

Plans Officer, General Headquarters, FECOM

Q: When you graduated from Yale you went to the Far East. Where were you assigned and what did you do?

A: I was sent to Japan to join the plans section of **G-3** [plans and policy] of General MacArthur's headquarters. There was an interesting windfall occasioned by my early arrival. The officer I was replacing was not ready to leave and the headquarters didn't want a long overlap. As a result I was given an open ticket-air, rail and ship-to travel around Japan for **30** days. By coincidence, a civilian historian-anthropologist Dr. Kenneth Morrow, had also planned a **30-day** tour. I enjoyed his company and profited a great deal from his expertise. We started from Tokyo, then down the east coast of Japan, around the southern islands, and up the west coast. We then went to Hokkaido and back down the east coast to Tokyo.

Q: Was your trip strictly a pleasure trip or did you also look at military installations?

A: While my purpose was not to inspect or check on military installations, I could not help but note the failings of the so-called "occupation force." There were small detachments of U.S. troops in every village and hamlet not serving any useful function. There was no need for occupation forces in Japan because there was no danger of a Japanese military revival. In fact, our troops were only interfering with the Japanese civil authorities who were functioning well. General MacArthur's instructions were carried out in the name of the emperor.

When I returned from the tour I wrote a trip report to General Almond, the chief of staff to General MacArthur. I said that our so-called "occupation forces" were not carrying out any real function; in fact, were interfering with the Japanese civilian authorities. Almond directed Colonel Dewitt Armstrong, the **G-3**, to have me make a study of the occupation. My recommendation that the troops be pulled back to training camps for possible use elsewhere was approved. The "elsewhere" I had in mind was, of course, Korea. To replace the occupation forces, I recommended formation of "Japanese Self Defense Force," patterned after the U.S. National Guard. Their mission would be to handle disasters and maintain law and order.

In retrospect, the idea of pulling out our occupation forces didn't happen any too soon. We were still pulling out the remainder of the troops in June 1950 when the Korean War broke out. But we had been able to reassemble some of the troops into regimental units which were available to go to Korea soon after the North Koreans invaded South Korea.

This planning for the retraining of the occupation force and the Japanese Self Defense Force was done by a rather small number of officers. As I recall, there were not more than eight or nine officers in the entire plans section.

Q: Did you work in both the military and civilian side of MacArthur's staff?

A: No, I worked exclusively on the military side. But I made friends with a number of planners in the civilian side through Doctor Morrow with whom I had traveled around Japan. I was fascinated with the way General MacArthur's civilian staff, SCAP [Supreme Commander, Allied Powers] was restructuring the entire political, social and economic fabric of the Japanese government. This staff contained a number of the best minds in the United States—all experts and highly regarded in their respective fields. MacArthur was revolutionizing—and this is an understatement—the entire Japanese society. He drew up a new constitution, redesigned the judiciary and economic systems, and set up industrial standards. The Japanese industry had a very low reputation up to that time because of shoddy workmanship and low standards of quality. MacArthur turned all that around; in fact, the Toyotas and Sonys which are so reliably built today can trace their success to MacArthur's directives.

Q: Did you get involved in drawing up the peace treaty or the constitution?

A: No. These were done on the civilian side of the headquarters. We in FECOM [Far East Command], the military side, coordinated with the civilians, but the drafting of the peace treaty and constitution were assigned to SCAP.

Q: On January 5, 1950, the President made a statement on Taiwan in which he said, essentially, that there would be no military assistance given to Chiang Kai-Shek. And shortly thereafter, Dean Acheson made a statement on Korea to the Washington Press Club on January 12 saying that Korea and Formosa were beyond the U.S. sphere of strategic influence. What reaction did these statements cause in MacArthur's headquarters?

A: I don't recall any reaction to the President's statement. But I remember well how stunned we were when Acheson made his public statement. It would have been one thing to say privately among ourselves that Korea would no longer be within our sphere of interest. But to say this publicly seemed to us the height of folly and irresponsibility. We were shocked that anyone in a high place, and especially a man with the reputation that Acheson enjoyed, would make such a statement.

