especially after 1945. For a more general overview, please see Geoffrey Best, *War and Law Since 1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) and his other monograph, *Humanity in Warfare* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980). Another good overview narrative on the development of law and conflict is Yoram Dinstein, *The Conduct of Hostilities under the Law of International Armed Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). For scholarship that historicizes notions of warfare within colonial projects and nation-states, please see footnote 7 of this chapter.

<sup>228</sup> Calculation of prisoners interned each month & captured rates (1952), Folder: Unclassified, 511-02, Korea; Box 19; Unclassified Records, 1969-75; POW/Civilian Internee Information Center; Records of the Provost Marshall General, 1941-; Record Group 389; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

The U.S. military had been wholly unprepared for such a sudden increase in the number of prisoners of war. Until the Inchon landing ROKA and UNC soldiers had gathered and processed the POWs in prisons that had been used through Japanese colonialism and U.S. occupation, such as the prisons in Mapo in central Seoul and Suwon in the south of Seoul. But under the different opinions within the Truman administration about the nature of the war at hand, the relationship between the battle front and the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel changed, making the prisoners of war an even larger logistical issue for the U.S. military.

On September 27, 1950, the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized General MacArthur to cross the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, transforming the focus of the war from containment to rollback. By November 6<sup>th</sup>, MacArthur was sending reports to Truman about the large numbers of Chinese Communist forces crossing over the Yalu River into Korea. The aim of the war was to shift yet again. “As I look back,” Dean Acheson wrote in his memoir, *Present at the Creation*, “the critical period stands out as the three weeks from October 26 to November 17,” a period after which General MacArthur would state on November 28: “We face an entirely new war.”<sup>229</sup>

As the Truman administration scrambled to articulate what exactly this “entirely new war” consisted of, the U.S. military was also scrambling to move the POWs south along with the U.S. troops that retreated to south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Soon, the POWs were amassed behind barbed-wire fences in camps in the southeast port city of Pusan, and then later moved to the island of Koje, located approximately 68 miles offshore from Pusan. At Koje, Oh Se-hui encountered another very important piece of paper – an

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<sup>229</sup> Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1969), 468-469.

abbreviated version of 1949 Geneva Conventions on the Treatment of Prisoners of War, which the U.S. military posted in each and every POW compound according to the Conventions' stipulations. Frederick Bieri, the delegate from the International Committee of the Red Cross assigned to report on the conditions of the POW camp on Koje Island, commented, "The POWs are very interested in the Convention, which is quite new to them."<sup>230</sup> However, it turned out that it was the Korean POW that was "quite new" to the Conventions, and not the other way around – the Korean POWs, whether anti-communist or communist, held and mobilized an awareness of the profound stakes involved in the application of the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

In 1950, when the official outbreak of the Korean War occurred, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) quickly mobilized to establish communication with all parties involved in the war. But the entities that had entered the conflict on the Korean peninsula were not the idealized sovereign nation-state entities that the Geneva Conventions had traditionally envisioned in war: the recently-formed United Nations had entered the conflict as a belligerent, the Korean peninsula was still divided, the northern Democratic People's Republic of Korea was not recognized as a sovereign entity by either the UN or the United States, and the United States was a former military occupier on the Korean peninsula. And none of the parties involved had directly ratified the 1949 Conventions.

But within the first few weeks of the conflict, the ICRC had received the pledges from the United Nations, United States, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and

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<sup>230</sup> Report on UN POW Camp No. 1 Koje-do and Pusan. Bieri: May 29 to June 9, 1951. Dr. Bessero May 29, 31, 1951. Transmission des rapports de visites de camps aux Nations Unies, aux Etats-Unis et à la Corée-du-Nord, 16/01/1951-12/05/1952, B AG 210 056-021, Archive of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

also the Republic of Korea that they would uphold the “principle” of the 1949 Geneva Conventions. But what was the “principle” of the 1949 Geneva Conventions?

With the specter of the atomic bomb after 1945 and the horrors of mass violence in the aftermath of World War II, the ICRC and the decolonizing world was facing a shift in the language and conduct of warfare, a change that had been in place well before 1945 – a shift noted by German jurist Carl Schmitt in his work *The Nomos of the Earth*, which was published in 1950, the same year of the outbreak of the Korean War. The universal moralism espoused by the ICRC and as observed by Carl Schmitt in *Nomos* “would bring into existence – in fact allow only the existence of – wars on behalf of humanity, wars in which enemies would enjoy no protection, wars that would necessarily be total.” The United States, in Schmitt’s judgment, would be the harbinger of this new type of war and empire, articulated and enacted along lines of “intervention,” “which was not confined to new states and governments in the traditional sense of the praxis of European law.”<sup>231</sup> Schmitt’s interventionist “war on behalf of humanity” and MacArthur’s “entirely new war” would converge upon the figure of the prisoner of war in the Korean War.

The armistice meetings between the U.S./UN delegates and the representatives from the DPRK and China began at Kaesong on July 10, 1951 and later moved to Panmunjom on October 25<sup>th</sup> of that year. By the end of the year, all sides had agreed upon the location of the ceasefire line near the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. A single item of debate - Agenda Item 4 which concerned the matter of prisoners of war – was still on the table.

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<sup>231</sup> Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum* (New York: Telos Press, 2003), 419. For a discussion on international humanitarian law that situates Schmitt’s theories within a longer genealogy, see Martti Koskenniemi, *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations: The Rise and Fall of International Law, 1870-1960* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002). The work of Nathaniel Berman also critically assesses the historical claims to universalism in international humanitarian law; see Nathaniel Berman, “Privileging Combat? Contemporary Conflict and the Legal Construction of War,” 43 *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law* 1 (2004). On the changing nature of war as a legal institution, see David Kennedy, *Of war and law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

However, on January 2, 1952, U.S. delegates presented a new demand – voluntary repatriation. The Chinese and North Korean delegates pointed out that the Geneva Conventions required mandatory repatriation. The policy of voluntary repatriation moved the political and ideological struggle well beyond the moral and humanitarian principles of the Geneva Conventions.

But the POW did not remain a simple discursive figure of war. Dean Acheson would devote a few pages of his memoir to the “POW problem.” “By mid-April a disconcerting report came in from General Ridgeway. [...] Again in March twelve prisoners were killed. General Ridgeway now reported that 37,000 prisoners in seven of the seventeen compounds could not be screened without the use of force.”<sup>232</sup> A U.S. Army intelligence report declared that “the United States has never confronted a POW like the Oriental communist POW.” The POW was laying claim to determining the application of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, and as this chapter will demonstrate, the three wars of civil war, Cold War “hot war,” and anti-imperial revolution were present in the camp itself. The war over the Korean War was on both sides of the barbed-wire fence.

This chapter begins on the ground of the Korean peninsula with the Korean prisoners of war as they navigate through processes of surrender, capture, and their later arrival at the POW camp on the island of Koje, a camp that ICRC delegate Bieri called “the largest camp ever run in accordance with the Geneva Conventions.” As the war itself changed drastically from June to September 1950 and then in November again, the viability of the figure of the prisoner of war became more and more central to the strategies of war fashioned at the White House and Pentagon. This first section focuses

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<sup>232</sup> Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 655.

on the different patterns and uses of violence deployed by the different groups in the camp during the first year, which, I argue, reveal how the socio-political landscape of this massive POW camp on the southeastern island of Koje was the site of competing projects of hegemony. Two different nation-state projects were claiming the individual Korean subject, while the United States claimed the role of guardian and guide for the Koreans regarding how to conduct oneself in war. But the violence – the beatings, the grenades, the shootings, and the suicides – would all evidence how much effort such projects demanded. The practices of violence or protest would be highly revealing also – beating by the anti-communist Koreans, shooting by the ROKA military guards, concussion grenades thrown by U.S. soldiers, hunger strikes by communist Koreans. In the midst of these struggles, it was the “prisoner of war” and the question of the application of the 1949 Geneva Convention that would become the site for contention. The second section focuses on the Psychological Strategy Board’s proposal on the issue of POW voluntary repatriation, and I frame the PSB’s particular approach to the category of “prisoner of war” within the history of 1949 Geneva Conventions to ground the Cold War PsyWar discourse within a larger conversation about claims to determining legitimate “warfare” and “humanity.”

### **Building a POW Camp**

In January 1951, the U.S. Army decided to construct a camp to hold over 150,000 prisoners of war on Kojedo, a mountainous island off the southeastern shore of the Korean peninsula. When International Committee of the Red Cross delegate, Frederick Bieri, visited the camp in June of that year, he noted in his report, “Koje-Do[...] is very

hilly. [...] Lovely landscapes. Healthy surroundings.” The island was also home to a sizable population of Koreans, the majority of whom cultivated rice or fished as a livelihood. These peasants had also been, especially in the post-liberation period, highly supportive of land reform, and the U.S. military had marked Kojedo as a “leftist” territory that was sympathetic to communists during the pre-Korean War occupation. When the U.S. Army engineers decided upon two valleys in the northeastern part of the island as the location for the camp, the Korean peasants protested the wholesale confiscation of their land, and U.S. Army memos noted that the peasants often angrily wielded their farming tools dangerously in their protests. However, within record time, the U.S. Army took over “1,260 Korean houses and buildings, as well as some 1,680 acres of land” for the camp’s construction, and as Bieri would later report, “It is interesting to note that the Compounds are built on former paddy fields.”<sup>233</sup>

One population was displaced supposedly in the interests of another displaced population. But the prisoners of war would soon be needed almost immediately to provide labor for the camp’s construction; in fact, by February 1<sup>st</sup>, “[p]ressure for the transfer was so great that the first POW’s were detailed to setting fenceposts and stringing barbed wire for their own confinement.”<sup>234</sup> The issue of labor would continue through the close of the camp in 1953 – the U.S. Army did not have sufficient personnel

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<sup>233</sup> “Normal procedure was to acquire the land for an indefinite period and without compensation to the owners. Clearance was generally a simple matter, requiring only the signature of the local governor. On occasions, however, local landowners protested the seizure of their land, verbal protests were sometimes backed with pitchforks, and demonstrations sometimes made necessary the procurement of the written approval of the ROK Minister of National Defense as well as that of the local governor. When native structures became an obstacle to the construction of POW facilities or constituted a security hazard, they were procured with the campsite property. On Koje-do, for example, 1,260 Korean houses and buildings, as well as some 1,680 acres of land, were procured for the Koje-do campsite.” From: The Handling of POW during the Korean War, Folder: Unclassified, S11-02, Korea; Box 16; Unclassified Records, 1969-75; POW/Civilian Internee Information Center; Records of the Provost Marshall General, 1941-; Record Group 389; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

to run the camp, and relied almost completely on POW labor. In May 1951, Bieri, the ICRC camp inspector, observed, “Hundreds of thousands of stones have been, and are still being carried by POW by hand from the seashore and from the hills, into the building areas. [...] The Enclosures and the POW hospital are tented (squad tents). The tents (arranged in company lines) are well ditched and have low walls made of mud and earth mixture. Each POW Battalion has its own kitchen, dispensary, feeding lines, utility shops, (tinsmiths, shoemakers, carpenters, barbers).”<sup>235</sup> The prisoners of war themselves built the camp - and the camp would become, in the words of ICRC delegate Frederick Bieri, “the largest POW camp ever run in accordance with the Geneva Conventions.”<sup>236</sup>

The U.S. Army began bringing over prisoners of war from the temporary camp at Pusan to Koje in February 1951. Oh Se-hui had been one of those POWs brought by cargo ship from Pusan to Koje. The journey from Pusan to Koje Island took approximately three hours, and according to Oh’s memoir, there were approximately 500 other POWs on the boat with him. The U.S. and UN forces had close to 140,000 prisoners of war in the Pusan camp at that time. The large undertaking of transferring these POWs to the island had begun.

Eventually, Oh Se-hui and other POWs were taken to the northern part of the island, where the U.S. Army, engineers, and POW laborers had begun to build the more permanent POW camp within two valleys near Dokbongsan mountain. In the westernmost valley, the U.S. Army had built compounds to house the prisoners of war

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<sup>235</sup> Reports by Bieri on May 29 to June 9, 1951 ; Transmission des rapports de visites de camps aux Nations Unies, aux Etats-Unis et à la Corée-du-Nord, 16/01/1951-12/05/1952, B AG 210 056-021, Archive of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

<sup>236</sup> Reports by Bieri on June 8&9, 1951; Transmission des rapports de visites de camps aux Nations Unies, aux Etats-Unis et à la Corée-du-Nord, 16/01/1951-12/05/1952, B AG 210 056-021, Archive of the International Committee of the Red Cross.



that had originally come from south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.<sup>237</sup> Oh Se-hui entered Compound 65 located in this westernmost valley; the compound itself was a vast swath of land ringed by barbed-wire fences and occupied by a multitude of tarp tents. Each compound held 2500 prisoners of war – however, to make some sort of organization out of the POW population in each compound, the compound was divided into three “regiments,” each of which were divided further into 3 “battalions,” each of which were divided even further into 2 “corps.” Each corps was housed in a tent, approximately 50 prisoners of war. And as according to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, the POWs were arranged with respect to military unit formation, and each compound would elect its own spokesman. Leadership and discipline in the compounds were certainly a key issue. Each compound elected their own compound spokesman, who would act as a representative for the POWs in the compound in front of the camp authorities. The spokesman would carry a significant amount of weight, but the most important figure in the compound was the Compound Monitor (CM). The Compound Monitor wielded a great deal of control over the everyday activities in the compound – they coordinated activities, cooperated with the camp authorities in making lists of the POWs, and in general maintained “law and order” in the camps.<sup>238</sup>

Central to each compound was a posted piece of paper – an abbreviated copy of the 1949 Geneva Conventions on the Treatment of Prisoners of War. In the same first report to the ICRC on the conditions at the UNC POW camp on Kojedo Island, delegate Bieri noted one particular request of the POWs, voiced during two meetings he had held

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<sup>237</sup> In this valley, the compounds were numbered in the 60s. On the opposite side of the mountain towards the east, the U.S. Army had erected compounds for the POWs who had come from north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, and these compounds numbered in the 70s and 90s.

<sup>238</sup> Oh, Se-hui. *Suyoungso 65 [Compound 65]* (Taegu: Maninsa, 2000). Information taken from Chapter 5, “Kojedo POW Camp.”

on June 5, 1951, one with all of the spokesmen from Enclosure No. 6 and another meeting with the spokesmen from Enclosures No. 7 and 8 on June 5, 1951. “Issue of more copies per compound of the Geneva Convention (POW) Extract in Korea,” Bieri noted in his report. “The one copy displayed in each Compound is not sufficient.” And the delegate added a remark following the request: “The POWs are very interested in the Convention, which is quite new to them.”<sup>239</sup>

The camp on Koje Island – massive in scale and in population – would become the first large-scale application of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, and the United States military would be first and foremost responsible for the application, being that the United States had become the head of the UN forces, under which the ROK Army was included. Although Oh Se-hui’s first impression upon entering the Koje Camp was one of isolation, the camp of 170,000 prisoners, U.S. soldiers, KATUSA and ROKA members, and Korean civilian workers was not isolated at all. In fact, the multiple wars of the Korean War would be distilled almost in its essence as multiple groups attempted to reinscribe state military’s claims to power repeatedly upon the POW, military, and bureaucratic populations within and without the camp.

The 1949 Geneva Conventions on the Treatment of Prisoners of War were a constant presence in the camp, and as it was supposed to mediate the encounter between Se-hui Oh and the ROKA soldier at the opening of this chapter, the Conventions were to also mediate the different encounters within the camp also – whether between prisoners of war themselves, prisoners and sentries, or prisoners and the administrative powers. At

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<sup>239</sup> Report on UN POW Camp No. 1 Koje-do and Pusan. Bieri: May 29 to June 9, 1951. Dr. Bessero May 29, 31, 1951.

the Kojedo Camp, the following provision, Article 121, would hold a particular significance:

**Article 121: Prisoners Killed or Injured in Special Circumstances**

Every death or serious injury of a prisoner of war caused or suspected to have been caused by a sentry, another prisoner of war, or any other person, as well as any death the cause of which is unknown, shall be immediately followed by an official enquiry by the Detaining Power.<sup>240</sup>

An examination of the over 300 incident case files on the instances of death or injury in the Kojedo camp reveals an entire political economy of violence, ranging from suicide, escape attempts, hunger strikes, and interrogation procedures created by the POWs themselves.<sup>241</sup> These files, complete with transcripts of interrogation and testimony statements, provide material from which to glean the shifting socio-political landscape in the camp. In each case, the body of the prisoner of war was at the center of the meaning-making.

### **Becoming a Prisoner of War**

As the camp began to be put together with barbed-wire, stones, and tarp, the prisoners of war themselves created an administrative quandary for the U.S. military. When Yi Chong-gyu arrived at Kojedo Island, he was assigned to Compound 91 – the camp was expanding constantly during the year, and new compounds running through the 80s and the 90s were in construction. The camp he encountered upon arrival was in constant flux and re-organization. Each compound held tens of thousands of POWs or CIs, and

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<sup>240</sup> *Commentary*, 569.

<sup>241</sup> The citation for the case files is as follows: POW Incident Investigation Case Files, 1950-1953; Office of the Provost Marshall; Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1; Headquarter, US Army Forces, Far East, 1952-1957; Record Group 554; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

because of the demand for military personnel at the front, there was a dearth of U.S. military personnel assigned to Koje-do.<sup>242</sup> In fact, a report dated January 3, 1952 stated that “189 US personnel were charged with the supervision of 37,000 prisoners.”<sup>243</sup> As a result, ROKA soldiers and KATUSA personnel were usually the ones who performed perimeter guard duty, while U.S. military personnel would occasionally perform a headcount and other administrative duties. The lines of authority within the Kojedo POW camp were neither evident nor stable.

Early administrative memos from the POW camp on Kojedo indicated both frustration and anxiety over the categorization of the POW. Even the most basic administrative task – the identifying and marking the POWs – was becoming difficult. A memo detailing instructions on the proper processing of prisoners of war dated from February 20 1951, the instructions lay the following rather straightforward process for creating the identification tags for the prisoners of war:

As soon as possible after capture and, in any case, as soon as prisoners of war come into military police channels, prisoner of war tags, UN AGO Form #3, will be prepared. In addition to the data shown on the form, the prisoners’ name will be written on the form, if possible in both Korean (or Chinese) and English characters, to provide a means of identification since enemy prisoners of war have not, in general, been provided with identification by their own forces. Thereafter, each prisoner of war will be required to keep this tag on his person, at all times, until he is issued a permanent identification tag carrying his interment number.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Yi Chong-gyu, Oral history interview, Seoul, Korea, January 11, 2008. [my translation]

<sup>243</sup> Memorandum from 91<sup>st</sup> MP Bn to 2d Log Com, Vol V-Reference Files-Control of Prisoners of War-HQ KCOMZ; Box 1651; Enemy Prisoners of War Records, 1951-53, Final report: “The Handling of Prisoners of War During the Korean War,” June 1960 to Control Prisoners of War, HQ KCOMZ; Eighth U.S. Army, Military History Section; Records of U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and Thereafter); Record Group 338; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

<sup>244</sup> Administrative Instructions Reference Handling Enemy Prisoners of War (Addressed to: Commanding General, Eighth Army), dated 20 Feb 1951, issued 5 March 1951; EPW/CI/D Gen Info Files – PW processing forms (1951); Unclassified/SS11-02/Korea; Box 14; Unclassified Records, 1969-75; POW/Civilian Internee Information Center; Records of the Provost Marshall General, 1941-; RG 389; National Archives and Records Administration; College Park, Maryland.

However, in a memo addressed to the Office of the Provost Marshal General regarding the handling of prisoners of war dated over a year later than the previous memo, the tone and concern regarding POW administration had changed quite considerably.

Prisoners of war or Civilian Internees are furnished with identification tags of metal, however, this serves no purpose for the metal is used by the prisoners for other purposes. [...] Another [...] difficulty [is] resolving the Chinese or Korean characters into anglicized names. The oriental prisoners of war interchange their names, forget their internment serial number, or deliberately change them, etc., therefore, any attempt at identification by other than fingerprinting has been abandoned as impractical.<sup>245</sup>

The camp administration's frustration with how the POWs were subverting the administration's bureaucratic surveillance – and also authority – is clear in the above quoted memorandum.

The prisoners of war themselves were a motley population – some had come from as far away as Uzbekistan, others from Manchuria, and still others from both north and south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Yi Chong-gyu, for example, arrived at United Nations Command Camp Number 1 in late 1951, and became a part of this POW population. Many prisoners of war had family in the south, and Yi recalled that during his time in the camp at Pusan, a prisoner of war would receive food daily from his elderly father, who visited the camp everyday. The pre-war occupations of the prisoners were as far-ranging as their hometowns. Although a good percentage of the POWs reported their previous occupation as “laborer,” other positions such as teacher, railroad conductor, merchant,

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<sup>245</sup> Subject: Prisoners of War (this memo is a response to an inquiry received on 15 April 1952 from Merlin Nelson Major (MPC) Chief, Prisoner of War Branch, and is addressed to Lt. Colonel Vern E. Johnson of the Plans and Training Division); Folder: Unclassified/Prisoners of War as re: Geneva Conventions; Unclassified/SS11-02/Korea; Box 15; Unclassified Records 1969-75; POW/Civilian Internee Information Center; Records of the Provost Marshall General, 1941; RG 389; National Archives and Records Administration; College Park, Maryland.

journalist, student, doctor, and nurse were offered as background information.<sup>246</sup> Women soldiers and nurses, who had joined the KPA, as well as female guerilla fighters, were also in their own compounds. In his reports, inspector Bieri discussed the infants and children living with their mothers in the camps. Yi Chong-gyun had even mentioned that in his compound at Kojedo, three generations of one family were present – the grandfather, father, and son.

In March 1951, approximately 50,000 prisoners of war were claiming that they had been residents of Korea south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel before the outbreak of the war, and had been forcibly drafted into the KPA. As later stated during the meetings at Panmunjom, the U.S. Army had captured persons of a wide-ranging circumstances – guerrillas and Communist sympathizers. Some had been “taken into custody as a security measure,” and still others had become prisoners of war “through the confusion of war.”<sup>247</sup> Soon, the category of “civilian internees” [CI] was made available to the camp population, and the U.S. military and the ROKA initiated a screening process to sift through the claimants. The civilian internees and prisoners of war from “South Korea” were assigned to compounds marked with numbers in the 60s, and those from “North Korea” were accordingly assigned to the compounds marked with digits in the 70s.

But even after being designated as “civilian internees,” much conflict continued. Oh Se-hui, who became one of these “civilian internees,” described five different categories of people who were in his compound:

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<sup>246</sup> I am culling this information from the hundreds of ATIS reports and also POW and Civilian Internee Incident case files. Although it is well-known that prisoners of war often did not divulge their identity during initial screenings, the above information appeared frequently enough to merit credence and attention.

<sup>247</sup> Meeting dated December 22, 1951, Minutes of Meetings of Subdelegates for Agenda Item 4 on Prisoners of War, 12/11/1951-02/06/1952; Korean Armistice Negotiation Records; Secretary, General Staff; Headquarters, United Nations Command (Advance); Record Group 333; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD. Quote is from Admiral Libby speaking to General Lee.

1. Civilians who were unable to flee during the KPA southern advancement, and then were subsequently drafted by or joined the KPA or the Chihandae.
2. Civilians who had been forcibly drafted by the KPA, fought against the ROKA, and then subsequently became POWs.
3. ROKA soldiers who were captured by the KPA, became POWs under the KPA, and then were captured again by the U.S. military when they crossed the 38th parallel.
4. ROKA soldiers who had either defected or became stragglers, and were regarded as KPA soldiers because of language miscommunication.
5. Civilians who had either purposefully or mistakenly joined the lines of POWs being marched by the U.S. forces. Or civilians who had been suspected of being spies, and thus arrested.<sup>248</sup>

Civilians from both north and south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, along with a large population of ROKA soldiers, comprised this category – an unexpected population to find behind the barbed-wire fence of a POW camp. The U.S. military practice of summarily rounding up civilians or all captured soldiers had shaped a significant portion of the POW population – and the character of the still ensuing civil war did also. Among the members of the Korean People’s Army from the DPRK who had also become POWs, whether through capture or surrender, were people – both men and women – who had been born on either side of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Certain members of the KPA had been trained military in China during the anti-colonial movement and insurgency training, while members of the ROKA had been trained under the U.S. military during the occupation years, and some members had been a part of the Japanese imperial army even before then.

Colonel Francis Dodd, one of the camp commanders of the Kojima camp, stated bluntly at one point that the POWs could have easily overrun the guards and escaped en

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<sup>248</sup> Oh, *Compound 65*, 101.

masse at any point, if they had wanted to do so.<sup>249</sup> But the POWs did not, and the camp – despite the anxieties held by U.S. military officials of how the POWs refused identification and the U.S. soldiers seemed unable to tell one “oriental” apart from another – did not descend into chaos. M. Frederick Bieri, one of the ICRC delegates who visited the Kojé camp regularly, even noted, “The discipline is good, enforced by the POW themselves.”<sup>250</sup> And in a later report he noted, “[T]he general feeling amongst the POW, that their days of travel from one camp to another are over, encourages them to do their utmost in furtherance of their constructional, educational, and recreational needs.”<sup>251</sup> The investigation reports into cases of violence certainly mark a steady pattern of different types of violence during the very time period that Bieri is observing, and a further probing into the interrogation transcripts, along with material from memoirs and oral histories, reveals a startling specificity to each use of violence, whether it was a group beating in an anti-communist-dominated compound, a fatal judgment in a People’s Court held in a communist-dominated compound, or a shooting or concussion grenade injury caused by South Korean or U.S. military personnel.

Bieri observed in the same breath in his report dated November 23-24, 1951 that, “In Compound No. 10 both Chinese and Korean POW work together on building projects, kitchen, etc. without the usual friction,” and later that a POW in the “maximum security” compound was under protective custody because “for reasons of his own, he

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<sup>249</sup> Interrogation of Dodd at Pusan; Case File #33; Box 8; Post Capture Summaries; Historical Reports of the War Crimes Division, 1952-54, War Crimes Division, Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General; Record Group 153; National Archives and Record Administration – College Park, MD.

<sup>250</sup> Bieri, Report dated January 15, 1951. *Transmission des rapports de visites de camps aux Nations Unies, aux Etats-Unis et à la Corée-du-Nord*, 16/01/1951-12/05/1952, B AG 210 056-021, Archive of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

<sup>251</sup> Report dated June 8 and 9, 1951. *Transmission des rapports de visites de camps aux Nations Unies, aux Etats-Unis et à la Corée-du-Nord*, 16/01/1951-12/05/1952, B AG 210 056-021, Archive of the International Committee of the Red Cross.



had stolen another patient's X-ray photo, in Koje-do, in order to be transferred to Pusan.” The fear – and also strategy – of the Korean POW who attempts to claim tuberculosis as a way to escape the camp perhaps unsettles the seeming placid diplomatic turn demonstrated in the collaborative work between the Korean and Chinese POWs. Death was still not in abeyance for the Korean POWs. Almost all of the instances of violence reported in the investigation cases occurred around situations with Korean POWs, not the Chinese POWs.

The socio-political landscape of the targeted violence, surveillance and fear in the POW camp was not one manufactured simply behind the barbed-wire fences. The category of “civilian internee” encompassed the capture and surrender experiences of prisoners of war Oh Se-hui, Yi Mu-ho, and Yi Chung-gyo, and the unstable character of the “civilian internee” and also the “prisoner of war” reveals the more complicated stories of how these POWs became POWs through a series of various interpolations by different kinds of military and states. The question “What are you?” for Oh Se-hui was the beginning of his becoming a prisoner of war – but from the moment of capture, through the multiple POW processing centers, through every truck transfer, the arrival at Koje, and then every compound transfer within the camp, Oh Se-hui had to answer that question time and time again. And each time he was asked the question “What are you?” the threat of violence and possible death was present, whether in the form of an ROKA soldier or an anti-communist youth group.<sup>252</sup>

The category of “prisoner of war” or “civilian internee” was a bureaucratic category of warfare that did not reflect the on-the-ground experiences of the prisoners of war. One former POW, Ko Yeong-gun, titled his memoir, *Facing Death*, and structured

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<sup>252</sup> Oh, *Compound 65*, Chapter 3, “POW Power Struggle” and Chapter 4, “Pusan Temporary POW Camp.”

his narrative of his wartime experience around sixteen moments of near-death experiences, beginning with his entrance into a temporary camp, and ending with a confrontation in the Koje camp.<sup>253</sup> Each moment of confronting death results from an encounter with new people, whether it be DPRK soldiers or ROKA soldiers, or even other POWs. The question of “What are you?” was not asking the prisoner of war to narrate him or herself, but rather signaling the beginning of a process where the soldier or policeman would execute in order to determine exactly “what” a potential prisoner of war was. When the ROKA soldier ripped up the UN leaflet in front of Oh Se-hui, the soldier was rejecting any claims the UN or U.S. would have on the conflict itself, an assertion of his own representation of state power on the ground. The U.S. or UN-led conflict of intervention was not to have any bearing upon the encounter between the ROKA soldier and Oh Se-hui – only the civil war, a conflict that had its origins in the Japanese colonial period and its escalation during U.S. military occupation, could be the legitimate template in which Oh Se-hui could become visible.

The prisoner of war Yi Chong-gyu’s experience of becoming a prisoner of war illustrates this working of the state. At the outbreak of the war, sixteen-year-old Yi Chong-gyu was hiding with his older brother from the Korean People’s Army, not wanting to be drafted. His family held a firm reputation as Christians in the community and owned a sizable piece of land, larger than most other farming families. Finally, on August 10, 1950, they decided they could no longer continue hiding. Yi was drafted, received ten days of training, and then was sent south.

I walked all the way down from the north as a soldier in the Korean People’s Army. On the night of General MacArthur’s Inchon landing I was on a mountain close to where the Imjin and Han Rivers meet [...],

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<sup>253</sup> Yeong-gun Ko, *Jookumeo Gobilul Numuso [Facing Death]* (Seoul: Mokmin Publishing, 1997).

Two large naval ships were shelling bombs all through the night, lighting up the northern skies. The bombs seemed like chunks of fire.<sup>254</sup>

The landing at Inchon would prove to be a military turning point. Faced with hundreds of U.S. marine units and a naval flotilla, Yi and others in his KPA unit began a fast retreat northward. Among his fellow soldiers were a few men from Yi's hometown, and eventually he made a pact with one of them to desert the Korean People's Army and find their way back to their hometown; both were certain that only death awaited them if they continued to march north in those conditions. They left one night, and began making their way back to Sŏhaedong. They trekked over mountainous terrain, only pausing to dig out radishes left over in the earth for their food.

As they neared their hometown, soldiers from the Republic of Korea Army captured them. Holding his hands up, Yi Chong-gyu repeated over and over that he was a Christian and not a Communist. The ROKA soldiers, somewhat skeptical, took him aside for interrogation and asked him to recite the Lord's Prayer. He did. The ROKA soldiers took him aside, and Yi became a POW.

The prisoners of war that the ROKA soldiers took in were essentially prisoners of war who were not prisoners of war – that is to say, if one seemed to be a fervent enlistee in the Korean People's Army of the DPRK, then certain death would have been waiting. In the cases of Yi Chung-gyu, Oh Se-hui, and also Ko Yeong-gyun, the ROKA soldiers granted them the privileged status of “prisoner of war” because they seemed to be in a third category aside from the two states engaged in civil war. Their humanity – or at least recognition of being worthy for another moment of life – stemmed from their appearance as a “civilian,” in the case of Oh Se-hui, or appearance as a “refugee,” in the case of

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<sup>254</sup> Yi Chong-gyu, Oral history interview, Seoul, Korea, January 11, 2008. [my translation]

Christian Yi Chung-gyu. The utterance of the Lord's Prayer or the presence of long hair became a shorthand in a time of continued mass violence of reading a person's relationship to the state, and to the violence itself – a moment which reveals what Fernando Coronil and Julie Skurski has described as where “[i]ndividual biography and collective history seem momentarily united, as history and the body become each other's terrains.”<sup>255</sup> And indeed, the Korean War had engendered such a moment where “the territoriality of nations and the corporeality of people become privileged mediums for reorganizing the body politic and for forcibly controlling the movement of persons and ideas within the nation's material and cultural space.”

But this template of conflict was not the one defining how U.S. soldiers captured Korean “prisoners of war.” Eighteen-year-old Yi Mu-ho, who had crossed over the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel from the north before the war's outbreak in hopes of receiving refugee status in the south, had enlisted as an ROKA soldier, most probably in hopes of escaping the constant interrogation he had suffered at the hands of multiple policemen as a “refugee.” After the Chinese pushed the U.S. and UNC forces back to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, Yi and two other fellow ROKA soldiers asked the people of a local village to hide them. The villagers agreed to do so, but only on the condition that Yi and the others dress in civilian clothing and put down their rifles. They agreed – but later when the U.S. military troops come to the village, the U.S. soldiers rounded up the entire village and processed them as “prisoners of war.” Yi Mu-ho, the eighteen-year-old boy who had sought asylum in the south as an anti-communist Christian from the north, had now become a “prisoner of war.”

