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Bruce Cumings

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Bruce Cumings : The Origins of the Korean War: Volume II: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947-1950 before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Origins of the Korean War: Volume II: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947-1950:

27 of 33 people found the following review helpful. The Bible for Students of Modern Korean History By J. CHOI I was an East Asian Studies (focus on Korea) at Harvard. Both Volumes on the Origins of the Korean War by Bruce Cumings are absolute prerequisites to understand and study this unfortunate part of Korean history. I note how some reviewers trashed the book because they think it is "revisionist leftist nonsense" - I believe it is a matter of the reader not liking what actually happened. Prof. Cumings scholarship is impeccable. His tendency to let his passion and compassion for the Korean people show in his writing has earned him the distrust of some. However, scholars in Korean studies - of whatever political persuasion - hail these volumes as masterpieces of scholarship and writing. Both volumes (outrageously priced as they are) are absolute must haves for any library that has a section on Korean history. 0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. INACCURACIES IN BRUCE CUMINGS "THE ROARING OF THE CATARACT" By Edward C. Parmenter There are many inaccuracies. In Chapter 18, at the top of page 614 he writes about an aide at the Pentagon saying that the U.S. expected the attack and that ships had been readied to evacuate Americans. FACT: According to 24th Infantry Division G-1 Journal for June 1950, the largest number of persons evacuated by ship was on the Norwegian freighter "Reinholt", which on June 26th had just finished unloading

its cargo. The ship had a crew of 10 so all facilities were for a maximum of 10 persons, all men. One of the 676 passengers was a pregnant woman with a due date of July 1. I am sure that if ships had actually been pre-positioned, they would have been ones with much better accommodations. Only about 200 other people were evacuated by ship. The balance of the 2,174 persons were evacuated by June 29 were by C-54 and C-47 transports flying between Kimpo and Suwon in Korea to Itazuke airfield in Japan. Incidentally that statement was not original to Bruce Cumings, It is almost a word for word copy of a statement made on page 2 of I.F. Stone's "The Hidden History of the Korean War". Several of those aircraft were destroyed on the ground by North Korean Yak fighter planes. Original records are located at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland. Records Group 407, Stack 270, Area 67, Row 29, Shelf 06, Box 3469. At the end of the 2d full paragraph on page 614 he writes that about five days before the war began, General Ridgeway requested information on naval aircraft "Hellcats", small gunboats and other military aid items destined for Indochina which might be diverted to Korea. FACT: In his end-note #119, he admits that he could not find a document supporting his statement. Additionally, the standard fighter used in the Navy and Marine Corps was the "Corsair" Diverting "Hellcats" would serve no useful purpose as pilots and ground crews would have to be found to fly and maintain them. In the paragraph at the bottom of page 614 and continuing on to page 615 he wrote that Clay Blair wrote that the Pentagon produced war plans for every conceivable occasion, including a June 30, 1950 plan for an amphibious landing at Inchon. His end note #121 refers to page 87 of Blair's book. FACT: He erroneously titles Blair's book as "Unknown War" when the actual title is "The Forgotten War". The earliest plan for an amphibious landing at Inchon was in JCS Document 924, Appendix B, which includes a landing at Inchon as part of "Operations Against Japan Subsequent to Formosa" which was dated June 30, 1944. On page 659, in the first full paragraph, Cumings wrote: The KPA march threatened a full envelopment as early as July 26, when General Walker ordered a military withdrawal from Taegu. But then the next day MacArthur flew over