I might add that now, in hindsight, I feel even more strongly about Acheson's statement. On one occasion a high-ranking Soviet negotiator told me in Geneva in the late '70s that it is hard for the Soviets to understand Americans. He said that the Soviets were surprised when Acheson, in 1950, announced that Korea was outside the area of U.S. strategic interest. This caused the Soviets, he said, to "unleash" North Korea and authorize them to invade South Korea. "At that," he said, "the U.S. went back on its word and mobilized not only its own forces but called on the United Nations to come to the aid of Seoul." He said: "We can't trust the United States to keep its word. The U.S., " he added, "is very volatile; it changes its mind."

"You'd better believe it," I said, not wanting to disabuse the Soviets of our volatility. I told him that Americans are slow to anger, but once aroused are quick to react when our national interest is threatened.

Q: Up until the time the North Koreans attacked south of the 38th Parallel, what were your main functions as a planner in MacArthur's staff?

A: I worked on plans for the Japanese Self Defense Force and on contingency plans in the event the North Koreans attacked South Korea. I remember sending a memorandum to my boss early in June 1950 telling him that from reading intelligence reports and reporting cables I believed we should be more alert to a possible attack in Korea. My boss, Colonel Armstrong, sent my memo to the chief of staff, General Almond. He, in turn, sent it to the G-2. General Willoughby, the G-2, took a dim view of anybody in G-3 interfering in his business. He said the North Koreans would not attack. Moreover, he said G-3 should in the future send memos on intelligence matters to him and he would decide whether or not to send them to the chief of staff. Fortunately, General Almond did not listen to Willoughby. He sent my memo to General MacArthur.

Q: What were you doing when the **Korean** conflict broke out in June of 1950?

A: **By** coincidence, one might say poetic justice, I was the G-3 duty officer the Sunday that the North Koreans attacked. When the news came in, I went to see the G-2 duty officer and we called the chief of staff. He told us to meet him in General MacArthur's apartment.

General MacArthur said, "Rowny, are you going to say 'I told you so?'" I didn't say anything, but must have looked like the cat that swallowed the canary. I recall that General MacArthur was quite calm and appeared unperturbed. He directed General Almond to call the military staff back to work immediately. General

Almond had the staff prepare messages for MacArthur to send to Seoul and Washington. MacArthur, meanwhile, was on the phone to Seoul, Washington, FECOM military headquarters, and the Japanese government. He ordered all U.S. troops in Japan to return to barracks.

I disappeared into the Dai Ichi building. For the next several days my wife brought me **clean** clothing and toilet articles. We worked around the clock, except for time off for catnaps on cots in our offices. For a week we worked, slept, and ate in the Dai Ichi building.

Q: What specifically did you do in the first hours and days after the invasion?

A: I don't recall precisely. I'm certain we were trying to decide how best to cope with and stabilize the situation. I recall it was a very chaotic period. Most of our contacts in Seoul were with a remarkable individual, Ambassador Muccio, our ambassador in Seoul. He was well-organized, calm and courageous. We were getting better estimates about the situation from him than from our military headquarters. This, in hindsight, is understandable because the military had its own problems trying to cope with the enemy. However, we were fortunate that Muccio was a broad-gauge and capable foreign service officer. He believed our troops could be organized to stand and fight. He did not think that we should simply pick up and move to the rear.

Q: After you finished the initial period of trying to get everything organized, when did you start planning for the Inchon invasion?

A: Several days after the attack a crisis developed within MacArthur's staff. His public relations advisor couldn't cope with the situation. Reporters had started to arrive from the United States almost immediately and were putting General MacArthur under a great deal of pressure. The public relations officer, having fortified his courage with several stiff drinks, passed out while briefing reporters.

Later that day I received a two-line directive from the Supreme Commander. It read:

1. *Effective immediately, you will-in addition to your other duties-act as my official spokesman.*
2. *You will tell the press everything they need to know and nothing they need not know.*

*Signed:
Douglas MacArthur*

It was a very simple, direct order. While it didn't give me much guidance, it certainly gave me a lot of freedom.