With the U.S. troops, the question of death for the potential prisoner of war was

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<sup>255</sup> Fernando Coronil and Julie Skurski, *States of violence* (University of Michigan Press, 2006), 84.

highly dependent on the tide of the battlefields. Robert William Burr, who joined the U.S. Army on January 26, 1951 at twenty years of age, noted the following:

I was present when a half a dozen prisoners upon capture [sic]. A platoon sergeant asked for volunteers to take them to the bottom of the hill, when he got no volunteers, he said he would take care of them himself. He shot them.<sup>256</sup>

Burr had been a part of two battles – Bloody Ridge and Heartbreak Ridge – that had resulted in devastating casualties for all sides. “One thing that will remain in my memory forever is the uphill struggle climbing hill 1179 (meters) which equates to over 3800 feet. [...] I think that was why the men were reluctant to take prisoners. They were so dogged tired that they were ready to drop in their tracks, without the added duty of taking prisoners to the bottom of the hill [...].”

The prisoners of war the U.S. soldiers did take in belied the soldiers’ expectations, as the longer history of U.S. military occupation and relations with Korea entered their frame of war. Sergeant Joseph Vincent Lisiewski, a nineteen-year-old from New Jersey, had captured a total of six Korean prisoners of war, but he noted that “Some went to school in the U.S.A., smoked U.S.A. cigarettes, spoke American.”<sup>257</sup> A staff sergeant named Robert H. Moyer, who had enlisted in 1947 and had served in South Korea before the outbreak of the war, offered the following assessment: “Before the war, Koreans considered us as another occupier of their country. And after the elections in 1948, we were only permitted off post in groups of 3 or more, for safety reasons. They disliked

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<sup>256</sup> Robert William Burr [2<sup>nd</sup> Inf div., 38<sup>th</sup> inf. Reg, 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion, Company E], Korean War Veterans’ Survey Questionnaire, Military History Institute Archives: Carlisle, PA.

<sup>257</sup> Joseph Vincent Lisiewski [Sgt, 7<sup>th</sup> Div., 32<sup>nd</sup> Inf Rgt.], enlisted in anticipation of the draft on 3-4-51: Korean War Veterans’ Survey Questionnaire, Military History Institute Archives: Carlisle, PA.

us.”<sup>258</sup> The “enemy” Korean smoked American cigarettes, and the “friend” Korean resented the American military presence. The U.S. soldiers, a number of them also from farming families in the Midwest or South, expressed “compassion and pity” for the ROKA or KATUSA soldiers, calling them “poor farm boys who had no idea what was going on.”<sup>259</sup> But it would be the “look of hate” that confounded the U.S. soldiers – Anthony B. DeAngelis described an encounter with “a young and attractive North Korean woman lieutenant, a nurse”:

Never in my life did I witness such a look of hate as was evident on the face of this woman, an emotion I found difficult to comprehend since she now was positioned to enjoy what I believe was the best opportunity in the world for happiness. But it also told me how effective Communism was as a mind poison; that this person could believe Americans, the liberty beacon of the world, were evil.”<sup>260</sup>

“[D]ifficult to comprehend” in myriad forms became a constant presence in the language of the U.S. military camp administration at the Kojé camp. The frustration underlying the camp administration’s memorandum on the difficulty of keeping surveillance due to the POWs’ deliberate sabotage (“The oriental prisoners of war interchange their names, forget their internment serial number, or deliberately change them, etc., therefore, any attempt at identification by other than fingerprinting has been abandoned as impractical.”<sup>261</sup>) echoes DeAngelis’ incomprehension in front of the “look of hate” from the North Korean lieutenant nurse.

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<sup>258</sup> Robert H. Moyer [Staff Sgt, 3<sup>rd</sup> Inf. Div., 7<sup>th</sup> Inf. Regt., 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, Med company] enlisted on August 13, 1947: Korean War Veterans’ Survey Questionnaire, Military History Institute Archives: Carlisle, PA.

<sup>259</sup> Charles Ehredt [1<sup>st</sup> Sgt., 1 Cav. Div, 16<sup>th</sup> Regiment] enlisted in 1949: Korean War Veterans’ Survey Questionnaire, Military History Institute Archives: Carlisle, PA.

<sup>260</sup> Anthony B. DeAngelis [1st Cav., 15<sup>th</sup> QM Co.] enlisted in 1948: Korean War Veterans’ Survey Questionnaire, Military History Institute Archives: Carlisle, PA.

<sup>261</sup> Subject: Prisoners of War (this memo is a response to an inquiry received on 15 april 1952 from Merlin Nelson Major (MPC) Chief, Prisoner of War Branch, and is addressed to Lt. Colonel Vern E. Johnson of the Plans and Training Division); Folder: Unclassified/Prisoners of War as re: Geneva Conventions; Unclassified/SS11-02/Korea; Box 15; Unclassified Records 1969-75; POW/Civilian Internee Information Center; Records of the Provost Marshall General, 1941; RG 389

The next section delves into the investigation case files, exploring the specific meanings of different types of violence practiced by different groups in the “largest POW camp ever run in accordance to the Geneva Conventions.” The prisoner of war became the site of multiple projects of subject-making, as the military and police forces of the ROKA (both as POWs and military guards within and outside the barbed-wire fences), the military personnel of the KPA and civilian internees advocating the DPRK, and the U.S. military forces who administered the camp and oversaw both POW work details and ROKA/KATUSA police patrolling. As the first year in the Kojima camp passes, the POWs themselves and all involved in the camp’s everyday logistics became embroiled in a struggle over what a prisoner of war should be – and the claims to political visibility embedded in such a category of the “laws of war.”

### **The War over the Prisoner of War**

On March 13, 1952, over sixty ROKA soldiers who were serving as guards on Kojima were summoned and instructed by an ROKA captain to escort a “parade” of three hundred POWs at around 9:30 in the morning. One of the ROKA guards in his later testimony stated, “I was surprised because the PWs were carrying the South Korean and UN flag. [...] I was at the head of the parade with a South Korean Flag detail of six men and myself.” The parade began “200 yards from compound 92,” and was slated to pass specifically by the compound, a communist Korean POW area. As they passed the compound, words were thrown, and soon the situation had escalated. UN military personnel soon arrive to join the ROKA personnel, and someone shot rounds into the compound. At the end of the parade, twelve POWs were dead and twenty-eight were

injured.<sup>262</sup>

The “parade” incident on March 13, 1952 was exceptional only in its explicitness. The claiming of legitimacy and sovereignty, signaled by the pairing of the ROK and UN flags, was demonstrated by a collective group of POWs, supported by military figures, in a space outside of the barbed-wire of their compound. In the months preceding the parade, much of the assertion of the ROK nation-state was occurring within the compound, often in the tent of the compound monitor, in the form of interrogation and beating. From April 18, 1951 until March 13, 1952, the U.S. military opened twenty-six separate case files for the investigation into POW deaths resulting from beatings inside the primarily anti-communist-dominated compounds. Although often the case files investigate the causes of only one POW death, a number of cases involve as many as fifteen deaths, or nineteen injured POWs. And more significantly, the supposed dates of the incidents also cluster somewhat around certain times – mid-September 1951, the first half of October 1951, late December 1951. Beating and interrogation took place after the transfer of a POW into a new compound, which accounted for the clustering of incidents around specific dates. On September 17, 1951 around four in the afternoon, seven Prisoner of War guards in Compound 83 severely beat newcomer Choi Hyun Hyo, who later stated, “The guards had asked me if I was Christian and when I replied ‘no,’ they beat about one hundred times with pick handles.” Lee Yun Jun, a witness to the beating, said that Choi “was beaten because he was a communist and he had killed other anti-communist prisoners at compound Number 78; he had been transferred from that

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<sup>262</sup> Case File #60, POW Incident Investigation Case Files, 1950-1953; Office of the Provost Marshall; Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1; Headquarter, US Army Forces, Far East, 1952-1957; Record Group 554; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.



compound to 83.”<sup>263</sup>

The Korean POWs attempted to create their own surveillance of the POWs in the Koje-do camp, which also meant understanding the certain administrative moves the U.S. military made in moving POWs around to different compounds. For example, a later beating in October 15, 1951 was also focused on a POW who had transferred from Compound 90 – the maximum security compound – and the POWs were suspicious of his previous activities in the camp.<sup>264</sup> The U.S. military often transferred POWs from one compound to the next if the POW’s life was in danger due to political conflicts. In a sense, although Choi’s utterance that he was not a Christian marked him as a possible Communist, it was his transfer from another compound that had already marked him as a suspicious figure. The beatings accompanied an extensive interrogation, where the compound leader or monitor demanded a full history and narrative of the transferred POW’s life before the transfer and before entry in the camp. Wary of possible communists “disguised” as anti-communists and vigilant for former members of the KPA, the anti-communist Korean POWs used these beatings as regular disciplinary practice within the compounds. Compound 83 was also the site where the South Korean Youth Group had taken control – in September 1951, this vigilante anti-communist group was most probably establishing its control in the compound, and used Choi to mark their disciplinary power.

In Compound 91, where Yi Chong-gyu was assigned, there were both anti-

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<sup>263</sup> Case File #25, POW Incident Investigation Case Files, 1950-1953; Office of the Provost Marshall; Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1; Headquarter, US Army Forces, Far East, 1952-1957; Record Group 554; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

<sup>264</sup> Case File #63, POW Incident Investigation Case Files, 1950-1953; Office of the Provost Marshall; Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1; Headquarter, US Army Forces, Far East, 1952-1957; Record Group 554; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

communists and communists among the prisoners, all of whom came from north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Yi worked as an assistant to the doctor in the compound medical facility, and he recalled that the doctor, whose hometown was in the northernmost region of Korea near China, had been the leader of a communist uprising in the compound. The uprising failed to take control of the compound, and subsequently the anti-communist faction in the compound took disciplinary action against the communists.

Although Yi could not remember the exact date of the uprising, one particular case file seems to fit Yi's narrative: Case file No. 71, which investigated the death of a prisoner of war caused by the beating from other POWs in the compound monitor tent on January 14, 1952. Yi recalled what he knew about the interrogation process:

The interrogation of the uprising's leaders involved stripping them down to their underwear and dunking their heads into large basins of cold water. Then they would be forced to kneel on wet *gamani* [rice straw bags] while being beaten. And if they still did not tell the truth, their heads would be held under water again.<sup>265</sup>

The scene described by Yi was a common one – albeit translated differently for each situation – in the Korean POW compounds on Kojedo. The “truth” in these cases was a full narrative of one's history before entering the camp – although many of these “truth” sessions would take place instead in the compound monitor's tent, where a POW who had been recently transferred would be interrogated on his history and intentions within the compound. Yi's recollection holds significance in the spectacle nature of the interrogation and punishment – a public disciplining of a group of communists required a spectacle, while the more enclosed interrogation of a POW transfer established surveillance and the assertion that the compound leaders were now the ones who had basic sovereign rights to the POW's body and life.

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<sup>265</sup> Yi, Oral history interview. [my translation]

But violence – and the POW beatings occurring in the anti-communist compounds – albeit frustrating, did not trouble the U.S. military camp authorities. There are over 300 such investigation case files on incidents ranging from suicide, beatings, and homicide. Of the 102 incident cases during the first year of the Koje camp operation, the average time between the date of the incident and the file date of the investigation is between 4 to 9 months. Among these 102 incident cases, 28 of them specifically dealt with cases of injuries and/or death within the POW compounds. The narrative of the on-the-ground experience in the camps offered by these incident case files unsettles a basic ideological narrative that was mobilized by both the anti-communist ROK government and the U.S. government in their stance towards communist Koreans in both the battlefield and the negotiating table: the Korean Communist prisoner of war was a fanatic, an ideologue who employed violent means in order to achieve a totalitarian or fascist compliance from others. However, only four of the twenty-eight cases involved communist “perpetrators.”

But why did the anti-communist POW compounds need this particular form of violence as a practice and a disciplinary threat? In a camp of 160,000 POWs, reinscribing lines of difference and sovereignty would take priority among the POWs. In a sense, the experiences of Oh Se-hui, Yi Chung-mo, and Yi Mi-ho at the time of capture would repeat itself over and over again within the POW camp. The anxiety over rendering each individual’s history and subjectivity transparent was foremost a priority in the compounds. And the effort and violence involved in the constant re-interrogation of prisoners of war belies the extreme effort and labor involved to insist upon a binary nation-state politics over this population.

In the March 13, 1952 incident of the POW “parade,” the communist Korean prisoners of war began shouting insults at the passing POWs and ROKA soldiers. And for the year preceding the incident, the communist Korean POWs hurled verbal insults constantly through the barbed-wire fence at the ROKA soldiers and military police. The fact that these incidents consistently ended with at least one POW shot by an ROKA soldier merits a closer analysis of the dynamics and meanings of insults, how the form of insults evolved over time, the power these insults displayed and the violence and reprisals these insults provoked in these moments.

At approximately 6:15 P.M. on April 10, 1952 at Compound 95, PFC (private first class) Lim Chai Kwan, a member of the 33rd Korean Military Police Battalion, shot and wounded a prisoner of war while on guard duty. The narrative of the full incident itself begins about a half an hour earlier. A prisoner of war had shut himself inside the compound latrine, which was located at the corner of the compound area near the fence. Sergeant Robert J. Mackenzie, part of the 551st MP Escort Guard Company, was making his rounds when he saw three ROK guards standing in a group at the corner of Compound 95. “[...] I stopped to see why they were not walking their posts. They were perimeter guards. There was a PW in the latrine, a stone latrine with a tin roof right outside the fence of Compound 95, and from what I gathered he was giving the ROKs a bad time. [...] He had a megaphone inside.” Another soldier [Louis D. Raines, Pfc, 551st MOP EG Company] said that he had heard that the PW had “been shouting to the ROK through one of these tin deals that makes your voice louder, calling him all kinds of

names about the ROK Army and the UN Army, swearing at him.”<sup>266</sup>

Eun Jin Sik, a POW questioned by the board, stated that the POW had in fact been, “in the toilet, on the way back. He was talking to this guard about Geneva conference, and this guard didn’t want to hear, and they shot him.” “What did he say about the Geneva Conference?” asked the board. “The 95 compound, POW’s all very bad, so they didn’t distribute the rations equally like the other compounds, so we demanded that we want equal distribution of the rations.”<sup>267</sup> The POW in the latrine holding a megaphone was accusing the ROKA soldiers of withholding the full ration distribution that was allotted to his compound simply because his compound was a firmly communist one.

According to Lim’s testimony, “The prisoners talked to us, all Korean ROK soldiers, and bad words, and then meantime, throw the stones to us. If I let them do that way, I will be punished by the law of Department of Defense of Republic of Korea, so finally I shoot.”<sup>268</sup> A much earlier case needs to be looked at briefly in order to appreciate the full import of Lim’s statement. In an earlier case where another ROKA guard shot a POW for insulting him, Captain Lee Byong Wha, who had been in command of the ROKA guards at the POW camps, gave the following testimony at 1500 hours on February 13, 1952:

In the past I received the following order: If a PW attempts to escape to yell “Chung-Jee” [sic] (chōngji) three (3) times before firing[sic] the weapon. But if the PW continues to escape the weapon may be fired. I misinterpreted the orders to read as follows: In case a PW attempts to escape from the compound, commit a disturbance in the compound, attempts a riot, insults or threatens the guards or resists or disobeys the

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<sup>266</sup> Case file 104, Box 5, POW Incident Investigation Case Files, 1950-1953; Office of the Provost Marshall; Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1; Headquarter, US Army Forces, Far East, 1952-1957; Record Group 554; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

guards the guard may fire his weapon for the purpose of killing. [...] <sup>269</sup>

According to Lee's statement, the act of escape, rioting, and insulting carry the same equivalence in terms of punishable crimes. But what did an insult transgress, that rendered it possibly the equivalent of an act like rioting, or an escape attempt? Lim's claim that he would have faced punishment if he allowed the POW to continue to insult him suggests that, for the South Korean state, insults are equivalent to a riot, an act of rebellion, endangering national security.

But a much earlier case of a challenge from the prisoners of war that invoked the 1949 Geneva Conventions occurred on July 29, 1951. The prisoners of war in Compound 76 – primarily POWs from north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel on the Korean peninsula - had begun to gather at the barbed-wire fence surrounding their compound. It was a strange sight – a few of them were dressed in their newly-issued bright red uniforms, but the rest of the prisoners were naked.

These Korean POWs were staging a protest against their new uniforms. Until that point, prisoners of war wore old military fatigues or handoffs from the U.S. military. In an effort to make escape more difficult, the U.S. military decided to hand out red uniforms. There was anxiety among the POW camp administrators regarding the civilian population surrounding the camp – a POW could escape to the surrounding villages and easily appear like a local civilian.

The POWs began to gather at the fence an hour after finishing their supper. Soon, a few of the prisoners took off their uniforms, wrapped them around a rock or two, and

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<sup>269</sup> Case file 83, Box 4, POW Incident Investigation Case Files, 1950-1953; Office of the Provost Marshall; Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1; Headquarter, US Army Forces, Far East, 1952-1957; Record Group 554; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

threw the package over the fence into the next compound, Number 77. “We cannot wear this kind of clothing,” cried out the POWs.

Members of the ROKA 33<sup>rd</sup> battalion had surrounded the compound. Words were exchanged, and the POWs insisted upon refusing to wear the uniforms. A scuffle ensued. Some POWs threw stones and some of the ROKA soldiers opened fire. Three POWs were killed, and four injured. The U.S. military investigation board concluded in its case file that the shooting was indeed “justified.”<sup>270</sup>

The Korean prisoners of war in Compound 76 protested on behalf of the Korean POWs in the camp. They contended that under Japanese colonialism, prisoners who were sentenced to death were assigned the red-colored uniforms in prison. The prisoners’ refusal to wear the red uniforms was not simply a sign of their obdurate refusal to recognize the authority of the U.S. military – it was also an act that insisted upon the U.S. military’s recognition of their own histories, experiences, and understandings of conflict and war. The Korean prisoners of war were refusing to be marked as criminals.

The decision of the hundreds of prisoners of war to stand naked in protest, without their red uniforms, and the subsequent shootings also laid bare the vulnerability of these prisoners. The 1949 Geneva Conventions on the Treatment of Prisoners of War were a constant presence in the camp, and as it was supposed to mediate the encounter between Se-hui Oh and the ROKA soldier at the opening of this chapter, the Conventions were to also mediate the different encounters within the camp also – whether between prisoners of war themselves, prisoners and sentries, or prisoners and the administrative powers.

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<sup>270</sup> Case file 40, Box 2; POW Incident Investigation Case Files, 1950-1953; Office of the Provost Marshall; Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1; Headquarter, US Army Forces, Far East, 1952-1957; Record Group 554; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

The “red uniform” incident in its entirety, from the protest at the barbed-wire fence to the finished drafts of the investigation board’s conclusion, simultaneously exposed the Geneva Conventions’ assumption underlying its script of proper POW treatment, while also challenging the ability of the U.S. military to carry out its role as the detaining power according to Western standards.

The Geneva Conventions of 1949 on the Treatment of Prisoners of War began from the assumption that prisoners of war were essentially vulnerable persons, and was invested in creating a normative understanding that taking a person prisoner rather than his or her life was a marker of advanced civilization. In fact, according to the conventions, the measure of any society’s civilization was revealed on the body of the prisoner of war – how the detaining power clothed, fed, and sheltered the body; how the detaining power marked, administered, and transported the POW body; and how the detaining power guarded, surveyed, and knew the POW body.<sup>271</sup> But these standards were most intimately revealed in the very moments they were transgressed, mocked, or resisted – as in the case of the red uniform uprising.

On June 18, 1951, the North Korean officers in Compound 72 staged a hunger strike. However, in order to make the members of the investigation board appreciate the full import of these North Korean POW officers’ refusal to eat, Major Carroll Cooper, the one of the top camp officials on Kojedo, vented his frustration with this particular group of POWs by narrating a string of refusals on the POWs’ part in the past. According to the Geneva Convention, as officers, they did not have to labor because enlisted men would

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<sup>271</sup> See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: sovereign power and bare life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) for Agamben’s “bare life” concept, and Michel Foucault, “*Society must be defended*”: lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76, ed. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana; trans. by David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003) for his “make live” concept.



undertake the work for them. However, the North Korean officers had refused and protested against enlisted men working for them, and insisted that they would do the labor themselves. However, according to Cooper, the POW officers were strategically refusing to maintain their compound areas. “Prisoners were refusing to observe even the basic requirements of sanitation, be defecation and urinating on the ground, even though adequate receptacles were provided, and throwing trash and garbage on the ground.”

On June 18, 1951 at 1000 hours, Captain Robert R. Armstrong, who had been assigned as the supervisor for Compound 72 on June 8, 1951, gathered all of the senior officers for a meeting where he stated that their living quarters would be inspected on a daily basis.

On June 18, I made an inspection of the entire compound. The Chinese area was well within the desired standard. The North Korean officers area was in a deplorable condition. The senior officers were called into the compound CP at which time they were told of the condition and that there would be another inspection at 1800 hours, the same day. They were also told that no one would be served the supper meal until after the inspection.<sup>272</sup>

According to Armstrong, when he returned at 1800 hours, one of the three sub-compounds had blatantly refused to put their compound into order. Armstrong issued the order that the POWs in sub-compound 3 would not receive food until they complied with his orders. “At about 2030 hours, Master Sergeant Kahl, compound commander, reported to me that all the North Korean officers had refused to touch their food and would remain on a hunger strike until sub-compound 3 had been fed.”

On the morning of the 19<sup>th</sup>, the POWs still refused to touch their food. The U.S. and ROKA soldiers were greeted with military songs accompanied by the beating on cans. As Sergeant Armando Poretta moved into the compound, he was greeted with

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<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

stones – and a POW had reportedly attempted to assault him with a “heavy chain.” Soon, more stones were thrown – Poretta got out of the compound and manned a machine gun. There was gunfire, and eleven prisoners of war were injured, seven of them dead on arrival at the camp hospital.

The case file also contains the transcript of an exchange with Lee Hak Ku, a Senior Colonel of the KPA, which reveals a rather differently inflected narrative of the instigating moment of the June 18<sup>th</sup> incident:

On 18 June 1951, the prisoners were supposed to have cigarettes distribution. Some of the prisoners of 2d Battalion hung some laundry on the barbed wire which is prohibited. When American M/Sgt saw it he took the laundry away with him. This was the prisoner’s fault so we did not ask to get the laundry back, but since it was cigarette distribution day they requested their cigarettes.<sup>273</sup>

Senior Colonel Lee, a figure who would later play a prominent role in the Dodd kidnapping, noted that the supposedly flagrant acts of defiance were perhaps more minor acts of transgression. For example, the supposedly unkempt sub-compound only had a water can indoors, instead of outdoors, which then resulted in the punishment of withholding food. Keeping his testimony rather even-handed, Lee appeared to strive to illustrate the severe disjuncture between the resulting punishment under the gunfire and the simple misdemeanors that the POWs committed.

Yet, the investigation board would again conclude, similarly to the red uniform uprising case, that the violence had been “justified” because it prevented a possible riot and escape attempt. Carroll concluded his testimony with three “facts”:

- 1) Since arriving in this Enclosure these Prisoners have resisted in every way possible the efforts of the protecting personnel to provide adequate facilities for them.
- 2) Their desire to work was only a method by which they felt they could make

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<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

demands upon and receive concessions from the protecting power. These demands were always to their advantage, and never to advantage of all concerned.

- 3) Their false promises indicate that they were stalling for time, in order to bring discredit, and criticism upon the United States Government.<sup>274</sup>

Carroll's frustration with the prisoners of war in Compound 72 stemmed from the fact that they did not accept the care or treatment of the U.S. military. In essence, the POWs refused not only to play their role as the prisoner of war, but also to allow the U.S. military to play its role as the detaining power, according to the script of the 1949 Geneva Conventions. The POWs' refusals were multiple: the refusal to keep the compound clean, the refusal to allow enlisted men to labor for them, the refusal to work efficiently and quickly, and the refusal to eat. Again, the body of the prisoner of war was at the center of the discussion – and the prisoners of war were strategically not allowing the U.S. military to take care of their bodies in terms of shelter, exercise, and nourishment. And the punishment for not accepting their roles as POWs was a possible death.

In a sense, the prisoners of war could only render their protest – and thus political position – visible via the use of their bodies. The U.S. military constantly harped upon the fact that it was the Korean Communist POW, not the Chinese Communist POW, who would create the most trouble for the administration. In fact, among the over 300 incident case files investigating acts of violence to and among POWs in the camp, over 96% of the cases involve Korean prisoners of war, both anti-communist and communist, not the Chinese prisoners of war. In demonstrating resistance by making their bodies vulnerable to possible violence, the Korean POWs marked their bodies as political, demonstrating that they had something at stake that the Chinese POWs did not. That something was the meaning of the war itself. The Korean POWs were refusing the

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

United States' claims to a universal moralism by disallowing the fulfillment of a detaining power's duties – and in turn, they were critiquing the United States' professed moral reasons for its involvement in the war itself.

### **The Psychological Strategy Board's Prisoner of War**

On April 4, 1951 – only a few months after the opening of the POW camp on Koje Island - President Harry Truman issued an executive directive for the creation of the Psychological Strategy Board [PSB] “for the formulation and promulgation, as guidance to the departments and agencies responsible for psychological operations, of over-all national psychological objectives, policies and programs, and for the coordination and evaluation of the national psychological effort.”<sup>275</sup> The PSB members would be the Undersecretary of State, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Director of Central Intelligence, and any other head or representative of a department or agency as deemed necessary by the board. In addition, a representative from the Joint Chiefs of Staff would sit as a military adviser. As part of the PSB's duties, the members would report to the National Security Council regarding its evaluations of “national psychological operations.” The fashioning of the issue of POW repatriation into one that fulfilled psychological warfare needs began in August 1951. On October 9, 1951, the Psychological Strategy Board issued a “Status of POW Policy Review.” The POW of the Korean War had now become a figure for the Cold War.

The creation of the Psychological Strategy Board – and its focus on the POW as a figure important to the larger war on discourse – indicates the particular historical

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<sup>275</sup>Harry S. Truman to Secretaries of State and Defense, and Director of CIA, April 4, 1951; Psychological Strategy Board; Subject File; CF; Truman Papers, Student Research File: “Psychological Warfare.” Harry S. Truman Library.

conjuncture within which the Truman administration was attempting to position itself on the world stage. The war-weary and war-wary public in the face of staggering number of military U.S. casualties, the horror of the atomic bomb, and the threat of World War III – all of these specters of war and death were implicated in the actions of the Truman administration. Wartime death – both past and present – was proving to be a complicated issue for the administration. Within a similar vein to the ICRC’s concerns with the legacies of World War II, the Truman administration also did not want the public to consider the Korean War as a potential “World War III.” Instead, the Korean War had to become the global “state of emergency” – thus legitimating U.S. intervention – that effectively deferred “World War III,” a nuclear showdown with Russia. However, a “state of emergency” that was quickly resulting in staggering numbers of casualties – both military and civilian – was becoming harder and harder to sustain. Thus, the “prisoner of war” debate became the new site on which to manufacture consent, where the stakes in the conflict were rendered “apolitical” and “moral.” As Truman would announce in May 1951, the prisoner of war repatriation issue was one about a divide between “freedom” and “slavery.” The emphasis on a moral universalism as the framing for the war had an uncanny resonance with the “war over humanity” that Carl Schmitt had predicted would become the hegemonic discursive form of war in the post-1945 world.

“Psychological warfare” itself had been a more recently created label for a set of practices that the U.S. military had been using for different ends throughout the past few decades. Psychological warfare during World War II was one conceived primarily around

the idea of “information” in order to influence individual opinion.<sup>276</sup> The Psychological Strategy Board was the first fully institutionalized oversight structure for psychological warfare, and it continued the earlier objectives of “explaining” American liberalism to the broader global public. But by the time Truman had issued the executive directive for the creation of the Psychological Strategy Board, a marked shift in the evaluation of the importance of psychological warfare had taken place. With formal decolonization quickly gaining momentum, the United States had to reposition and rearticulate its own global, universal claims vis-à-vis imperialism. In his retrospective narrative review of the PSB’s activities of 1951, Raymond Allen, former Director of the PSB, wrote about the challenges facing the PSB: “[C]ould we present our policies and acts in such a light that they would strike a responsive chord in the hearts and soul of men and make them feel that their cause was our cause? In seeking an answer to questions like these, some high officials became convinced that we needed the same kind of unified leadership as in a military struggle. Accordingly, they proposed the appointment of a sort of ‘chief of staff

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<sup>276</sup> “SHAEF, for example, saturated German occupied areas of Western Europe with over 5 billion leaflets.” Propaganda was the order of the day, but it was a propaganda program based on the “principle that American information programs were based on truth,” according to a “Report on the establishment of the Psychological Strategy Board” authored during the Eisenhower administration. Truth claims – and thus, self-evident universalism – formed the core of the psychological warfare effort. During World War II, the “CIAA [Coordinator for Inter-American Affairs], OWI [Office of War Information], and OSS [Office of Strategic Services], were the major organizations involved in American psychological warfare, but [...] the War Department also had a Psychological Warfare Branch and the Navy had a Special Warfare Section.” From Scott Lucas, “Campaigns of Truth: The Psychological Strategy Board and American Ideology, 1951-1953,” *The International History Review* xvii, 2: May 1996, 253-504. Interestingly, the report also includes the Board of Economic Warfare, the Office of Censorship, the War Production Board and the Federal Communications Commission within this group of pre-PSB precursor bodies within the U.S. government. After 1945, much of the psychological strategy revolved around the Marshall Plan, and creating approval and consent among different populations in Western Europe, in particular Italy. The pre-PSB systems of psychological strategy were about explaining American liberalism to those under the Marshall Plan. For more of an overview of Psychological Warfare, see Rob Robin, *The Making of the Cold War Enemy: Culture and Politics in the Military-Intellectual Complex* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

for the cold war' responsible directly to the President and command-in-chief."<sup>277</sup> The mandate for the PSB essentially was to "identify exactly what we were trying to accomplish" – the PSB was to articulate the Cold War itself. NSC 20/4 and 68 had provided the policy rhetoric for the contours of the Cold War, and the PSB was to engage and practice it. And Allen's characterization of the United States was indeed an exemplary articulation of U.S. exceptionalism in the Cold War era: "In this time of crisis and stress, the American nation has risen to a new role. We may speak of this role without vanity or self-consciousness because we did not seek it but rather tried to avoid it." In a concern about winning the "war of wills," Allen reminded Truman that "we must make it clear to those who are our friends, and to those who would be our friends, that we not only abhor militaristic imperialism, but also that we disclaim cultural and intellectual imperialism as well. The only rule we seek is the Golden Rule."

The prisoner of war was undoubtedly a figure of policy-making during the Korean War – and perhaps more importantly, a figure of Cold War psychological warfare. On November 16, the Senior Staff of the NSC issued an interim report on the "United States Courses of Action with Respect to Korea," recommending "a political course of action" if U.N. forces were forced to "retire" from Korea.<sup>278</sup> Although Chinese forces, along with KPA, did not succeed in pushing the UN forces out of Korea, a "political course" eventually took the form of armistice meetings first at Kaesong, and then at Panmunjom located near the 38th parallel.

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<sup>277</sup> Raymond B. Allen to Matthew Connelly, March 7, 1952; OF 1290-D: Psychological Strategy Board; Truman Papers, Student Research File: "Psychological Warfare." Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>278</sup> Memorandum for the Senior NSC Staff. "U.S. Courses of Action with Respect to Korea," in vol. 10 of *Documentary History of the Truman Presidency*, ed. Dennis Merrill (University Publications of America, 1997), 29-32.

In that sense, Bruce Cumings is right to mark the spring of 1951 as the end of the *Korean* war [his italics], as the subsequent war continued protracted armistice meetings, extensive bombing of the north, and battles that simply served to reestablish the 38th parallel.<sup>279</sup> With rollback no longer the aim, the war indeed moved to a more explicitly political and ideological terrain, where the figure of the prisoner of war became central to that political and ideological warfare. In the “entirely new war” of the post-MacArthur period, the war for containment had prevailed, and the determining dynamics of the war seemed to be contained to the tables and tents at Kaesong and later Panmunjom – the villages at the 38th parallel where the armistice talks took place. The figure of the prisoner of war became emblematic of this type of war, where the terrain was ideology and politics, not territory. Although militarily the war was now one of containment, rollback was still operating – this time over people and their “psyches.”

By January 1952, prisoner of war repatriation became the most controversial and public issue at the Panmunjom truce talks. The fashioning of the issue of POW repatriation into one that fulfilled psychological warfare needs began in August 1951. On October 9, 1951, the Psychological Strategy Board issued a “Status of POW Policy Review.” Stating that the PSB, “after an exhaustive study of the various legal and psychological aspects of the problem,” was now “endeavoring to secure working-level inter-Departmental and Agency (State, Defense, CIA) agreement” on the issue of POW repatriation. The Joints Chiefs of Staff supported some form of voluntary repatriation, where POWs could elect whether or not they wanted to repatriate to China or North Korea; the Secretary of State narrowed the possible POW population in terms of non-

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<sup>279</sup> See Cumings’ discussion of the change from containment to rollback. Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War Volume 2: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947-1950* (Seoul: Yuksabipyungsa, 4<sup>th</sup> printing: 2002), 757.



repatriation, and stated that only ROK personnel forcibly drafted into the Korean People's Army of the DPRK should not be sent north of the 38th parallel; and the Secretary of Defense, fearing that any alteration of the repatriation principle would result in jeopardizing the welfare of U.S. POWs, advised against voluntary repatriation.<sup>280</sup>

The PSB saw the following advantages to the policy of voluntary POW repatriation: “1) It would reinforce the principle of United Nations asylum from tyranny. 2) The effectiveness of future United States psychological warfare programs would be enhanced by the adoption of this policy.”<sup>281</sup> More specifically, it was hoped that the policy would encourage future defections from Communist armies, especially from the Chinese Communist Forces. Moreover, it placed the Korean War squarely within the parameters of the “war of wills” that Allen had characterized. The POW of the Korean War would become a figure of the Cold War – an individual abstracted from history who would freely make a choice between “communism and anti-communism,” and based on his or her fundamental humanity would choose the free-market democracy espoused by the United States.

