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# Enter the Dragon: China's Undeclared War Against the U.S. in Korea 1950-51

Wayne A. Silkett  
*U.S. Army*

Russell E. Spurr

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forced back into the Pusan perimeter. The story of the acclimation of the average marine as he came face to face with the twin enemies of weather and the North Korean and Chinese human-wave attacks is the glue that holds this book together.

Berry's work traces the marine involvement from MacArthur's decision to provide a marine brigade to help shore up Walker's shaky Pusan perimeter, through the landings at Inchon, the push to Seoul, the retreat from the Chosin Reservoir, and the final hard-fought engagements during the armistice talks. Recollections of the retreat from the Chosin, in particular, help to explain how the marines held together in the face of the almost constant human-wave attacks of Chinese Communist troops. Considering the less favorable aspects of the retreat on the opposite side of the peninsula, the marines have every right to be proud of this part of their history. The frustration of the period of armistice negotiations takes on new meaning when seen from the perspective of marines suffering daily casualties during a period when peace was presumed to be close at hand. Memories of the lukewarm reception that greeted all too many marines on returning from Korea would be echoed a generation later.

This book is eminently readable and very useful for an understanding of what combat in our first major undeclared war was really like. Marines, in particular, will appreciate that special bond that held their brothers-in-arms together during

the retreat from the Chosin Reservoir and continues in the Corps today.

BRANCE PARKER  
Captain, U.S. Navy  
Naval War College

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Spurr, Russell. *Enter The Dragon: China's Undeclared War Against the U.S. in Korea 1950-51*. New York: Newmarket Press, 1989. 335 pp. \$22.95

Korea, the "incomprehensible crusade," the forgotten war now enjoying a long overdue renaissance, has been portrayed more comprehensively but never better than in Russell Spurr's *Enter The Dragon*. Spurr, an "old China hand" and *London Daily Express* correspondent in Korea in 1952-53, not only culled the archives, but took full advantage of door openings following Mao Tze Tung's death in 1976 to interview many Chinese participants, from private to army commander. His stunning, dramatic book is thus largely told from the Chinese point of view. And a captivating story it is.

When mainland China—under-rated, scorned, butt of countless jokes—suddenly, unexpectedly exploded into the Korean War in late 1950, she set into motion the longest, most disgraceful retreat in American military history. *Enter The Dragon* bars no holds and willingly lauds and excoriates friend and foe alike. Though it covers barely the first year of the Korean War, ending

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with the June 1951 calls for a cease-fire, it enthalls from its first page.

Spurr is at his best dealing with people: the Chinese general afraid of spiders; the American general to whom the enemy was nothing but "Chinese laundrymen;" the U.S. regimental commander vowing to urinate in the Yalu. There are dozens of fascinating personal glimpses: Mao the dogmatic school teacher, overconfident, undercapable; Douglas MacArthur, "a man of many words," surrounded by fawning, adoring courtiers, who saw himself, one reporter wrote, "as a Ghenghis Khan in reverse," but far less knowledgeable about Asia, air-power, intelligence, and politics than he thought; Syngman Rhee, intolerant, vindictive, despotic; and Matthew Ridgway, "America's most underrated military genius." No less intriguing are looks at the less mighty: Big Ears Wong, Fat Belly Wu, Limp Zhang, Opium Li, Sawtooth Soong, "Nervous John" Coulter.

*Enter The Dragon* opens with a Chinese liaison officer's account of the North Korean Army's tightening of the noose around the "Pusan Perimeter." Anticipating a North Korean victory, Chinese political and military leaders were severely alarmed, though not entirely surprised, by General MacArthur's tactical masterstroke at Inchon. North Korean leaders immediately recognized they were lost unless the Chinese intervened. Spurr strongly suggests that the Chinese did not want war with the United States.

Only recently victorious against the Nationalist Chinese and dedicated to and preparing for an invasion of Taiwan, Spurr convincingly portrays Chinese leaders reluctantly entering the Korean War to prevent liquidation of a friendly (and buffer) state. The Chinese hoped their intervention could be limited in scale and serve as a warning. Of particular concern was America's possession of the atomic bomb. The Chinese, of course, were not talking with the West and the West was not talking with the People's Republic of China. To U.N. forces (mainly South Korean and U.S.) on whom the first blows fell, Chinese intervention was anything but limited and offered precious little warning. And here is the mainstay of Spurr's book.

Spurr describes in few words but vivid detail the People's Liberation Army and its Korean War variant, the Chinese "Volunteers" (Zhou Enlai's idea and term), and its chief adversary, the American army. Weak in mobility, communications, supply, transport, and firepower, the Chinese nevertheless fielded a daunting force: physically tough, superb at camouflage and infiltration (both figured prominently in the "surprise" of Chinese intervention, as did stubborn American refusal to believe it likely or even possible), adept at long, overland marches, and extremely confident.