to Korea and demanded that further withdrawals cease, and shortly thereafter the 2d Infantry Division landed at Pusan and was rushed to the line at Chinju. FACT: First, there was never a military withdrawal from Taejon. Second, none of the War Diaries for the 2d Infantry Division, including those for the 9th, 23d and 38th Infantry Regiments even mention Chinju, When they arrived, with the 9th being first, they were sent to the Naktong Bulge area, thirty to 50 miles North of Chinju. The 29th Infantry Regiment, consisting of two battalions was shipped from Okinawa with the last of them arriving on July 25th. They were attached to the 19th Infantry Regiment of the 24th Infantry Division and elements of both units moved to the Hadong, Anui and Chinju areas, with the 1st Battalion 19th Regiment arriving at Chinju by 1700 hours (5:00 PM civilian time) on July 27th 1950! I do not believe MacArthur's trip was to order Walker to cease any more withdrawals. General Walker did not issue his famous "Stand or Die" directive until July 29th, two days later. Had MacArthur delivered such an ultimatum on the 27th, Walker would NOT have waited TWO days to issue HIS ultimatum. That fact, and my review of pertinent War Diaries leads me to the conclusion that MacArthur flew to Korea to personally inform Walker in some detail about the additional help that was on the way. The 5th Regimental Combat Team was on the way from Hawaii with lead elements scheduled to begin arriving in the Masan area West of Pusan late on August 1st. The First Provisional Marine Brigade with its own armor, artillery and air support was on the way from San Francisco, scheduled to arrive about August 8th. The Second Infantry Division was on the way from Seattle with its 9th Infantry Regiment also scheduled to arrive on about August 8th. When I first questioned Professor Cumings about his statement, he insisted that he meant Taegu as Taejon had fallen several weeks before. In fact Taejon had fallen only FOUR days before. When I proved to him that his statement was incorrect, he had two comments. The first was "I wish I had that information 25 years ago." The other was "I wasn't doing military history." On page 661 in the first paragraph, he writes that by September 8, he (MacArthur) had been sent all available combat trained Army units except the 82d Airborne, Division. FACT: The 11th Airborne Division was also at full strength, yet it also remained in the U.S. It was not until early October that the 187th Airborne Infantry Regiment of that division was sent to Korea. On page 720 in the first full paragraph he writes that "In one documented instance, in the town of Suncheon, the Americans replaced marauding South Korean Forces with American 1st Cavalry elements. End note #44 refers to the Manchester Guardian for December 4, 1950 and to Journal Entries RG 338, K MAG files, box 5418 - journal entries for November 5, 24, 25 and 30, 1950. I have not had a chance to try to find those documents. FACT: Professor Cumings conveniently did NOT list the Stack Area, Row, Compartment and Shelf, all of which are needed to locate documents at the National Archives. If he actually located those documents, he would have had all of that information. As for an article in the Manchester Guardian, I would not trust ANY newspaper article without independently checking its accuracy and then, I would NEVER refer to that article as an ORIGINAL source document! There are no references in 1st Cavalry Division War Diaries or in War Diaries of the 5th, 7th or 8th Cavalry Regiments for November 1950 which have any reference to relieving any ROK units in or near Suncheon. Beginning in the first full paragraph on page 751, Professor Cumings wrote that in 1950, atomic bombs were heavy and unwieldy, requiring big sand loading pits and time consuming assembly. FACT: By 1950 they were NOT that heavy or unwieldy and either the gun type or the implosion type could be checked out and loaded on an aircraft within two hours. They DID require special loading dollies to transport them from the storage area to the aircraft. Using hydraulic lifts built into the dollies, bombs were inserted into the aircraft's bomb bay. Beginning on page 753 he

