

August 29, 2020

70 Years Ago, The Korean War, The Plain Speaker, Hazelton, PA

Korean War Weekly Front Pages

27 August – 2 September 1950

The Plain Speaker, Hazelton, PA

“Stacked up by the hundreds.”



On Monday the North Koreans threw 40,000 troops into a desperate offensive along the whole rim of the northern front. The power drive dented the Allied line, with the Reds taking the town of Uihong from South Korean defenders. Heavy fighting was reported all the way from the front city of Waegwan, northwest of Taegu, to the coast at the Sea of Japan, 45 miles to the east, but US officials expressed belief that the critical airfield at Pohang would be held. US artillery ringed the airport and supported hard-pressed South Korean troops. So furious was the Pohang sector battle that both sides were counterattacking at the same time. The

Allied troops held the airport city but had lost Kigye, nine miles northwest of Pohang, which had changed hands three times in 48 hours. By Thursday UN forces backed by 90mm Pershing tanks had halted the advance of some 26,000 Reds on Pohang. The communists had failed to carry out an order to take Pohang before the end of August.

On the southern front, the Reds hit American lines near Haman, about 35 miles west of Pusan. American and South Korean troops turned back a North Korean bayonet charge in hand-to-hand combat. One American machinegun nest was wiped out by Red bayonets. Haman was later recaptured, which temporarily blunted the Red drive.

Near the center of the line, another 20,000-man communist force attacked South Korean infantrymen 18 miles north of Taegu, the rail hub. Taegu and Pusan, the principal UN seaport at the southeast tip of the Korean peninsula, were the main objectives for the North Koreans in the southeast. The US First Cavalry kicked off against Reds entrenched on a 1,700 foot hill northeast of Waegwan, and gained within 200 feet of the summit in five hours. To the south on the western front US artillery blasted Red attempts to cross the Naktong River, inflicting heavy losses.

On Thursday, North Korean forces jumped off in a new attack, striking at 15 points simultaneously in a drive on the southern coastal sector which may signal the long-expected communist offensive aimed at throwing UN forces into the sea. Up to two North Korean divisions pushed forward in an attack against the US 25th Division. The sudden blow followed an ominous lull-before-the-storm which had puzzled American commanders. The next day, the 25th counterattacked, but was forced to abandon the strategic town of Yongsan, only 12 miles from the highway that linked Taegu with Pusan. "Red bodies are stacked up by the hundreds," an officer said, "but they're still coming." By the end of the week, terrified remnants of the two communist divisions were fleeing in a rout as tank-led Allied infantrymen attacked at vital points all along the 120-mile front

Two American artillerymen had been cut off and hid in Red-infested hills for 18 days. They were beside their guns when a North Korean slipped in and ambushed them, throwing a grenade which failed to explode. The two crawled through the line of incoming North Koreans and up to the hills, where they lived on turnips out of the fields, cucumbers and castoff "C" ration cans, evading capture by Red patrols and surviving the machine gunning of a house they were hiding in.

A fleet of 90 Superfortresses smashed at targets in North Korea, plastering Chinnampo, Pyongyang's port, with 600 tons of bombs. B-29s, light bombers and fighters hit bridges in the Seoul area, while fighters and fighter bombers struck hard at Reds in support of UN troops on the battlefield.

The Chinese correspondent for the Soviet newspaper Pravda reported that the Chinese people were ready to defend their borders against the US. He repeated Communist China's assertion that

American planes had attacked Chinese territory. The reported attacks were "arousing deep indignation" among the Chinese populace, who were demanding that the "American bandits" be brought to account.

Some high rank US officers were appalled by the shortcomings of green US troops in the early Korean fighting. They said the Army should drastically revise its recruiting and training program, stressing recruitment of fighting men who are willing to die for their country and forget about bland appeals to travel-hungry, security and pension-conscious youngsters.

The US Secretary of State said it was up to the UN whether its forces should drive beyond the 38th parallel which divided North and South Korea. He suggested that perhaps events might take such a course that the question of crossing the line would resolve itself. He also said that by word and deed the US was doing its utmost to discourage the Chinese communists from becoming involved in the Korean fighting.

President Truman called for a 3 million man American fighting force, up from 1.5 million, to block the path of communist aggression. This pointed to greater spending, higher taxes and larger draft calls, yet the plan for a broader mobilization drew quick, bipartisan pledges of Congressional support.

(Photo courtesy newspapers.com, Hazelton Plain Speaker)