But POW voluntary repatriation policy was tricky to articulate because Article 118 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions specifically stipulated that all prisoners of war had to be repatriated as soon as possible at the end of a conflict. In fact, the PSB's proposal of voluntary repatriation was a literal reversal of the U.S. delegate's position on repatriation at Geneva only less than two years earlier. Article 118 had, in fact, not only been the center of extended debate during the 1949 Geneva Conventions, it had also been the subject upon which both the Soviet Union delegate, General Skylyrov, and the U.S.

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<sup>280</sup> Status of POW Policy Review, 386.6 Report on Situation with Respect to Repatriation of Prisoners of War, Box 32, SMOF: Psychological Strategy Board Files, Papers of Harry S. Truman.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

delegate, General Parker, agreed.

A brief overview of the debates over POW repatriation during the 1949 Geneva Conventions is necessary for our understanding of the import and stakes involved with the PSB's proposal for voluntary repatriation in 1951. "War" itself was the foremost concern for the International Committee of the Red Cross – albeit a different war, World War II. The ICRC had worked ever since 1942 to bring together another convention to address the limitations of the 1929 Geneva Conventions in front of a changing and shifting landscape of "total warfare" – the delegates needed to reexamine the regulatory measures of the 1929 Geneva Conventions regarding states' behaviors and actions during wartime. The different categories of wartime personhood – civilians, the wounded and the sick, the prisoner of war – also ran up against another shifting landscape – one of sovereignty and civilization. On Thursday, April 21 1949, when Mr. Max Petitpierre, the Head of the Swiss Federal Political Department, made the opening welcome speech for the gathering of delegates from sixty-four nations for the Geneva Conventions, he laid out what type of work was in front of them: "The Convention of 1864, first conceived by Henry Dunant, a citizen of Geneva, has come to form part, as it were, of the spiritual heritage of mankind. It is one of the steps mankind has climbed in its endeavors to raise the standard of civilization."<sup>282</sup>

The conventions had come together primarily in the interest of one particular category – the wounded and the sick. But soon another figure of war would incite a great deal of debate and energy – at a level far surpassing the other categories of "civilians" or the "wounded and the sick." But soon another figure of war would incite a great deal of

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<sup>282</sup> *Final Record of the Diplomatic Conference at Geneva of 1949, Vol II, Sec. A.* (Berne: Federal Political Department, 1963), 9.

debate and energy – at a level far surpassing the other categories of “civilians” or the “wounded and the sick.” As historian Geoffrey Best has written, “The 1949 POW Convention, so much enlarged beyond the 1929 bridgehead, was made up of 143 articles and five annexes. [...] None of the three other Conventions possessed as concentrated a character or invited such concentrated attention. Its spotlight focused on just one actor, the POW, and one crowded stage, the POW camp.”<sup>283</sup> The prisoner of war had taken such central importance at the conventions because of the very basic questions of state legitimacy the figure of the POW evoked and revealed.

The UK delegate argued that some of the POWs still under the United Kingdom’s care did not want to repatriate to the USSR. On June 23, 1949, the delegate from Austria proposed such an amendment that would allow the prisoners of war to choose whether or not to repatriate at the war’s end, but a large majority promptly rejected it.

General Sklyarov (USSR) feared that a prisoner of war might not be able to express himself with complete freedom when he was in captivity. Furthermore, this new provision might give rise to the exercise of undue pressure on the part of the Detaining Power. General Parker (USA) shared that opinion.

At stake was the state’s sovereign claim on its citizen-individuals. The focus on the individual – and its attendant implications for state sovereignty – at the 1949 Geneva Conventions became the later focus of the PSB in formulating voluntary repatriation. The Korean War, I contend, had forced the ICRC to articulate and negotiate its own position of legitimacy within a shifting world of war. If the twentieth-century has been witness to the institutionalization of warfare, then the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the debates over the POW during the Korean War evidences a shift in conceptions of the “individual”

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<sup>283</sup> Geoffrey Best, *War and Law Since 1945* (Oxford : Clarendon Press ; New York : Oxford University Press, 1996).

as a way to regulate state behavior. In 1958, an extensive commentary on the 1949 Geneva Conventions – a nine-hundred-page undertaking, was published.:

The individual is considered in his own right. The State is not the only subject of law, and this step forward by the Geneva Conventions constitutes an important advance in the present-day international law.<sup>284</sup>

Thus, the PSB's proposal for voluntary repatriation was not, in the strictest sense, a reversal of the previous stance in 1949 – it was a different claim on the individual as a way to shape the most basic relationship over sovereignty – that between the state and the individual.

The 1949 Conventions differed from the 1929 Conventions in two crucial aspects: the lack of a preamble and the notable increase in the number of articles. As the introduction of the *Commentary* on the 1949 Conventions stated,

The Regulations annexed to the Fourth Hague Convention of 1907 contained seventeen Articles relative to prisoners of war, the 1929 Convention constituted a code of almost one hundred articles and, based on the experience of the Second World War, the present 1949 Convention contains 143 articles. The time for declarations of principle is past; the 1929 Convention showed the advantages to be gained from detailed provisions. The 1949 Convention went so far as to impose on the contracting States obligations which are so specific that in many cases they require the modification or the supplementing of national legislation. That is undoubtedly a great step forward in humanitarian law.<sup>285</sup>

The lack of a preamble was based on an assumption of a universally accepted norm regarding the position of the “human” within a larger international system: “Obviously, rules as detailed as these were drawn up primarily with a view to lengthy conflicts, such as the last two world wars; but they also have the tremendous advantage of defining, in

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<sup>284</sup> Pictet, Jean S., ed., *Commentary: The Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949*. 4 vols. Geneva, ICRC, 1952, 1958, 1960. The quote is taken from Volume 4, page 86.

<sup>285</sup> *Commentary*, Volume 1, 9-10.

practice and in relation to certain specific circumstances, the position of the human being as such in the present-day international system.”<sup>286</sup> Without question, the 1949 Geneva Conventions aimed to control the behavior of different states in conflict – and as evidenced by the extensive debating over the figure of the POW during the conventions, the different states involved understood this aspect very well.

The Psychological Strategy Board, in their attempt to fashion a prisoner of war for the Cold War, took it upon themselves to articulate the “principle.” The Psychological Strategy Board would be the institutional entity within the U.S. government to configure the “prisoner of war” as a possible discursive site on which to integrate fully the Cold War hegemonic aims of the U.S. government and the humanitarian ideals of a longer Western genealogy. U.S. military psychological warfare tactics and the international humanitarian law espoused by the ICRC may appear unlikely bedmates, but during the Korean War, the struggle over the prisoner of war and the subsequent application of the 1949 Geneva Conventions demonstrated how the terrain of warfare had shifted to a subject that both PsyWar and IHL had in common: the individual human subject.

In a December 18, 1951 memo to fellow PSB staff member, Tracy Barnes, Palmer Putnam offered a few key suggestions regarding resolving the legal issues surrounding POW repatriation:

2. Why not announce to the world that prisoners of war unwilling to return to the political control of the armies from which they were captured shall be regarded as political refugees who will be given sanctuary?
3. Why could not the International Red Cross, or some similar nonpartisan group, accept the responsibility for interviewing each prisoner and establishing the truth of his personal wish?

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<sup>286</sup> *Commentary*, Volume 1,10.

4. Why does this not solve the problem of forced repatriation of prisoners of war, while at the same time conforming to the intent, at least, of the Geneva Convention?<sup>287</sup>

Under this rubric, the post-1945 international nation-state order as managed by the United States, sanctioned by the United Nations, and looked after by the International Committee of the Red Cross would claim a moral legitimacy – and the POW would be its perfect subject, a person deserving of sanctuary within Western international humanitarian norms.

The POW repatriation issues struck at the heart of a larger project the PSB began to articulate for the U.S. government on a global scale – how the “innate” desires and will of those under Communist rule would seek and “choose” American democracy instead. The Korean POW repatriation issue had larger consequences though when we take into consideration the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, the arbitrary line drawn by the U.S. military colonels in August 1945. A divided Korea had been destined, according to the 1943 Cairo Conference, to become the first official experiment in “trusteeship” under the newly formed United Nations – the north occupied by the USSR, and the south occupied by the United States. “Trusteeship,” of course, was a new rendering of Wilson’s “mandate,” a program of tutelage for former colonies under the auspices of an international community of nation-states.<sup>288</sup> “Trusteeship” on the Korean peninsula soon gave way to a Cold War divided military occupation by the time the U.S. military arrived in 1945. The U.S.

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<sup>287</sup> Memorandum for Mr. Barnes, December 18, 1951; Box 32, SMOF: Psychological Strategy Board Files; Papers of Harry S. Truman; Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, MI.

<sup>288</sup> This form of U.S.-led “trusteeship” was enacted in 1947 with the “Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands,” which had previously been the “South Pacific Islands,” a League of Nations mandate that had been under Japanese administration before transferring to U.S. control in 1944. In 1947, the territories came under UN-sanctioned “trusteeship.” The Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Republic of Palau – all established after U.S.-administered trusteeship officially ended in the late 1970s or early 1980s) had been all under this particular trusteeship.

military and the United Nations had set up the 1948 elections which resulted in President Syngman Rhee, a man unpopular with the vast majority of Koreans. However, it was not the legitimacy of Rhee's regime per se that was occupying and concerning the U.S. policy officials during the Korean War – it was the issue of a proper subject of decolonization under U.S. guidance. Indeed, in the face of the Soviet Union and the formally decolonizing world, the United States needed a subject it had successfully “decolonized,” and that the Koreans had willingly participated and desired the particular system of governance put forth by the United States.

The PSB's voluntary repatriation proposal had as its main concern the continuing de-recognition of North Korea as a sovereign state, where the individual would renounce the state's sovereign claims over him or herself. In the state's stead, the post-1945 international nation-state order as managed by the U.S., sanctioned by the UN, and regulated by the ICRC would lay a claim on knowing the subjective desires of the individual POW. Rendered stateless, the POW who chooses not to repatriate would be under the sovereign auspices of an international system. By January 2, 1952, the U.S. delegates at Panmunjom had placed the demand for voluntary repatriation on the armistice negotiating table.

### **Conclusion: Panmunjom, Koje, and Interrogation**

On February 12, 1952, a memo arrived at Koje camp that pressed for the preliminary screening of prisoners of war. There had been a previous round of repatriation interrogation in late December 1951, but a few key compounds had successfully prevented interrogation teams from entering their compound. Compound 62 had been one of those compounds – it housed 5,600 civilian internees (CI). Compound

62 civilian internees were self-professed Korean communists, and had rejected the notion of voluntary repatriation.<sup>289</sup>

On February 18, U.S. and ROKA military interrogation teams accompanied by 850 U.S. troops from the Third Battalion of the 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry arrived at Compound 62 at 5:30 A.M. By 9:00 A.M., 1 U.S. Army enlisted man was killed, 55 civilian internees killed, 4 U.S. Army enlisted men wounded, and 140 civilian internees were wounded – of whom 22 later died of the inflicted wounds. Alerted to the presence of U.S. military troops surrounding the compound, the CI's met the troops with homemade cudgels, barbed-wire flails, and hundreds of stones. The majority of POWs died from wounds inflicted from the concussion grenades.

The stakes involved in the question of voluntary repatriation were high both at the tables of Panmunjom and behind the barbed-wire fence on Koje Island. As the Psychological Strategy Board's proposal and the three different wars on the ground in Korea converged upon the figure of the prisoner of war, the prisoner of war him/herself would make demands upon the international community, in turn. At this point in the story, the Korean prisoner of war was afforded perhaps the most visibility on the global stage than at any other previous point in the Korean War – however, this was also the point where the “fanatic Oriental Communist” prisoner of war would begin to appear in the bureaucratic annals of the U.S. military and government. In a study conducted during the war, titled “The Oriental Communist Prisoner of War: A Study from the Intelligence Viewpoint,” the writer states, “The United States Army has never had to deal with this type of prisoner before. [...] He has taken unto himself many duties and missions to

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<sup>289</sup> Case 104, Box 8, POW Incident Investigation Case files, 1950-1953; Office of the Provost Marshall; Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1; Headquarter, US Army Forces, Far East, 1952-1957; Record Group 554; National Archives and Record Administration – College Park, MD.



perform to further the interest of his fatherland. He has not stopped fighting just because he is a prisoner of war. He continued his fight with all the zeal and patriotism he had on the fighting line.”<sup>290</sup> In the struggle over defining the “prisoner of war,” the U.S. had taken a definitive turn – the “Oriental Communist prisoner of war” was to be a “fanatic,” one devoid of rational thinking, and certainly devoid of any claims to the political.

But the Korean communist prisoner of war would utilize the very structures of bureaucracy and language outlined in this chapter, as they laid literal claim to their own sense of sovereignty in the shifting conflict over the meanings of decolonization. The prisoners of war were about to have a personal conference with the head of the UNC Camp #1 on Koje Island. And it would be on their terms.

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<sup>290</sup> “The Oriental Communist Prisoner of War,” POW/CI Center; Office of the Provost Marshall; Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1; Headquarter, US Army Forces, Far East, 1952-1957; Record Group 554; National Archives and Record Administration – College Park, MD.

## Chapter Four

### A Mutiny of Sovereignty: The kidnapping of Brigadier General Francis Dodd by Korean Communist prisoners of war

The king, we are told, exclaimed, ‘C’est une revolte,’ and Liancourt corrected him: ‘Non, Sire, c’est une revolution.’

- *Hannah Arendt, On Revolution*<sup>291</sup>

Sometimes nowadays episodes take on such a fantastic character as to be almost unbelievable.

-*Editorial titled “Koje Fantastic,”  
The New York Times, May 11, 1952*

On May 7, 1952 – in a twist of events which journalist Murray Schumach of *The New York Times* would later describe as “the strangest episode of the Korean War”<sup>292</sup> – a group of Korean Communist prisoners of war “kidnapped” U.S. camp commander Brigadier General Francis Dodd of the Kojedo POW camp, the largest U.S.-controlled camp during the Korean War. The POW spokesman for Compound 76, Joo Tek Kwon, had placed multiple, repeated requests to meet with Dodd, and that afternoon, Dodd finally agreed to meet with Joo.<sup>293</sup> They met at the main gate of the compound, the barbed wire fence between them. One of the prisoners of war from the compound served

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<sup>291</sup> Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 47.

<sup>292</sup> Murray Schumach, “Gen. Dodd is Freed by Koje Captives Unhurt and Happy,” *The New York Times*, May 11, 1952.

<sup>293</sup> The spelling of Korean and Chinese names are according to the Romanized versions appearing in the U.S. military documents. U.S. military Romanization of Korean did not consistently follow any format at this particular time, so spelling can vary greatly. But for ease for possible later reference in the archives, I have kept the used Romanization.

as a translator. The list of topics to be discussed was lengthy, ranging from mundane complaints about camp logistics to the larger issue of voluntary repatriation screening. The gate opened during the meeting to let a large truck carrying several tons worth of tents through. One of the POWs, Song Mo Jin, a large man of considerable strength, walked slowly through the gate, waited till Dodd put away the piece of wood he was whittling, stretched his arms as he pretended to yawn, and then grabbed Dodd. The POWs literally carried Dodd into the compound, closing the barbed-wire fence behind him. Soon, the POWs unfurled a large sign, approximately 25 feet long and 3 feet wide, over the main compound building. The following message in English had been painted on the banner: We have captured Dodd. He will not be harmed if PW problems are resolved. If you shoot, his life will be in danger.<sup>294</sup>

On Saturday morning, May 10<sup>th</sup>, tanks began arriving by ship onto the island. A heavy rain was pouring down, and at least twenty Patton and Sherman tanks filed down the muddy roads towards Compound 76. The U.S. Army had explicitly forbidden the presence of any media on the island, but one journalist – Sanford L. Zalburg – had managed to get onto the island by the graces of a Korean fisherman and his 20-foot boat, traveling four hours through the “rainswept seas” from the town of Chinhae on the peninsula to the island of Koje. Approaching the island at 2:30 in the morning on Saturday, he described the island as such:

From miles out you could see Koje’s prison camps. The island is large, but the prison camps are concentrated in one section. We landed at a village. [...] A mile or so on either side of the village strings of lights blazed over the prison enclosures and the guards quarters and camp. Blue-gray colored light poured down into the enclosures from

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<sup>294</sup> Details from Case File #33; Box 8; Post Capture Summaries; Historical Reports of the War Crimes Division, 1952-54, War Crimes Division, Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General; Record Group 153; National Archives and Record Administration – College Park, MD. [Hereafter “Case File #33”]

searchlights on the mountainside. [...] Koje Island compounds are heavily barbed wired, with two high wire fences surrounding each plot. At night the lights blaze down. In the corners of the compounds are three story high guard houses where machine guns are mounted.<sup>295</sup>

Army jeeps manned by armed military personnel were patrolling the entire length of the coast surrounding the camp, and armed foot patrols could be seen also. To Zalburg's eyes, Koje Island had become a military fortress, or in the words of Icle Davis of the 156<sup>th</sup> Military Police Detachment, Koje was an "Alcatraz" for the Korean War.<sup>296</sup>

Before being escorted off the island with a scolding by the U.S. Army, Zalburg was able to talk with a few of the U.S. infantry officers on the island. One infantry officer who had been on duty at Compound 76 during Dodd's captivity told Zalburg that "[...]he could see Dodd plainly. The General's clothes were freshly washed, he said. Dodd was about 100 yards away and surrounded by a great mass of Communists. None of the Reds laid a hand on Dodd."<sup>297</sup> The juxtaposition between the seeming order and calm within Compound 76 and the demonstration of sheer force by the over twenty armed U.S. tanks moving steadily towards Compound 76 was the scene that greeted Zalburg on that Saturday morning.

Rumors of the POWs' capture of Dodd and finally a brief press release by the U.S. Army sent the U.S. press into a frenzy. The front page of *The Los Angeles Times* on May 9, 1952 blared: 8<sup>th</sup> ARMY ORDERED TO FREE GENERAL HELD BY RED POWS. By and large, the reaction was one of disbelief. "Sensational," "bizarre,"

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<sup>295</sup> Alexander Liosnoff Collection, Box 1, Folder: Korean War Press Releases and Wire Service Teletypes (Brigadier General Francis T. Dodd), Hoover Institution Archives. (a version of Zalburg's narrative appears in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* on May 12, 1952 in the article titled, "20 Tanks Scare Reds into Freeing Dodd: Army Rushes Force to POW Island by Ships." At that time, Zalburg was working as an International News Service correspondent.)

<sup>296</sup> "A time to pause and reflect," *The Madison Press*, Madison County, OH, May 23, 2009.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

“incredible,” and “fantastic” – a vocabulary of the unbelievable, the ungraspable, was mobilized by the editorial desks and the journalists who had the task of reporting the event to the American public.<sup>298</sup> Each newspaper and each statement issued by the U.S. Army echoed the similar sentiment – why had the POWs kidnapped the camp commander? Every newspaper stressed that the POWs had made a rather unusual request: “It was disclosed that the Communists had asked for 1,000 sheets of paper [presumably writing paper] and that this already had been sent to the island. [...] The purpose was not clear but the requisite order was issued by General Colson.”<sup>299</sup> By the next day on May 10, the *Atlanta Daily World* was calling the kidnapping “a bizarre episode.”<sup>300</sup>

At the press conference General van Fleet held with the media, Lt. Col. James McNamara, van Fleet’s public relations officer, described the situation as such: “The Communists are talking with General Dodd. Apparently they are trying to get as much as they can. General Dodd is apparently holding out and talking to them. It is a one-day Panmunjom.”<sup>301</sup> Even the U.S. Army personnel on the island of Kojedo were not clear on what the demands of the POWs were. According to Zalburg, “[o]ne officer said that the Communists ‘keep making demands, sort of like at Panmunjom.’”<sup>302</sup> The cluster of tents at the village of Panmunjom where the armistice negotiations were taking place had become a shorthand for a certain type of negotiating. And indeed, the corollary between the activities within Compound 76 on Kojedo and the negotiations in the tents at

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<sup>298</sup> “Use Force to Release Hostage if Necessary, Gen. Ridgway Rules,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 9, 1952. ; “UN Rejects Red Terms to Free General,” *Atlanta Daily World*, May 10, 1952.; “Kojedo Fantastic,” *New York Times*, May 11, 1952.

<sup>299</sup> Lindsay Parrott, “U.S. General Seized by Red Prisoners at Kojedo as Hostage,” *The New York Times*, May 9, 1952.

<sup>300</sup> “UN Rejects Red Terms to Free General,” *Atlanta Daily World*, May 10, 1952.

<sup>301</sup> Murray Schumach, “General Believed Unhurt,” *The New York Times*, May 10, 1952.

<sup>302</sup> Alexander Liosnoff Collection, Box 1, Folder: Korean War Press Releases and Wire Service Teletypes (Brigadier General Francis T. Dodd), Hoover Institution Archives.

Panmunjom signaled a set of stakes in the conflict that challenged the bounds of the imaginations of the U.S. mainstream press.

In this chapter, I argue that the term “prisoner of war,” in this historical moment, did not merely describe a category of wartime status. During the Korean War, the figure of the prisoner of war became central to explaining the meaning of the conflict itself, whether it be anti-imperial resistance, anti-communist Cold War conflict, or a civil war. This chapter moves from the negotiating tents at Panmunjom to Compound 76 at United Nations Command Camp #1 on the island of Koje. A close reading and microhistorical study of the Panmunjom negotiations over POWs and the Dodd incident itself reveal that the conversation and conflict effectively revolved around the structural legacies of the 1945 division of Korea at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and the subsequent foreign occupations on the peninsula by the United States and the Soviet Union. The stakes were about the meanings of effective postcolonial liberation and sovereignty as the legitimacy of the 1948 elections held in the north and south respectively was forced onto the table of war by both the POWs at Koje and the negotiators at Panmunjom.

However, diplomats and policy-makers fashioned the figure of the prisoner of war as central to the moral discourse underpinning the Cold War. On May 7, 1952 in the pressroom of the White House, perhaps no less than 12 hours after the kidnapping on Koje island, President Harry Truman made a statement regarding the ongoing armistice talks in Korea. “[T]here shall not be a forced repatriation of prisoners of war – as the Communists have insisted,” he announced. “To agree to forced repatriation would be unthinkable. It would be repugnant to the fundamental moral and humanitarian principles which underlie our action in Korea. [...] We will not buy an armistice by

turning over human beings for slaughter or slavery.”<sup>303</sup> The prisoner of war was, essentially, a propaganda item on the negotiating table inside the tents at the village of Panmunjom. But the controversy surrounding the voluntary repatriation issue signaled a more fundamental problem than a simple claim to morality in the post-WWII global order.

The ceasefire negotiations had begun on July 10, 1951, and by the end of the year, all parties had agreed upon the location of the ceasefire line near the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. A single item of debate - Agenda Item 4 which concerned the matter of prisoners of war – was still on the table. However, on January 2, 1952, U.S. delegates presented a new demand – voluntary repatriation. The Chinese and North Korean delegates pointed out that the 1949 Geneva Conventions on the Treatment of Prisoners of War required mandatory repatriation. The issue of POW repatriation would become the most protracted subject of debate at Panmunjom, effectively prolonging the fighting in both the battlefields and the camps for another eighteen months until the armistice signing in 1953.<sup>304</sup>

The Dodd kidnapping revealed how the Korean War was a conflict that the

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<sup>303</sup> Special to *The New York Times*, “TRUMAN ENDORSES U. N. TRUCE STAND REJECTED BY REDS; He Denounces as 'Repugnant' to World Foe's Insistence on Repatriation of Captives BACKS RIDGWAY 'PACKAGE' Acheson and Foster Also See Allies Offering Fair Terms for Cease-Fire Accord TRUMAN ENDORSES KOREA TRUCE STAND,” *The New York Times*, May 8, 1952.

<sup>304</sup> The key scholarly monograph centrally focused on the armistice talks during the Korea War is Rosemary Foot’s *A Substitute for Victory: The politics of peacemaking at the Korean Armistice talks* (Cornell University: Ithaca, NY, 1990). Foot does have one chapter that examines the POW repatriation debate, titled “Victims of the Cold War: The POW Issue.” In the collection *Child of Conflict: The Korean-American Relationship, 1943-1953*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983) edited by Bruce Cumings, Barton J. Bernstein also provides analysis of the negotiations over the POW issue. His article is titled, ““The Struggle over the Korean Armistice: Prisoners of Repatriation?,” and it provides a narrative overview of the different phases and choices made at the negotiating table regarding POWs. Also, Walter G Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front* (Washington, D.C: Center of Military History, United States Army, 2005), which is volume two in the series by the United States Army on the Korean War, provides information on Panmunjom and Koje, in addition to a narrative of the different military strategies on the battlefields in tandem with the negotiating tactics.

Geneva Conventions had not anticipated. A post-colonial civil war in a nation divided at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel by the occupying United States at the moment of liberation from Japanese colonialism, the Korean War had begun less than a year after the 1949 Geneva Conventions had drafted new “laws of war.” The United Nations and the United States did not recognize the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea [DPRK] as a sovereign state, and the United Nations had entered the conflict as a belligerent. Such a situation tested a key assumption, that the “military” and the “political” could be divided, of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which still essentially regarded warfare as a conflict occurring between two nation-states. The prescriptions of the 1949 Geneva Conventions did not encompass the very real geopolitical shifts of the decolonizing world, and Korea would prove to be the first, direct challenge to the “international community.” As the United States and the United Nations sat down at Panmunjom with representatives from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the situation brought into stark relief that high-level negotiations were about to take place with an entity the U.S. and the UN did not recognize, calling into question the assumptions about the laws of war. With the applicability of international laws of war called into question, the Korean prisoner of war represented the site on which resolution or conflict would proceed.<sup>305</sup> The kidnapping of Dodd and the subsequent U.S. military response revealed a moment when the POWs themselves, the U.S. military, and the Panmunjom negotiators attempted to claim the definition of the POW.

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<sup>305</sup> Although there is still a lack of scholarship on the application of international humanitarian law during the Korean War specifically, there is a great deal of scholarship examining and analyzing the development of international humanitarian law especially after 1945. For a more general overview, please see Geoffrey Best, *War and Law Since 1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) and his other monograph, *Humanity in Warfare* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980). Another good overview narrative on the development of law and conflict is Yoram Dinstein, *The Conduct of Hostilities under the Law of International Armed Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).



In the days following Dodd's release, the U.S. Army launched the longest investigation of a POW-related incident conducted during the Korean War, resulting in a case file that stretches to almost 500 pages of interrogation transcripts and statements.<sup>306</sup> During Dodd's questioning, the U.S. military focused initially on attempting to delineate the use of force by the POWs in capturing Dodd; however, Dodd could not provide a satisfying answer about the violent nature of the prisoners of war themselves. "The only thing broken was my fountain pen," he asserted.<sup>307</sup> At 9:30 PM on May 10<sup>th</sup>, three days after the initial capture, the POWs of Compound 76 escorted Dodd to the main gate, received a written receipt for his release, and allowed Dodd to walk out of the compound. The POWs had released him on the condition that the U.S. and UN military recognize the organization – named "The Korean People's Army and Chinese Volunteer Army Prisoners of War Representatives" – they had formed during their time with Dodd. When one pauses to consider these details in view of the requests for the 1,000 sheets of writing paper, one can clearly see that this was indeed no ordinary kidnapping situation.

In a memo dated May 13, 1952, the POW Command of the U.S. Army instructed the following to new camp commander Boatner: "Upon assuming command[...], your missions are to secure and maintain uncontested control of Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees under United Nations control wherever located."<sup>308</sup> The POWs of Compound 76 continued to refuse the entry of U.S. and ROKA military personnel into the compound after Dodd's release. On June 10, 1952, Boatner ordered U.S. military troops and

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<sup>306</sup> Case File #33; Box 8; Post Capture Summaries; Historical Reports of the War Crimes Division, 1952-54, War Crimes Division, Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General; Record Group 153; National Archives and Record Administration – College Park, MD.

<sup>307</sup> Case File #33, Interrogation of Dodd at Pusan, at the U.S. Army Hospital, dated June 21, 1952.

<sup>308</sup> "Subject: Letter of Instructions, TO: Brigadier General Haydon L. Boatner, G-15641," Tab 250. Volume III – Reference Files – Control of Prisoners of War – HQ KCOMZ; Box 1651; Enemy Prisoner of War Records, 1951-53; Eighth U.S. Army, Military History Section; Record Group 338; National Archives and Record Administration – College Park, MD.

paratroopers to storm Compound 76 using tanks, tear gas grenades and flamethrowers. That day, the death count was thirty-four prisoners of war and one U.S. soldier, and “uncontested control” became the official policy for POW camp administration.<sup>309</sup>

The story of the Dodd kidnapping was the story of the invention of different strategies of war and diplomacy – but the site of invention was neither the battlefield nor the negotiating table with career diplomats and politicians. Instead, the questions of sovereignty, decolonization, and self-determination were played out in the POW camp on Koje Island and the tents at Panmunjom. The strategies were not about bombs per se or technological advances, but rather about the interrogation room, the negotiating table, and wartime bureaucracy. The POWs’ demand for 1,000 sheets of writing paper and Truman’s demand for voluntary repatriation were part of the same story.

### **Negotiations without Recognition**

The meetings at Panmunjom began on October 25, 1952, a single day after nine 2 ½ ton trucks moved material and tents to the site, where forty men labored to erect the conference tents, complete with lighting, flooring, and heating.<sup>310</sup> In his memoir, titled *How to Negotiate with Communists*, Admiral Charles Turner Joy, the chief negotiator for the United Nations Command, uses a consistent phrase – “stage setting” – to describe much of the negotiating that took place in the tent. According to Joy, one of the U.S., UNC interpreters arrived at one of the earlier meetings with “a small standard bearing a handkerchief-sized replica of the United Nations flag” and placed it squarely in the center

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<sup>309</sup> Case File #153; Box 8; POW Incident Investigation Case Files, 1950-1953; Office of the Provost Marshall; Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1; Headquarter, US Army Forces, Far East, 1952-1957; Record Group 554; National Archives and Record Administration – College Park, MD.

<sup>310</sup> Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, 112.

of the negotiating table. Nam Il began to push the flag away from the center of table, and then Joy would then push it back to the “dead center.” After one of their breaks, the Communists then placed a North Korean flag on the table, and it was “identical in all respects to the United Nations emblem except that it rose some six inches *higher*.”[Joy’s italics]<sup>311</sup>

The negotiations at Panmunjom revolved around the ritual gestures of sovereignty – and revealed the performative aspect of the meetings. The politics of recognition were deeply embedded in the negotiations themselves. The United States and the United Nations did not recognize the sovereignty of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, and yet the rituals of negotiation implied “conditions of equality” – the foundation of the sovereign nation-state order was based upon the notion of equality, and each nation-state was an individual actor within a larger community of states. As historian Prasenjit Duara has noted and anthropologists John Kelly and Martha Kaplan have furthered, “what is novel about modern nationalism is not political self-consciousness , but the world *system* of nation-states,” a system that became “real [...] with the construction of the United Nations.”<sup>312</sup> How would the U.S. and UN negotiate with North Korea without granting them recognition as a sovereign nation? In an effort to sidestep this morass, the United States decided to delegate the task of negotiating to the “military commanders in the field” rather than career diplomats or politicians.<sup>313</sup> Thus, the tents were ostensibly a site that could effectively partition the “military” from the “political.”

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<sup>311</sup> C. Turner Joy, *How Communists Negotiate* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 8.

<sup>312</sup> John Dunham Kelly and Martha Kaplan, *Represented Communities: Fiji and World Decolonization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 9.

<sup>313</sup> Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation; My Years in the State Department*, 1st ed. (New York: Norton, 1969), 533. Secretary of State Dean Acheson writes in his memoir, “The case for military talks through commanders in the field was strong for the following reasons: First, because neither the Chinese nor the North Korean authorities were official entities recognized by the United States.”

However, there was one negotiating tent at Panmunjom which repeatedly could not finesse effectively the discursive construction of a separation between the “military” and the “political.”<sup>314</sup> The meetings of the subcommittee on Item 4 on the negotiation agenda – prisoners of war repatriation – began on December 11, 1952. The negotiators representing the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and China respectively were Major General Lee Sang Cho and Colonel Tsai Cheng-wen, two men described by the official U.S. Army history of the Panmunjom talks as the “enemy[‘s] two ablest negotiators.” Seated across the negotiating table were Rear Admiral Ruthven E. Libby, whom the very same history described as “a fiery sea dog with salty tongue,” and Colonel George W. Hickman, Jr., who “provided added balance to the UNC team.”<sup>315</sup> Each team had brought their own staff, interpreters, and stenographers.<sup>316</sup> The time was 1300 hours, and Major General Lee said, “Let’s begin the talks.”<sup>317</sup>

The first major debate revolved around the issue of “civilian internees.”<sup>318</sup> Major General Lee repeatedly put forth the argument that to simply sift through the POW population to determine who had been where vis-à-vis the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel before the

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<sup>314</sup> The other agenda items were: 1) the setting of the agenda for the talks themselves, 2) the demarcation line and demilitarized zone, 3) ceasefire arrangements and inspection provisions, 4) prisoner of war repatriation, 5) referral of political questions (an agreement to hold a political conference after the armistice signing in order to settle “the questions of the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Korea, the peaceful settlement of the Korean question, etc.” From, *Historical Dictionary of the Korean War* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 7-12.

