

PDF | The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War

by David Halberstam



David
Halberstam

THE
COLDEST
WINTER

AMERICA AND THE KOREAN WAR

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David Halberstam's magisterial and thrilling *The Best and the Brightest* was the defining book about the Vietnam conflict. More than three decades later, Halberstam used his unrivaled research and formidable journalistic skills to shed light on another pivotal moment in our history: the Korean War. Halberstam considered *The Coldest Winter* his most accomplished work, the culmination of forty-five years of writing about America's postwar foreign policy.

Halberstam gives us a masterful narrative of the political decisions and miscalculations on both sides. He charts the disastrous path that led to the massive entry of Chinese forces near the Yalu River and that caught Douglas MacArthur and his soldiers by surprise. He provides astonishingly vivid and nuanced portraits of all the major figures--Eisenhower, Truman, Acheson, Kim, and Mao, and Generals MacArthur, Almond, and Ridgway. At the same time, Halberstam provides us with his trademark highly evocative narrative journalism, chronicling the crucial battles with reportage of the highest order. As ever, Halberstam was concerned with the extraordinary courage and resolve of people asked to bear an extraordinary burden.

The Coldest Winter is contemporary history in its most literary and luminescent form, providing crucial perspective on every war America has been involved in since. It is a book that Halberstam first decided to write more than thirty years ago and that took him nearly ten years to complete. It stands as a lasting testament to one of the greatest journalists and historians of our time, and to the fighting men whose heroism it chronicles.

Amazon.com Review

David Halberstam's magisterial and thrilling *The Best and the Brightest* was the defining book for the Vietnam War. More than three decades later, Halberstam used his unrivalled research and formidable journalistic skills to shed light on another dark corner in our history: the Korean War. *The Coldest Winter* is a successor to *The Best and the Brightest*, even though in historical terms it precedes it. Halberstam considered *The Coldest Winter* the best book he ever wrote, the culmination of forty-five years of writing about America's postwar foreign policy.

Up until now, the Korean War has been the black hole of modern American history. *The Coldest Winter* changes that. Halberstam gives us a masterful narrative of the political decisions and miscalculations on both sides. He charts the disastrous path that led to the massive entry of Chinese forces near the Yalu, and that caught Douglas MacArthur and his soldiers by surprise. He provides astonishingly vivid and nuanced portraits of all the major figures -- Eisenhower, Truman, Acheson, Kim, and Mao, and Generals MacArthur, Almond, and Ridgway. At the same time, Halberstam provides us with his trademark highly evocative narrative journalism, chronicling the crucial battles with reportage of the highest order.

At the heart of the book are the individual stories of the soldiers on the front lines who were left to deal with the consequences of the dangerous misjudgments and competing agendas of powerful men. We meet them, follow them, and see some of the most dreadful battles in history through their eyes. As ever, Halberstam was concerned with the extraordinary courage and resolve of people asked to bear an extraordinary burden.

The Coldest Winter is contemporary history in its most literary and luminescent form, and provides crucial perspective on the Vietnam War and the events of today. It was a book that Halberstam first decided to write more than thirty years ago and that took him nearly ten years to write. It stands as a lasting testament to one of the greatest journalists and historians of our time, and to the fighting men whose heroism it chronicles.

Includes an Afterword by Russell Baker

Tributes to David Halberstam

David Halberstam died at the age of 73 in a car accident in California on April 23, 2007, just after completing *The Coldest Winter*. Legendary for his work ethic, his kindness to young writers, and his unbending moral spine, Halberstam had friends and admirers throughout journalism, many of whom spoke at his memorial service and at readings across the country for the release of *The Coldest Winter*. We have included testimonials given at his memorial service by two writers who made their reputations at the same newspaper where he won a Pulitzer Prize for his Vietnam War reporting, *The New York Times*

Anna Quindlen

...David occupied a lot of space on the planet. Perhaps he felt the price he must pay for that big voice, that big reach, that big reputation, was that his generosity had to be just as large. Most of us, when we take to the road and meet admiring strangers, vow afterward to answer the note pressed into our hands or to pass along the speech we promised to the person whose daughter couldn't be there to hear it. But with the best will in the world we arrive home to deadlines, bills, kids, friends, all the demands of a busy life. We mean to be our best selves, but often we forget.

