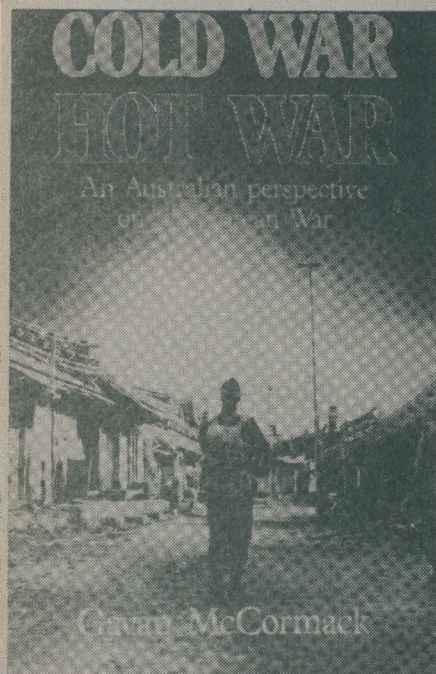


CURRYING FAVOUR WITH THE US



Cold War, Hot War: An Australian Perspective on the Korean War by Gavan McCormack. Hale and Iremonger, 1983. \$11.95 paperback; \$24.95 hardback.

Reviewed by
**Hilda
Andrews**

The recent Korean Airline disaster and the assassinations in Rangoon of members of the South Korean Cabinet have brought a sharp reminder of the continuing explosive situation in that area. This well-documented history of the still unresolved Korean War and of the events leading up to it could not have been more timely under the circumstances.

In the appendix to his book, Gavan McCormack points out that "from 1953, when the Korean War ended, to 1981, not a single monograph or scholarly article was published in Australia about the war". He spends some time examining and criticising the first book, which appeared in 1981, by Robert O'Neill, "Strategy and Diplomacy", Vol. 1 of "Australia in the Korean War 1950-1953". Among many of its omissions, McCormack singles out the omission of any reference to Wilfred Burchett's reporting from the North which he regards as extremely relevant and to which he himself refers a number of times.

Gavan McCormack examines questions which have caused much controversy. On which side actually started the war by invading the other, he does not come to any definite conclusion. On whether the Soviet Union was involved, he thinks there is little evidence that Stalin had any foreknowledge of the impending conflict. The only meeting Kim Il Sung had with Stalin was eighteen months prior to the outbreak of the war, and McCormack considers this too early to be relevant. As for China, the American administration of the time dismissed China, in their ignorance, as a Kremlin puppet.

On the employment of germ warfare by the U.S. Army, he concludes, on the basis of material which has only

recently become available, "and finally since it is now clear that for 25 years the United States lied to the world to cover up its acquisition of the Ishii unit's (the Japanese germ warfare unit which operated against China in World War II) grisly secrets and thus to protect the perpetrators of some of the greatest crimes against humanity committed during World War II the possibility that it may have lied in denying the Chinese and North Korean allegations of 1952 has to be treated with absolute seriousness. The case closed for thirty years has to be reopened".

The chapter "Australian Commitment" will be of special interest to readers. The story is an involved one, but McCormack's final sentence sums it up — "The goal of assisting Korea ran a poor second to that of currying favour with the United States".

Though an academic study, this book is very readable. The author is a senior lecturer at La Trobe University, has spent many years studying Japanese and Chinese, and has published many works on Japan, China and Korea. In 1980 he visited both Koreas as the guest of cultural organisations in Seoul and Pyongyang.

Hilda Andrews is a member of the ALR collective.