<sup>315</sup> Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting front*, 140.

<sup>316</sup> Horace G. Underwood was the official interpreter for the United Nations Command. Underwood would later become a key figure in U.S.-Korea relations, especially regarding education.

<sup>317</sup> Meeting dated December 11, 1951, Minutes of Meetings of Subdelegates for Agenda Item 4 on Prisoners of War, 12/11/1951-02/06/1952; Korean Armistice Negotiation Records; Secretary, General Staff; Headquarters, United Nations Command (Advance); Record Group 333; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD. [Hereafter “MMS”]

<sup>318</sup> In March 1951, approximately 50,000 prisoners of war were claiming that they had been residents of Korea south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel before the outbreak of the war, and had been forcibly drafted into the KPA. As later stated during the meetings at Panmunjom, the U.S. Army had captured persons of a wide-ranging circumstances – guerrillas and Communist sympathizers. Some had been “taken into custody as a security measure,” and still others had become prisoners of war “through the confusion of war.” Soon, the category of “civilian internees” (CI) was made available to the camp population, and the U.S. military and the ROKA initiated a screening process to sift through the claimants. (from *MMS*)

outbreak of war was not a valid way to determine who belonged to which state. “Can people who are not prisoners of war be made prisoners of war by this conference?” he asked. “That is not possible. [...] I was myself a person of South Korean origin, but you know, and the other people of the world know, that I am not a person of your army but a loyal General of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.”<sup>319</sup>

In response, Libby insisted upon creating what he called “a clear distinction between politics and law, between a political question and a legal question.” Invoking the “law of nations,” Libby asserted that the people in question regarding “civilian internee” status were for a “fact,” “citizens of the Republic of Korea, and thus “they have certain rights guaranteed to them by the laws of that country and they have certain responsibilities to their country.” In this negotiating tent, one would expect that the discussion would have primarily revolved around the 1949 Geneva Conventions, but the quick turn in the conversations and arguments soon exposed the central stakes of the discussion. To talk about the prisoner of war was to discuss the claims a state could make upon its subjects – and, more importantly, which states were considered legitimate within the post-1945 world order.<sup>320</sup>

In essence, the talks surrounding Agenda Item 4 at Panmunjom revealed that five years after the division of Korea, it was still not clear what type of border the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel should be. Born under the hands of “two tired colonels working late at night” at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. on August 10, 1945, the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel did not follow any geographical or cultural division – rather, the latitudinal line of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel served as

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<sup>319</sup> December 29, 1952, *MMS*.

<sup>320</sup> December 29, 1952, *MMS*.

the division between two foreign occupations of Korea – the U.S. and the Soviets.<sup>321</sup> For Koreans, the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was entirely an artificial division. Under Japanese colonial rule, the experience of being a subject of empire exceeded any territorial state bounds. Koreans were factory laborers in Manchuria or sugar cane workers in Hawaii, while self-exiled Koreans built political “governments” in Shanghai and multiple anti-colonial military training outfits throughout the Manchurian-Korean border, the Korean peninsula, and in Hawaii.<sup>322</sup> The prisoners of war in the camp on Kojedo reflected the migrations forced by both Japanese colonial policies but also Stalin’s deportation policies during the late 1930s due to perceptions that Koreans, still colonized by Japan, could serve as enemy spies. Some prisoners of war had come as far away as Uzbekistan, others from Manchuria, and still others from both north and south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, although all had been categorized as “North Korean” in their intake interrogation reports.<sup>323</sup>

In the year 1950, five years after liberation, the question of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel had not been resolved. And the Korean War itself presented a true quandary to all involved. On one hand, if the war were a civil war, the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel would simply be a vestige of foreign occupation, it not having a longer historical meaning to the politics and communities in Korea. If the war were a war of rollback, somewhat similarly the 38<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> As Rusk would note in later reflections, he and Bonesteel “[worked] in haste and under great pressure [...]. Using a National Geographic map, we looked just north of Seoul for a convenient dividing line but could not find a natural geographic line. We saw instead the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and decided to recommend that....[The] choice of the thirty-eighth parallel, recommended by two tired colonels working late at night, proved fateful.” *from* Dean Rusk, *As I Saw It*, 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990).

<sup>322</sup> For scholarship on the activities of Koreans along the trans-border of Korea and Manchuria, please see Charles Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950*, Studies of the East Asian Inst (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press) and *Koreans in China*, ed. Dae-Sook Suh and Edward J Shultz, Papers of the Center for Korean Studies no. 16 (Honolulu, Hawaii: Center for Korean Studies, University of Hawaii, 1990). For a recent monograph on Korean labor in Hawaii during the twentieth century, please see *From the Land of Hibiscus: Koreans in Hawai'i, 1903-1950* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007)

<sup>323</sup> I am culling this information from the hundreds of ATIS reports and also POW and Civilian Internee Incident case files. Although it is well-known that prisoners of war often did not divulge their identity during initial screenings, the above information appeared frequently enough to merit credence and attention.

parallel would not signify territorial sovereignty. On the other hand, if the war were an anti-Communist war of containment, the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel would have been solidified as sovereign border, albeit selectively, since the U.S. and UN did not want to grant political recognition of the DRPK's sovereignty. And yet on another level, if the war were a war of national liberation, the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel would primarily only have meaning as an imperial gesture. In the negotiating tents at Panmunjom, the question of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and the war would have to be resolved over the prisoners of war.

Lee asserted the legitimate sovereign claims of the DPRK over the Korean peninsula by returning to the elections of 1948:

If you talk about the so-called citizenship or nationality of these people we are talking about, as I have said, it is a complicated question. You should remember the name of our Republic is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and when the Democratic People's Republic was born, it was born as a result of an election which showed the will of the entire people of Korea, including the South Koreans.<sup>324</sup>

The putative division between the “military” and the “political” fell apart in the negotiating tent because the debate addressed the very core of “sovereignty” in the post-1945 era – what type of military action rendered a state legitimate in the decolonizing world? Did the military government of the U.S. Army render a decolonized state legitimate? Or did a history of anti-colonial military resistance impart legitimacy in terms of the relationship between the people and the state?

It became clear that the subsequent naming of these respective states was another aspect of the sovereignty and recognition issue. “[Y]ou made reference to ‘Syngman

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<sup>324</sup> Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950*, 216, The Republic of Korea was created in the south through UN-sponsored elections on August 15, 1948, three years exactly from the date of liberation from Japanese colonial rule in 1945. However, on September 9, with the creation of the Democratic People's Republic in Pyongyang, “North Korean authorities attacked the South Korean elections as illegitimate and claimed that underground elections had been held in the south[...].” I discuss the 1948 elections in the south in my chapter regarding martial law and interrogation practices under U.S. occupation in the south.

Rhee's government," said Libby to Lee on the meeting on December 27<sup>th</sup>. "By this reference I assume you meant the government of the Republic of Korea, [...] since there is only one recognized government in Korea. [...] For the purpose of this conference it is sufficient that our side pays you the courtesy of referring to your government by the name you prefer – the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We do this out of common courtesy and in deference to your wishes, and not because we recognize any such government in fact."<sup>325</sup>

And then on January 2, 1952, Rear Admiral Luthven put another issue on the table: voluntary repatriation of the prisoners of war. The issue of repatriation pushed the negotiations to another level of debate over the nature of nation-states in the post-1945 world. On January 26, 1952, Libby was the one who commenced the day's talks. Addressing General Lee, he said, "In closing yesterday your side stated that it is proper to talk about north and south Koreans and about the areas north and south of the military demarcation line in order to avoid any political discussion. [...] These negotiations are being conducted within a certain political framework. We cannot, and will not, as you suggest, close our eyes to these facts," Libby asserted.

The Republic of Korea is a sovereign state. It exists. It exists as a result of the free will of hundreds of thousands of Koreans. By their act of creating this state, the residents of the area south of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel made themselves nationals of that state. [...] This is not politics. This law. This is fact. However unpleasant this fact may be to you, it remains a fact.<sup>326</sup>

In response, Lee addressed the question of an individual's will vis-à-vis the state. He said, "It is impossible to arbitrarily classify the Korean people in accordance with their northern or southern national designation. [...] Because in Korea there are two

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<sup>325</sup> December 27, 1951, *MMS*.

<sup>326</sup> January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1952, *MMS*.



forces which differ from each other in nature: on the one side, there is the Revolutionary People's Army which represents the interests of the people; on the other side, there is a reactionary army." He continued,

All those prisoners of war whom we captured from your army we do not classify into whites or blacks; nor do we instigate the negro to oppose the whites, and we have not canceled their military designation. [...] We do not raise the question of whether those Americans should go to England or Africa after the war. That is a question of electing one's political standpoint. We do not ask them to do so, and we don't find it necessary either."<sup>327</sup>

At this juncture in the negotiations, the question of POW repatriation had pushed both Libby and Lee to betray a specific tension in the construction of the nation-state in the post-1945 world – the contradiction of the “military” and the “political” in the formation of a state. The legitimacy of military participation, for both the DPRK and the United States, was founded upon the assumption of consent and choice on the part of the participants themselves, whether Korean revolutionaries or African American soldiers. And yet, Lee attempted to undermine this notion, by pointing out that the participation did not necessarily indicate a putative identity between the subjectivity of the person and the political agendas of the state.

Libby took this opportunity to push the discursive logic further: “The position taken by your side has two basic themes which are so diametrically opposed to each other that the inclusion of both in the same proposal cannot, in our view, be defended on any grounds of logic or reason. These theses are: ‘freedom of choice’ and its opposite ‘forced repatriation.’”<sup>328</sup> And he went on to state, “So far as the individuals themselves

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<sup>327</sup> January 8, 1952. *MMS*.

<sup>328</sup> January 11, 1952. *MMS*.

are concerned, the United Nations Command proposal is a bill of rights.”<sup>329</sup> The debate over the prisoners of war repatriation exposed that the negotiations were more than a struggle over whose interpretation of “international law” would be valid – this was a conflict over who could lay claim to knowing the subjectivity, the desires of the “prisoners of war” amidst competing notions of citizenship, human rights, and sovereignty in the age of three worlds.

### **The Prisoner’s Choice**

United Nations Command POW Number One on the mountainous island of Koje was sprawled within two long valleys, and essentially was, in the words of the International Committee of the Red Cross delegate Frederick Bieri, “probably the largest POW camp ever run in accordance with the stipulations of the Geneva Convention.”<sup>330</sup> In this camp essentially created by POW labor using barbed-wire, mud, and thousands of stones from the sea, one particular piece of paper posted on every compound’s bulletin board garnered a great deal of attention from the prisoners of war themselves: extracts from the 1949 Geneva Conventions, in both English and Korean.<sup>331</sup> From May 29 to

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<sup>329</sup> January 14, 1952. *MMS*.

<sup>330</sup> Reports by Bieri on June 8&9, 1951; Transmission des rapports de visites de camps aux Nations Unies, aux Etats-Unis et à la Corée-du-Nord, 16/01/1951-12/05/1952, B AG 210 056-021, Archive of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

<sup>331</sup> Bieri, Reports on May 29 to June 9, 1951. Transmission des rapports de visites de camps aux Nations Unies, aux Etats-Unis et à la Corée-du-Nord, 16/01/1951-12/05/1952, B AG 210 056-021, Archive of the International Committee of the Red Cross. In May 1951, Bieri observed, “Hundreds of thousands of stones have been, and are still being carried by POW by hand from the seashore and from the hills, into the building areas. [...] The Enclosures and the POW hospital are tented (squad tents). The tents (arranged in company lines) are well ditched and have low walls made of mud and earth mixture. Each POW Battalion has its own kitchen, dispensary, feeding lines, utility shops, (tinsmiths, shoemakers, carpenters, barbers).” According to Bieri’s reports, the prisoners of war organized themselves after the guidelines in the conventions and the interpretation by the U.S. military. By May 1952, the majority of the compounds had its own microcosm of tents – hundreds of tents housed the prisoners of war in groups of two hundred or so, while other tents were designated for medical attention, religious practice, the compound monitor, and even English language lessons which involved

June 9, 1951, ICRC delegate Frederick Bieri visited the camp on Kojé island for the first time. On June 5, Bieri held meetings with the POW spokesmen at the camp. He noted that “[n]o complaints concerning treatment were made”; however, he did note that the prisoners of war requested the “[i]ssue of more copies per compound of the Geneva Convention (POW) Extract in Korean. The one copy displayed in each Compound is not sufficient.” In his remarks for that day’s meetings, Bieri wrote, “The POW are very interested in the convention, which is quite new to them.”

However, the prisoners of war themselves did indeed have a sense of the larger international system in which they were embroiled. In the archives of the International Committee of the Red Cross is a letter from a Lee Hak Ku, a prisoner of war in the Kojé camp who was writing to protest the introduction of voluntary repatriation interrogation screening, which had been attempted by the U.S. military in multiple compounds in late December 1951 around Christmas time. He wrote in a letter dated 29 December 1951, addressed “To the Delegate of the International Committee of Red Cross.” “Honorable Delegate,” he begins, “I wish you are healthy and happy, on behalf of all P.W.s, including officers and E.M.S., who are being kept in detention by American forces at Kojedo.” Lee had presented himself as a representative of the POWs, and then continued by reminding the ICRC of its own responsibility towards the POWs themselves: At the same time I hope that our request to you [...] would be fulfilled satisfactorily by you and your Committee’s endeavor, whose mission is to carry out its just and sacred duties along

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writing essays on “American freedom”. The POWs, in accordance with the 1949 Geneva Conventions, elected their spokesman, who in turn would assign the compound monitor, clerk, supply monitor, and a host of other myriad duties and responsibilities.

with other humanistic problems entrusted by all the mankind of the world.”<sup>332</sup> It is perhaps not all that surprising that Lee later invoked the Geneva Conventions in his protest of the repatriation interrogation screening. His letter belied some knowledge of the Panmunjom proceedings – and an awareness of how politically linked the tents at both Panmunjom and Kojedo were to each other with the figure of the prisoner of war at the core of these discussions. Included with Lee’s letter was a message for General Nam Il, the North Korean negotiator at Panmunjom. The U.S. Army had removed the message, but Lee had clearly thought of the ICRC as a meditating factor, all the while with an eye to intervene in the happenings at Panmunjom. Lee would become a central figure in the Dodd incident on May 7, 1952.

Within less than a month after the abovementioned exchange between Admiral Libby and General Lee at Panmunjom on January 26, 1952, a memo pushing for the preliminary screening of prisoners of war arrived at the Kojedo camp on February 12<sup>th</sup>. There had been a previous round of repatriation interrogation in late December 1951, but a few key compounds had successfully prevented the interrogation teams from passing through the gates to their compound. Compound 62 had been one of those groups – it housed 5,600 civilian internees (CI), people who had been formerly classified as “prisoners of war” but whose status was changed to “civilian internee” when they argued that they had been civilians, not military personnel. Compound 62 civilian internees were self-professed Korean communists, and had rejected the notion of voluntary repatriation.

On February 18, U.S. and ROKA military interrogation teams accompanied by

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<sup>332</sup> Lee Hak Ku’s letter was enclosed in a memorandum addressed to Dr. Otto Lehner of the ICRC from a Lt. Col. Henry S. Daughtery. *Mauvais traitements lors de la capture. Témoignages, notes juridiques*, 21/02/1951-14/03/1952. B AG 210 056-011. Archive of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

850 U.S. troops from the Third Battalion of the 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry arrived at Compound 62 at 5:30 A.M. It was before daybreak, and the compound sat in darkness, save for three corner areas illuminated by the fence lights. The arrival at the compound before daybreak was a part of the strategy to take the 5,600 civilian internees living in large tents within the compound area by surprise. The received orders stated that the military personnel must take control of the compound, line up the civilian internees for breakfast, and conduct them to the latrines afterwards. Then according to the testimony of Lieutenant Colonel Norman Edwards, the orders explicitly instructed, “When breakfast is finished and everything is ready, conduct the polling team to each area and begin polling. [...] Keep the CI’s squatting or lying down.”<sup>333</sup>

However, the plan did not unfold as anticipated. By 9:00 A.M., 1 US Army enlisted man was killed, 55 civilian internees killed, 4 U.S. Army enlisted men wounded, and 140 civilian internees were wounded – of whom 22 later died of the inflicted wounds. Alerted to the presence of U.S. military troops surrounding the compound, the CI’s met the troops with homemade cudgels, barbed-wire flails, and hundreds of stones. The majority of POWs died from wounds inflicted from the concussion grenades. The large number of casualties raised the question of why the U.S. military had been so insistent.

Lt. Col. Edwards gave the professed goal of the mission as he understood it: “To give each CI [civilian internee] the right to freely express his desire for a rescreening, which meant that when he was rescreened, he could indicate whether or not he wanted to go to North Korea or South Korea.”<sup>334</sup> The bounded space of the polling areas was to

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<sup>333</sup> Case 104, Box 8, POW Incident Investigation Case files, 1950-1953; Office of the Provost Marshall; Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1; Headquarter, US Army Forces, Far East, 1952-1957; Record Group 554; National Archives and Record Administration – College Park, MD. [Hereafter “Case 104”]

<sup>334</sup> Case 104.

facilitate the CI to “freely express his desire.” But the mobilization of military troops necessary in order to construct the space signaled how the “freedom” of the polling area was made by the threat of mass violence by the troops’ presence. The patent juxtaposition of the bureaucratic space for the expression of liberal individual choice and the mobilization of military troops in order to construct it certainly threatened to be a contradiction of sorts, and it became the central focus of the subsequent investigation.

According to Lieutenant Colonel Hartlet F. Dame, the U.S. troops have been instructed to “present overwhelming force in such a manner that prisoners would be discouraged from any overt act, and particularly discouraged from attack against troops being used.”<sup>335</sup> The investigation board continued this line of logic in the conclusion section of the case file: “That the civilian internees deliberately attacked UN military personnel in the face of overwhelming firepower capabilities.” “Overwhelming force” became the presentation of a rational state power in the narrative of the investigation case. The POWs had not recognized this rational display of power, and thus forfeited their claims to protection of life.

But a particular interaction destabilized this presentation of “overwhelming force” as the characteristic of a “rational state.” Colonel Maurice Fitzgerald, the camp commander of the Kojedo Camp, appeared before the investigation board. The following exchange transpired between the board and Fitzgerald regarding the use of force:

Q: Am I correct in my conception of compound 62 as being in effect enemy held territory?

A: No, we can go into Compound 62 any time to do anything we want.

Q: Without force?

A: It means, to do what we want. Is open to adjustment at anytime. We might do without force. We have the capabilities of doing what we want.

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<sup>335</sup> Case 104.

Q: I didn't mean that. I am not questioning the capabilities at all. My point is that would require force to enter the compound?

A: Based on their prior conduct, their sections, their implied intentions and threats, it is reasonable to assume that we would have to use force.<sup>336</sup>

Fitzgerald, the camp commander during this incident, hesitated and hedged on the question of the necessity of force. If force was used, then it was clear that the civilian internees themselves had not consented to nor recognized the authority of the United States as a protecting power. The use of force threatened the actual professed goal of the "mission."

Immediately after this incident at Compound 62, the U.S. military decided to discipline Colonel Maurice Fitzgerald by assigning him to the oversight of certain Communist compounds at the Kojé camp. Brigadier General Francis Dodd soon arrived at the island of Kojé to assume the responsibilities of camp commander of UNC Camp #1. But the issues concerning the uses of force and bureaucracy in creating the POW subject would remain. What type of individual was the prisoner of war supposed to be?

### **The Dodd Incident**

Compound 76 in the Kojédo POW camp was located in the maximum security area. On May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1952, Brigadier General Dodd went to the compound to negotiate the entry of U.S. interrogation teams to conduct preliminary repatriation screening. Holding a population of 6,418 prisoners of war, Compound 76 had already given a bit of grief to the administrative officials of the camp regarding voluntary repatriation screening, having persistently refused the entry of screening interrogation teams into the compound. Dodd was hoping to at least have the POWs agree to submit to fingerprint identification, since

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<sup>336</sup> Case 104.

the POWs had made it a practice to give false names, swap ID numbers, and multiple other acts to undermine the bureaucratic oversight.<sup>337</sup>

At 2 PM on May 7<sup>th</sup>, Dodd was listening to the list of requests and complaints compiled by Joo Tek Woon through the barbed-wire fence. A group of approximately six prisoners of war had gathered for the meeting.<sup>338</sup> Although Joo could communicate sufficiently in English himself, one of the other POWs from the compound was serving as the official translator. The topics of discussion ranged from arranging weekly compound spokesmen meetings to material requests such as socks, raincoats, and toothbrushes. According to the statement of General Raven, who had stood beside Dodd, prior to the kidnapping, Joo had repeatedly invited Dodd inside the compound: “Please come inside the compound where we can resolve all the problems at a desk,” and “Please come inside and we will sit down and resolve our problems as gentlemen.” At around 3:00 PM, a work detail passed through the gate, and the POWs seized Dodd and carried him into their compound. Kim Chang Mo, who was the compound monitor for Compound 76, had instructed their chief compound clerk, O Seong Kwon, to paint a banner with the following English message: “We capture Dodd. We guarantee his safety if there is shooting, such a brutal action then his life is danger[sic].” The banner unfurled from the compound’s main building after Dodd disappeared into the compound.

Once inside the compound, Joo Tek Kwon made an extraordinary gesture towards Dodd. In his interrogation transcript, Joo, the spokesman for Compound #76 who had ordered Dodd’s capture, recollected that after they had carried Dodd into the Compound,

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<sup>337</sup> Box 7; Post Capture Summaries; Historical Reports of the War Crimes Division, 1952-54, War Crimes Division, Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General; Record Group 153; National Archives and Record Administration – College Park, MD. [Hereafter “Box 7”]

<sup>338</sup> Case File #33.



“I then [...] told the General [...] that we were sorry that we had captured him against his will, and that we would guarantee his safety and not harm him.” Without the barbed-wire fence between them, the terms and meanings of the roles of camp commander and prisoner of war could have been dramatically altered. With the camp commander behind the barbed-wire fence, and Joo’s apology set a rather unexpected tone for Dodd’s duration in Compound 76. Joo’s statement, I suggest, revealed that it was crucial to establish that Dodd was still a camp commander, and the POWs were still prisoners of war.

What was at stake in this incident was the definition of the prisoner of war as a political subject. After Dodd’s capture, Joo immediately began negotiating with the authorities through the barbed-wire fence, stating that representatives from the other communist compounds must be brought to compound #76 in order to have a meeting with Dodd. In hopes of negotiating this point, the U.S. Army brought the senior colonel of the DPRK Army, Lee Hak Ku, to the main gate – who, in the words of Colonel William H. Craig, was “the most influential officer PW.” But upon arrival at the compound, Lee simply stated: “it would be impossible to hold a meeting with a barbed wire fence separating us, therefore it would be necessary to enter the compound.”<sup>339</sup>

O Seong Kwon, the 22-year-old POW clerk in Compound 76 who had also translated the appropriate words for the sign announcing Dodd’s capture, went with Captains Havilland and Carroll to each compound in the maximum security section. He spoke with the spokesman and commander of each compound, telling them about the successful capture of Dodd, “and that a meeting would be held with the General in Compound #76, and that they should all come.” Kwon and the two U.S. captains went to

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<sup>339</sup> Case File #33.

Compound 96, 95, 607, 605, and then 66 and 62, bringing two representatives from each compound.<sup>340</sup>

The group of Communist prisoners of war ultimately charged with “mutiny” by the U.S. Army numbered thirty-four POWs, three of whom were young women, and the rest were men. But perhaps the most important detail of this infamous cohort of prisoners of war is that a total of ten POWs out of thirty-four Korean POWs had been born in South Korea. They patently did not fit the later narrative of the U.S. press and military of “fanatic communist North Koreans.” The ages of the prisoners of war ranged from nineteen to thirty-seven – all of them had been born during Japanese colonial rule. These prisoners of war were a particular group among the rest of the POW population. It was most probable that many of the prisoners who had participated in the kidnapping – all of whom were spokesmen and women for the other POW compounds – had a certain level of experience in the anti-colonial resistance movement.

The personal history of Lee Hak Ku, a key POW figure in the Dodd incident and a senior colonel with the Korean People’s Army, followed these historical shifts, according to the reports of the multiple U.S. interrogations he had undergone. Lee was born in Hamyong Pukto – the northernmost province of the Korean peninsula, right on the border with Manchuria. After graduating school, he had supposedly farmed for one year, and then taught Japanese at a local primary school. However, the chronology of his life shifted tremendously at the moment of liberation from Japan. From August 1945 to August 1946, he was “[e]mployed by the North Korean People’s Government Ministry of Interior as Chief of Public Security (Police) Section in Myongch’on.” In August 1946, he “enlisted in the Peace Preservation Corps at Nanam,” and he had also been a member of

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<sup>340</sup> Case File #33.

the North Korean Democratic Youth League as well as the North Korean Labor Party.<sup>341</sup>

Manchuria, also an area that had been under Japanese colonial rule, figured as an important dimension to the geopolitical imaginaries of these POWs. In the extensive investigation report on the Dodd incident, a prisoner of war named “Liu I” who had served as an interpreter for the two Chinese POW representatives appears in the interrogation records. In his interrogation report, the space reserved for noting whether the POW was “SK” (south Korean) or “NK” (north Korean) held an explanatory phrase: “Born in South Korea, citizen of China, Chinese Korean.” The presence of two Chinese Communist representatives in a group of predominantly Korean POWs was a significant act of recognizing the history of the Korean anti-colonial resistance movement in China – and the larger vision of international anti-imperial struggle.<sup>342</sup>

Eventually, all the representatives from other Communist compounds arrived at #76. After multiple meetings with Dodd within the main compound tent, they moved to the Civilian Information and Education Building – the largest structure in each compound designed for teaching U.S. democracy and English to POWs, but now had been transformed into the site for a POW organizational activity unanticipated by the U.S. Army. According to Dodd: “We were up on the stage of the platform; I would say there were about a dozen persons on the stage, and down in the chairs facing the stage, down

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<sup>341</sup> ATIS interrogation report no. 1468.

<sup>342</sup> Charles Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, 9. Historian Charles Armstrong states, “It is important to understand the history of the guerilla struggle in Manchuria in order to make sense of the DPRK in 1950, or even in 2000. A new state and society for Korea had been imagined at the interstices of colonial control and unregulated frontier, at the meeting point of rootless intellectuals, political exiles, foreign influence, and a poor but mobile and relatively independent peasantry.” Before the creation of “Manchukuo” in 1932 by the Japanese colonizers, Manchuria had been home to many Korean peasant farmers, most of whom had migrated due to the pressures of the famines and peasant uprisings of the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Korea. With the advent of Japanese colonial rule, Korea and Manchuria became interconnected by the steel railroad and the constant need for labor – and by 1945, close to 2 million Koreans were residing in Manchuria.

on the lower level, there were three or four rows of persons.”<sup>343</sup> The POWs collectively formed the “Korean Peoples Army and Chinese Volunteers Prisoners of War Representatives Association.” Sitting at a desk on the stage above the members, Dodd signed a note recognizing this representative organization. This act of writing by Dodd is central to the project of the POWs – and it was clear that in order for the POWs to claim a redefinition of the POW as a political subject that they would need to transform – but also still require – the authority of the camp commander.

Just as the space of the CI&E building had been transformed into a diplomatic meeting hall, other spaces that Dodd occupied were similarly altered. After the meeting, the POWs escorted Dodd to a room that had been prepared for him: “rice mats on the floor and blankets on top of the rice mats, a wooden bunk, table, three chairs and rack on which to hang my clothes.” As Senior Colonel Lee Hak Ku remarked in his interrogation: there were always two guards outside of the room, but they were there to “maintain the prestige” of Dodd. His meals were delivered through the barbed-wire fence, the POWs noted in their interrogations – perhaps to help ease Dodd’s ulcerated stomach, they did not give him their POW rations. But also, perhaps eating the POW rations would have also challenged Dodd’s hold onto his own authority as camp commander. A performance of North Korean songs and plays had been planned that evening in the CI&E building – and Brigadier General Dodd was a guest at this performance.<sup>344</sup>

The next morning, the POWs have arranged a certain morning routine – or ritual perhaps – for Brigadier General Dodd. In the 500-page expanse of the investigation case

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<sup>343</sup> Case File #33.

<sup>344</sup> All quotes directly from interrogation transcripts in Case File #33.

file, there is a particular interrogation of a POW who was not directly involved with the kidnapping or the creation of the POW representative body – An Jong Un, a POW who served as the compound doctor. He gave the following testimony during his interrogation:

Q: What knowledge do you have concerning the seizure of General DODD?

A: [...] An unidentified POW came to the dispensary and requested that I accompany him to a tent near the mess hall in 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn area to treat General Dodd. Enroute to the tent I met Lee Hak Eu and he asked what I was doing. When I explained that I was going to treat the General, LEE stated, that is fine, go ahead. Upon arrival at the tent, General DODD was taking a bath in a metal tub made from an oil drum. About three (3) PW monitors were washing the General's body. [...] When the General had finished bathing I examined his finger and knees and observed they were healing. The Interpreter told me the General had a cough when he woke that morning, so I listened to his heart beat and examined his chest. He appeared to be in good condition. [...] In leaving, the General gave me a pack of cigarettes.<sup>345</sup>

The spectacle of Dodd being bathed by three POWs and then the careful medical attention Dodd received toed a line between the assertion of a complete surveillance over his body and also the offer of special services to an elite guest. Dodd was unmistakably a prisoner under the care of his captors, who were prisoners of war. Yet, there was no carnivalesque reversal of a binary hierarchy of power between a POW camp commander and the POW. Instead, the POWs carefully marked Dodd's body and the space of the compound itself to establish and assert Dodd's authority – which they explicitly made contingent on their own authority as a collective of representatives for the POW camp.

On May 8th, the POWs gave Dodd the most important document of the incident: a list of 11 functions and demands of the POW representative organization. Item #7 on the list was the most revealing: “In order to secure the business of this institute, we

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<sup>345</sup> Case File #33.

request four tents, ten desks, twenty chairs, one hundred K.T. paper and two hundred dozens of pencils, three hundred bottles of ink and two hundred stencil paper and one mimeograph.” The organization wanted to create their own archive, their own bureaucratic overseeing function, of the POW. When we ponder the meaning of such a demand and look at the very first item on their list of organizational functions, we can see how this move towards establishing the means of an archive on the POW is also a move towards claiming a legitimate sovereignty: “1) We organize the representatives of PW’s association by total PWs of Korean Peoples Army and Chinese People’s Candidates that are confined in Koje Island.” In his interrogation, Joo stated that after Lee Hak Ku was elected president of the PW representative association, he effectively “became the commander of all PW Compounds in the UN POW Camp #1.”<sup>346</sup>

The bureaucracy they would create would approach the POW as the subject of a state, not simply a wartime category. The single, most important demand the POW organization made was the cessation of U.S. military repatriation screening, claiming that the U.S. was forcing subjects of the DPRK to renounce the state’s sovereign claims over them. Using their position as prisoners of war, these representatives in turn forced the international community to ask what type of political collective body the DPRK was – and to argue that it was a legitimate state.

In an effort to lessen, or triage, the damage from the capture of Dodd, the U.S. military sent in General Colson to become the camp commander of Koje. Colson’s duty was to announce to the POWs upon his arrival that Dodd was no longer in command, and therefore all negotiations with him would be null and void. Colson delivered the following message via loudspeaker and writing to the members of Compound 76 at five

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<sup>346</sup> Transcribed copies of these statements are contained as evidence within Case File #33.

minutes after midnight, the night of Dodd's capture:

At about 1500 hours of 7 May certain PW of Compound 76, maliciously attacked Brigadier General Francis T. Dodd, then CG of this Camp and Lt Colonel W.R. Raven, CO of Enclosure Number 7. General Dodd against his violent opposition was forcibly carried into Compound 76 where he is now held a prisoner. Such an action is contrary to all the principles of the Geneva Convention. I am the new CG of this Camp and as such I am authorized by the rules of the Geneva Convention to order you to immediately release General Dodd and permit him to return safely. I do hereby order that you release him unharmed.<sup>347</sup>

Dodd was not released. Instead, altogether twelve messages were sent through the barbed-wire fence to the new camp command. A message sent to the U.S. command on May 10th, signed by Lee Hak Ku on behalf of the PW representative organization, provides a crucial frame through which to understand the functions of the organization they had created. "This Representative Group announce once again that the unwilling detention of Brig. Gen. Dodd, US Army, your predecessor by this Representative Group is the legal leading measure for the protection of lives and personal rights of our POWs who have been intimidated by unjust management handled by your authorities having decreased the authority of Geneva convention[sic] and nullified the said Convention by the illegal management of POWs and the violence against the POWs."<sup>348</sup> The invocation of the Geneva Convention in this exchange message makes a very crucial discursive move: it unhinges the authority of the United States from the moral authority of international humanitarian law, by stating that the U.S. was not synonymous with the international order.