Q: Why did General MacArthur pick you?

A: I'm not entirely sure. Perhaps he felt I knew something about the Korean situation. Or perhaps he felt I was known to the chief of staff who had confidence in me. Or perhaps I was simply "Mr. Available," someone who was in the plans section and could explain to the press corps what was happening in Korea.

Q: How long were you at this job before you moved on?

A: I was the spokesman and continued to work in the plans section until we left Tokyo to join the invasion forces headed for Korea. I think this was around September 5th, about ten days before we landed at Inchon. During the early days of the war we were looking everywhere we could throughout the Pacific Theater and throughout the Army for troops to send to Korea to stabilize the situation.

Within the FECOM staff there were, broadly speaking, two schools of thought. One school of thought, the prevailing one, was that we should pull our troops back into a perimeter at Pusan and evacuate them to Japan. The second school of thought, the one held by my boss, Colonel Armstrong, was that we could land an amphibious force in Korea instead of evacuating our forces. He believed, and we in the plans section concurred, that once we evacuated Korea, there would be very little opportunity to go back. Accordingly, we began thinking along these lines in mid-July. It took that much time to determine what was happening in Korea and how seriously the situation would deteriorate before we could stop the enemy. Around the first of August, we planned an amphibious force to outflank the North Koreans and thus save us from having to evacuate our troops.

Q: Would you tell me about the idea of a landing farther up the coast from Pusan and how you were involved in it?

A: Once we got the okay from our boss, three of us worked up an invasion plan. One was Colonel James Landrum, who was a distinguished war hero who had been seriously wounded in the Pacific War. He is now a retired major general, living in Hawaii. The second was Colonel Lynne Smith, who became a brigadier general before the end of the Korean War. Smith was a very bright officer but a practical one. I've lost track of him. And I was the third.

It is interesting that when we developed our plans, all of us had the same idea of landing on the west coast behind the enemy's front lines. One of my fellow planners, I think it was Smith, thought we should land at the "hinge," the front line itself. The other, Landrum, thought we should land farther up, about 10 kilometers behind the front line. My idea was to penetrate deep, about 25 kilometers beyond the front line. Colonel Armstrong decided not to make the decision himself, but had us present our plans directly to General MacArthur.

General MacArthur listened carefully to the first plan of hitting at the hinge. It was the classic solution. He then listened to the plan of landing farther up the coast. By the time he got to me, I was trembling. I thought MacArthur might not consider me bold but simply foolish for recommending we land so deep. MacArthur, however, surprised us all. He went to the charts, picked up a grease pencil, and drew a big arrow more than 100 kilometers up the west coast opposite Seoul. "One should land as close as possible to the objective, and the objective is the capital," he said. "You're all too timid. You're pusillanimous. You should think boldly and decisively? He said he had learned from the Pacific War that the best way to produce results was by island-hopping. So why not terrain-hop? "Land at Inchon," he said, "have you considered that?"

"Yes, General, we thought of it briefly," I said. "But we decided there were several good reasons against it. First, it is very close to Seoul and the enemy would certainly be defending the capital in great force. Second, it was the most difficult of all areas for a landing because the tides are so great. Inchon has a 31-foot tide-the second largest tidal area in the world. We would have difficulty getting a force on land, and it would be hard to support them once they got there."

MacArthur simply said: "Go for the throat, Seoul is the objective. And as for the tides," he said, "don't take counsel of your fears. Physical obstacles can be overcome by good planning, strong nerves, and will power." We went back to our office and developed the plan to land at Inchon.

But the plan was far from having the approval of Washington. In the first place, the Pentagon thought it might be better to evacuate our troops from Pusan. They thought a Dunkirk back to Japan was the best solution. However, if there was to be an amphibious landing, they thought that the worst place to land was Inchon.

