



The Memorial Day That May Never Come Again



by Bob Considine

One of America's most distinguished reporters, Bob Considine has won many journalistic awards over the years. Most recently, his outstanding coverage of the death of Pope Pius XII earned him the coveted Overseas Press Club Award.

FROM PURSED LIPS and golden horns the sad sweet sound of taps flows over the land and its honored dead.

Public officials from the President on down bear wreaths to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers at Arlington or to the simple headstone of a forgotten grave in a forgotten land. Another Memorial Day is at hand.

Could it be the last?

It could. Look again at artist Homer Hill's nostalgic cover of today's Family Weekly. The memorabilia of a type of conflict which may never take place again!

The stereopticon slide suggests scenes of World War I, a war of trenches and foot soldiers.

The bugle might have cut the foggy murk of the Argonne Forest, stirring the hearts and lifting the spirit of the Lost Battalion. The World War II snapshots—the memory of a night at Maxim's, maybe, the recollection of a day when timeless Rome welcomed another conquering army.

"Timeless Rome," and every other precious treasury on earth, every city, work of art, place of worship, university, library, school, museum, hearth, noble thought can now be obliterated by the hand of man.

Our cover illustration sings a happy song of survival in the midst of war: the letter from home, the ribbon to be worn in pride, the victory-day newspapers to be put away against the day when the kids ask what Pop did Over There.

There might be no survivors, to speak of, after a World War III. World War III would produce

not an Unknown Soldier but the Unknown Species.

The Soviet Union either now has or will soon have the ability to deliver to any part of the United States, or our bases overseas, hydrogen bombs of fantastically horrible power and destructiveness.

By 1962 or thereabouts, the United States will have the identical or superior intercontinental ballistic missile striking force.

A short time later, Britain will have a similar capacity. France is busy building herself an atomic arsenal. Red China has announced like plans which, if achieved, will place the fate of a great portion of mankind in the hands of a nation whose diabolic Communist leaders would welcome a retaliatory blow which might reduce the mainland's population by 300,000,000.

Bernard M. Baruch is of the shocked opinion that a day will come—unless the United Nations can achieve nuclear disarmament—when virtually every nation on earth will have atomic weapons, just as every little nation now has its modest supply of guns, planes, tanks, ships.

NOT LONG AGO the writer witnessed the test of an American hydrogen bomb drop over a little island near Eniwetok and Bikini in the far Pacific. It was not a multi-megaton H-bomb. Yet there wasn't a man on our observers' ship, 39 miles away from the point of detonation, who did not feel that he was about to die. In the black pre-dawn of that morning, the whole Pacific Ocean seemed lighted by the most horribly bright white light man has ever seen. We had been equipped with thick weld-

er's glasses, with lenses as black as pitch, but the light burst through them like glittering and stunning bullets. We dropped our heads in our folded arms, as if beating off an unseen assailant, and it was as if the light was frying the marrow in our bones. The flash of heat which accompanied the light was unbearable while it lasted. Some great hand seemed to have grabbed our heads and thrust them in an oven.

And in the awed silence of that moment (the sound of the enormous conflagration would not reach us for several minutes), a man beside me half-sobbed, "Dear God . . . suppose this had happened to my home town."

This, as we said, was a minor H-bomb. We have them 10 or 20 times as powerful. So do the Russians. So will the British, surely, and probably every other major power on earth.

The memory of many Memorial Days comes back to me as I write these words. Former President Wilson, broken and pale, watching as the robust Warren G. Harding dedicated the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier . . . 1921. F.D.R. walking on his braces to put a wreath on the same Tomb in 1941, while the Japanese prepared to strike. Gen. Mark Clark, facing the endless white crosses at Anzio . . . after the Big War. President Eisenhower at Arlington last year, pinning the Congressional Medal of Honor on the caskets of two who would join the Unknown Soldier—one of them from World War II, the other from Korea.

And always the Gold Star mothers, weeping and wondering if this was their son.

War, as waged in pre-nuclear times, was Hell—as Sherman observed. Yet, for the living, it had its compensation. It brought adventure, travel, excitement, and even a chance to strut. It produced songs that rollicked and rolled—Dixie . . . Tipperary . . . Over There . . . Oh, Frenchie . . . Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition.

World War III would produce no song, no champagne label, no memory of a quiet auto tour through France on a furlough, with a pretty girl at every stop.

It would end life as we know it; end even the observance of the deaths of those who died in lesser wars. The Air Force now has in its files a report stating that a "salvo" of Russian nuclear missiles might kill 10,000,000 Americans in a matter of minutes. There are probably documents in the Kremlin which estimate what the Strategic Air Command of the U.S. Air Force could do to the great cities of Russia in retaliation.

Plainly, the vision of a World War III calls for a more terrible word than Sherman's Hell.

I've long thought that all the delegates to the UN, plus all the presidents, dictators, premiers, and kings of the earth, should be forced to watch a test of the latest weapon designed to exterminate the race. These are the war makers and have been for untold centuries. Perhaps, having watched such tests, they will become peacemakers.

Or so we pray, as we prepare to pay homage to men who died in battles wherein the tools of destruction were but toys.

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