Lee ended the message by writing, "I announce that American Brigadier General Dodd is, as he has reported, in utterly safe condition, being protected from all danger and

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<sup>347</sup> Case File #33.

<sup>348</sup> Case File #33.

there is not even the smallest change in his sanitary or mental condition could be seen. He is discussing with us in most usual condition. Your health and new result of practicing Geneva Convention is hoped for. Representing the representatives group of KPA and Chinese volunteer Troop PW by the approval of the then CG of PW Camp. Signed Lee, Hak Koo.”<sup>349</sup> The POWs were not necessarily either surprised or perturbed by the change in command. They shifted their bureaucratic strategies in their negotiations – all statements regarding past events of violence, etc. that had occurred under Dodd’s command would be verified by Dodd’s signature, and those statements regarding the future entitlements and functions of the POW representative organization would be signed by Colson.

On May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1952, both Dodd and Colson had marked their signatures on the corresponding statements. Upon Dodd’s release, the U.S. military, in turn, immediately demoted both of them. It was the fact that they had signed their signatures on documents written up by POWs attesting to violence in the camps among multiple items that led to the quick demise of both of these men’s military careers. Their signatures were the act of transgression.

### **Interrogation without Recognition**

The administrative summary to the U.S. Army investigation file on the May 7 1952 “kidnapping” of Brigadier General Francis Dodd contained a peculiar turn of phrase: “When Dodd was released he was in good physical condition and there is no doubt that his captors treated him well, in fact, to the point of being patronizing.”<sup>350</sup> The

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<sup>349</sup> Case File #33.

<sup>350</sup> Summary for Case File #33.



usual straightforward chronological telling of the case file's events paused, and an "in fact" created a rupture large enough for a comment, a slight aside – and suddenly, it was evident that there was something in this case file that could not be contained by the bureaucratic language of the U.S. Army. Case #33 of the Dodd kidnapping was the sole case where the United State Army brought charges of "mutiny" against prisoners of war, and the case file itself extended to almost 500 pages of interrogation transcripts and statements. The labor involved in the investigation and preparation for prosecution was evident, but in the end, as the file was prepared for the archive, the administrative summary insisted on noting that the prisoners of war were "patronizing." The amount of effort the U.S. Army exerts to address a "mutiny" committed by "patronizing" prisoners of war raises a simple question: what political / psychological boundaries had these Korean Communist prisoners of war transgressed in taking the American commander of the POW camp prisoner?

The 29<sup>th</sup> Military Police Criminal Investigation Detachment of the United States Army began its investigation into the Dodd incident on May 29, 1952.. The investigation did not end until August 7 of that year, with the investigation officially declared "closed" on August 25, 1952. Two separate cases, Cases #32 and #33, were filed by the United Nations against the prisoners of war who had been involved in the kidnapping. Case #32 involved the six prisoners of war who were present at the meeting at the barbed-wire fence with Brigadier General Dodd: Joo Tek Woon, Kim Chang Mo, O Seong Kwan, O Byong Keol, and Song Mo Jin. Case #33 also included Joo and Kim, but expanded its list of accused to the POWs who were in the POW representative organization. The official charges, according to the case file summary read as follows:

The defendants in Case #32 are charged with unlawfully striking Brig Gen Francis T. Dodd, a member of the United Nations Command, on 7 May 1952 at UNC PW Camp #1, Koje-do, Korea. The twenty five (25) defendants in Case #33 are charged with mutiny in their joint refusal to release Gen Dodd in accord with a lawful order given them by Brig Gen Charles W. Colson, Gen Dodd's successor as Commanding General of UNC PW Camp #1. [...] Included among the defendants in #33 are two (2) former members of the Chinese Volunteer Army. All other defendants are Korean.<sup>351</sup>

The phrases “unlawfully striking” and “joint refusal to release Gen Dodd in accord with a lawful order” clearly attempted to stress the characterization of these POWs’ actions as outside the bounds of the law. But when Dodd’s own interrogation revealed that the result of the physical kidnapping had been minor scratches and a broken fountain pen, one can question why the authorities had insisted on using “unlawful striking” as the characterizing phrase of the incident. And the act of “mutiny” occurred not necessarily in the moment of bringing Dodd behind the barbed-wire fence of Compound 76, but rather at the moment of refusing to recognize the authority of Colson’s demand to release Dodd. To undermine the authority invested in the signatures of Dodd and Colson on the documents recognizing the PW representative organization, the U.S. military criminal investigation team had to de-invest the political content of the POWs’ demands themselves by criminalizing the POWs. The investigation report was one particular process to criminalize the prisoners of war themselves in order to nullify the other actions of the two Brigadier Generals, Dodd and Colson.

Rather significantly, the investigation case file itself revealed an important aspect of the investigation: there are twenty-eight transcripts of interrogations with prisoners of war who had been involved in some way with the incident, while all U.S. military personnel involved submitted narrative statements. The only other interrogation transcript

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<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

was the questioning of General Dodd after the incident, while he was stationed at Pusan. The interrogation transcripts themselves show the template of questions and the priorities held by the CID during the investigation, and more specifically, they reveal that the main concern of the CID agents was the representative organization the POWs had created.

The 20<sup>th</sup> MP CID members had to demonstrate the premeditated nature of the kidnapping, while also eliding the broader political and organizational aspects of the POWs' activities. The kidnapping had to be a criminal act, not a political one. There was one particular question that the CID agents would ask only the POWs directly involved in the POW representative organization. The question was essentially two-fold: "Q: Have you read the rules for governing PW's as prescribed by the Geneva Convention?" which was followed by, "Q: Did you, *as a member of the association*, know that you were holding General Dodd against his will and in violation of the Geneva Convention?" [my italics]

The answers given by the prisoners of war in response to the first question were almost unequivocally "yes" – or they would specify which parts of the Convention they were familiar with. The responses to the second question, without exception, all held to the claim that ultimately the POWs had not violated the Geneva Conventions and that the capture of Dodd had been simply a necessity because they could not otherwise have a meeting with him. For example, four women Korean prisoners of war had been members of the KPA and CPVA PW Representative Association – all of whom were from Compound #80 in Enclosure 8, the all-women compound. Pak Soo Pok, a 20-year-old woman from south Korea and who had joined the North Korean Army as a nurse, stated in her interrogation on June 10, 1952: "I, as a member of the committee, disregarded the

Geneva Convention laws governing Prisoners of War because I felt that we were right in detaining General DODD.” Kim Jong Sook, the 22-year-old spokesman for Compound #80, declared, “I as a member of the association felt that I was right in helping to detain General Dodd.” And Kim Jong Ja, the 21-year-old commander of Compound #80 from south Korea, stated, “I thought we were right in holding General DODD and that we were not violating the Geneva Convention Laws.” These POWs offered the same rationale as the others accused in the case: the circumstances surrounding the Dodd incident were extraordinary, and the conditions in the camp previous to the incident had rendered the kidnapping necessary. The Geneva Conventions, according to the POWs, did not hold in the circumstances due to particular violations of the conventions committed already by the U.S. military and the supporting ROKA soldiers within the camp. Or as PW representative Sun Jin Kwan stated, “I felt that our demands were legal.”<sup>352</sup>

On June 25, 1952, Lee Hak Ku was brought in for interrogation by the CID agents. The usual question was put forth: “Q: Did you, as a member of the association know that you were holding General Dodd in violation of the Geneva Convention?” Lee’s response was brief: “A: I do not care to answer this question.” Lee’s apparent refusal – and perhaps “patronizing” attitude – to recognize any obligation towards the U.S. authority in the interrogation room later prompted the investigation case file to brand him as a leader of the “fanatical” POWs.

Lee Hak Ku had extensive experience with the U.S. military bureaucracy, having gone through multiple interrogations. A senior colonel in the Korean People’s Army, Lee had been a highly valued POW under U.S. custody. However, his intake interrogation report noted an unexpected surrender on Lee’s part soon after MacArthur’s

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<sup>352</sup> All quotes from interrogation reports located in Case File #33.

landing at Inchon in mid-September 1950:

PW surrendered to US troops on his own volition. [...] PW left his unit in the mountains (south of TABUDONG) and approached the American lines at night. He approached two American soldiers sleeping on a roadside, and roused them by gently shaking them; and they brought him in as a PW. PW was disgusted with the Communist doctrine and system and consequently surrendered.<sup>353</sup>

In the follow-up interrogation on September 25, 1950, the interrogator, a Sergeant Hayashi from ATIS, characterized Lee Hak Ku “as intelligent and very cooperative.” He made the following notes on Lee during the interrogation:

No attempts were made at evasion and answers were given without hesitation. Although PW at one time was in position of great responsibility in the NKPA, he did not show any signs of being a Communist. PW is of a higher than average caliber, and, from all indications, highly ambitious. [...] Reliability – good.<sup>354</sup>

On September 22, 1950, which was a Friday, Major General Frank E. Lowe paid a visit to Lee Hak Ku, and Lowe would send a copy of the interrogation to President Truman in a mailing dated May 3, 1951. The Memorandum’s narrative begins as such: “I interrogated Colonel Lee Hak Ku, Chief of Staff, Thirteenth Division on Friday, 22<sup>nd</sup> of September, in the detention area at Pusan. The man answered my questions forthrightly and willingly so far as I could observe. I had the impression that he was an able person.”

The interrogation reports up until the Dodd incident had portrayed Lee as a rational man, a person who, in fact, “did not show any signs of being a Communist.”

Major General Low held steadfastly to this opinion of Lee’s character even after this

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<sup>353</sup> ATIS interrogation report no. 1293 dated 24 September 1950, contains Field Report (164-MIS-0930) dated 21 September 1950. From an unpublished data research collection compiled for a special documentary series produced by MBC [Cultural Broadcasting Company] in the Republic of Korea in 2004. The documentary special was called “Han’guk Chōngaenggwa Poro [The Korean War and the Prisoner of War],” and it was a series special on a program called “Igaenūn Marhalsu Itta [Now We Can Speak].” [Hereafter “Now We Can Speak compilation”]

<sup>354</sup> ATIS Interrogation report no. 1468 dated 29 September 1950, contains Field Report (ADVATIS-0900) dated 25 September 1950. From the *Now We Can Speak* compilation.

following response from Lee to Lowe's question about what "caused the North Koreans to fight with such fever": "His answers pointed consistently to the conclusion that the soldiers, at least, believed that they were fighting for the unification of Korea without sending that, in fact, they were fighting through the influence of Communist Russia."<sup>355</sup> Even within his previous interrogations, Lee had been insisting on the autonomy of the political subjectivity of North Korean soldiers. But in the Dodd investigation files, and the subsequent U.S. media outlets, Lee would fill a necessary role in the script needed by the U.S. military to delegitimize the claims made by the POW representative organization. Lee Hak Ku would become the "fanatic Oriental Communist prisoner of war" *par excellence*, a leader who essentially brainwashed other POWs via Communist ideology.

When we consider scholar Elaine Scarry's assertion in *The Body in Pain* that "[t]he relative ease or difficulty with which any given phenomenon can be *verbally represented* also influences the ease or difficulty with which that phenomenon comes to be *politically represented*,"<sup>356</sup> and take another look at the investigation files on the Dodd incident, what initially may have simply seemed to be a "strange event" was, in fact, a political gesture - one that reveals the high stakes of articulation, visibility, and power in the prisoner of war camps of the Korean War. And the arrival of Brigadier General Haydon Boatner would articulate these stakes with tanks, paratroopers, and flamethrowers.

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<sup>355</sup> From the *Now We Can Speak* compilation. The letter addressed to President Harry Truman by Frank E. Lowe, Major General, US Army, is dated May 3, 1951. Lowe writes, "Colonel Lee Hak Ku was, as of 6 October 1950 and since that time as far as I know, the highest ranking NOK officer captured as well as those voluntarily surrendering. Attached hereto is a copy of his interrogation which is both interesting and significant. I believe that overall it is as significant today as it was on 6 October 1950. Yours Faithfully, Frank E. Lowe."

<sup>356</sup> Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 12.

## The “New Regime”

An internally circulated U.S. Army history titled, “The Handling of Prisoners of War during the Korean War,” dubbed the arrival of Boatner at Koje as “The New Regime,” a welcome change supposedly from the previous bungling of Dodd.<sup>357</sup> In his own unpublished memoir typescript, Boatner made the following bold statement: “Well, then, just what if anything was the weakest element in our prisoner of war methods in Korea? In my opinion, the greatest weakness stems from our inability to cope with the Oriental.”<sup>358</sup> Boatner prided himself on having been the commanding general of troops in Burma during the Asia-Pacific Wars. Fluent in Mandarin, he recollected many moments where he surprised the POWs on Koje with his linguistic knowledge. The June 10, 1952 storming of Compound 76 with tanks, flame throwers, and even paratroopers would be hailed as a success by the U.S. military.

In the memoir, Boatner recalls the morning of June 10. Boatner had constructed new, smaller compounds under U.S. Army directives to split the communist compounds into more “manageable,” smaller groups. “I took Colonel Lee over to the site of the new compounds so he could see them for himself. Then I gave him orders written in Korean, Chinese and English to assemble all prisoners in the open area in the center of his compound, No. 76, in groups of 100, to be marched under armed escort to the new compounds. I told him if his men moved orderly no one would be hurt, but that if they resisted force would be used and any resulting casualties would be his responsibility and due to his own disobedience of my legal orders.”

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<sup>357</sup> The Handling of POW during the Korean War, Folder: Unclassified, S11-02, Korea; Box 16; Unclassified Records, 1969-75; POW/Civilian Internee Information Center; Records of the Provost Marshall General, 1941-; Record Group 389; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

<sup>358</sup> Typed unpublished manuscript; Box 7; Haydon Boatner Collection. Hoover Institution Archives.

After dismissing Lee and sending him back into Compound 76, Boatner allotted thirty minutes to wait before entering the compound. Then, according to Boatner, “fifteen minutes after the announced time for our entrance, our troops cut holes in the wire[sic] and the tanks entered followed by flame throwers and then the paratroopers.”

Boatner then stood at a Command Post on an adjacent hill so he could observe the operation. He noticed homemade “Molotov cocktails” being thrown at the oncoming tanks. In the later investigation interrogations of the POWs, it became clear that the POWs had been preparing for some sort of conflict – the U.S. troops were surprised to find that the POWs had somehow made gas masks in the event that gas grenades would be launched. The operation had lasted four hours. “[W]hat a gruesome sight it was!” exclaimed Boatner in the memoir. “A battlefield in every respect. Entrenchments, wounded, dead, burning buildings and tents[tents] with a few human hands, legs or feet here and there.”<sup>359</sup>

The former policy of “overwhelming force” had found new expression under Boatner’s command. But even after the June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1952 incident, the highest levels of U.S. military command were still not content with the situation of “uncontested control” in the POW camps under U.S. Army control. Upon closer examination, the policy of “uncontested control” no longer means the demonstration of “overwhelming force,” but the complete eradication of resistance that was not only physical, but also symbolic.

The Dodd incident reveals a process of fashioning the Korean Communist POW into an ideological figure – or more specifically, a “fanatic” – a phrase used extensively by U.S. military personnel to describe the Communist POWs in both their statements for the case file and administrative memos passed from higher command to the camps.

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<sup>359</sup> Ibid.



“Uncontested control” would become the central official policy for the camps, and Boatner’s decision to storm Compound 76 on June 10<sup>th</sup> and the resulting deaths were clearly in line with the new objective of preempting the issue of consent on the part of POWs. I believe that we can view the policy of “uncontested control” as the other side of the coin of “voluntary repatriation” – both depoliticized the Korean prisoner of war, and demonstrated the prerogative of the U.S. to define a normative POW subjectivity for the post-1945 order, and thus the power to define the relationship between the international order, the state, and the individual.

On August 4, 1952, in a statement to all POWs that was posted in the compounds, Boatner gave this summary of the Dodd incident: “The last two months have been a critical period in this Prisoner of War Camp. Many difficulties were caused by the kidnapping of General Dodd and other acts of mutiny and defiance by Prisoners of War. Those were criminal acts which were caused by stupid, selfish and politically motivated self-appointed leaders, who acts[sic] as compound representatives.” In contrast, he offered the following template of normative POW subjectivity: “Each Prisoner of War must remember that he has surrendered and is a prisoner of war under the custody and command of the Camp Commander, acting for the Detaining Power. Each prisoner must do his duty as a soldier, and do nothing illegal. He must obey orders and comply with the policy of the Camp Commander. Do these things promptly and in good spirits and you will be more contented.”<sup>360</sup> A proper POW must be a content one – and more importantly, a subject of the camp itself, rather than an outside state.

The longest clause of Boatner’s statement to the POWs that invoked the Geneva

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<sup>360</sup> “Statement to all Prisoners of War,” Tab 2-19. Volume VI – Reference Files – Control of Prisoners of War – HQ PW; Box 1652; Enemy Prisoner of War Records, 1951-53; Eighth U.S. Army, Military History Section; Record Group 338; National Archives and Record Administration – College Park, MD.

Convention repeated this sentiment that POWs cannot claim a subjecthood outside of the camp's confines:

The Geneva Convention states: "In all places where there are Prisoners of War, except in those where there are officers, the prisoners shall freely elect by secret ballot, every six months, and also in case of vacancies, prisoner representatives entrusted with representing them before the military authorities, the Protecting Powers, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other organizations which may assist them. [...] Every representative must be approved by the Detaining Power before he has the right to commence his duties. [...]" You will see, therefore, that your representatives can be removed by your Camp Commander. I want him to serve you for the well-being of the POW's in accordance with my orders and policies. If he does not, I will remove him from his responsibility and call upon you to elect another representative.<sup>361</sup>

Representation and the cessation of forced repatriation screening were the two most important demands the POW representative organization made. As both the U.S. government and the Korean communist prisoners of war understood, at stake in the interrogation process was the question of what type of political subjectivity would be legitimate within the post-1945 international nation-state system. Clearly, if the United States military could demonstrate that an overwhelming number of Communist combatants and civilians desired non-repatriation, the U.S. interpretation of the Geneva Convention's humanitarian intentions would take precedence at the negotiating table. But more importantly, the POWs understood that the repatriation interrogation held up only one particular template for subjectivity – the internee would need to narrate him/herself as a "human," a subject devoid of claims to collective subjectivities, such as citizenship, nationalism, or a Communist revolution. If we take Carl Schmitt's statement: "War is the existential negation of the enemy," we can see how the voluntary repatriation policy is, in fact, creating a different discursive violence – by focusing on the individual,

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<sup>361</sup> Ibid.

the U.S. essentially “negates” the claims to sovereignty made by North Korea.<sup>362</sup> But the discursive violence is not directly committed by the United States, but rather by the POW individual him/herself.

On August 16, 1952, Mark Clark, the Commander of the United Nations Command, sent a memo to the head of KCOMZ (Korean Communications Zone), which was the military branch in charge of the POW Command. The top figure of the U.S. Army was concerned about the situation on Koje:

A review of reference messages as well as previous reports from your headquarters show continued incidents, ranging from what appear to be minor incidents to mass demonstrations and open defiance of the camp authority, many[sic] of which have resulted in deaths, serious[sic] injuries, and intolerable affronts to camp authority[...] I assume you are familiar with my previous directives to seize and maintain uncontested control of all POW installations [...].

2. If proper control is being exercised it is incomprehensible to me how prisoners could have in their possession Red Flags for demonstrations, or how they could seize a member from the security forces and force him to eat a POW ration. The continued complete dependence on use of Tear Gas from compound perimeters for putting down demonstrations is also a manifestation of weak control. This can never be substitute for immediate intervention within the compounds by an adequate group of guard personnel authorized to use such forceful means as necessary.

3. I do not intend to tolerate the conditions which have resulted in the disorders in UNC POW Camps and which have proved embarrassing and harmful to our position in the Eyes of the Free World. The adverse effect on the Armistice negotiations at Panmunjom is obvious. [...]<sup>363</sup>

The “Eyes of the Free World” were now on the infamous Koje camp. But what exactly did the Koje camp need to demonstrate for the “Eyes of the Free World”? Clark’s memo revealed much more about the shifting tactics of the POWs than about how “uncontested control” was to be achieved. The POWs continued to insist on waving signs of their

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<sup>362</sup> Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. by George Schwab (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 33.

<sup>363</sup> Correspondence of POW Division Relating to Enemy POWs; Box 1-4; Headquarters, U.S. Army Forces, Far East; Record Group 554; National Archives and Record Administration – College Park, MD.

sovereign state, and the forcing of a U.S. soldier to eat a POW ration seemed to be a demonstration of tactics of humiliation. In the face of Boatner's shift in the use of "overwhelming force," the POWs in turn seem to have understood the stakes involved in maintaining a situation of conflict with the U.S. military on the island.

## **Conclusion**

On May 13, 1952, *New York Times* journalist Murray Schumach gave a narrative on what had happened behind the barbed-wire fence at Compound 76 - Brigadier General Dodd had finally given a statement at a press conference in Korea: "General Dodd nervously read to correspondents an account[sic] of his experiences in the compound with 6,000 Communists. In a deep voice that quavered a few times, the burly, gray-haired general started with the Communist ruse that brought him to the gates of the compound." In this long article, Schumach quoted directly from Dodd in describing his treatment by the POWs – "During my entire stay in the compound," Schumach quoted Dodd as saying, "I was treated with the utmost respect and courtesy, and my personal needs were looked out for. The demands made by the P.O.W.'s are inconsequential, and the concessions granted by the camp authorities were of minor importance."<sup>364</sup>

Dodd was attempting to minimize the significance of the kidnapping – and, most importantly – the consequences of his signature on multiple documents the POWs had presented to him. And the U.S. military, both in terms of military investigation and military force, had begun to work towards resolving the problem of "Kojé Fantastic." But the attention had already been garnered. In his "Confidential Report Concerning the Real Crisis in the Relationship between the Detaining Power and the Prisoner of War in

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<sup>364</sup> Murray Schumach, "3 Days of Captivity Described by Dodd," *The New York Times*, May 13, 1952.

South Korea” dated May 27, 1952, ICRC delegate Georg Hoffmann stated, “The capture of an American general by the prisoners of war of Kojedo created a sensation throughout the world and suddenly brought mass attention to the precarious situation in Kojedo.”<sup>365</sup>

Hoffmann then provided the following analysis of the reasons behind the turmoil and conflict on the island of Koje:

The Korean war, although an object of international politics, is also a civil war, and nonetheless a civil war where the conflicting adversarial ideologies do not strictly lie within specific region, such as, for example, the “war of Sonderbund” or the “war of succession” in America. In the past, the larger centers of communism were in southern Korea, where much more of the population as a whole resided than in the northern half of the country.<sup>366</sup>

The kidnapping of Dodd had sparked a discussion on the international stage about the meaning and character of the Korean War itself.

But back on the Korean peninsula, the Koreans newspapers were reporting the event to their Korean readership. On May 16, 1952, *Dong-A Ilbo* ran an editorial titled, “The Meaning of the Dodd Incident.”<sup>367</sup> The editorial began with none of the disbelief, surprise, and outrage expressed in the U.S. media outlets. “The implications of the event are various,” the editorial began. “And if one examines the possible objectives of the kidnapping of the camp commander by the prisoners of war, it is not difficult to discern the myriad significance and meanings of the event.” Rather than using “bizarre” or “fantastic” to describe the event, the editors of *Dong-A Ilbo* used the word “performance.” The kidnapping had been a performance, very similar to the

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<sup>365</sup> “Rapport Confidentiel Au C.I.C.R. Concernant La Crise Actuelle des Relations entre Puissance Detentricice et Prisonnier de Guerre en Corée du Sud [Confidential Report to the ICRC Concerning the Real Crisis between the Detaining Power and the Prisoner of War in South Korea].” B AG 119 056 016. [my own translation].

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

<sup>367</sup> “Dodd Sakōnoe ūimi [The Meaning of the Dodd Incident],” *Dong-a Ilbo*, May 16, 1952.

performances enacted by the North Korean negotiators at Panmunjom, according to the editors. In positioning “democracy” and “communism” as antithetical to each other, the editors moved to a vocabulary of “performance,” of empty gestures, to delegitimize the political claims of the Korean communist prisoners of war, and to strengthen anti-communism as the concrete stronghold for democracy. As Truman stepped down and Eisenhower became the President of the United States, the Korean anti-communist POWs made their own appeals for political visibility to the U.S. government.

In July 1953, after the signing of the ceasefire agreement at Panmunjom, the urgency surrounding the question of political recognition for POWs did not subside. In fact, the issue took on an even greater immediacy as the final prisoner of war camp and the final interrogation room were built on the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, in preparation for the voluntary repatriation process. India, it had been decided by the United Nations and agreed upon by all delegates present at the Panmunjom armistice negotiations, was now in charge of the prisoners of war.

## Chapter Five

### **An “Experiment in Neutrality” for Decolonization: The POW, India, and the Global Geopolitics of the Unending Korean War**

On July 27, 1953 at Panmunjom, UN Command representative U.S. Lieutenant General William K. Harrison Jr. and Northern Command representative DPRK Lieutenant General Nam Il entered a hall built specifically for the purpose of the armistice signing ceremony. With the “mutter of artillery fire” coming through the “thin wooden walls,” Harrison and Nam took their seats at separate tables and wordlessly signed nine copies of the armistice, which would take official effect within twelve hours later. In front of “Allied observers” and press from sixteen different United Nations countries as well as observers and thirty-five press members from different communist countries, General Harrison finished signing at 10:10 AM, with General Nam finishing one minute afterwards. “The North Korean general glanced at his watch, rose and strode quickly from the hall, without a glance at the United Nations table,” narrated a *New York Times* article. Harrison exited more “leisurely,” pausing to smile and pose for photographs, and “saluted the honor guard and greeted some United Nations representatives before he climbed into a helicopter to fly back to Munsan at 10:27 A.M.”<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>368</sup> Lindsay Parrot, “Ceremony is Brief – Halt in 3-Year Conflict for a Political Parley Due at 9 A.M. Today,” *The New York Times*, 27 July 1953, p. 1.

The ceasefire had been signed, but it seemed that everyone was quick to caution against considering the armistice as the “end” of the conflict. As President Eisenhower stated in an address broadcasted nationally:

[W]e have won an armistice on a single battleground, not peace in the world. We may not relax our guard nor cease our quest. Throughout the coming months, during the period of prisoner screening and exchange, and during the possibly longer period of the political conference which looks toward the unification of Korea, we and our United Nations allies must be vigilant against the possibility of untoward developments.<sup>369</sup>

The Korean War had not come to an official close – only a ceasefire pause. “Seventy-two hours after the signature of the armistice,” the military troops of all sides withdrew “one and a quarter miles from the fighting line, and a neutral zone [was] established between the armies.”<sup>370</sup> The Demilitarized Zone, representing the ceasefire, had become the setting for the next phase of the war – the exchange of prisoners of war.

In early October 1953, Indian General Kodandera Subayya Thimayya arrived at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, escorted in a U.S. helicopter. “In the helicopter,” he explained, “I had a superb view of the Korean landscape, and I was struck by the beauty of the country – until I got a glimpse of the DZ. The land here looked like a bleak, barren and blasted piece of hell.”<sup>371</sup> On this very “piece of hell” what Thimayya called an “experiment in neutrality” took shape in the final prisoner of war complex of the Korean War, and the final iteration of the interrogation room, here called the “explanation room.” India led the experiment with a resolution to the impasse at the armistice table over POW repatriation. Each POW would individually enter the “explanation room,” and after listening to an “explanation” provided by a representative from the POW’s pre-war nation-state on why

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<sup>369</sup> “Texts of Eisenhower and Dulles Broadcasts on Truce,” *The New York Times*, 27 July 1953, p. 4.

<sup>370</sup> “Ceremony is Brief,” *NYT*.

<sup>371</sup> Kodandera Subayya Thimayya, *Experiment in neutrality* (New Delhi: Vision Books, 1981), 47.



the POW should return home, the prisoner of war would choose to repatriate, to not repatriate, or to go to a yet undetermined “neutral country.” The landscape of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel had changed again as specified buildings and compounds were erected by both sides.

This carefully scripted encounter often broke down in actual practice. As Thimayya himself noted in his memoir, “Some amazing incidents occurred during the explanations[.]” He recalled one young Korean man who had originally been from South Korea, but was now a prisoner of war in North Korea and refused to repatriate back to the south:

In one instance, a prisoner entered the room to discover that the explainer was a late friend who had been in the same regiment. They greeted and hugged each other as old comrades would. The prisoner then asked if he could sit alongside the explainer, and the Chairman of the subordinate body had no objection. The two men started to reminisce and to tell stories about the old days, and the prisoner made enquiries about his mother.<sup>372</sup>

At this point, the explainer pulled out a photograph of the POW’s mother, saying that he had just seen her before coming to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. “She wants you to come quickly,” the explainer said. Upon seeing the photograph, the prisoner “burst into tears and said, “Please give her my love. I will come back quickly. I will come back when Korea is free, and that is not very far off.”<sup>373</sup>

In today’s history books, the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel – or the Demilitarized Zone – appears more permanent than temporary, the line cutting across the Korean peninsula often being the most recognizable feature of Korea to the American mainstream public. But in 1953, even with the signing of the ceasefire agreement, no one – not Eisenhower, not

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<sup>372</sup> Thimayya, 192.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid.

Thimayya, nor the Korean prisoner of war – considered the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel to be a permanent line of division. The immediate post-ceasefire phase of the war, namely the exchange of prisoners of war at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, affords us an opportunity to refract the meaning of the Korean War not through the usual, overdetermined prism of Cold War politics where anti-communism and communism become the only stakes visible, but rather through the prism of neutrality, a different history that has been present on the Korean peninsula. For India and Korea, the POW controversy was not the first time that India had played a role in the questions of applications of international law over political recognition in Korea through the United Nations. In 1948, India had been one of the members of the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea, overseeing the elections in the Republic of Korea, and then remained on the United Nations Commission on Korea afterwards.

This chapter charts the history that informed the construction of neutrality in terms of political philosophy, military/diplomatic practice, and visions of the decolonized globe. In this particular rendering of the POW controversy that connected the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel of the Korean peninsula beyond the United Nations or the United States, extending the ramifications to India, Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina. This chapter examines and takes its analytical premise from the multiple imaginaries of the decolonized futures present at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel in 1953, which came out in full force in the struggles over defining, practicing, and even embodying “neutrality” at a site that was also the site of the frontline of the global Cold War, the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. In order to glean this history of “neutrality,” I turn to a set of unexamined memoirs and United Nations documents pertaining to the POW issue, while other documents, like the proposals

offered by different UN state representatives, have been analyzed by historians of international policy vis-à-vis the Korean War.

I analyze three distinct phases and levels of the “experiment in neutrality” that was POW repatriation. The first section examines how India’s own strategic approach to drafting and presenting the proposal on the POW repatriation issue reveals India’s own interpretations and application of international law during this era. For India, the interpretation and application of “neutrality” to the case study of Korea contained elements that would later be important to the articulation of non-alignment at the Bandung Conference in 1955 – Indian diplomats, officials, and military personnel were to lay claim to the universal concepts espoused by the United Nations. But a key significance of the POW controversy for the scholarship on neutrality and non-alignment in the Third World is how it reveals the parsing and thinking through of neutrality through a project of recognition, not through states, but rather through the subjects of these states. Indeed, the question – what kind of subject is the prisoner of war? – was central to the debates in the United Nations.

The second section of the chapter focuses on the application of the proposal’s terms to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel in 1953 – the ambitious undertaking of creating the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission, supervising the construction of the POW compounds, and overseeing the “explanation” activities on the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Here, the central question became: how does one create a physical space of “neutrality” that facilitates the individual POW to make a “free choice”? Each explanation booth held a *tableau* of different actors. The prisoner of war sat on a bench accompanied by 2 or 5 Indian guards, facing the “explainers,” who sat behind a table. In the far corner behind another

table sat the 5-member Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission inspection team – composed of delegates from Switzerland, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, with the head delegate from India. In the other corner, sitting on a bench were members of “observers” from the United Nations Command. Neutrality, in the explanation room, lay in the carefully calibrated encounters of speaking, listening, and observing – it was a scripted encounter, supposedly strong enough to mitigate any “excesses” enacted within the room. By extending the analysis to the preparation POWs and U.S. PsyWar educational programs encouraged before their arrival at Panmunjom, this section demonstrates how rather than “choice” being the operative mode or concern in these “explanation rooms,” the concept of “performance” was more central to the basic relationship between the state and the individual that being reconfigured and tested in these rooms.