General MacArthur invited the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Tokyo to discuss the plan. After we had presented it to the chiefs, the Air Force chief spoke first. He thought it was unnecessary to land troops amphibiously. "Given sufficient priority," he said, "the enemy's supply lines could be so heavily bombarded that he would have to pull back."

The chief of Naval Operations was next. “A 31-foot tide,” he said, “made an amphibious landing infeasible. We could not get sufficient troops in before the tide turned,” he said, “and the troops ashore would be driven back into the sea. Besides,” he said, “the area is heavily protected with powerful sea mines and underwater obstacles.”

The Army chief of staff thought we were planning to land where the enemy would defend most strongly-Seoul.

The chairman of the JCS [Joint Chiefs of Staff], General Lawton Collins, was quiet. He knew MacArthur well and hesitated to take him on.

Then General MacArthur took the floor. Crisply and elegantly, often citing examples from the Peloponnesian Wars and other classic battles, MacArthur began to charm the Chiefs. His lecture to them was a tour de force. After he finished, General Collins said, "I think we all approve, don't we?" The other Chiefs were too intimidated to object.

The next day, General MacArthur called us into his office, one at a time. When it came my turn MacArthur placed his arm around my shoulders and said, ‘Colonel Rowny, Inchon shall go down in history as the 22d Great Battle of the World.’ From my West Point studies I knew there had been 18. My mind wandered for a second-where were the other three? But I soon came back to earth as MacArthur pumped my hand.

Feeling about eight feet tall, I went home and told my wife what MacArthur had said. "I believe he can put on his trousers two legs at a time," I said. "I really believe he can walk on water."

- Q: To go back a bit, Task Force Smith was the first U.S. group to meet the enemy. They came up just about to Osan where we later had K-55 and Fifth Air Force Headquarters. Did you follow that operation from Tokyo?
- A: Other officers, perhaps the operational side of the G-3 staff followed it while the three of us worked on the landing up the coast. I know I was personally quite busy because I had to brief the press every day. I probably briefed them on Task Force Smith, but don't recall it.
- Q: Did you have any real problems with the press?

A: Yes, I had problems with the press, but nothing to compare with the problems of today's world. Today, the press is much more demanding and much more insistent that they need to know details. They speculate upon and criticize everything in sight. They editorialize more today than they did back then when they were content simply to report the news. Every day I had some minor crisis or another in dealing with the press. But overall, it went fairly well and I had a rather good rapport with the press.

Several of the reporters got wind of the fact that we were working on an amphibious plan and questioned me about it. I told them it was nothing I could comment upon. Off the record, I told them they were correct but appealed to them not to tip off the enemy. The press corps kept the secret and did not telegraph our plan to the enemy. I was pleased that no leaks occurred.

Q: Let me revert back to your days at OPD. Did you have any influence on the Japanese peace treaty or the planned occupation?

A: Yes, I had a piece of the action, working on studies, even before VJ Day, pertaining to the postwar period. We didn't know just how the war would come out. But even then we were making plans for the future of Japan and tried to shape a long-term Japanese-U.S. relationship. We dealt with such questions as the final disposition of the emperor and how to best handle the Japanese after the war. All this, of course, was well before the days of the Marshall Plan. But we had the same kinds of ideas for rebuilding Japan that we did for Europe. General MacArthur wanted to see Japan get on its feet and established as a going economic society as rapidly as possible. He rejected any idea of revenge or vindictiveness. MacArthur said we should give the Japanese all the help we could, once we had defeated them.

MacArthur had a strong hand in our planning, and we relied heavily on his input. We drew up our studies, summarized them, and sent them to MacArthur for his comments. He influenced many of the plans for the better. I have previously mentioned that most of Washington thought that the emperor should be executed. MacArthur disagreed. He believed we would have to exercise strong authority in Japan and could only do so through -someone in whom the Japanese had absolute faith I'm now repeating myself, but MacArthur thought the emperor was the only person who could keep the Japanese society together. He was convinced that an occupation force would not be able to control and guide the destiny of Japan.