writes about napalming everything ahead of the advancing Chinese and NKPA forces and behind retreating UN Forces to create a wilderness of "scorched earth". To support his point, at the top of page 755 he quotes PART of an article by new York Times reporter George Barrett. Cumings writes "A bit later George Barrett of the New York Times found 'a macabre tribute to the totality of modern war' in a village north of Anyang: The inhabitants throughout the village and in the fields were caught and killed and kept in the exact position they held when the napalm struck - a man about to get on his bicycle, fifty boys and girls playing in an orphanage, a housewife strangely unmarked, holding in her hand a page torn from a Sears-Roebuck catalogue crayoned at Mail Order No. 3,811,294 for a \$2.98 'bewitching bed jacket-coral.'" That quote was only the SECOND paragraph of the article. It also left off the last sentence of the second paragraph. The COMPLETE article, as published on page 258 of I.F. Stone's "Hidden History of the Korean War" and in George Barrett's obituary, published in the New York Times on November 24, 1984 follows: "A NAPALM RAID HIT THE VILLAGE THREE OR FOUR DAYS AGO WHEN THE CHINESE WERE HOLDING UP THE ADVANCE, AND NOWHERE IN THE VILLAGE HAVE THEY BURIED THE DEAD BECAUSE THERE IS NOBODY LEFT TO DO SO. THIS CORRESPONDENT CAME ACROSS ONE OLD WOMAN, THE ONLY ONE WHO SEEMED TO BE LEFT ALIVE, DAZEDLY HANGING UP SOME CLOTHES IN A BLACKENED COURTYARD FILLED WITH THE BODIES OF FOUR MEMBERS OF HER FAMILY. The second paragraph read as above, except it ended: "THERE MUST BE ALMOST TWO HUNDRED DEAD IN THE TINY HAMLET." The obituary specified that the article was written on February 6 while Barrett was with an American commanded armored unit. The entire article is a fabrication. Consider the following: FIRST: Napalm kills by inflicting third degree burns wherever it strikes a body. The only other way napalm kills is by carbon monoxide poisoning when, in close proximity of napalm ignition, the oxygen in the air is replaced by carbon monoxide, and even then the ignition point is close enough that serious burns occur. SECOND: When a person dies, they collapse, they do not remain erect. THIRD: There is an archive of every Sears-Roebuck catalog ever printed. A search of the Fall Winter 1949 and the Spring and Summer 1950 catalogs reveals no listing of the "bed jacket". Most importantly, all Sears-Roebuck catalogs have catalog numbers with the same characteristics. They begin with one or two numbers, then there are two letters and then have four more numbers. There are minor deviations, such as a letter preceding the initial numbers, which indicate a special shipping point. Go on-line and look for Sears-Roebuck Catalogs and you can access any page in any specific catalog ever printed. For the most part, except in the beginning and the end, catalogs had in excess of 1,000 pages. FOURTH: It seems highly unlikely that a village of about 20 people would have an orphanage with 50 children. FIFTH: Why would a woman whose village had been under the control of the Chinese for the previous six to nine weeks even be filling out a catalog order? SIXTH: Napalm was used primarily in hilly areas where napalm would filter down into underground bunkers and into foxholes. The Anyang River flows north into the Han River just South of Seoul. See Army Map Series Topographical Maps, Series L552, Map NJ 52-9 (Seoul). About five miles North of Anyang, the river valley widens so there are no significant hills near the village of Tokson-ni, which is about six and a half miles north of Anyang. For about a mile in any direction, the village is surrounded by rice paddies. Any digging into the ground would result in ground water filling the excavation. THE ONE GRAIN OF TRUTH IS THAT THERE WAS NOT ONE, BUT TWO ARMORED COLUMNS OPERATING IN TANDEM IN THAT LOCATION IN THAT TIME FRAME. According to the Brigadier George Barth and War Diaries of the 25th Infantry Division War Diaries, those columns with infantry and artillery support, advanced during the day and returned to pre-constructed defensive positions at night. Artillery support consisted of five U.S. Field Artillery Battalions with 18 Field Artillery pieces each and one British Field Artillery Battalion, also with 18 Field Artillery pieces. Strong points were primarily reduced by use of up to 108 Field Artillery howitzers. One example was a Chinese strong point South of Anyang. In one instance the 15th ROK regiment was driven off a hill in the early evening by a force of Chinese. For the rest of the night, a total of 72 howitzers fired on that hill. In the morning, soldiers of the 15th ROK Regiment attacked the hill. There was NO resistance and when they reached the top, they counted a total of 308 Chinese dead. TO SUM IT ALL UP, PROFESSOR CUMINGS MIS-REPRESENTED A FICTIONAL ARTICLE BY BARRETT TO PROVE HIS POINT. THE MIS-REPRESENTATION BEING THAT HE OMITTED HALF OF THE STORY, WHICH INDICATED THAT UN FORCES WERE ADVANCING, NOT RETREATING. MY LAST CONTACT WITH PROFESSOR CUMINGS WAS WHEN HE TOLD ME NEVER TO CONTACT HIM AGAIN, HE ALREADY HAS TENURE WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO AND BASICALLY, HE DOESN'T CARE WHAT ANYONE ELSE THINKS. "WHEN I SEND A BOOK TO THE PUBLISHERS, IT FLIES OFF LIKE A BIRD AND I AM NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY ERRORS IN IT."

In continuing his argument that the Korean War was civil and revolutionary in character, Bruce Cumings examines the internal political-economic development of the two Korean states and the consequences, for Korea, of Cold War rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. He investigates the intense border fighting and internal political instability that preceded the Northern invasion and challenges the notion of sudden Soviet-sponsored intervention. "A decade ago, Bruce Cumings opened a new chapter in Korean War studies by arguing that this horrible conflict was above all a civil war. The Roaring of the Cataract is on a grander scale and narrated in a freer, more

indignant voice than the first volume....there is no better camera obscura for those daring to revisit the bloodbaths that convulsed Korea at mid-century."--Far Eastern Economic Review