The third section of the chapter follows a specific cohort of Korean prisoners of war. At the end of the allotted “explanation” period, there were exactly eighty-eight prisoners in war in total who had chosen to go to a “neutral country,” although the country itself had not yet been determined. Seventy-six of the eighty-eight POWs were Korean, two of them were from South Korea and the rest were from North Korea. For the prisoners of war who chose a “neutral country,” they would move from being one of the most oddly “hypervisible” subjects on the stage of struggles over political recognition to become one of the most oddly “invisible” subjects after the Korean War conflict receded into the past with the 1954 Geneva Conference on Korea and Indochina, where a different 38<sup>th</sup> parallel – the 13<sup>th</sup> parallel – was instituted. As they waited in India, the eighty-eight prisoners of war soon discovered that they had become essentially stateless

persons, and it become incumbent upon the prisoners of war themselves to gauge the geopolitical globe, propose possible countries for the category of “neutral country,” and then petition the appropriate authorities. Survival once again hinged upon a certain recognition by a state power. This section explores and reflects upon how these prisoners of war created strategies to render themselves as “visible” subjects – and what “neutrality” had possibly meant to them. On the most basic, individual levels, these Korean prisoners of war were asking themselves what kind of life they wanted – and each time, the response to this question was fraught with the constant deferral of decolonization on the Korean peninsula. What did it mean to seek a life elsewhere for these Korean prisoners of war?

This chapter marks the very first attempt within both U.S. and Korean historiographies to write a history of the POW repatriation process, the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission, and the seventy-six Korean prisoners of war who chose to go to a “neutral country.” Histories of the Korean War have often either ended the narrative with the ceasefire agreement signing ceremony, or historians have considered the activities of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission and the seventy-six Korean prisoners of war as outside the realm of nationally-bounded histories of either South Korea or the United States. As a result of this blindspot, the particular open-ended nature of the Korean War is either erased, or not examined sufficiently. Just as the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel has come to signify the state of perpetual warfare on the Korean peninsula, the seventy-six prisoners of war who had to navigate their choice of a “neutral country” in the years following the ceasefire also embodied the precariousness, the ambiguity, and the unresolved nature of the project of decolonization that began in 1945.

## **India's Recalibration of the Nation-State System for Decolonization**

Right before he was scheduled to depart from India for Korea to take on his role as the Chief Delegate of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission, General Thimayya met with his two “chief political advisors,” B.N. Chakravrtty and P.N. Haksar, “senior officers of the External Affairs Ministry,” along with Krishna Menon, and Prime Minister Nehru. Starting with tea, the people at the conference soon focused on the topic of Korea. Thimayya recalled that Prime Minister Nehru “had very little to say at all” to him: “I can’t tell you very much [...] You’ve heard what I said to the CFI [Custodian Forces of India] officers about the significance of our country’s foreign policy and about the necessity for maintaining strict neutrality.” Placing his hand upon the bound copy of the Terms of Reference on the table, Nehru continued:

This is your bible, [...] the only guide you will have. No one can tell you what to do or how to do it. [...] Your job is to find some solution to the problem that is plaguing the world in Korea. A solution to that problem may mean that similar problems in other parts of Asia can be solved as well. Thus, your job can well mean peace in Asia and perhaps in the world.<sup>374</sup>

Nehru’s instructions as remembered and reconstructed by Thimayya laid out two elements that were critical in how India had decided to approach the question of “neutrality.” First, the notion of “international law” or an “international community” was to be affirmed – the Terms of Reference, here almost reverentially portrayed, were to be the parameters between which Thimayya had to invent “neutrality.” Secondly, the “Korean problem” was brought to the fore as an important case study for the rest of Asia. Or as Thimayya himself stated in his memoir, “[T]he basic pattern of the Korean war was being duplicated in the other Asian conflicts. A study of the Korean pattern, therefore,

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<sup>374</sup> Thimayya, 39.

would have equal significance to the problems in Burma, Indo-China, Malaya and Indonesia.”<sup>375</sup>

For India, the “Korean problem” at the United Nations – and specifically, the POW repatriation controversy – presented an opportunity for an intervention in the operations of the international community. At the crossroads between an increasingly bipolar Cold War and indigenous struggles for self-determination, Korea had become a high-profile representative of dynamics that were in play all over the Asian continent. For Thimayya personally, the significance of the Korean War itself lay in how it seemingly heralded a new kind of war: “the significance of the conflicts in Asia is that the military is attempting to proselytize on a large scale.”<sup>376</sup> The struggle was now over each side “proving the superiority of its ways of life.” “What does history teach us about wars in which way of life was a basic aim?” Thimayya asked. A type of warfare from history came to mind: “The Crusades come first to mind.”<sup>377</sup>

What kind of “neutrality” did one have to fashion in front of such an emerging pattern of war – a war that was patently ideological? The ideological conflict was on full display at the seventh session of the General Assembly, where discussion on the Korean question instigated the creation of more concrete proposals on possible resolutions to the armistice negotiation impasse. A special report from the United Nations Command in Korea on the current status of the military and armistice activities began the discussion on October 18, 1952:

The differences between the United Nations Command and the communists which have prevented the conclusion of the armistice were narrowed, by the end of April 1952, to one question: whether all prisoners

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<sup>375</sup> Thimayya, 24.

<sup>376</sup> Thimayya, 23.

<sup>377</sup> Thimayya, 22.

of war should be returned, by force if necessary. Final conclusion of an armistice under the terms of the present draft agreement now depends upon communist acceptance of a solution to the prisoner-of-war question consistent with humanitarian principles.<sup>378</sup>

Having raised the question of how to resolve this issue of the negotiation impasse, the United States representative presented a draft resolution, one that was sponsored by twenty-one states. This particular draft resolution was worded to have “the General Assembly to affirm the principle of non-forcible repatriation as representing the will of that body,” to use the words of scholar Shiv Dayal. “*Notes with approval,*” the draft resolution stated, “the principle followed by the United Nations Command with regard to the question of repatriation of prisoners of war, and the numerous proposals which the United Nations Command has made to solve the questions in accordance with this humanitarian principle.” In essence, as Dayal has noted, the draft resolution aimed to frame the U.S. policy of voluntary repatriation as a “humanitarian principle,” as a way to counter the North Korean and Chinese accusations that such a principle went counter to the mandatory repatriation stipulated in the 1949 Geneva Conventions.<sup>379</sup>

However, during the course of the General Assembly session on Korea, three very specific draft resolutions dealing with the question of POW repatriation were placed on the table by representatives from Mexico, Peru, and India respectively. The Mexico resolution was primarily concerned with the particular categories applicable to the prisoners of war, to ensure that the prisoner of war was not rendered “stateless” as a result of the process. Although all prisoners of war who desired repatriation would be

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<sup>378</sup> UN, Document A/2228 (Note dated 18 October 1952 from the permanent representative of the United States of America addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a special report by the United Nations Command in Korea)

<sup>379</sup> Shiv Dayal, *India's role in the Korean question; a study in the settlement of international disputes under the United Nations*. (Delhi: S. Chand, 1959), 110.



immediately repatriated, those who were “desirous of establishing temporary residence in other States, would not return to the country of their origin until the coming into force of the decisions that, in order to achieve a peaceful settlement of the Korean question.” Regarding the states who had already agreed to accept POWs temporarily within their borders, the “authorities of that country shall grant them [the prisoners of war] a migratory status which will enable them to work in order to provide for their needs,” prioritizing state “guarantees for the subsequent protection of their [prisoners of war] freedom and their lives.”<sup>380</sup> In his follow-up letter to the Secretary-General, Luis Padilla Nervo, the representative of Mexico, further explained that this granting of immigrant status would enable the POWs to “[raise their] social status by restoring to them the dignity that only free work can bestow. At the same time, a contribution to the progress of international law might be made by reaffirming the principle that prisoners of war are not to be treated as just a conglomeration of human beings whose fate as the authorities may decide at will, but on the contrary, that man’s inalienable right to work out his own destiny freely should prevail.”<sup>381</sup>

The Peru resolution focused on creating a Commission that would decide the resolution over the POW repatriation issue.<sup>382</sup> The resolution proposed a Commission composed of delegates from each of the “parties to the conflict,” as well as two delegates selected by the General Assembly and one “neutral state,” who was not a member of the United Nations. And notably, the non-UN member “neutral state” would serve as the Chairman of this Commission. The Peru resolution, different from the Mexico resolution,

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<sup>380</sup> UN, Document A/C.1/730 (Mexico: draft resolution) Dated 1 November 1952

<sup>381</sup> UN, Document A/C.1/731 (Letter dated 1 November 1952 from the permanent representative of Mexico addressed to the Secretary General)

<sup>382</sup> UN, Document A/C.1/732 (Peru: draft resolution) Dated 3 November 1952

did not offer any concrete details on what would happen to the prisoners of war themselves – however, it was clear from the working of the resolution, that the Peruvian government and delegates were concerned about situating the POW repatriation issue – and also the United Nations – within a larger global framework that extended past the United Nations’ authority, as evidenced by the inclusion of one non-UN “neutral state.” Beginning the resolution with a statement affirming “the desire fo mankind for an immediate just and honourable peace,” the writers of the resolution ended with a different affirmation: “That in the performance of its functions, the Commission shall be guided by the principles of the United Nations Charter and by the Declaration of Human Rights.” The Peru resolution was a recognition that the “international community” embodied by the United Nations did not, in fact, include all states or groups in the international community, but also extended the United Nations’ claims to defining certain universals. It was a careful re-calibration of the United Nations vis-à-vis the Korean peninsula and the globe.

India’s draft resolution very explicitly positioned the 1949 Geneva Conventions as its point of departure: “*Affirms* that the release and repatriation of prisoners of war shall be effected in accordance with the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, dated 12 August 1949, the well-established principles and practice of international law and the relevant provisions of the draft Armistice Agreement.”<sup>383</sup> The proposal itself was elaborately detailed, contained seventeen separate steps outlined in the process of resolving the POW repatriation issue. While the Mexico resolution was primarily concerned with the state status of the POWs and the Peru resolution was focused on balancing a political dynamics and the UN within an overseeing Commission,

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<sup>383</sup> UN, Document A/C.1/734 (India: draft resolution) Dated 17 November 1952

the India resolution focused almost exclusively on parsing out the step by step process of a “Repatriation Commission” that would oversee the actual repatriation of prisoners of war. In the contested draft of the armistice, a “Committee for Repatriation of Prisoners of War” was already part of the provisions, and this Committee’s responsibilities were primarily logistical. However, the India resolution made a number of significant revisions and changes to the composition and duties of the Committee. First, the India resolution stipulated that there would be four representatives on the Committee: Czechoslovakia, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland. And secondly, the Committee was responsible for providing the following to all prisoners of war:

7. In accordance with arrangements prescribed for the purpose by the Repatriation Commission, each party to the conflict shall have freedom and facilities to explain to the prisoners of war depending upon them their rights and to inform the prisoners of war on any matter relating to their return to their homelands and particularly their full freedom to return.

The India proposal began from the premise that international law must be upheld – in the above quote, the proposal insists upon the POWs’ “full freedom to return,” which echoes the 1949 Geneva Conventions of mandatory repatriation. In a sense, all of the meticulous details outlined in the proposal held the essential characteristics of later non-alignment – the objective of restraining excess by the different powers, which placed India in the role of determining when the U.S. or China, or any nation-state representative had “crossed” over their proper bounds; and also an assertion of a moral authority to be able to determine “excess,” “ideology,” and “nationalism.”

India’s proposal challenged the U.S. authorities’ claim over the universalisms espoused through the United Nations, but the proposal did not pose a challenge to the legitimacy of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel or to either states on both sides of the parallel. The General

Assembly quickly passed the India resolution with an overwhelming majority vote. Later, Krishna Menon added new terms that facilitated the overcoming of the impasse that still existed at the negotiating table – the choice of a “neutral country” for the prisoner of war in the explanation room. As scholar Rosemary Foot notes, “[t]he signature of the Korean armistice agreement in July 1953 has often been linked to the Eisenhower administration’s threats, during the final stages of the negotiation, to launch nuclear war against the People’s Republic of China (PRC), should there be continuing failure to agree to terms,” an idea espoused and circulated by the Eisenhower administration itself in the years following the ceasefire.<sup>384</sup> However, Foot demonstrates that other multiple other factors probably aided the quickening of the signing of the ceasefire. For example, China was to begin its Five-Year-Plan in 1953, and for North Korea, the escalation in U.S. bombing especially during the final year of the war had been devastating, as the U.S. air bombs targeted wide swaths of land as civilian villages along with military targets such as dams and factories were encouraged sites for strafing and bombing. I suggest that India’s particular formulation of “neutrality” offered in the form of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission and the third choice of a “neutral country” also facilitated the signing of the ceasefire in that it provided a space where political recognition could be negotiated, deferred, and still remain intact. Menon and Nehru understood that a key issue on the negotiating table was the issue of recognition of the People’s Republic of China and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea at the United Nations, with the United States being quite adamant about not allowing a possible seat to the PRC or DPRK. The choice of a “neutral country” enabled the political

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<sup>384</sup> Rosemary Foot, “Nuclear Coercion and the Ending of the Korean Conflict,” *International Security*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Winter 1988-1989), 92.

recognition issue embedded in the voluntary repatriation issue to appear less about the states' legitimacy and more about the individual POW's preference. It appeared to be more about the POW rendering him/herself an asylum seeker or a refugee, rather than being about the POW rejecting the state's claims upon his/her subjecthood.

### **“Repatriation” Explained, Translated, and Performed**

The entire proceedings of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission and the POW complex built upon the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel hinged upon one concept: repatriation. The most crucial aspect of the “choice” rendered in these “explanation rooms” was the moment when the prisoner of war decided through which door he or she would exit – the door for repatriation, or the door for non-repatriation:

After each explanation session the prisoner was asked by the Indian chairman of the NNRC committee within each explanation tent if he desired to be repatriated. This question was asked by the chairman through an interpreter. It had been specific in the Armistice Agreement that, to avoid misunderstanding, the act of delivery of a prisoner of one side to the other side would be called “repatriation” in English. The equivalent words in Chinese and Korean were also specified.<sup>385</sup>

But the various wars on the Korean peninsula with its disparate array of “prisoners of war,” consisting of civilians and military personnel from both sides of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, had been complicating the notion of “repatriation” from the beginning of the debate. And in October 1953, when the explanations finally began, the personnel involved in the explanations discovered a difficulty: “repatriation” did not mean one, single thing to the prisoners of war. Rather different meanings depending on his or her background. For a south Korean prisoner of war, “repatriation” could also mean going back to the

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<sup>385</sup> Draft of a history of the UNCREG operations at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel; Box 1; The Jack Tydal Papers; United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, PA.

hometown in south Korea. As Thimayya recalled, “This problem concerned the particular choice of words we had to use when we asked the prisoner if he wanted repatriation. These Chinese and Korean words that were used to signify the idea of repatriation had a literal meaning that suggested vaguely the idea of returning home. [...] Unquestionably, some confusion did exist in the minds of some of the prisoners.”<sup>386</sup>

Debate over the interpretation of the different stipulations of the Terms of Reference had entirely erupted along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Building sites and the speed at which these compounds were built, the order in which the prisoners of war would be sent to the explanation rooms, whether or not prisoners of war would receive “explanations” in a collective group or individually – these were only a few of the overwhelming details that became a site of intense contestation. According to the Terms of Reference, the “bible” that Nehru had gestured to in front of Thimayya, the “explanation period” was mandated to a 90-day period. At the end of the 90-day period, Thimayya reflected upon the results: “Explanations were finished. Out of the 90-day period, ten days were used for explanations, and some 3,000 men out of 22,000 had been explained to. Of these 3,500 men, less than 150, or slightly more than 4% asked for repatriation. This was a much smaller number than the total who sought repatriation by escape from the compounds.”<sup>387</sup> The very crux of the issue that had been holding up the ceasefire agreement from being signed at Panmunjom for over eighteen months had now boiled down only 10 days of “explanations,” where even the “choice” of repatriation or non-repatriation seemed dubious.

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<sup>386</sup> Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality*, 82.

<sup>387</sup> Thimayya, 190.

Although the primary focus of debates, wrangling, and arguments at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was on whether or not “choice,” “free will,” “neutrality,” or “objectivity” were properly supported and facilitated by the elaborate setups of the camp and explanation rooms, I contend that the actual fundamental concern of all state parties involved was not the exercise of “free will” in the explanation rooms, but rather the proper performance of the relationship between the state and its subject and the mediation of the international community over that particular relationship. For the 90-day period at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel on the Korean peninsula, the states of the Republic of Korea, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the People’s Republic of China, and the United States found themselves in an unprecedented situation in the conduct of warfare: the state had to “explain” to a prisoner of war who had rejected repatriation why they should return. For the states involved, their own legitimacy – fragile and tenuous – was tested one by one in these individual explanations as the basic relationship between state and subject was laid bare and ambiguous. The prisoner of war, despite heralded as the humanitarian focus of all states involved, was rather beside the point in the grand scheme of nation-states and the international community. The point was the allegorical performance of the explanation room itself, not the choice of repatriation or non-repatriation.

The explanation room, I argue, was a distilled scene of the nation-state system – each represented by a body, some listening, others observing, one talking, but all judging. And the setting of the “stage” or the explanation room exemplified these dynamics, as evidenced in the following schematic image of the explanation room system created by the UNC for the anti-communist Korean and Chinese non-repatriates based on the Terms of Reference enforced by the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission:

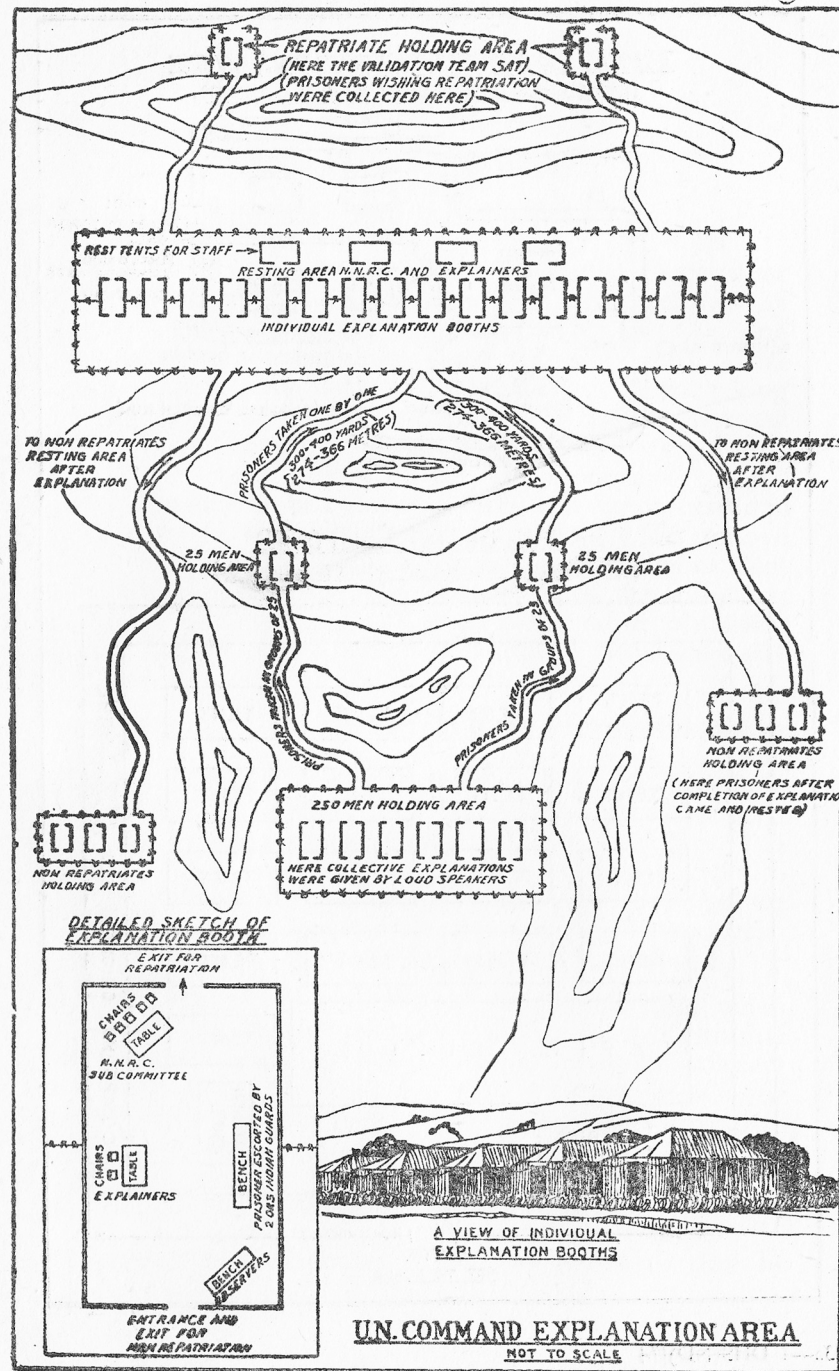


Figure 5.1: A Map of the “U.N. Command Explanation Area.”

From Sri Nandan Prasad and Birendra Chandra Chakravorty, *History of the Custodian Force (India) in Korea, 1953-54*, Armed forces of the Indian Union ([New Delhi]: Historical Section, Ministry of Defence, Govt. of India, 1976).



Neutrality, in this map, lay in the carefully calibrated and controlled movements of the POWs, punctuated with deliberate repetition of the “explanation” for clarity. According to the map, 250 POWs were first gathered in the holding area, located in the lower middle of the map, where “collective explanations were given by loudspeakers.” Then, Indian soldiers took groups of 25 POWs at a time to the intermediate holding area, from where POWs were taken one by one to the individual “explanation booths” drawn in the top center of the map. Each explanation booth held a *tableau* of different actors – the prisoner of war sat on a bench accompanied by 2 or 5 Indian guards, facing the “explainers,” who sat behind a table. In the far corner behind another table sat the 5-member Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission inspection team – composed of delegates from Switzerland, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, with the head delegate from India. In the other corner, sitting on a bench were members of “observers” from the United Nations Command. Neutrality, in the explanation room, lay in the carefully calibrated encounters of speaking, listening, and observing – it was a scripted encounter, supposedly strong enough to mitigate any “excesses” enacted within the room.

Each side of the Cold War divide was reserving the ability to pass judgment on the maturity and the ability of the Korean to articulate and interpolate its subject. Which Korea would it be – which Korea would be deemed appropriate to join a system of nation-state recognition? It was not just a room, as the POWs understood. It was a frontline competition of the politics of recognition in the Cold War. And it was a heated competition. On October 22, 1953, General Hamblen, the head of the United Nations Command Repatriation Group [UNCREG], received a memorandum from the

headquarters of the NNRC. It reported that on October 17, 1953, one of the UNC representatives (according to the footnotes, it appears that it was a Lt. Col. William R. Robinette) called “the Polish delegate to the NNRC ‘a son of a bitch’ after several arguments within the explanation tent.” The performance aspect of the explanations is demonstrated fully in UNCREG’s unpublished history’s rendition of the incident:

The incident occurred near explanation tent 15. The explanation to the prisoner in that tent had continued for over two hours. Because all other tents had completed explanations for the day, a crowd gathered near tent 15 to observe the outcome of the interview then in session. As the prisoner left the tent through the non-repatriation door, the crowd surged around the prisoner. The Communists present shouted for the prisoner to return to the tent and urged that he make his exit through the repatriation door. At this point a UNC Representative protested to Communists that they had no right to try to continue explanations outside the tent. It was during the ensuing melee that the offensive remark was alleged to have been made to the Polish representative by the UN representative.<sup>388</sup>

The willfulness on the part of those involved to perform their roles within the explanation room did not diminish the fact that the “choice” made by the prisoner of war had a very material and serious consequence. In fact, when examined more closely, the choice of non-repatriation, repatriation, or a neutral country itself was itself a multivalent issue for the prisoners of war. It was not merely about “choosing” a particular state, but rather weighing and navigating an ever-shifting landscape of power. It was a question of discerning what was still possible or now impossible in the decolonization project of Korea.

The 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, as mentioned earlier, was not considered to be a permanent border; thus, both states of the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea seemed somewhat tenuous. The 7737 Korean non-repatriate prisoners of war that were transferred from the UNC to the Custodian Forces of India at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel

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<sup>388</sup> Draft history of UNCREG, USAMHI.

had also been living behind barbed-wire fences for possibly up to three years – three years of negotiating the fraught politics on-the-ground, as categories and populations were created, debunked, and reinvented.<sup>389</sup> It is crucial to understand how this particular population of Korean POWs who arrived at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel in 1953 had been created. At its height, the UNC Camp on Koje Island held 173,218 prisoners of war – 151,589 were Korean, and 21,629 were Chinese. The population of 151,589 Korean, which included 49,309 “civilian internees,” was not a constant one throughout the war. Two exchanges during wartime, mediated under the dictates of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, resulted in 5,464 Koreans exchanged in Operation Little Swap and later 69,160 Koreans exchanged in Operation Big Swap – both exchanges of POWs happened at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel near Panmunjom. On June 18, 1953, in an attempt to assert authority and sovereignty over the anti-communist prisoners of war in defiance of the ongoing Panmunjom negotiations, ROK President Syngman Rhee ordered the ROK Army to orchestrate a mass release of Korean anti-communist POWs from the camps. An estimated 27,000 POWs escaped that night from UNC camps scattered over the mainland peninsula, adding to the numbers of those who had managed to escape before then – totaling 27,063 Korean escapees for the war’s duration. But there were POWs who also died in the chaos and panic as U.S. soldiers began firing to frighten the POWs to halt – the investigation reports numbered the deaths at 58, and the injured at 75. At the war’s end, a total of 3,105 Korean POWs

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<sup>389</sup> According to the draft history of the UNCREG, “the total number of anti-Communist prisoners transferred[sic] to the custody of the CFI during this operation period was 7,900 North Koreans and 14,704 Chinese, for a total of 22,604.” However, these numbers are only approximations of the actual count of prisoners.

had died behind the barbed wire, whether of illness, suicide, homicide, accident, or the increased U.S. military force.<sup>390</sup>

In January 1952, when the U.S. delegate placed the proposal for voluntary repatriation on the negotiating table at Panmunjom, the prisoner of war was thrust upon the world media stage, as the delegates argued over who could claim the legitimate interpretation of the 1949 Geneva Conventions. The POW, figured as a vulnerable subject in the Geneva conventions, became a somewhat paradoxical character in the midst of the controversy. The delegates at Panmunjom, worldwide media, representatives at the United Nations – much of the controversy over the prisoner of war issue revolved around who was best positioned to articulate what the POW desired. The different groups in charge of the prisoners of war at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel were also embroiled in this debate. The 173,218 prisoners of war under U.S. custody had become a hypothetical, universalized subject, onto which each party or state could project its particular configuration.

In his 1954 memoir, General K.S. Thimayya made a case for the superior ability of India – and Indians like himself – to gauge and understand the prisoners of war, explicitly demonstrating the particular “neutrality” of India at work in assessing and overseeing the NNRC and repatriation business at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. He wrote about the frustrations expressed by the American officers in charge of the Korean and Chinese prisoners of war: “[T]he Americans said that they had tried to screen the prisoners thoroughly, but that some of them never were certain in their minds. ‘These people never

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<sup>390</sup> Folders – Statistics, POW Statistical Reports July 1950-Sept 1953, Korean and Chinese Recapitulation; Box 1; Statistical Reports Relating to Enemy Prisoners of War, 1950-1953; Office of the Provost Marshall, Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1, Headquarters, U.S. Army Forces, Far East, 1952-1957; Record Group 554; National Archives and Record Administration – College Park, MD.

know what they want,' I was told. 'Some of them have changed their minds three or four times already and now they may have done so again.'" The American officers essentially reduced the seeming fickleness of the Korean and Chinese prisoners of war to a more general character flaw among "these people." But Thimayya noted that since many of the interpreters used by the Americans were either South Korean or Formosan Chinese, objectivity was not always achievable. "It was quite possible," Thimayya wrote, "that the UNC never was able to discover the true wishes of some of the POWs, even though they certainly had made the attempt."<sup>391</sup>

General Thimayya offered his own interpretations and observations of the motivations behind the actions and choices made by the prisoners of war under the custody of the NNRC. "The truth was that if one of the POWs fitted the propaganda picture we never saw him or were able to find him," Thimayya wrote. "The majority were motivated by fear, not of communism as such but of going home. The most important reason for this fear was that it had been implanted among and taught to the prisoners while they were in the camps." Thimayya discussed the different factors behind the "fear" he had observed: There were rumors that since they had been "captured by the enemy," the communists would behead them if they returned. Some had been in "some kind of trouble in the military units" they had been in during the war. Others faced "various criminal charges" in their hometown. But there were "other personal reasons" – during the three or more years away from home, the prisoner of war had become concerned about the changes that may have happened back home during his or her absence. "Many disquieting rumors of such changes, of ten by word-of-mouth by prisoner captured later, reached the men and fed their feelings of insecurity. [...] A

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<sup>391</sup> Thimayya, 79.

prisoner of war may hear that his farm and family had been taken over by another man, or that the government had confiscated his farm.<sup>392</sup>

Thimayya's observation of a possible myriad of reasons behind the actions of prisoners of war is significant not necessarily for its accuracy, but for how it reveals a two-fold tension in the POW issue. Thimayya needed to be able to claim to know better than the other "non-neutral" countries the motivations and desires animating the prisoners of war. The long stipulated observation he provides also demonstrates the limits of these state actors in understanding the motivations of the POWs. Indeed, the narrative arc of Thimayya's memoir was marked by certain breakthrough moments of understanding especially the Korean prisoners of war. I contend that Thimayya's memoir, written in 1954 but not published until much later, reveals how Thimayya was explicitly folding the figure of the Korean prisoner of war into the larger narrative of a Nehru-articulated vision of decolonization, one that espoused the possibility of a nation-state pedagogical project in transforming its subjects and citizens into fully modern subjects. Thimayya's relationship with the POWs was inflected with a pedagogical overtone, but it was ultimately a horizontal, fraternal relationship along the plane of decolonization and the rise of postcolonial nation-states' claims on the structuring of global power and order.<sup>393</sup>

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<sup>392</sup> Thimayya, 105-106.

<sup>393</sup> Here I draw upon Dipesh Chakrabarty's notion of "pedagogy" that he notes is embedded in the developmentalism underlying ideas of decolonization present at the Bandung Conference. In his essay, he especially analyzes Nehru's own brand of developmentalism "pedagogy." "In the pedagogical mode, the very performance of politics reenacted civilizational or cultural hierarchies: between nations, between classes, or between the leaders and the masses. Those lower down in the hierarchy were meant to learn from those higher up." This was in tension with what Chakrabarty has called the "dialogical" side to decolonization: "Anticolonial thinkers often devoted a great deal of time to the question of whether or how a global conversation of humanity could genuinely acknowledge cultural diversity without distributing such diversity over a hierarchical scale of civilization – that is to say, an urge toward cross-cultural dialogue without the baggage of imperialism." Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Legacies of Bandung: Decolonization and the Politics of Culture," from *Making a world after empire: the Bandung moment and its political afterlives*, ed. by Christopher Lee (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), 46-47.

To set the proper stage for the explanations, the “bleak, barren, and blasted piece of hell” that Thimayya had seen from the window of his helicopter upon arrival had to be transformed. The Demilitarized Zone itself was a “strip of land 4 kilometres in width running across the Korean peninsula.” Divided into “two equal halves by the Military Demarcation Line, the Demilitarized Zone was to be the site of the POW complex for the explanation and repatriation proceedings – the northern half was under the Northern Command, and the southern half was under the United Nations Command.<sup>394</sup> In the middle along the DZ was the explanation room system. On either side of the explanation room complex were the POW camps of the non-repatriates who were now under the custody of the CFI. “[B]ounded on the South by the Imjim river and [...] dominated by hills rising from 1,500 to 1,800 feet,” this area of the DZ was “very heavily mined” since it had changed hands many times over the course of the war.

In the southern part of the DZ, within “the vicinity of Tong-Jong-ni,”<sup>395</sup> the 22,600 Chinese and Korean prisoner of war non-repatriates from the UNC were housed in what Thimayya noted was a “marvelous job of construction. All the huts were prefabricated and every plank for them had been shipped from the United States.”<sup>396</sup> The compounds had heating and also hot and cold water - the U.S. military was not repeating the same haphazard approach used in the urgent quick speed with which the camp on Koje-do – this particular camp was very planned. However, due to space constrictions, the enclosures were placed very close together – “Each enclosure had six to eight compounds, and each compound was made to house about 500 men.”<sup>397</sup> On the other

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<sup>394</sup> *The Custodian Force*, 21.

<sup>395</sup> *The Custodian Force*, 22.

<sup>396</sup> Thimayya, 83.

<sup>397</sup> Thimayya, 82.

side of the DZ, in the villages of Song-Gong-ni and Palsan-ni, were the lodgings of 359 prisoners – American, British, and Korean – who had decided not to repatriate. Although they lived with “less luxury than did the south camp POWs,” these POWs “lived comfortably” – the Northern Command had whitewashed the small houses in the village – “Their quarters, with the neat vegetable patches beside the houses and with pumpkins ripening on the roofs, had a pleasant and peaceful atmosphere.”<sup>398</sup>

When the “first batch” of prisoners arrived at 0800 in the morning of September 10, 1953, the 489 North Korean non-repatriates from the Koje-do camp “marched in with flags waving and bands blaring[...] shouting, screaming and gesticulating.”<sup>399</sup> The flags were of South Korea and the United Nations.<sup>400</sup> General Thimayya judged that such a demonstration, if it did not interfere with the processing, was permissible. Present at the POW’s arrival were representatives of the NNRC, press correspondents, and also observers from the CPV and KPA. A sudden melee broke out when some of the anti-communist North Korean POWs spotted the uniformed members of the KPA-CPV observer teams. POWs hurled stones and spat at the observers, as the Indian soldiers attempted to hold them back. Later, according to the official history of the Custodian Forces, the anti-communist POWs “explained [to the CFI] that their objection to the presence of the Communist observers was based on the fear that individual prisoners would be indentified during the process of taking over and then their families would harassed or punished by the Chinese and North Korean Govts.”<sup>401</sup>

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<sup>398</sup> Thimayya, 114.

