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New Zealand and the Korean War, Vol. I: Politics and Diplomacy

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MacArthur in Korea may once again confront us.

ROBERT PREVIDI
Long Island, New York

McGibbon, Ian. *New Zealand and the Korean War, Vol. I: Politics and Diplomacy*. Auckland: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992 (in association with the Historical Branch, Dept. of Internal Affairs). 468pp. \$US 59

In relative terms, New Zealand's contribution to the United Nations Command during the Korean War was minor. Wellington's contribution consisted of two frigates, a field artillery regiment, and a transport company. However, New Zealand's quick response to the UN's call for help underscored Wellington's strong support for the United Nations and the emerging Western alliance. Moreover, the government's decision to provide a military contingent has had a far-reaching influence.

This work, by New Zealand's pre-eminent military historian, is the long-awaited first volume of the official history of New Zealand in the Korean War. Like its Australian counterpart, written by Professor Robert O'Neill, McGibbon's work collects all political and diplomatic matters in one volume; a second volume will address military operations. As an official history, the work has had the benefit of heretofore unavailable diplomatic files and official documents. This point is of particular import to students of New Zealand's postwar diplomacy and strategy, because this work is the first that comprehensively employs official sources

dealing with what emerged as New Zealand's postwar security policy.

In addition to providing an interesting perspective—from the standpoint of a small power—of the preliminaries, conduct, and “termination” of the Korean War, this work also surveys the political home front. This reviewer was particularly interested in the treatment of the antiwar efforts of the not inconsequential peace movement and the activities of the New Zealand Communist Party. Those wishing to understand better how the Fourth Labour government, led by David Lange, could in 1985 essentially walk away from the Anzus alliance and its intimate defense relationship with the United States would do well to read this work. While New Zealanders are often referred to as the “Prussians of the Pacific,” McGibbon reminds us that there have long been strong pacifist feelings in the country.

Indeed, one of the lessons of this interesting study is the influence New Zealand diplomats were able to exert at the highest levels of United Nations and allied policy making, despite the small size of their country and of its military contribution. Given the decline of British imperial power and growing disagreements within the Commonwealth, New Zealand officials saw that they must respond militarily to the Korean conflict so that they might continue to “win the peace” for which the nation had fought so hard in World War II. Contrast this approach to foreign policy with the 1986 statement by a leading member of the Fourth Labour government that under Labour's new foreign policy there would be “no more Koreans.” The speaker,

Helen Clark, is now the leader of the Opposition in the New Zealand Parliament.

Upon reading this excellent history, I was struck by how the New Zealand body politic has changed so fundamentally its stance on security policy in such a short period of time. Until the definitive history is written on this radical change in national attitudes, we can be content with this splendid work to appreciate how far New Zealand policy has strayed—or, depending upon one's perspective, evolved—from its historical roots.

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Hoffman, Jon T. *Once a Legend: "Red Mike" Edson of the Marine Raiders*. Novato, Calif.: Presidio, 1994. 434pp. \$24.95

Merritt Austin Edson was a little guy, and like a lot of Marines he was wiry—five foot seven and 140 pounds when in fighting trim. In his foreword General Walter Boomer, the Marine leader in Desert Storm, writes that Edson "didn't fit the Hollywood image of a Marine." Jon T. Hoffman says that only Edson's eyes exposed his willingness to die and to have those who fought with him die. One combat correspondent called his eyes "as purposeful as a killer's and as unemotional as a shark's."

Edson became one of the most versatile and respected Marines of his time: he was among the best combat leaders and most effective staff officers, an expert tactician, and also an artilleryman, a naval aviator, and a preeminent com-

petitive marksman. Hoffman tells all this with candor (though he is a bit prudish about Edson's rambling personal life). This thorough and readable biography covers not only Edson's career but also the evolution of the Marine Corps over thirty crucial years; it won the 1994 Marine Corps Historical Foundation's Wallace M. Greene, Jr., Award.

Edson won his first Navy Cross in 1928 commanding the Coco River patrols in Nicaragua. For months, he and a few Marines chased Augusto Sandino, the nationalist guerrilla whom the Marines insisted on calling a bandit. They never did catch him, but Captain Edson's jungle patrols stretched every man's strength and endurance; they advanced a notch the "science" of fighting "small wars." Edson rewrote the manual for counter-guerrilla operations in the 1930s, and he could well have contributed to the Marine's work in Vietnam had he lived that long.

Six months before the United States entered World War II, Lieutenant Colonel Edson was selected to command 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, and to convert it into that radical innovation, the 1st Raider Battalion. Eight months after Pearl Harbor, Colonel Edson led that battalion in the amphibious assault on Tulagi, across Ironbottom Sound from Guadalcanal. It was there that he won his second Navy Cross. However, he became a legend when he received the Medal of Honor for his defense of the vital ridge behind Henderson Field in an epic night of fighting. In that battle, Hoffman says, Edson "was the catalyst of victory"; for every move the Japanese attempted, he had the right answer, and he "never took cover."