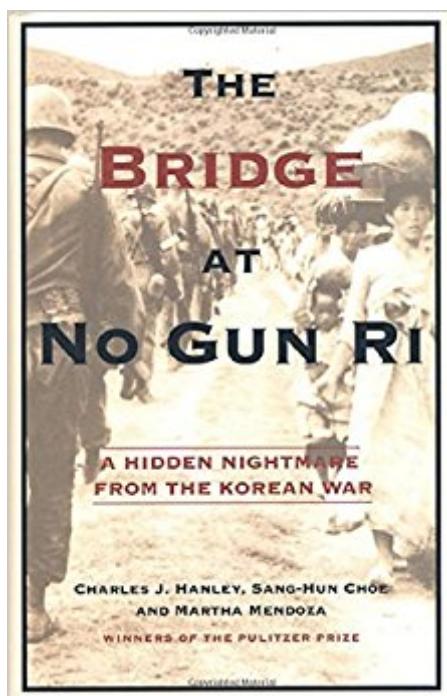


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The Bridge At No Gun Ri: A Hidden Nightmare From The Korean War



Synopsis

The untold human story of a massacre of Korean civilians by American soldiers in the early days of the Korean War, by the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists who uncovered itIn the fall of 1999, a team of Associated Press investigative reporters broke the news that U.S. troops had massacred a large group of South Korean civilians early in the Korean War. On the eve of that pivotal war's 50th anniversary, their reports brought to light a story that had been suppressed for decades, confirming allegations the U.S. military had sought to dismiss. It made headlines around the world. In The Bridge at No Gun Ri, the team tells the larger, human story behind the incident through the eyes of the people who survived it: on the American side, the green recruits of the "good time" U.S. occupation army in Japan made up of teenagers who viewed unarmed farmers as enemies and generals who had never led men into battle; on the Korean side, the peasant families forced to flee their ancestral village caught between the invading North Koreans and the U.S. Army. The narrative looks at victims both Korean and American; at the ordinary lives and high-level decisions that led to the fatal encounter; at the terror of the three-day slaughter; at the memories and ghosts that forever haunted the survivors. The story of No Gun Ri also illuminates the larger story of the Korean War-also known as the Forgotten War-and how an arbitrary decision to divide the country in 1945 led to the first armed conflict of the Cold War.

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Customer Reviews

The AP investigation of a 1950 shooting of South Korean civilians by U.S. soldiers won Hanley, Choe and Mendoza the Pulitzer Prize in 1999 and ignited a series of controversies that as yet remain unresolved. In the early days of the Korean War, as defeat began sliding into disaster,

inexperienced, poorly commanded U.S. troops received higher orders to stop, by force if necessary, civilian movement through their lines. They responded, the journalists found, by massacring a number of South Korean civilians near the village of No Gun Ri over a period of three days. This book delves further into the "larger human story" of the events, well establishing the terror and confusion of the South Korean refugees, caught up in a war they did not understand. The reconstruction is less effective from the American side. Relative to the number of alleged participants, U.S. interviewees are few. (A high proportion, the authors find, suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder.) The authors take pains to establish the men of No Gun Ri as dropouts and throwaways teenage rejects of a postwar society obsessed with prosperity and anti-communism. That in turn makes it easier to show them, as well as the Korean civilians, as victims of a government that sent them to Korea to fight a civil war on the side of squalid local tyranny. That perspective is defensible but, experts might argue, scarcely definitive. This volume, with its focus on personal experience, is correspondingly best understood as advocacy reportage, eschewing critical analysis by concentrating on the victims on both sides of the rifles. (Sept. 6) Forecast: Readers shocked by reports of the incident will pick up this follow-up, while an eight-city author tour should bring the story to further corners. But with U.S.-North Korean relations apparently under control, the book probably won't benefit from current political notice. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

In 2001, Associated Press reporters Hanley, Sang-Hun Choe, and Martha Mendoza broke the story of how U.S. troops opened fire on a group of South Koreans during the Korean War; later, they won a Pulitzer Prize for their investigative work. The book begins with U.S. troops stationed in Japan on occupation duty. These troops, who had no combat experience and were used to the easy and sometimes "wild" life in Japan, soon found themselves in Korea facing the invasion of the North Koreans. Most units had no adequate antitank weapons and were led by inexperienced officers. The U.S. Army retreated until it reached the Pusan defense line (located at the base of the Korean peninsula), and it was during this period that the massacre of civilians occurred. Recalling Facing My Lai (LJ 12/97) in scope and content, this book tells a grim but true story. The authors have done their research and tell an excellent tale one that the U.S. Army tried to forget. Recommended for both public and academic libraries. Mark Ellis, Albany State Univ., GA Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

excellent

...who have obviously not read this book whose authors make an admirable rebuttal of the jingoistic and minor (but hysterical) "challenges" put to their research. The book relies on hundreds of sources and its conclusions have been mostly upheld by the South Korean and U.S. governments. The reality is, this book is just "the tip of the iceberg," as another reviewer put it. What it hints at is the Korean War as the beginning of the genocidal, technocratic, and imperialist model of Amerikan warfare that has come to dominate our shared global history. The myth of liberal, democratic interventionism is shredded to reveal a tragicomedy of bureaucratic errors, racism, careerism, hardcore politics, official cover-ups, and sinister detachment. I highly recommend a paired reading with Turse's excellent account of the genocide we call the "Vietnam War." It is chilling to see how identically these two wars were waged. The Sixties' "free fire zones", "search and destroy" missions, and carpet bombing campaigns first found expression in the Fifties' refugee "evacuations," "strafings," and the complete leveling of North Korea. At least 2.5 million civilian Koreans were casualties of this war. And the ugly truth is that the Rhee dictatorship and U.S. troops on the ground and in the air were responsible for most of them. Essential reading to understand our world today.

Charles Hanley, Sang-Hun CHOE AND Martha Mendoza take the research of a south Korean policeman of dubious character and wind it around their preconceived notion as to what happened at NGR. They denigrate the training of U.S. soldiers in Japan without any facts except some from disgruntled privates who embellish their barracks war stories and contaminating the evidence the authors think they had. Their description of the action at NGR is based on youthful survivor testimony and little from the chain of command on the US side. At the scene were officers, commanders, reporters and many more reputable witnesses that tell a different story. To label NGR a massacre is a travesty of the first order. A real massacre took place a few days later at Hill 303 where some twenty US soldier prisoners of war were shot at close range with their hands tied behind their back. When somebody is accused of a crime there should be concrete evidence to support that accusation. With lack of solid evidence and an action 50 years old the authors should have been more careful not to denigrate the character of any of those doing their duty.

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