<sup>399</sup> Thimayya, 74. However, the *Custodian Forces (India) of Korea* history states that the number of arriving prisoners of war was 499.

<sup>400</sup> *Custodian Forces*, 30.

<sup>401</sup> *Custodian Forces*, 31.



The anti-communist Korean prisoners of war became the contingent that consistently challenged the work of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission and the authority of the Custodian Forces of India, and thus, Thimayya accorded these POWs a great deal of attention in his memoir. He detailed their daily lifestyle and practices, which were instituted almost immediately upon their arrival. They woke up every morning “between three and four a.m., and began the day briskly with a few marching songs vigorously accompanied by brass bands.” Physical training exercises followed, and then the POWs sat down to their breakfast. The camps were “neat and spotless,” and the afternoons were usually spent with sports or other classes. What Thimayya called “political indoctrination” classes took place later in the day, and the “last event of the day would be a march-past, again with much music, flags, and slogan-shouting[sic].”<sup>402</sup> Such a disciplined lifestyle also was the creation of a solidified surveillance police structure that the POWs had developed during their time in the Koje-do Camp. Every compound had its own “guard tent,” and the ruling organizations – namely the Anti-Communist Youth League - held trials for offenses, and reserved the right to exercise punishment by death.<sup>403</sup>

Mass demonstrations, insistence on negotiating the terms of entering the explanation rooms, and even kidnappings became part of the daily landscape of the POW camp at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Notably, Thimayya observed a difference between the Chinese and the Korean POWs’ mass organizing: “The Chinese POWs were better disciplined,

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<sup>402</sup> Thimayya, 113.

<sup>403</sup> Thimayya, 114. As the *Custodian Forces (India) in Korea* history narrated, “The prisoners maintained a soldierly routine even in the POW camps, in order to keep up their health and spirits. The cooking party in the anti-Communist compounds started preparing breakfast for its 500 inmates as early as 0330 hours each morning. Everybody got up by 0430 hours in the pre-dawn bitter cold of the Korean winter. By 0600 hours PT was finished and breakfast was served an hour later. The main meals of the day were taken between 1100 and 1200 hours, and again between 1700 and 1800 hours. (36-37)

less noisy, and a bit more rational. They seemed to me like lost and abandoned children; the Koreans seemed like bewildered and angry children.”<sup>404</sup> The mass rioting, according to Thimayya, was an attempt to garner attention, to “force recognition”: “Sometimes they acted like neglected or rejected children, and the clamour they made was an almost pathetic attempt to force recognition of themselves as people rather than as pawns in a brutal game of politics,” observed Thimayya in his memoir.<sup>405</sup> Thimayya attributed this level of desperation on the part of the POWs to the fact that “they all were fed up with being statistics [...T]heir inclination was to try to increase the dissension in the hope of attracting more consideration of the individual problems.”<sup>406</sup> Thus, he framed the challenges the POWs issued to the India-led NNRC not as ultimate challenges to the legitimacy of the Indian “experiment in neutrality” but as a necessary element to overcome in order to achieve neutrality. He wrote,

The Chinese and Korean soldiers, like our own, were mainly simple village folk, barely literate, and completely unsophisticated. [...] We did believe that an important function of our neutrality was to find out everything we could concerning the true desires of these non-repat POWs. By the time we had the whole lot in our custody, we were convinced that if anyone was going to begin thinking of these prisoners as human beings, it would have to be us.<sup>407</sup>

Thus, the “true desires of these non-repat POWs” was to be the province of the India-led NNRC and the CFI.

Kenneth Hansen, a Colonel in the U.S. Army Psychological Warfare Division, depicted a different portrait of the anti-communist prisoners of war, dubbing them “Anti-Communist heroes” in his memoir, *Heroes Behind the Wire*, about his observations and

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<sup>404</sup> Thimayya, 109.

<sup>405</sup> Thimayya, 90.

<sup>406</sup> Thimayya, 104.

<sup>407</sup> Thimayya, 92.

experiences during the PsyWar operations and programs conducted in the POW camps of the Korean War. In a departure from the American officers who, in Thimayya's memoir, had expressed frustration with the prisoners of war, Hansen described the actions and choices of the non-repatriate prisoners of war at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel as the culminating climax of the "valiant and victorious struggle of the anti-communist heroes in Korea."<sup>408</sup> "For the prisoners of war," Hansen wrote, "it was a life and death struggle, replete with drama and pathos, and yet even to them not without flashes of their irrepressible humor. To participate in their ordeal was to become emotionally involved with them, without exception."<sup>409</sup> Hansen's narrative was also one of pedagogy, but it differed from Thimayya's in one fundamental, significant way – the story of the anti-communist POWs Hansen provides is one of linear transformation catalyzed by the U.S. Psychological Warfare educational programs. It is a story about liberal enlightenment, aspiration, and truth – in other words, the "anti-communist hero" of Hansen's memoir was a universalized subject, one who had learned and acquired the proper behavior and affect in front of the Cold War-inflected global order.

The "choice" of non-repatriation that the anti-communist POW was making was supposed to demonstrate the emancipatory potential of the American imperial project. According to the logic of the PsyWar programs, the POW's initial introduction to the PsyWar educational programs created in the POW camps were to be the turning point and epiphany moment for these Chinese and Korean POWs. Individual consciousness and a sense of historical agency only became possible through the POWs' reception of "objective information" offered by the U.S. educational programs. In the early days of

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<sup>408</sup> Kenneth K. Hansen, *Heroes behind barbed wire*. (Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand, 1957), vi.

<sup>409</sup> Hansen, 175.

the war, in October and November 1950, President Truman “ordered the initiation of a pilot rehabilitation program for the Korean prisoners of war. Lieutenant Colonel Donald R. Nugent, USMC, who had been an American educator in Japan before and after World War II, was named to head the program.”<sup>410</sup> The chief instructor of the “pilot rehabilitation” program was Mr. Monta L. Osborne, who “pointed out to the POWs that, as North Koreans of military age, they had never in their lives received wholly objective information.” Osborne went on to state that under “Japanese domination [...] everything they had been told had been what the Japanese chose for them to hear,” and then under “Soviet rule, they had entered a period in which the information which reached them was even less reliable[.]” In a sense, Osborne was making a connecting thread that ran through Japanese colonialism and Soviet foreign occupation – both significant historical phases had been collapsed into one continuous era of propaganda. The North Korean prisoners of war “were now to receive, for the first time in their lives,” according to Osborne, “completely objective information.”<sup>411</sup>

These POWs were supposed to manifest an American-dictated project of transformation – from a Korean subject too steeped in Confucian ways of relating in society to think independently, to a Korean subject enlightened by American democratic ideals, able to conduct or mimic participatory democracy through rational thinking. As scholar Grace Chae has noted in her study of the U.S. military education programs conducted behind the barbed-wire fences of the POW compounds, “defense researchers in the military argued that the subordinate behavior among Koreans towards their leaders reflected a psychology rooted in Confucian traditions that suppressed individual thought

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<sup>410</sup> Hansen, 44.

<sup>411</sup> Hansen, 45.

and agency. This discourse regarding their capacity to independently reason was significant to the rationale behind POW reeducation programs, which came to be regarded as a possible means of reforming prisoners into rationally ‘fit’ subjectivities.”<sup>412</sup> Or as FOD Lieutenant colonel Robert E. O’Brien remarked to the instructors involved in the CIE program: “[The Koreans] are a people who have been shunted from one stage of oppression to another over the years and always kept in ignorance to prevent independence of action and thought. These few months may be just the spark that will motivate them to demanding enlightenment, education, and freedom of action and thought.”<sup>413</sup> The “choice” to not repatriate was to be evidence of the POW’s own American “enlightenment” – a demand for “education and freedom of action and thought.”

According to Hansen, the anti-communist POWs had studied the armistice agreement meticulously and rigorously during their time in the Koje-do camp. Each anti-communist prisoner of war received the full armistice agreement annex that contained the Terms of Reference regarding prisoners of war. “It was so important a document to the prisoners that those who could read it memorized it. Those who could not read it participated in so many discussion groups that they thoroughly knew the sense of it, and could point to the numbered paragraph under discussion at any time.”<sup>414</sup> Hansen waxed almost poetic about the prisoners of war studying the Terms of Reference: “If ever a group deserved the U.S. Army slang designation of ‘guardhouse lawyers’, it was the

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<sup>412</sup> Grace Chae, “Captive minds: Race, war, and the education of Korean War POWs in U.S. custody, 1950-1953” (United States -- Illinois: The University of Chicago, 2010), 170.

<sup>413</sup> Quote of O’Brien is from Grace Chae’s dissertation, page 183. The footnote for the quote’s archival provenance is as follows: “Suggestion re: Administration for Instructional Officers, Memorandum #1,” Folder: Reports from F.O.D., Col. O’Brien to Col. Nugent, General Records 1951-1952,” Box 1, RG 554, National Archives, 1.

<sup>414</sup> Hansen, 121.

prisoners of war.” Asserting that the prisoners, “in the end, were more familiar with the agreement as to their fate than many of the Indian officers who had the final say as to its administration.”<sup>415</sup> Such an assertion on the part of Colonel Hansen was essentially an argument for the merits of the Psychological Warfare work within the POW camps – primarily an “educational” program conducted through the Civilian Information and Education [CI&E] section. The anti-communist Korean prisoners of war who were publishing and distributing their own compound newspapers – for example, the newspaper titled “Flash” specifically dealt with information on the repatriation issue – and conducting their own discussion groups on the armistice agreement. To Hansen’s delight, the POWs were now performing “democracy” as taught by the CIE program.

Hansen’s portrait of the anti-communist POW as the eager pupil of American-style education certainly diverged from Thimayya’s portrait of the anti-communist POW as the confused “child” strategically clamoring for attention. But this comparison between the two portrayals raises a question about how Hansen and Thimayya were respectively defining “liberation” via their constructed views of the Korean POWs. I suggest that for Hansen, American-style liberation is in the moment of recognition by the Korean POW of the value inherent in American liberal democracy. In this case, for Hansen, witnessing Korean POWs mimicking or performing the gestures of democracy was sufficient. For Thimayya, liberation, as the later section of this chapter will demonstrate, was also about nation-building, the education of a subject to become a fit, modern citizen. Thus, in Hansen’s portrayal, the POWs could not possibly be “confused” because they had to manifest and exemplify the success of the rational thinking espoused by the American education programs.

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<sup>415</sup> Hansen, 121.

Despite Hansen's glowing portrayal of the successes of the CIE program in the anti-communist POW compounds, the leaders among the anti-communist POWs, especially among the Anti-Communist Youth League, expressed certain reservations and critiques of the program. In Chapter Two of this study, I discussed an analysis of interviews with twenty-four Korean anti-communist POW leaders in the ACYL conducted by the U.S. PsyWar section on the efficacy of the CIE program in promoting democracy among the POWs. One of the POW leaders, Kim Hyung Ha who had been the Chief Clerk in Compound 81 in the Koje-do camp and Compound 2 at the San Mudai Camp, felt that the "CIE orientation classes have been too neutral [and] feels that the instruction should be more strongly anti-communist." He mentioned that the POWs themselves were "already teaching many of the classes, such as literacy, mathematics, etc." Another POW leader, Bat Yeung Ho whose hometown was Pyongyang, noted that "[m]any of the PWs would like to learn foreign languages but the CIE teacher in the compound were not educated enough to give them these course," and that the "PWs would like to use their own teachers with the assistance and supervision of CIE teachers." POW Kim Bock Song proposed that the "CIE should be operated the same as ROK schools and colleges," while POW So E. Seop "desired that they be given more technical training" and suggested that they be given "school credits for classes being taught in the compound."<sup>416</sup> The POWs themselves view the CIE program more as a resource, rather than a teacher or all-encompassing program in anti-communist democracy. Indeed, over the course of the twenty-four interviews in the study, almost all of the POWs voice some

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<sup>416</sup> *Interviews with 24 Korean POW Leaders*. Prepared by Research, Analysis, and Evaluation Division, Psychological Warfare Section, United States Army Forces, Far East, Headquarters. Dated 13 May 1954. Unpublished manuscript.

criticism or dissatisfaction with the CIE program. If this was the case, how did the POWs utilize the resources of the CIE to fashion their own programs for

Hansen and his PsyWar team were not the only ones observing the prisoners of war for the duration of the war. Delegates from the International Committee of the Red Cross made regular visits to the camps to note the conditions, register any complaints, and ensure that the camp authorities were running the camp in accordance with the 1949 Geneva Conventions. One aspect of POW camp life the delegates especially took note of was the compound performances put on by the prisoners of war themselves for each other. The stage, built by the POWs themselves, often was the central focus of each POW compound. It was the site where the Korean Peoples Army and Chinese Volunteers Prisoners of War Representatives Association placed Brigadier General Francis Dodd for their first official meeting. The stage was the site of People's Court trials in the communist compounds, where individual POWs were called upon to do public self-criticism in front of the other POWs, and disciplinary action could often follow. In the anti-communist POW compounds, the more violent group disciplinary beatings took place in the CIE building, where the stage often was located. And the stage, for both anti-communist and communist compounds, was also the site of many entertainment performances staged by the POWs.

The stage was a site of pedagogy created, sustained, and even circulated by the Korean prisoners of war. The performances that were for entertainment value – and perhaps the most visible element of POW daily life to outside visitors such as the ICRC delegates and PsyWar members – must be seen as part of the larger matrix of sovereign claims-making occurring on the ground of the POW camp. Body and affect were both



the terrain upon which a different pedagogy was mapped. Although not all Korean prisoners of war were members of the ACYL, the ACYL was effectively in charge of the compounds in which they had established themselves – and as Thimayya had noted in his memoir, the ACYL set down a similar structure of a state-like body in the camps on the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Surveillance, interrogation, disciplinary beatings, newspapers, educational programs, and even meal distribution fell under the jurisdiction of the ACYL. From the archival materials available, it is difficult to say that the ACYL also had control over the performance department of the compounds. However, a closer examination of the plays reveals a positionality that the POWs projected – and instructed others to inhabit – that Thimayya’s and Hansen’s formulations could not encompass.

In the compound of the prisoner of war, Oh Se-hui, who was discussed earlier in this dissertation, dramatic performances were the special forte of Compound 65. According to Hansen, the productions varied from one-man acting scenes to plays in “four acts and six scenes.” The prisoners of war “built stage-settings out of cardboard and kraft paper boxes, hemp bags, poster paper, paper bags, tins cans and wooden ration boxes, dyed with tooth powder, clay, grass, lime and DDT!” exclaimed Hansen, pointing at the ingenuity of the anti-communist Koreans. The list of play names – unfortunately only in English translation – that Hansen provided in his memoir run an interesting gamut of interests and entertainment. Plays such as “Bloodstained Sword,” “A Day in Seoul,” “Mr. Park Visits Seoul,” “Dear Free Land” clearly referred to the Korean War experience itself. Romance plays also found their way onto the production bills: “Love at the Port,” “Son-in-Law Wanted,” “Princess Bell-Flower,” and “White Pearl.” However, as Hansen continued with his list of plays, it becomes evident that the plays were very much geared

towards creating a narrative of the Korean nation: “Naivete,” “Justice” “Sword of Wrath,” “My Homeland Where the Flowers Bloom,” “For the Cause of my Fatherland,” “Sons of the Republic of Korea,” “Going Home,” “Prop of the Republic of Korea,” and “Land of Passion.” Other plays referred explicitly – and perhaps in content described – aspects of camp and military life itself: “Quack’s Hospital,” “Leaders,” “Cigarette Butts.” Comedies were also part of the roster: “Shanghai Typhoon” and “Foggy Shanghai,” according to Hansen were “devoted to the struggles of political exiles during the Japanese occupation of Korea.”<sup>417</sup>

When the prisoners of war were faced with the situation of the “explanations” that would take place at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, they had a few questions. “Would they receive explanations individually or in groups?” – this was the central question, according to Hansen. “Their solution was a series of plays, presented with variations in every Korean and Chinese compound,” marveled Hansen in his memoir. “Compounds with particularly exhilarating version – or exceptionally effective actors – toured other compounds, presenting their production to wild cheers and applause.”<sup>418</sup> The setting was almost always invariably the same – “a table presided over by a turbaned actor who, so there could be no mistake, wore on his chest a sign proclaiming him the ‘Indian Chairman.’” On his left were the Czech and Pole representatives – each “placarded and obviously in the role of minor villains.” On his right were the Swedish and Swiss representatives – and also a U.N. representative, a U.N. observer, and a U.N. interpreter. The Korean POWs – and also the Chinese anti-communist POWs - had staged according to the Terms of Reference their own *tableau* of the explanation room.

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<sup>417</sup> Hansen, 75-76.

<sup>418</sup> Hansen, 145.

From offstage entered the communist representative, observer, and interpreter – and finally, the communist “explainer” entered and “took his seat.” “Then, to an accolade which was invariably deafening, the HERO strode on stage.” – the anti-communist Korean prisoner of war entered the *tableau*. The “explainer” began his “explanation script,” and the POWs, in writing the script, had “considered every possible angle which might be employed to persuade” a POW to repatriate to North Korea. But, “the hero had an answer for every approach.” The answers often “confounded” the explainer – and in other instances, the “explainer,” visibly moved by the POW’s responses, would exit out of the tent through the non-repatriation door, arm-in-arm with the POW. In “one version, even the Czech and Pole sought asylum.”<sup>419</sup> And although such a play seemed to fall all too easily within certain categories of mapping communist versus anti-communists, these plays are remarkable in the sense that here it was the anti-communist Korean POW who was the full agent of history on the world stage of political change, not the presiding committee assembled by the United Nations or China. And within the context of the previous performances and plays, the actions of the Korean prisoner of war were portrayed as a part of a longer teleological history of anti-colonialism and nationalism. It was the Korean prisoner of war who would enlighten others, and it was the Korean prisoner of war who would embody the South Korean state. Hansen’s apparent delight with these dramatized “explanation room” performances misrecognized the dynamics of political articulation expressed in these plays. But the aims of the PsyWar section and the POW’s portrayal of the explanation room did converge in an important way – the “choice” of repatriation or non-repatriation was not exercised, but rather performed in the explanation room.

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<sup>419</sup> Hansen, 146.

When the Korean anti-communist POWs arrived at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, the tactics of the POWs turned towards challenging the NNRC-structured explanations. Initially, the Korean non-repatriate POWs refused to attend the explanations scheduled, and General Thimayya held discussions with them over a week-long period. On October 24, 1953, Thimayya went out to the compound to meet with the POW leaders. They presented a list of demands to him, which in his memoir, Thimayya called “unreasonable,” “quite impossible to meet,” and even “fantastic.” The POW compound leaders “wanted the explanation huts to be rebuilt inside their compounds,” or wanted “their compound leaders in the explanation booths and they asked that the explanations be given to five prisoners at a time.”<sup>420</sup> Thimayya “pointed out [...] evidence of intimidation of the individuals by the prisoners’ organisation,” and as a result, he believed that only “individual explanations” could “guarantee a free choice to the men.”<sup>421</sup>

Other demands of the POWs Thimayya considered to be entirely reasonable were that POWs who were ill did not have to undergo the explanations – and also they voiced a concern about “repeated explanations” – “They did not want to have individual POWs subjected to the explanations more than once. I was in complete sympathy with this demand, although the Rules of Procedure did permit the situation.”<sup>422</sup> These discussions marked a particular turning point in Thimayya’s understanding of the POWs themselves, as he began to identify “fear” as a core element motivating the POWs’ demands:

After talking for hours with the POWs about their demands, I became less concerned with the demands themselves and more aware of the fears and misunderstandings that caused the prisoners to present these particular demands in the first place. It was quite obvious that the leaders were afraid that individuals within their groups might become confused if

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<sup>420</sup> Thimayya, 179-180.

<sup>421</sup> Thimayya, 180.

<sup>422</sup> Thimayya, 180.

subjected to too much psychological persuasion from the explainers. The leaders insisted that it was the explainers themselves and the approach used by the explainers that the prisoners fears, and not the communist ideology.<sup>423</sup>

However, on closer examination the demands and concerns of the POWs that Thimayya identified as stemming from a “fear” were more revealing of the POWs’ claiming and critiquing the state and subject relationship set up in the explanation room. Although their demands to move the explanation rooms into the compounds may have seemed “outrageous,” I suggest that the POWs may have fully been aware of how “outrageous” their demands were. The gesture of making such a demand to the head of the NNRC that in turn acted not only as a critique of the DPRK’s claims on the POW as a subject, but also asserted the claims of the ACYL – and thus the Republic of Korea by extension – upon the POW subject. The concern about the “approach used by the explainer” and pointedly not the communist ideology itself was a strategic condemnation of the DPRK, basically an assertion that the DPRK was illegitimate as a state because it used manipulative practices to claim its subjects.

Thimayya, it turned out, did have one very effective way of breaking the impasse in their discussion over the explanation structure and procedures. “Unquestionably, the best argument[sic] with the POWs was to play on the fear that their future never would be settled if they didn’t cooperate with the NNRC and the CFI.” Although the POW compound leaders were attempting to use their position as prisoners of war to make claims on the legitimacy of certain states, Thimayya’s statement hit home on an unerring reality: the POWs’ position as non-repatriates had rendered them as essentially stateless. “They could not go on indefinitely being non-repats and until their future had been

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<sup>423</sup> Thimayya, 180.

decided, they themselves would have no security and their very existence would be a threat to peace.”<sup>424</sup> This particular fear on which Thimayya honed in had a broad impact on the actual performances by the Korean POWs within the explanation rooms, as the script of explanation quickly veered off from the staged performances rehearsed and performed in the POW camps.

On October 31, 1953, when the Korean POWs finally agreed to attend the explanations individually, some had been able to bypass inspection with “stone and occasionally a knife hidden in their clothes. They made serious attempts to attack the explainers.”<sup>425</sup> As Thimayya noted, the North Korean POWs were “more violent than the Chinese in the explainers’ huts.”<sup>426</sup> Or among the Korean POWs who sat quietly in front of the explainer, many of them had “plugged their ears with cotton wool” to demonstrate their “refusal to listen to the explanations.”<sup>427</sup> A few POWs did engage in exchange with the explainer: “For instance, the explainer might ask if he could give the prisoner a copy of the message which the Northern Command had for him. The prisoner would accept the leaflet and then blow his nose on it. Or the explainer might offer a cigarette; the prisoner, when reaching for it, would suddenly slap the explainer’s face.”<sup>428</sup> At the end of the first day of explanations with the Korean POWs, out of 459 POWs who had received explanations, 21 elected repatriation. The next day 483 POWs attended individual explanations, and only 19 elected repatriation.

As Thimayya had observed, the North Korean POWs utilized much more violent tactics than the Chinese POWs, and the particular tactics of the North Korean POWs

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<sup>424</sup> Thimayya, 181.

<sup>425</sup> Thimayya, 182.

<sup>426</sup> Thimayya, 182.

<sup>427</sup> *Custodian Forces*, 56.

<sup>428</sup> Thimayya, 182.

point to the stakes involved for the Korean POWs in the explanation room and the question of repatriation. Although Hansen interpreted these gestures as transparent evidence of the POWs' desire for nonrepatriation – and thus, an affirmation of a U.S.-framed anti-communist state – I suggest that these gestures of threats and insults reveal the peculiar precarious position of the prisoner of war. The “choice” of whether or not to repatriate had been clearly made by the prisoners of war before entering the explanation room. The explanation room, thus, became a site where the North Korean prisoner of war had to perform his own legitimacy. It was indeed a performance of transparency, although one that was different from Hansen's vision. The majority of the North Korean non-repatriate prisoners of war who were at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel after the ceasefire were from UNC Camp #1, part of the population that remained on the island after the initial voluntary screening had been done to distinguish and separate the repatriates and non-repatriates. The non-repatriates had been sent to various camps on the mainland, while repatriates had remained on the island. The North Korean prisoners of war at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel were a population of POWs who could possibly garner a great deal of suspicion under the Republic of Korea because they had “elected” non-repatriation later during the war. Unlike Hansen's portrayal of the educational enlightenment of the POWs as transforming them into universalized subjects, the POWs themselves very well understood that they were marked as doubly suspicious for being from north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and for deciding upon non-repatriation late during the war. The North Korean POW who lunged at the DPRK explainer, who explicitly mocked or insulted the explainer's own performance of state legitimacy – this prisoner of war was preempting the different ways multiple states embodied by the observers in the room and also by the

fellow POWs waiting outside by performing his own “transparency.” It was ambiguity that would mean a certain social – and even possibly physical – death.

The claims of the DPRK state on these POWs subjects were also clearly being challenged. After the first two days of expectations, the Northern Command switched their own tactics in explanations. Previously, the explainers had spent 20 to 25 minutes per POW in order to process through the approximately 500 POWs that made up the population of one compound. The explainers had “merely read a written statement from the Supreme Northern Commander. If the prisoner then showed interest or asked a question a more detailed explanation was given.” However, with the new version of explanations, “the prepared statement was read out continuously, over and over again,” at times for a period extending to three to four hours. “ According to their view, the prisoners had been under the influence of the UNC for two or three years, and the explainers therefore were entitled to a few hours in which to counteract the UNC’s influence.”<sup>429</sup> It was a move to invalidate the challenges issued by the POWs’ resistance to the explanations by implicitly accusing the UNC of manipulating the “psyches” of the POWs.

Across the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, the United Nations Command explanations commenced much later, on December 2, 1953. Compared to the activities south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, the atmosphere of the UNC explanations seemed orderly and contained. The most prominent, distinguishing feature of the South Korean explanation rooms were the tape recorders – there was background music for the explanations. The recordings had three

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<sup>429</sup> Thimayya, 187.



parts as follows, evidence of Thimayya's comment in his memoir that "[t]he explaining technique of the UN side leaned heavily on the sentimental."<sup>430</sup>:

- a) 1<sup>st</sup> part: A conversation between a boy and a girl, showing their desire to have the prisoner in his mother country and amidst his family. They talked about their peaceful land "with streams, and paddy fields, where little calves jump about seeking their mothers" and requested the prisoner to "come back to your home land and cherished freedom."
- b) 2<sup>nd</sup> part: Korean music, generally beginning with the song "I want to go home."
- c) 3<sup>rd</sup> part: A female voice appearing on behalf of the prisoner's mother. She complained "that our strange fate does not permit me to reach my boy but I am sending a warm message to my son enclosed behind barbed wires without liberty." She went on to tell him the family anguish when they did not find him among the prisoners who returned earlier. "I looked in your room and found your sister crying in despair all day long." She assured him that no harm would befall him if he returned, and then sounded a note of warning: "If you keep believing in the North Korean Regime you will be only a half matured man." The appeal ended with the words "Walk to the fate of freedom, picturing your motherland in your mind."<sup>431</sup>

The strategy of the Republic of Korea was to present the relationship between the state and its subject through familial narratives. The allegory of the state appeared in the form of different family members – as voices of a young boy and girl and an older woman were meant to evoke memories and affective ties to siblings and mothers. The family, the motherland, and the state had been collapsed into one, and the ROK explainers were presenting the ROK as a naturalized nation-state, whose legitimacy had been already established through a genealogy of blood family ties.

Surrounded by the sound from the recordings, the South Korean explainers also had paid a great deal of attention to their uniforms and dress. "[Dressed in American uniforms of rick material and fine cut," the explainers "made a show" of their expensive watches and "ostentatious" cigarette cases "with such nonchalance as to suggest that

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<sup>430</sup> Thimayya, 190-191.

<sup>431</sup> CFI, 60.

everyone in South Korea possessed it.”<sup>432</sup> However, the South Korean non-repatriate prisoners of war were eager to debate their explainers on this very issue. In fact, the prisoners in the Northern Camp, unlike their counterparts in the Southern Camp, “apparently were very anxious to receive explanations.”<sup>433</sup> In Thimayya’s opinion, the “prisoners were usually more political educated than the explainers themselves,” and rejected the sentimental music as a simple ploy.<sup>434</sup> They pointed to their POW uniforms and “brag that they were made in Korea,” accusing the ROK explainers of being “American stooges.” The prisoners, who according to Thimayya were “usually more politically educated than the explainers themselves,” wanted to engage in a debate with the explainers about the conditions in South Korea, and often “confused or embarrassed the explainers.”

Soon, the ROK explainers adopted a tactic that was exactly the opposite of what their DPRK counterparts had done. When explanations commenced, the explainers allotted 30 to 35 minutes per POW. By December 8, 1953, none of the POWs had chosen repatriation, and the explainers began quickly dismissing the POW after only 6 or 10 minutes. The POWs protested this practice, and “complained that they were being treated lightly.” One particular prisoner “wanted to know much more, for example, about South Korea’s Five Year Plan, about economic conditions there, about the reasons for the presence of the Americans and so on.” Heated arguments often broke out, with the prisoner refusing to leave, and “in some cases remained for as long as two or three hours” until forcibly removed by the CFI.<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>432</sup> Thimayya, 191.

<sup>433</sup> Thimayya, 61.

<sup>434</sup> Thimayya, 191.

<sup>435</sup> Thimayya, 192.

In the end, of the 359 communist non-repatriate POWs, only seven chose repatriation – five were South Koreans and two were Americans. According to Thimayya, “These seven all claimed that they were real communists and that they left only because they did not like the way their camp was being run; they said the administration was not conducted along properly democratic lines, and some claimed to have been bullied by the camp leaders.”<sup>436</sup> (115) But there was one particular POW among the South Korean non-repatriates that Thimayya focused upon in his memoir, where Thimayya described him as a “a young South Korean of unusual intelligence.” “From the beginning, I felt that he would eventually opt for a neutral country,” wrote Thimayya. As the days passed, Thimayya began to believe that this POW would indeed stay in North Korea. The POW did eventually decide to go to a neutral country, and Thimayya recorded the POW’s response to his question about why he had made that decision:

He answered that he did not approve of the North Korea communist[sic] regime any more than he did of the South Korean government. He felt that he could not be happy living under either regime. When he opted for a neutral country, his belief in communism was lessened, I think, but it had not disappeared altogether. He told me frequently that he was fed up with wars, and he wanted nothing more than to go where there was peace. [...] The Korean understood his own motives better, and whatever was the strength of his political beliefs, his desire for a peaceful existence was far greater.<sup>437</sup>

For Thimayya, the POW’s choice of a “neutral country” was a choice for peace, an affirmation of India’s own policy of neutrality.

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<sup>436</sup> Thimayya, 115.

<sup>437</sup> Thimayya, 115.

## **The 76 POWs Who Chose a “Neutral Country”**

Boarding the ship at Inchon harbor to head for India, the eighty-eight prisoners of war – seventy-six Korean and twelve Chinese – could still hear the message from the South Korean government being broadcasted from “loudspeakers in the surrounding hills” to the Korean prisoners of war, “an impassioned plea [for the Korean POWs] not to leave with the foreigners but to stay in their own country.” “The prisoners seemed affected by the broadcast,” General K.S. Thimayya noted, “but when we told them they could still choose to return they all refused to do so and continued the journey with our troops.”<sup>438</sup> All eighty-eight prisoners of war had one element in common – all of them had made a choice to be neither repatriated to North Korea nor South Korea, neither China nor Formosa, but rather to be sent to a “neutral country.” At that moment, they were headed to India where they would wait for further information and news about which country or countries would be the possible “neutral country.” In other words, the “neutral country” was still unknown and undecided – all eighty-eight POWs had chosen an idea, an abstraction, not a specific country.

The “explanations” were not the only thing that demanded an audience of the prisoners of war at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel – loudspeakers in the POW compounds blared programming and announcements, dramas were staged by and for the POWs, educational programs that had been developed by the U.S. PsyWar and Civilian Information and Education teams continued in the anti-communist compounds, and consistent interrogation by POWs of fellows POWs also intensified at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. When the ship departed from Inchon harbor with the eighty-eight prisoners of war and the members of the Indian Custodian Forces, Ju Yeong Bok, a former major in the Korean People’s

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<sup>438</sup> Thimayya, 206

Army, noted a moment of quiet pause, markedly different from the incredible volume of programming and announcements that had been directed at the POWs in the camps – “When we disembarked from Inchon, the Indian soldiers who had seemed to fill the entire deck of the ship went below to their cabins, and the remaining prisoners of war [...] threw futile glances at their vanishing fatherland. [...] I looked out at the horizon until barely a speck was discernible,” Ju writes in his memoir. It would take the strains of Indian music coming from the cabins of the soldiers below deck to shake Ju’s focus on the horizon – “Now, I noticed that the music did not seem so unfamiliar to my accustomed ear. The sorrowful tone directly entered my soul, it seemed. Without quite realizing it, my body had been placed within Indian culture.”<sup>439</sup> At the moment the Korean peninsula fades from view, Joo finds that his ear has become “accustomed” to the Indian music, and that his body and soul fell into an emphatic consonance with the music. Amidst a sense of loss and isolation, there was no expression of fear – rather, Ju emphasizes the sense of a measure of the possible, a kernel of the imaginable, for him to be able to live in the future landscape of the “neutral country.” It becomes clear that the concept of a “neutral country” was not an empty category for Ju; thus, what did it mean for the seventy-six Korean prisoners of war to choose to go to a “neutral country” as they lived cordoned off in camps at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel in 1953?

