

EDITORIAL

Put draft issues and D-Day politics aside

"These are the boys of Pointe du Hoc. These are the men who took the cliffs. These are the champions who helped free a continent. These are the heroes who helped end a war," Ronald Reagan said at Normandy, rekindling tear-wrenching emotions in the veterans who stood by to listen.

Next week President Clinton will attempt to do the same at the biggest D-Day commemoration in history. The 50th anniversary of the the June 6, 1944 invasion of Europe will be the grandest in history.

As the generation of veterans who fought in the war comes to an end, this celebration will be the last, at least of this magnitude. The three-day, two-continent event has been in the works for over two years and will include several thousand military personnel representing all the services.

President Clinton will be speaking to veterans of war and people who lost people they loved while serving during World War II. But, the veterans will have a hard time seeing eye-to-eye with Clinton. Reagan was part of the D-Day generation and he was easy to identify with. Certainly there will be a sense of animosity knowing that Clinton sidestepped the only draft he was ever eligible for during the Vietnam War.

The difference in the emotions and politics separating World War II and the Vietnam War will probably be buried under the simple title of "draft dodger," the title that rang clear in the attacks by Reagan during the last election and still rings clear, without a doubt, in the ears of those who did serve the country in the service. The draft, however, is only one of the issues, but it is the only one that matters.

The fact that Clinton is part of a different generation won't matter. The fact that Clinton is not a World War II vet won't matter. The fact that Clinton is president of a world that is radically different from the world in which Reagan was president won't matter. The fact that Americans' attitudes toward Soviet expansion has turned 180 degrees since Reagan was president won't matter. The fact that the Vietnam War was a dumb war won't matter. The only thing that matters is the draft.

Clinton has made his argument and explained his reasons for not participating in the draft. Although there are too many emotions in those involved, the explanation, no matter how good, won't ever matter to some. But, at this commemoration, it should be a time to look beyond Clinton's past and focus on this country's past.

This event will mark a true test of Clinton's ability to reconcile differences between people who don't understand the differences and don't care to. People should see beyond the politics and issues and recognize the giant steps this country made during the World War II era. It is hoped the spirit of the event won't be lost in the things that "won't matter," but instead will be a time to show everyone that for a period of time this country hummed in unison, working together to fight for change and working together until the end was victory.



OPINION

North Korea: A ticking bomb



MARIUS MELAND

We don't usually hear much about North Korea. Once in a while the media report disturbing stories about Kim Il Sung, the octogenarian "Great Leader" who presides over the most vulgar cult of personality since the glory days of Joseph Stalin. For the most part, however, North Korea remains closed to the rest of the world, nestled as it is on a peninsula between Communist China and the U.S.-supported capitalist South.

But now, North Korea is on the front page of newspapers, and the news is most disagreeable. Kim won't allow the International Atomic Energy Agency to inspect all the nuclear sites in the country, and observers think they know why: He's trying to build nuclear bombs.

Not since the Cold War has the threat of nuclear annihilation been so imminent. Nothing could be more frightful than the detonation of a nuclear bomb, destroying all the animal and plant life of an entire region and polluting large areas of the world for generations to come. The fact that human beings invented such a weapon of total destruction speaks not only of the vast powers of humankind, but also of its potential for evil.

But during the Cold War, there was always the presumption that the nuclear superpowers would act rationally. Although the United States and the Soviet Union accumulated enough weapons to exterminate all life on Earth, people assumed that the weapons would primarily be used as a deterrent.

Nobody could conceive that anyone would be so utterly evil as to open the gates of hell and let the hell-hounds loose. It's what President John F. Kennedy called the MAD, or Mutual Assured Destruction, policy: so atrocious that no country in its right mind would even think about acting it out.

With Kim, however, the situation is different. Over and over again, history has provided ample evidence that North Korea's "Great Leader" doesn't abide by the laws of reason. This is the man responsible for holding the crew of a captured American spy ship for 11 months in 1968, blowing up half the South Korean cabinet in Rangoon in 1983, and shooting down a South Korean airliner over the Andaman Sea in 1987.

Kim is just the last chapter in the tragedy that is Korean history. And in this tragedy, the United States, along with the Soviet Union and Japan, plays the role of the villain. Before World War II, Korea was a colony that the Japanese ran with unusual brutality for 35 years. Under the Japanese iron rule, the imperialists drafted thousands of Koreans to work in mines, factories and military bases, and Korean women were brought to the front to serve as "pleasure girls" for Japanese soldiers during World War II.

After World War II, Korea once again became a mere tool in a game played by imperialistic superpowers. In 1945, the United States drew a line along the 38th parallel and declared that the Japanese should surrender to the Soviet army in the north and to the U.S. army in the south. Thus, with the stroke of a general's pen, Korea became a divided nation, a casualty of the Cold War reasoning that governed geography after World War II.

Kim, a staunch, Soviet-loyal communist who fought in the war against the Japanese, became Stalin's straw-man in

Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea. An admirer of Stalin, Kim soon tried to emulate his image as the "father of the nation." In a cult of personality so bizarre that it could only be surpassed by Hitler, Stalin and Mao, the "Great Leader" began the construction of enormous monuments in his own name.

His birthplace was converted into a national shrine. For his 60th birthday, his people built a colossal bronze statue, and for his 70th birthday they built an Arch de Triomphe taller than the one in Paris. South Korean sources claim that North Korea spent \$4 billion — out of an annual \$25 billion budget — on public works projects in commemoration of Kim's 70th birthday. That figure would be absurd in any nation, but in a country where people are so poor that they're advised to eat no more than twice a day, such financial recklessness is no less than insane.

But Kim's ambitions extend beyond the borders of North Korea. Throughout much of his rule he has regarded it as his destiny to be the one who unifies the South and the North. In 1950, with the help of the Soviet and Chinese armies, he launched a fullscale invasion of South Korea, estimating that it would take no more than three weeks to conquer the South.

What Kim didn't expect, however, was that the United Nations, whose Security Council had shifted its policies toward U.S. interests because of a Soviet boycott, would take sides with the South in the war. Shortly after the U.S. intervention, American warplanes bombed Pyongyang so intensely that only a few chimneys broke the flattened horizon of the capital. When the armistice was signed three years later, the war had resulted in four million casualties and the devastation of 33 percent of all Korean homes.

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