Spurr's portrayal of the American army when the dragon entered is a devastating one. Hastily sent to Korea from the occupation army in Japan, Spurr calls it "scandalously

unfit, understrength, and under-trained." He takes it to task for "criminal carelessness," slackness, complacency, poor discipline, and grave laxity (partly the result of an environment in occupied Japan whereby eager male Japanese did much of the U.S. soldier's work for him while other Japanese performed more intimate off-duty services—all well within the GI's budget).

Even the reader well versed in the Korean War will be hard pressed to remain ungripped by Spurr's unfolding of the mammoth clash between Chinese and American forces. Though evidence of a Chinese presence dated a week earlier, the ferocious main Chinese attack occurred 1 November 1950. Without air cover, artillery, or tanks, superbly infiltrated infantry-heavy Chinese formations fell first upon the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division. Accompanied by bugles, whistles, and gongs, reminding at least one GI of a "Chinese funeral," it was the prelude to the longest, most shameful retreat in American military history: 275 miles in six weeks. To be sure, spectacular gallantry and extremely stubborn resistance are not ignored. The 1st Marine Division's magnificent retreat to the sea (a euphemism by any other name still smells the same) ranks as the singular, stellar U.S. division-sized operation of the Korean War; the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division's loss of half its artillery and 3000 men *in one afternoon* the most tragic. Spurr treats both very skillfully.

In the ensuing weeks, heady Chinese success altered the original goal of warning the United States. By December 1950, the Chinese goal became the original North Korean one of unifying the entire peninsula under communist rule.

If the Chinese were weak in modern firepower, lacked standardized weapons and were furnished with only crude, hand-drawn maps, this foot-mobile force, logistically supported by a few hundred trucks and *half a million coolies*, still staggered the world's mightiest military power, undid General MacArthur and President Truman, and set percolating doubts about the relationship between political ideas and material wherewithal which continue to our own day. Political vicissitudes aside, *Enter The Dragon* ends on the military upbeat with General Ridgway's near miraculous turnaround of the Eighth Army—and of the Korean War.

*Enter the Dragon* is no apology for Chinese intervention. It is a remarkable account of a neglected war, told principally from the main enemy's point of view. As such it seeks far less to convince than to inform. It would benefit from more maps, less threadbare photos, and a thorough editing (the Dieppe raid was 1942 not 1943; the 8th Regiment 1st Cavalry Division was the 8th Cavalry Regiment; napalm was first used not at Okinawa but at Pelelieu; U.S. Marines did not first operate under the U.S. Army in Korea but had in both world wars). These flaws,

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however, are minor. *Enter The Dragon* is nothing short of superb.

WAYNE A. SILKETT  
Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army  
U.S. Army War College

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Van Creveld, Martin. *Technology and War: From 2000 B.C. to the Present*. New York: The Free Press, 1989. 342pp. \$22.95.

This book is different. Its goal is to provide a historical analysis of the role that technology has played in the development and transformation of war, but it is not simply an account of weapon evolution and the impact of that evolution on combat. The book has a larger vision of technology within the society and the total impact technology has on war. Accordingly, a great deal of attention is given to mundane subjects such as roads, maps, communications, and management, each of which has a significant influence on war.

Van Creveld has organized his material by four eras. The first, reaching to about 1500 A.D., is the Age of Tools, when military technology derived its energy from the muscles of men and animals. The second extends to about 1830 and is the Age of Machines. The third goes through the Second World War and is the Age of Systems. The final era covers from 1945 to the present: the Age of Automation. Each of these four sections of the book contains five chapters. Four of them each deal with a particular aspect of warfare,

such as field warfare or naval warfare, more or less chronologically for the era. The fifth chapter in each section is thematic. These deal with irrational or dysfunctional technology which does not get exploited, the rise of military professionalism, the invention of invention, and real war (as opposed to make-believe war).

In addition to a decent index, the book contains a bibliographical essay with brief comments about books related to each chapter of the book. Its conclusion is that a comprehensive and systematic theory of the relationship between technology and war is not available. Perhaps such will have to wait for a modern Clausewitz.

Martin Van Creveld is an internationally acclaimed military historian who teaches history at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He brings a broad international perspective to this book due to his interaction with members of both the American and Israeli defense communities.

His discussion of guerrilla war and terrorism is quite worthwhile, but there is much more of value in this book. It helps to put in proper perspective the impact of a nation's infrastructure and technology on its war-making. It will stimulate one's thinking. Each of the four sections of the book devoted to the different eras contains approximately the same number of pages; this places most emphasis upon the more modern periods since the four eras are progressively shorter. Even so, the book is weakest in its final section.