For the prisoners of war who chose a “neutral country,” they would move from being one of the most oddly “hypervisible” subjects on the stage of struggles over political recognition to then becoming one of the most oddly “invisible” subjects after the Korean War conflict receded into the past with the 1954 Geneva Conference on Korea

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<sup>439</sup> Yeong Bok Ju, *76 P’orodül [The 76 Prisoners of War]* (Seoul: Daegwan Publishing Company, 1993), 47.

and Indochina, where a different 38<sup>th</sup> parallel – the 13<sup>th</sup> parallel – was instituted. The eighty-eight prisoners of war as they waited in India soon discovered that they had become essentially stateless persons, and it became incumbent upon the prisoners of war themselves to gauge the geopolitical globe, propose possible countries for the category of “neutral country,” and then petition the appropriate authorities. And survival once again hinged upon a certain recognition by a state power – only instead of the violence experienced in the POW compounds as state-proxy organizations like the Anti-Communist Young Men group sanctioned and enforced, the question of productive labor was on the table for these men in negotiating their future “neutral country.”

Ju had been able to imagine a sense of his own future intertwined with India because India was indeed not “foreign” to Korea. The encounters between the Indian military personnel and the Korean prisoners of war within the POW camps belied an even longer history of being embedded in each other’s colonial histories: at one point, two Korean prisoners of war called out to Brigadier Gurbaksh Singh of the CFI. They had recognized him from a previous encounter in an earlier conflict – Singh “had been a prisoner of the Japanese in Singapore during World War II,” and the two Korean POWs had been his guards, working under the Japanese colonial army.<sup>440</sup> It was this very history that enabled the CFI to communicate with the Korean prisoners of war without the aid of interpreters from either the UNC or NC. “Among our own personnel we had a number of men who could speak Japanese. Most of the prisoners, because of their experience with the Japanese during World War II, could understand a little of this language,” wrote Thimayya in his memoir. The ability to communicate, however rudimentarily, with the POWs became critical when nine Korean prisoners of war, during

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<sup>440</sup> Thimayya, 110.

a simple reprocessing assignment, suddenly broke out of the line and threw themselves at the CFI soldiers and asked for repatriation. “These men were terrified of the UN in general and of their recent comrades in particular,” commented Thimayya. The Korean prisoners of war trusted neither the United Nations Command nor the ACYL nor the Republic of Korea to safeguard their lives.<sup>441</sup>

The choice of “neutrality” for the Korean non-repatriate POWs occurred in a similar manner. Choosing neutrality usually did not occur in the space of the explanation room, although occasionally a POW did choose a “neutral country” at the end of his explanation. More often than not, the choice of a “neutral country” happened in these moments of rather desperate escape. For POW Ju Yeong Bok, his choice of a “neutral country” was exercised when he threw himself at the barbed-wire fence of his POW compound, in an effort to escape the constant interrogation and torture the POW compound leaders were exercising upon him. According to his memoir, the POW compound leaders had been keeping close surveillance on who might choose repatriation or a neutral country. One night, someone woke up Ju by pulling his head up by the hair – they demanded to know who else he knew was intending to choose a neutral country. Refusing to speak, Ju was placed under surveillance with POW guards and then subject to routine interrogation.<sup>442</sup> Indeed, Ju must have seemed suspicious to the anti-communist non-repatriate POW compound leaders because he had been one of the first round non-repatriate POWs sent to the mainland camps, but he had not escaped from the camp during Syngman Rhee’s mass organized release of POWs on June 18, 1953. In his memoir, Ju stated that he had purposefully not escaped because he had already decided to

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<sup>441</sup> Thimayya, 79.

<sup>442</sup> Ju, 39.

leave the Korean peninsula for a “neutral country.” “I did not like the idea of escaping,” he wrote. “Or to put it more precisely, the thought of having my body attached to this land and living here made me anxious, and I disliked it. I wanted to go anywhere far, far away. I wanted to use my hands to cultivate land where there was neither red nor white [neither communism nor right-wing anti-communism].”<sup>443</sup> To the POW compound leaders, the choice of a “neutral country” reeked of an ambiguity that could not be tolerated.

On January 14, 1954, Ju was still under POW guard and surveillance. It was his birthday, and snow covered the ground. The guards were not as alert, he noticed, perhaps due to the cold and the snow. He made a mad run for the fence, startling the guards into pursuit. He saw an Indian CFI soldier running towards him on the other side of the fence. “Don’t shoot!” Ju called out in English. “Don’t shoot!” When the Indian soldier was able to place his hands on Ju’s body, pulling him out of the compound, Ju wrote of that moment: “I felt a comfort rise up from a mysterious place deep inside of me.”<sup>444</sup> And, indeed, this moment marked the end of the very brief first chapter in his memoir, and opened what Ju clearly considered to be the important drama of the memoir – his time in India as an ex-prisoner of war.

Ju opened his memoir with a phrase that was suggestive of both statement and question: “Why did I choose a neutral country” – “It was a question I had asked myself thousands of times over the course of my lifetime,” wrote Ju. But Ju’s memoir was not a straightforward expository narrative providing a definitive answer to this question. The title of his memoir was *The 76 Prisoners of War*; Ju refracted the question of why he

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<sup>443</sup> Ju, 37-38.

<sup>444</sup> Ju, 44.



chose a neutral question through a sort of auto/biography of the cohort of the 76 Korean POWs who had all chosen a “neutral country.” This particular narrative decision on the part of Ju indicated two important facets of how Ju understood his experience as a “neutral country” POW.

First, in terms of understanding why he had chosen a neutral country, Ju’s experience with the collective cohort functioned literally and figuratively a pivotal part of how, when, and where the “neutral country” was defined. In their peculiar status of statelessness, the prisoners of war clearly formed strategies to make themselves visible to different states as viable candidates – they grouped themselves together accordingly. The vision of the “neutral country” was not an individual one, as POWs banded to ensure that no one individual would be left stranded. And it is through Ju’s explication of other POWs’ reasonings behind their decisions that the reader is able to glean a sense of Ju’s own possible motivations. Second, Ju and the other POWs were clearly aware of their particular status as the POWs who had chosen to go to a “neutral country.” As “The 76 Prisoners of War,” they held a symbolic importance for India; however, as time progressed, the POWs encountered a series of challenges in the increasing bipolarization of the geopolitical landscape. Ju’s memoir was also a story about the incredibly disparate choices the POWs made in the years following the ceasefire. The search for the “neutral country” was perhaps even more difficult than the decision to choose a “neutral country.”

After disembarking at Madras, the now ex-prisoners of war and members of the Indian CFI boarded a train that transported them to Delhi. Their arrival at Delhi was greeted by a mass of Indian citizens and government officials. In place of her father, Prime Minister Nehru, Indira Gandhi was there to offer an official welcome to the 88 ex-

POWs, making sure to shake each individual ex-POW's hand. Before boarding buses that would take them to their living quarters, the ex-POWs were split into two groups – those who had elected to stay in India as their “neutral country,” and those who had elected to go to South or Central America for their possible “neutral country.”<sup>445</sup> The ex-POWs had initially inquired about the possibility of Switzerland or Sweden as their receiving neutral countries, but both states had rejected the possibility. Ju had been a part of the group who had hoped to go to Central or South America.

Afterwards, the ex-POWs arrived at their new living space in the New Delhi vicinity – a large, old hospital structure that had been erected by the British colonists. The Indian authorities in charge of the ex-POWs held a meeting with them, where the authorities made specific suggestions to the ex-POWs on how to organize their days. Classes on discipline, customs, public morals, domestic lifestyle, English language lessons, and dining manners, and also maintaining an organized daily life based on going to bed and rising early were all recommended.<sup>446</sup> It was clear that the Indian authorities viewed the ex-POWs as citizens-in-training, and claimed responsibility for preparing these ex-POWs as proper subjects for whichever nation-state would become their future home. Education – in terms of language, trade, and behavior or composure - was considered to be important to transform the ex-POWs into proper subjects of the modern nation-state.<sup>447</sup>

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<sup>445</sup> Ju, 111.

<sup>446</sup> Ju, 116.

<sup>447</sup> Nevertheless, we are trying to teach them languages and trades that will enable them to fit into our society. They have adjusted easily to our food. Our climate still is difficult for them and we have to send them to the mountains during the hottest part of the summers. Marriage for them will be a problem, but if they adjust in other ways perhaps that also can be arranged. (Thimayya, 208)

However, finding a receiving “neutral country” had become much more complicated than anticipated. General K.S. Thimayya paid a visit to the ex-POWs’ residence to convey the difficult news. The wait for a “neutral country” was most probably going to take a long time, much longer than anticipated, conveyed Thimayya. If any of the ex-POWs no longer wanted to wait to see if and which “neutral country” would be open to receiving them, then the Indian government would help them return to their original countries, whether China or North Korea. Otherwise, the only thing the ex-POWs could do in the meantime was to wait.<sup>448</sup>

Thimayya’s words of caution about a long wait soon rang very true for the ex-POWs. It took at least another two years until August 1956, for the majority of the ex-POWs to have a “neutral country” destination. Five months after Thimayya’s initial talk with the ex-POWs, General Thorat, who had been the head of the CFI at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, came to discuss the situation with the ex-POWs. The situation had not changed ever since Thimayya’s visit, and Thorat suggested that the most effective way to move the process forward was to have the ex-POWs petition states where they hoped to settle. After a meeting among the ex-POWs themselves, the resulting numbers were 24 for Mexico, 22 for Brazil, 6 for Argentina, and 2 for the Dominican Republic. Ju himself had selected Brazil, and noted that the more anti-communist leaning ex-POWs had chosen Mexico and Argentina, while the more left-leaning ex-POWs had chosen Brazil and the Dominican Republic. For example, Ju portrayed one particular Korean ex-POW, Pak Gi-Chan, as a fervent anti-communist – at this meeting with Thorat, Pak stood up and announced that all the ex-POWs must go to Mexico. Pak most probably considered Mexico to be safely anti-communist because of its proximity and also “alliance” with the

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<sup>448</sup> Ju, 170.

United States at that time. The ex-POWs were clearly attempting to read the geopolitical landscape of Central and South America.

Over the next two years, the ex-POWs found themselves in an increasingly precarious situation. After the first round of petitions, Mexico was the only one who was willing to accept ex-prisoners of war; however, even Mexico was not willing to take all original 24 ex-POWs who had petitioned. There was constant reconfiguring and recalibrating among the ex-POWs, and eventually Brazil and Argentina also accepted a number of ex-POWs, although both states reserved the right to refuse the petitions of particular ex-POWs. By early 1956, the ex-POWs had received news about their possible destinations, but a collective letter sent by a number of Korean optees for Argentina to the United Nations conveyed a sense of their underlying anxiety:

Most Honourable The U.N. Secretary-general, Dr. Dag Hammarskjöld  
From Korean ex-prisoners opted for Argentina

It is really very happy that at last we are found our new home in beautiful country, Argentina after two year's waiting. Firmly we believe that it is only due to Your Excellency's favour and efforts through U.N. organization and direct and indirect contact with government concerned.  
[...]

Sir, in return for your Excellency's good office and the generous offer of Argentine government we will strive for the prosperity of Argentina along with her people.

And it was said that our 57 Brazilian optees would leave here for Brazil on February 4.

We hope that "very soon after that" we shall be able to leave for Argentina.<sup>449</sup>

The letter was signed as being "From all Argentine optees," but was specifically signed by Pak Sang Sin, Lim Ik Kam, Hong Il Seop, and Lee Chol Kyun. The letter was clearly an effort on the part of the ex-POWs to leverage some degree of pressure on the United

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<sup>449</sup> [Miscellany – Correspondence and reports concerning the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission 1954], United Nations Archive; New York, NY.

Nations to ensure that their departure and acceptance by Argentina would happen. “[W]e will strive for the prosperity of Argentina along with her people,” they wrote, as they expressed their *desire* to become proper subjects of Argentina, their willingness to become productive citizens, if given the choice. The situation was a differently inflected situation of the explanation room for these former prisoners of war – rather than having their subjecthood explained by a member of the state, they found themselves in a position of having to explain their viable subjecthood for other states.

One major difficulty for a small subset of the ex-POWs was their background as officers in the Korean People’s Army. Two particular ex-POWs, Hyeon Dong Hwa and Ji Ki Cheol, had applied for Argentina and Mexico respectively, but were repeatedly rejected. Ji had then tried to apply for Brazil, but because his application went in after the initial group of 55 had been sent, Brazil had refused his application also. In 1957, after the majority of ex-POWs had departed India, Hyeon Dong Hwa embarked on a letter-writing mission to the United Nations, sending a letters dated April 25<sup>th</sup>, May 7<sup>th</sup>, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, and the final one on November 23<sup>rd</sup>. He wrote the letters to plead both his case and that of Ji Ki Cheol. In the first letter, Hyeon introduced him by immediately distancing himself from the possibility of being associated with communism:

I am a Korean ex-Prisoner of War who was brought here with Indian Custodian Troops in Feb. 1956. I came to India not because I am a pro-Communist or admirer of “Nehru’s neutral policy” but because the injury which I got during the War and self-grieves were the main reason.<sup>450</sup>

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<sup>450</sup> Army Head Quarter Camp, National Stadium, New Delhi, Apr. 25<sup>th</sup> 1957 To: Director of U.S.I.A.; from [Miscellany – Correspondence and reports concerning the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission 1954], United Nations Archive; New York, NY.

And regarding Ji, Hyeon wrote, “It is beyond my conception that the Government of Argentina refuses the entry of one of most ardent anti-Communist fighter among our groups.” He acknowledged that both he and Ji had been in the KPA, but he offered evidence of their “wills of fight with Communism.” He had written a piece in the “reader’s column in Hindustan Times in Feb. 11<sup>th</sup> 1957 issue under the title of ‘Korea Election,’” he stated in his letter, and the piece clearly communicated his anti-communist beliefs.

Later, after Lennart Finnmark, the assistant to the Secretary-General, suggested that they get in touch with the respective Argentine and Mexican embassies in New Delhi, Hyeon reported on his visit with the Argentine embassy, where “Mr. Falco, Chargéd affaires of the Embassy, [...] frankly told us that his government had refused to accept us because we were officers of North Korean army and were regarded as Communists.”<sup>451</sup> Hyeon then stated, “Thereafter, we did everything in our power to obtain the materials that can prove us as anti-Communist and submitted them to him.” The case of Hyeon and Ji disappear from the United Nations archive after this final letter, and I have not been able to figure out what the fate of these two ex-POWs was. But the series of letters written by Hyeon clearly demonstrates how the ex-POWs, although far away from the Korean peninsula, were still compelled to render themselves politically transparent in front of each state they wanted to petition. Being part of the “76 POWs” meant something different politically depending from where in the geopolitical landscape one was looking.

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<sup>451</sup> [Miscellany – Correspondence and reports concerning the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission 1954], United Nations Archive; New York, NY.

The ex-POWs had also clearly made a strategy to render themselves visible to the state they were petitioning not only as individuals, but as a collective group. In a letter dated March 27, 1956 from Arthur S. Lall, Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, to Mr. Dag Hammarskjold, Secretary General of the United Nations, Lall forwarded lists of the men who had “expressed a desire to be resettled” in Mexico and Argentina, and asked the Secretary General to forward the lists to the respective government representatives. Both lists provided the names of the petitioning ex-POW, sometimes also the ex-POW’s age, and also the background and desired occupation of the ex-POW. And an examination of the lists themselves reveals how the ex-POWs were preparing and trying to reinvent themselves for settlement in Mexico or Argentina. As evidenced in the lists provided below, the Korean ex-POWs who had opted for Argentina all primarily wanted to work in the engineering sector, whether as a mechanical engineer, electrical engineer, or in chemistry.<sup>452</sup>

<b>List of ex-prisoners of the Korean War who opted for resettlement in Argentina</b>			
<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>ISN No.</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
1	Hong Il Seop	148198	<b>Bachelor. Mechanical Engineer.</b>
2	Han Hyeong Mo	129097	<b>Bachelor. Seaman.</b>
3.	Yo Zu Fang	711388	<b>Student in China. Electrician. Speaks and writes Spanish.</b>
4.	Cheong Lee Ren	715261	<b>Teacher in China and wants to be an Electrician.</b>

<sup>452</sup> Attached to a letter sent by Arthur S. Lall, Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, to Mr. Dag Hammarskjold, Secretary General of the United Nations. Dated March 27, 1956. [For the following lists that had been included with Lall’s letter, I have placed my own emphasis in bold on the “remarks” section of each list.] from [Miscellany – Correspondence and reports concerning the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission 1954], United Nations Archive; New York, NY.

5.	Jeong Seong Hi	135578	<b>Trained Electrician who has done a complete course at the Reorkee Engineering Centre as an Electrician.</b>
6.	Lim Ik Kan	123794	<b>Was a University student in Korea with Chemistry as his subject. Speaks and Writes Spanish which he has studied in India.</b>
7.	Jang Ki Doo	39496	<b>He was a student in Korea. Wishes to learn a trade in Argentina.</b>
8.	Pak Chang Kun	104017	<b>He was a student in Korea and wishes to be an Electrician in a factory.</b>
9.	Lee Cheo Kyun	95602	<b>A farmer.</b>
10.	Pak Sang Shin	150003	<b>Former Pilot in the Japanese Army. In India has learnt Stenography in French and typing.</b>
11.	Lee Tek Joo	86571	---

**Figure 5.2: List of ex-prisoners of the Korean War who opted for resettlement in Argentina**

For the ex-POWs who opted for Mexico, the occupations of poultry farmer and camera mechanic were the choices of the majority. With such specific choices of occupations and training, the ex-POWs were hoping to travel with their specific group. Creating a life in a “neutral country” was not an isolated, individual vision at this point – the ex-POWs were presenting themselves as a collective specialized labor force and resource to each state.

<b>List of ex-prisoners of the Korean War who opted for resettlement in Mexico</b>			
<b>S. No.</b>	<b>ISN No.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
1	17328	Ji Ki Chol	<b>Age 31, was Army officer in Korea, wishes to do Poultry farming</b>
2	73526	Kyun Dong Hwa	<b>Age 21, was student, wishes to do Poultry farming.</b>



3.	101619	Jang Ki Hwa	<b>Age 27, labourer, wishes to do Poultry farming</b>
4.	25134	Kim Kwon Ox	<b>Age 24, was a clerk, wishes to be a camera mechanic – repairs etc.</b>
5.	87932	Han Pyo Koo	<b>Age 24, labourer, wishes to be a mechanic in any branch. Has no training.</b>
6.	98654	Jeong Joo Won	<b>Age 23, student wants to be a camera mechanic, has some knowledge of camera.</b>
7.	12246	Jo Cheol Hi	<b>Age 22, student of electrical engineering course, wants to be a cine-camera-man or a camera radio mechanic, good in his work, has training in India for 1 ½ years.</b>
8.	108275	Kim Bong Kook	<b>Age 36, farmer, wishes to do Poultry farming.</b>
9.	150690	Son Tai Ha	<b>Age 22, clerk, wants any labour work.</b>

**Figure 5.3: List of ex-prisoners of the Korean War who opted for resettlement in Mexico**

The choice of a “neutral country” for these ex-prisoners of war had not happened simply spontaneously, but rather through debate, conversation, and discussion. In his memoir, Ju Yeong-bok depicted a conversation he had with another ex-POW, Yi Shinyeong, whom he had known ever since they met in the UNC Camp at Yongchon in mid or late 1952. They had become close, and according to Ju, Yi very willingly followed Ju. At some point, Ju had persuaded Yi to choose to go to a neutral country, but one night sometime after Thimayya’s visit in 1954, Yi told Ju that he had decided to stay in India, rather than going to a country somewhere in Central or South America. Ju reconstructed Yi’s words to him as follows:

I decided on this after a great deal of thought. And this is not meant to be a reproach in any way to your proposal to go to a neutral country. Because I’m not an idiot, I have also thrown away everything ‘north’ and ‘south.’ We left not because we were mistrustful of others but because we believed that we could leave behind the politics and ideologies and go to a foreign country where we could farm and have a successful life, no?

Yi believed that he would be able to “farm and have a successful life” in India rather than in Central or South America. He called the Indians very “pure and direct,” and considered India to be “very democratic.” India had become the site of his vision of a “neutral country.”<sup>453</sup> Although initially greatly surprised, Ju said that he wished him the best. Yi soon departed the ex-POW camp hospital, and two years later on February 4, 1956, ex-POW Ju Yeong Bok left India along with 54 other ex-POWs for Brazil. By August 21, 1956, a United Nations memorandum reported the status of the ex-POWs.

Status of Korean prisoners of war sent to India		
Brazil	55	Arrived in Brazil according to letter from India Mission 27 March 1956
Argentina	11	Opted for Argentina according to letter from India Mission of 27 March 1956; Argentine entry visa granted according to letter from the Argentine Mission of 17 July 1956
Mexico	9	Opted for Mexico according to letter from India Mission of 27 March 1956
India	7*	Opted for India
North Korea	4	Returned to North Korea
China	2	Returned to China
	88	
* One of these returned to N. Korea according to Note Verbale from India Mission of 17 August 1956		

**Figure 5.4: Status of Korean prisoners of war sent to India, dated 21 August 1956**

The ex-POW who merited the asterisk next to the number 7 under those who had opted for India was a young man named “Mr. Lim Sa Seon,” according to a letter dated August 14, 1956 from the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, whose home

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<sup>453</sup> Ju, 176.

address was noted as “Won San City Mei Yun Tong.”<sup>454</sup> Other ex-POWs later also decided to leave their original choice of “neutral country” – a “Mr. Suck-lin Kim” who was among the 55 ex-POWs sent to Brazil had requested for repatriation to South Korea.<sup>455</sup> At the time of the request, he had “been placed on a temporary basis as gardener of a Presbyterian Mission in the State of São Paulo.

The choice of a “neutral country” was neither assured asylum nor guaranteed immigration. The ex-POW was a stateless person, dependent on a discourse of humanitarianism to place strategic pressure upon the United Nations and different states. The strategies they employed were multiple, and their choices revealed a longer history of imagining what a possible future might be. They exercised as much control as they possibly could over the seemingly haphazard structural shifts that determined their futures. They had to articulate themselves as proper subjects for an imagined nation-state. The demands of decolonization had not ended for them, just as the Korean War itself had not ended.

## **Conclusion**

In his memoir, *The 76 Prisoners of War*, Ju Yeong Bok reflected upon the type of possibilities neutrality could open up for the politics on the Korean peninsula. “8.15 Liberation. The joy of freedom and independence from the oppression of Japanese colonial rule had arrived. But the joy was shortlived,” he wrote. Almost immediately, the

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<sup>454</sup> Dated August 14, 1956 From Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, from [Miscellany – Correspondence and reports concerning the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission 1954], United Nations Archive; New York, NY.

<sup>455</sup> “Request for repatriation by South Korean ex-prisoner of war” Dated 20 December 1956 Mr. V. Stavridi, Director, External Services, DPI G.S. Rabinovitch, Director, RIO UNIC from [Miscellany – Correspondence and reports concerning the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission 1954], United Nations Archive; New York, NY.

divided occupation of the Soviets and the Americans was imposed upon the peninsula, and “another chain was tied around the neck of Koreans.”<sup>456</sup> For Ju, Korea should have been a neutral nation, and at this time of writing this memoir, he also believed that Korea should become a permanent neutral nation. Neutrality, in this case, was a moment of Korea’s history before the politics of the Cold War descended on the peninsula and coopted the possible futures in Korea. Ju completed his memoir in 1993, but perhaps when viewed through his thoughts on neutrality and Korean history, the choice that he made as a young man during the war to go to an undefined “neutral country” was a choice to go to a Korea that he believed should have been, one separate from the politics of the Cold War. But as Ju and the other seventy-five Korean prisoners of war very quickly discovered upon their arrival in New Delhi, “neutrality” itself had already been tempered with the lens of the Cold War, and the vision of the “neutral country” evidently eluded more than just a few of them, as some of them elected to repatriate to North Korea eventually.

Ju Yeong Bok had not returned to North Korea. For the young man from South Korea in this chapter’s introduction who decided not to repatriate, it is most probable that he was not able to cross the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel again. And although Ju no longer lived in Korea, the presence of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and the constant reminder of Korea’s division still pained him. “This book is for my mother and all of the other mothers who had sent their sons to the frontline and are still waiting for their return.” This is Ju’s dedication, and both his life and the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel demonstrated the unending nature of the Korean War.

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<sup>456</sup> Ju, 29.

## Conclusion

### The Afterlives of Perpetual War



The wooden slats propped up against the wall in the above photograph had been used as floorboards for many years in a small house in a fishing village located on the small island of Yongch'o. When the owner of the house pulled up the floorboards in order to install new ones, he noticed large Korean characters written boldly and in black on the underside of the boards. The author of these writings had been Korean prisoners of war, and almost every house in the fishing village had these boards forming the walls or floors of their home. The small islands of Yongch'o and nearby Ch'ubong had been the site of top-secret POW camps during the Korean War, so top-secret that I did not come across any official documentation of these camps during my research visits to the

National Archives. In place of official U.S. military documents, the memories of the village residents and the physical, material remnants of the POW camps serve as the peculiar embodied archive of a war that has not ended.

When the prisoners of war were shipped to Panmunjom for repatriation or explanation after the signing of the ceasefire in July 1953, the local residents who lived near the POW camp carefully disassembled the camp materials, using what they could find. Wire, wooden planks, metal – all were precious commodities during a time of utter devastation. The residents had reassembled and reused these materials – the POW camp itself had an afterlife in the hands of the residents as it was transformed into small homes and other necessities. The traces of the POW camp can be found in the writing on the wooden planks, a large water reservoir created by the U.S. Army, and stone partitions in various states of ruin dotting specific places on the island.

But why the secrecy around these two prisoner of war camps? According to the histories recalled and told by the villagers, the camps were created to house the most fervent communist Korean POWs. In the light of this study, it seems most probable that these camps were installed after the Dodd kidnapping incident, when the U.S. authorities, especially camp commander Boatner, prioritized moving the POWs into smaller, more manageable compounds. It was at this time that all anti-communist POWs were sent to the mainland, and the paratroopers were sent into the communist Korean POW compounds to discipline and punish the POWs for transgressing their position. It is quite possible that the members involved in the Korean People's Army and Chinese Volunteers Prisoners of War Representatives Association had placed there, along with other higher-ranking officers of the KPA. But the villagers did not express any fear or disgust at the

POWs themselves in their recollections – in fact, one of the POWs had escaped the camp, and instead of going far away from the camp, he decided to stay in the surrounding village, where he ended up marrying a young woman in the village and became a farmer. The U.S. Army, the villagers told me, could not recognize the difference between Koreans.

In other words, as the written-upon wooden planks and the local villagers who had grown up around the POW camp could attest, the Korean War had never quite left the village. In fact, the writing on the wooden planks and the figure of the former POW who had become a local farmer points to particular ways to pay attention to the current lives and afterlives of war. Because although the Korean War had never quite left this village, different legacies from the war were also informing a world of constant warfare as the question of decolonization in Asia and the Pacific Islands continued. The written planks and the ex-POW farmer were demonstrations of the limits of the violent project of hegemony the United States had embarked upon in 1945 and escalated in 1950. The writing of the POWs was a demonstration of the POWs' own *insistence* on articulating their own political subjectivities and imaginaries, to cover quite literally the space that was supposed to silence them through confinement in a visual, undeniable form their presence and voice. The choices of the ex-POW to make a life under the shadow of the POW camp with the local villagers were a demonstration of a Korean subject *insisting* upon his claims to shaping the everyday and the mundane in spite of the constant “state of exception” touted by the United States and the newly formed Republic of Korea. It was an insistence to remember and return to the basic questions of self-determination, land, and the question of what a liberated life was supposed to look like.

From the vantage point of Yongch'o and Ch'ubong, the Korean War appears less like the usual textbook map image with the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel drawn boldly across the peninsula and arrows pointing in the direction of military movements back and forth across the parallel. Instead, the Korean War appears more like a shifting matrix composed of thousands upon thousands of human encounters, where a more encompassing spectrum of historical actors comes into view. Using the interrogation room as the central focus, this study has charted a very different map of the Korean War, one that follows a multitude of interrogation rooms and camps invented, mobilized, and experienced by a cast of historical actors not often brought together within the same story of the Korean War. The governments of India, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Peru joined the more familiar parties of the United States, the United Nations, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and the Republic of Korea. The Korean prisoners of war themselves were from both sides of the parallel, and sometimes from the farther reaches of the Korean diaspora created under the pressures of Japanese colonialism. The interrogators were Japanese American young men, who had lived behind barbed-wire fences in the United States not long before the outbreak of the Korean War. In other words, all assumptions about who had held or exercised power, about who had resisted or negotiated power, have to be revisited and unsettled in this story of the Korean War.

This story situates the Korean War not simply within a Cold War binary power struggle, but rather within a historical moment when nothing was assured, but many things seemed possible, and the old, usual categories and definitions of empire, nation, and subject seemed inadequate in front of the changes being wrought. Liberation from Japanese colonialism had come to Korea, and the Korean people had commenced the



project of formal decolonization on the peninsula. The question of global governance in the aftermath of World War II loomed large over the world stage of politics as the shaken state of the European powers' legitimacy appeared to cede the power of influence to the United States or even possibly India. The United Nations was created only a month after U.S. Army personnel had arrived on the Korean peninsula to commence the military occupation. These histories converge upon the prisoner of war issue during the Korean War, where defining sovereignty, subjecthood, and liberal governance in an era of war and formal decolonization became the stakes of international conflict. The history of the Korean War is one that exceeds the frame of the Cold War. The histories and the POW Camps of the Korean War in the small island villages of Yongch'o and Ch'ubong are currently absent from the available declassified records of the National Archives in the United States, but the experiences of the villagers on these islands share a history of dealing with U.S. militarization, guerilla warfare, and states of emergency with peasant farmers in the Philippines at the turn of the century, for example.

This study has offered a history of the Korean War that has been overshadowed by the Demilitarized Zone, the hypervisible legacy from the Korean War and certainly a hypervisible reminder that the war has not officially ended. By beginning with the U.S. military interrogation room, the POW camp, and the negotiating table, I presented an analysis of the Korean War that charted not the traditional landscape of warfare in terms of territory and diplomatic power struggles, but rather the development and practice of a key project of warfare in the twentieth-century: making the decolonized subject. When the practices, negotiations, and encounters around the question of subject-making come to the fore of a history of the Korean War, both the legacies and the origins of the Korean

War bring a genealogy of American liberalism and warfare into sharper focus. The interrogation transcripts examined in this study position a legacy of the Korean War not simply in the techniques of warfare itself, but in terms of bureaucracy and the logic of transparency and liberal governance.

The term “war” itself evokes horror and images of mass destruction, and “war” has undergone a process of gradual institutionalization as “aggressive warfare” in particular has been criminalized. The objective of this study was to demonstrate the profound limits of such a characterization of and approach to warfare. I argue that it essentially elides and denies a deeper violence enacted and facilitated by war – the fact that “war” is also supposed to produce “new subjects” through its crucible of mass violence. This type of warfare is the warfare articulated and developed by the United States in particular throughout the twentieth century and still today. In order to critique U.S. discourses and applications of warfare, I insist that we must also keep in mind war’s “productive” capabilities, not simply its “destructive” ones. The violence enacted on the battlefields, through mass bombings, and via torture in the interrogation rooms must be viewed through a larger, implicating lens, where these acts are not simply rendered as “immoral,” “evil,” or “irrational.” Torture and bureaucracy, killings and state-building, battlefields and international law – the profound intimacy between violence and the languages of liberalism lies at the heart of the analysis in this study.

Sovereignty holds the central ground on current discussions of U.S. foreign interventions, as both the U.S. and other nations invoke the sacred nature of sovereignty in their engagement in warfare. However, my study illuminates how, although sovereignty now seems to be an exhausted idiom for state power, the concept of

“sovereignty” as used today (and its attendant unwieldy nature perhaps) is a legacy of the different struggles over decolonization and the question of what liberation was supposed to look like. The institutionalization of warfare during the mid-twentieth century involved the creation of a certain flexibility to accommodate the profound structural contradictions of colonial rule. In this study, I have demonstrated how there can be multiple types of sovereignties on the ground, with multiple types of demands being placed on the individual subject. The United States, ever in constant disavowal of its own desires for sovereign power, fashions a particular claim via sovereign power on the Korean individual subject that also bypasses the South Korean state. Indeed, as argued in Chapter Two, the Korean individual subject had to evidence and demonstrate a particular subjectivity towards the USAMGIK before the granting of state sovereignty was granted.

This study provides a historical analysis of U.S. interventionism, of the specific moment when the United States was attempting to render its rhetoric and practice of intervention as a universalized one of humanitarian aid, not of warfare. U.S. historians have long examined the Korean War as an event that held significance for elsewhere - the rise and consolidation of the U.S. military industrial complex, the move from rollback to containment as Cold War policy, and the rise of U.S. hegemony within the early Cold War period. In this study, I reflected upon the war itself, to examine the abstracting tendencies of war, to analyze how “war” itself can be a universalizing category of historical experience – and one whose demand for abstraction has profoundly material and devastating consequences.

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Atsushi “Archie” Miyamoto, interview conducted by author, February 26, 2007, Harbor City, California.

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