David did it. He always did it. The note, the call, the book, the advice. When I mentioned this once he dug his hands deep into the pockets of his grey flannels, set his mouth at the corners, looked down and rumbled, "Well, but it's so easy." That's nonsense. It's not easy. But it is important, and why he has been remembered with enormous affection

by ordinary readers all over this country, and why each of us who live some sort of public life would do well, with all due respect to Jesus, to ask ourselves about those small encounters: what would David do? ... **Read her full tribute**

Dexter Filkins

...If I could use a sports metaphor--and I think David would have appreciated that--David was the pulling guard, as in a football game. The pulling guard who sweeps wide and clears the hole for the running back who runs through behind him. We reporters in Iraq were the running backs. David went first--a long time ago--and cleared the way.

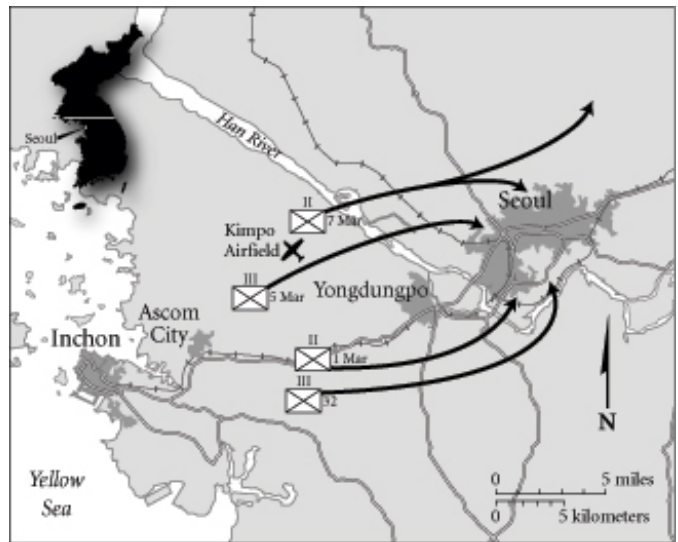
In Iraq, when the official version didn't match what we were seeing on the streets of Baghdad, all we had to do--and we did it a lot--was ask ourselves: what would Halberstam have done? And then the way was clear.... **Read his full tribute**

A Timeline of the Korean War

How It Began

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| January 1950 | Secretary of State Dean Acheson leaves Korea out of America's Far East Defense Perimeter. |
| June 25, 1950 | The North Korean Army crosses the 38th parallel with a force of about 135,000 troops. The Republic of Korea is taken completely by surprise by the invasion and their forces are soon in full retreat. |
| July 7, 1950 | General Douglas MacArthur is officially put in command of the forces set to defend the Republic of Korea. |
| August 1950 | Relentlessly focused attacks by the North Koreans drive the ill-prepared defense forces into the country's southeast corner. The Pusan Perimeter is established as the last best hope of maintaining a toehold on the peninsula. |
| August-Sept. 1950 | The North Koreans launch assault after assault against the Pusan Perimeter, with particularly brutal fighting taking place along the Naktong River. U.S. soldiers are in constant danger of being overrun. |
| September | MacArthur delivers his |

15, 1950 masterstroke with the amphibious landings at Inchon. The invasion blindsides the North Korean defenders and relieves pressure on the Pusan Perimeter. UN forces are able to drive north from Pusan and east from Inchon. By the end of September the North Korean forces are routed on all fronts, Seoul has been recaptured, and MacArthur receives permission to cross the 38th parallel.



The drive to Seoul, September 16-28, 1950

The Debacle

November 1950 U.S. soldiers march deep into North Korean territory, eventually reaching the Yalu River border with China. But the first warning of a conflict with the Chinese takes place at Unsan, where the Eighth Cavalry is mauled by a surprise engagement. By the end of November Chinese Communist forces mount a major offensive at Kunuri and the Chosin Reservoir.

December 1950 Overwhelmed by hundreds of thousands of Chinese soldiers, UN forces are battered to positions below the 38th parallel. General Walker is killed in an accident, and General Ridgway takes over his command. General MacArthur lobbies relentlessly for attacks into China, an action that would draw China, and likely the USSR, into a full-scale war. Tensions between Truman and MacArthur escalate.

January-February 1951 The Chinese reach the high-water mark of their assault. General Ridgway aggressively combats the Chinese in the fight for the central corridor, with

major battles fought at Wonju,
Twin Tunnels, and Chipyongni.

April 11,
1951 Truman relieves General
MacArthur of his duties.
Raucous public outcry in
support of the celebrated
general further erodes Truman's
popularity.

The End

July 27,
1953 After years of bloody stalemate,
a cease-fire is signed between
North Korea and the UN. The
border established is very close
to the original line at the 38th
parallel. It is estimated that the
war cost 33,000 American,
415,000 South Korean, and up
to 1.5 million Chinese and
North Korean lives. In the arena
of U.S. foreign policy, the
lessons of Korea still largely
remain unlearned.

Product Description

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