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Matter Of Fact

By Joseph and Stewart
Alsop

Who Failed?

EVERY AMERICAN, in and out of public life, is asking who is responsible for the disastrous intelligence failure which has now led to military disaster in Korea. The answer is simple. The whole responsibility belongs to Gen. Douglas MacArthur's own intelligence organization, headed by one of the little circle of high staff officers who have been with MacArthur since Bataan, Maj. Gen. Charles A. Willoughby.

This would not be so if General MacArthur were subject to normal rules. In a normal war theater, agent nets and other machinery for gathering and processing intelligence belong to the national intelligence organization, the CIA. In a normal theater, by the same token, the theater G-2 is primarily responsible for military interpretation of the intelligence thus obtained, and has only the most limited responsibility for intelligence collection.

Even during the second World War, however, when this pattern was becoming established in other theaters, General MacArthur showed sharp dislike for it. Indeed, he actually banned the CIA's wartime predecessor, the Office of Strategic Services, from operating in his Pacific theater. Postwar, he continued to maintain the same ban until this spring, when the CIA was at last permitted to get its toe in the door. Even then, moreover, the unusual concession was demanded and granted, that the local representatives of the CIA should be placed under the operational control of General Willoughby, as theater G-2.

THIS ARRANGEMENT remained in force after the Korean War broke out, until after the Inchon landing operation. The bold and brilliant stroke at Inchon was the best possible proof that a great military commander like MacArthur can work real miracles with good intelligence. Inchon would hardly have been possible without solid detailed information about the weakness of the enemy defenses; and MacArthur himself congratulated the CIA representatives on their part in securing this information.

For some occult reason, however, trouble followed almost at once. Not very long after the Inchon landing, the arrangement made in the spring was suddenly upset. The old ban on the CIA was again enforced.

The whole task of gathering and processing intelligence, as well as interpreting the intelligence for the theater commander and for Washington, once more reverted to General Willoughby's organization, where the entire responsibility still remains.

Rather transparent attempts are now being made to suggest that the intelligence thus provided was not really so bad after all. It is hinted, in one breath, that our plans in Korea only miscarried because of the interdict on air operations beyond the Chinese border (which General MacArthur of course knew all about long before he gave the recent order to attack). In the next breath, it is also stated that the true intention of the "home by Christmas" offensive was only to blunt an expected Chinese onslaught. This is demonstrable nonsense.

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Wherry Seeks 'Blunderer' in Korean Attack

AS EARLY as late September, General MacArthur had been positively convinced that the Chinese would not intervene in Korea. At Wake Island he expressed this conviction most forcibly to the President, only a few days before the Chinese crossed the border. The sudden appearance of Chinese troops in combat in October very evidently took our divisions in Korea wholly by surprise. And even thereafter, the authorities in Tokyo clearly believed that the Chinese intervention was essentially unimportant, inspiring many stories about the small numbers of Chinese troops in Korea and their demoralization by American firepower.

Finally, no general in his senses would have hurled our thin lines of men, with a great gap in the center, against an enemy whom he did not confidently regard as weak and on the run. General MacArthur must, he can only, have ordered the "home by Christmas" offensive on the basis of an estimate of enemy capabilities and intentions so grossly false that over 200,000 Chinese troops were somehow lost in the shuffle. He must, he can only, have been perfectly sincere in saying that he hoped to "end the war for all practical purposes." It is a dreadful thing that General MacArthur thus walked into a huge, well-laid trap. But it is more just to our most eminent American soldier to admit this frankly, than to try to pretend that he got into the trap of his own volition.

In short, the horror that confronts us proves the converse of a rule already given. Just as a great commander can work miracles with good intelligence, so even the greatest commander cannot overcome bad intelligence. Since the bad intelligence emanated from General MacArthur's own headquarters, this may displease those who like to believe that he has attained a sort of divine perfection. But facts are facts none the less and they must be faced.

Senate Republican Leader Kenneth S. Wherry (Nebr.) yesterday said some Government official "blundered" in not recognizing the danger of a Communist invasion in Korea. "And in due time we shall fix that responsibility," he warned.

He said Rear Admiral Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter, chief of the Central Intelligence Agency, has testified that CIA warned that the North Koreans were massing troops along the thirty-eighth parallel "a few days before the attack occurred."

"Someone blundered in not recognizing that an invasion was in the offing," Wherry said on a radio broadcast.

Wherry renewed his demand that President Truman fire Secretary of State Dean Acheson to help "unite the American people." He said Acheson's record on Western European problems "is no better than his ineptness on problems of the Pacific."

On the question of home front mobilization, Wherry said he will support "whatever measures experience teaches are necessary to prevent runaway inflation."

He said the President should be given authority to set up priorities for the manufacture of military goods, but he opposed granting hard-and-fast controls over prices and wages.

"Absolute power to govern prices and wages—these are segments of the 'Fair Deal' in conflict with the goals for which we are opposing communism in Korea and elsewhere around the globe," he said.

Wherry said the "greatest contribution" Mr. Truman and Congress could make to hold down prices would be to cut nonmilitary Government spending.

Asked about the roll of the Republican Party during the war emergency, Wherry said it should be one of constructive criticism of Administration "failures."