Another controversy at the time was whether or not there should be a fourpower occupation of Japan. The State Department favored it, but the Pentagon opposed it, as did MacArthur. I recall that MacArthur said that under no circumstances

would he countenance heading a four-power occupation. If Washington wanted such a solution, he said, they'd have to get themselves another U.S. commander. He did not believe a four-power occupation was necessary, desirable, or even workable. In retrospect, seeing what happened in Berlin, he was right to put his foot down.

Q: Once General MacArthur got the Chiefs' approval for the landing at Inchon, what happened?

A: We got down to serious planning on the details, of which, of course, there were many. We had to alert the troops, assemble the ships and supplies, and do it all in a big hurry. It was not an easy task because the troops, ships and supplies had to come from all over the Pacific Theater and even the United States.

Q: Let me go back once more to the days immediately following the time North Korea attacked Seoul on the 25th of June. What units went over first?

A: General MacArthur called General J. Lawton Collins, the chairman of the JCS, on the 25th of June. Collins approved MacArthur's request that the Fifth Regimental Combat Team be dispatched to Korea immediately to reinforce the troops there. We were thankful we had at least one regimental combat team to move to Korea at the beginning of the war.

Q: Where was the team located?

A: It was located in Hawaii. General Almond kept pushing General Walton Walker, the Eighth Army commander, to train the infantry divisions and get them in shape for combat. Walker believed there was no real urgency; he did not want to make extraordinary demands on the training establishment or the troops. But Almond kept pushing and complained to MacArthur that Walker wasn't vigorous enough. MacArthur called Walker in and said, "Look, when Almond tells you to do something, he speaks for me." From then on, there was no love lost between Walker and Almond. When the plans were being drawn up for the Inchon invasion, Almond insisted-and MacArthur approved-that the X Corps, which Almond would command, not report through Walker, but directly to General MacArthur. In addition, Almond was to continue as MacArthur's chief of staff. X corps was to be a separate force and not a unit under Eighth Army.

Q: I'm getting ahead a bit, but by the time Walker was killed in a jeep accident on Christmas Eve, had MacArthur lost **faith** in Walker's ability?

A: I'm not certain. But the fact that MacArthur backed Almond was undoubtedly a blow to Walker's morale. MacArthur obviously believed that Almond was on the right track. He approved Almond's ideas that we had better get the U.S. out of being occupation troops and begin training them for combat. Our troops in Japan were in unbelievably bad shape physically, mentally, and morally. Many U.S. soldiers had Japanese live-in girlfriends and there were thousands of Japanese-American babies. The troops had become lazy and fat. Pulling them back into training camps was long overdue.

But to get back to Walker, if MacArthur had lost complete confidence in him, he would have relieved him. You will recall that MacArthur was a man of strong loyalties and believed that Walker was loyal to him. Still, a gulf opened up between Walker and Almond, and when push came to shove, MacArthur backed Almond.

Engineer, X Corps, Eighth Army, Inchon, Korea

Q: Let's get back to the planning for the Inchon invasion. When did you learn that you were going to be the engineer for the landing?

A: I learned I would be the engineer for the Inchon landing the day after MacArthur got final approval from the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the plan. I was notified that I would be the corps engineer of the X Corps operation. Although still a lieutenant colonel, I would have all the privileges and authority of a brigadier general.

There were many problems involved in getting the troops together, putting them on ships, and getting them moving in a short period of time. The first favorable date for a landing was September 15th. If we failed to meet that date we would have to wait 60 days for the next favorable set of tides. By then the weather would be freezing and the troops in the south of Korea overrun. We had to make the 15 September date.

Another problem we had to resolve was whether to have the troops hit the beach from small assault boats or from LSTs [landing ships, tank]. The troop ships would have to stay several miles away because of the tides. This meant that small boats would have a long way to come—two or three miles—and the troops would be subject to enemy fire. On the other hand, if we landed troops by beaching LSTs, they would be vulnerable to North Korean counterattacks until the next high tide. We spent a lot of time and effort trying to figure out from aerial photographs