

The Lessons of the Korean War

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Neil A. Salonen, president of the Freedom Leadership Foundation, addresses a rally which drew 2000 people to the New York Hilton on June 25, 1975 to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War.

This year, we feel that there is a special significance in marking the anniversary of that tragic chapter in Korean History when the war broke out. Not just because a quarter of a century has passed, but because it's undoubtedly clear to all those who've studied the situation that the danger of a renewed outbreak of the war is more clearly present today than at any time since the armistice was signed in 1953.

Over 50,000 American lives were sacrificed throughout the three-year Korean War. As a result of that, an armistice was signed which has been fraught with tension, has been repeatedly aggravated -- almost broken -- on many occasions. The memory of the American people, which understood so clearly the reason for our support to the Republic of Korea in 1953, has been the object of a barrage of propaganda in the last 25 years. Many people -- young people especially -- are very unclear about things that were all too obvious then. On any American college campus today, you can easily start a debate about who even started the Korean War. There's been a tremendous movement on the campuses to indicate that the war really began when the military regime of the South provoked and attacked the Northern zone, which was at that time occupied by Soviet troops. This is simply a big lie in the face of the record.

But without someone to speak up and set the record straight, gradually the awareness of the American people about that crucial conflict, about the events which led up to it, and which have followed since, is in danger of being tragically distorted. In a recent opinion poll, we found that despite our long history of support for Korea, and our long-standing treaty for mutual support, only 61 percent of the American people favor honoring that treaty if the South were to be attacked by the North. Many people feel that it would be a mistake for America to -- in the words of so many speakers today -- "be involved in another Asian war." They prefer to think that we can let other parts of the world deal with their own affairs.

I think to really understand the significance of that moment in America's history, we must first examine the basic nature of Communism itself and our reason for opposing it.

There are as many reasons to oppose Communism as there are groups centered around those reasons. There are reasons of nationalism -- particularly from the countries of Eastern Europe. There are many people who oppose Communism because it's the antithesis of democracy. There are many people who are not political at all, opposed to Communism because of its barbarity to humanity. All of these are valid and significant reasons for opposing Communism, and we share them.

But we feel there's a much more fundamental reason why everyone in a free society should be against Communism. Communism is atheistic. The essence of Communism is materialism -- the belief that man is just a blob of matter and ultimately has no more value than a chair. Communism therefore is the enemy of God, and as such, it's the duty of all religious people to unite together to oppose it. The history of Communism throughout the world has been a history of religious persecution in Tibet, in the countries of Eastern Europe, in the Soviet Union, in China, and in North Korea where Christianity, side by side with Buddhism and Confucianism has been persecuted, oppressed, and by every means known, sought to be

eliminated as a belief among the people.

Very often, in contrasting Western society and Communist society, the corruption in the Communist world is compared to the corruption and shortcomings of a free society. I would like all of you to want to recognize the shortcomings of our country or any country, and to take responsibility to do something about it. But I would also want to be the first to rise up and say that the shortcomings of the societies of the free world are the shortcomings of being unable to fully realize our ideals as yet, but still having the freedom to continue to strive for them. They're the shortcomings of individual human beings.



South Korean troops guard one of the recently discovered tunnels built by North Korea as part of their overall military build-up

They're not the fundamental, ideological shortcomings of the ideology itself. The corruption, inhumanity, and antidemocratic nature of the Communist regime is not a perversion of the Communist doctrine -- it is the Communist ideology itself. As such, it's in a fundamental clash with the guiding ideologies of the Free World. The principles of Communism have produced the most unprecedented atrocities in human history. The record set in those countries has been for worse than any the Free World has ever known.

As a primary example, we need only look to what is admittedly the most hardline Stalinist regime in the world today, that of Kim Il Sung in Communist North Korea. The fruits of atheistic Communism can clearly be seen: in place of religion, President Kim has created a cult of personality which deifies himself as the source of all goodness and happiness. In marriage, the young couple in North Korea must vow their loyalty as part of the marriage vow to the doctrine of Kim Il Sung. Children in state controlled nurseries are taught that Kim Il Sung is their father, that they are children of the State, and that their relationship with their physical parents is far less important than their relationship to their national father Kim Il Sung. He is revered as the son of heaven by the populace. Not content to have his country follow the doctrines of Communism alone, he's taken the Communist doctrine and given it his own interpretation.

Under this so-called "Juche" ideal -- the ideal of individual self-responsibility -- he's taken that small nation of North Korea and arrogantly proclaimed that they alone have the true Communism. When he wasn't able to receive the support that he needed or wanted from the Soviet Union or Red China, he turned to the Third World. While balancing the Chinese against the Soviets, effectively neutralizing their ability to control him, Kim Il Sung has sacrificed the growth of his own nation in order to pour money and economic aid into the countries of Asia and Africa in an effort to be recognized as the leader of the

Third World.

Recently Kim Il Sung made a tour of some of the countries of Africa and Eastern Europe and our representative in Mauritania said that the response was incredible. Kim is so xenophobic, so self-centered, that large banners and posters express the gratitude of the people of Mauritania, or all those countries of Africa, to "their beloved and respected comrade, Kim Il Sung."

The principles of democracy are based on belief in the individual sanctity of human life. It is our moral duty to oppose Communism, not just because of politics or economics, but because its ideology is immoral.

I feel it is important for us to understand the significance of Korea in the context of this struggle between the Communist and Free World societies. The obligation and the desire of free and democratic nations is to show concern for the developing nations of the world. The desire of the Communists, in opposition to that, is to expand their control, so there has developed a global competition on every level between the two blocs of nations. The ideologies of Communism -- most effectively exported by the Soviet Union because of their great economic and military power and the doctrines of a free democratic and religious society -- again, most effectively exported and supported by the United States because of our position in the Free World -- are the subject of debate in virtually every country throughout the world today.

Korea is now the forefront of this struggle, first of all because of the tremendous threat of renewed outbreak of hostilities. Communists and those opposed to them are working side by side in African nations, in Asian nations, competing on a level of ideas, competing on the level of economic aid. That competition can and should be healthy, and it should be one that we welcome and that we rise to. But the struggle between Communism and freedom in Korea is far beyond that level. It's a struggle of armed divisions. Not just North Korea against South Korea, but a nation in the North which is armed by the Soviet Union against a nation in the South which is protected by the mandate of the United Nations.

It has therefore become -- particularly since the collapse of the struggle in Southeast Asia -- the very center of and possibly the trigger and the key to the question of peace in the world today. Since the defeat of the United States in Vietnam, Kim Il Sung has been working aggressively in order to renew and to mobilize support throughout the world. Immediately after the collapse of Saigon, the North Korean regime moved up the number of tank and readied for assault in very way; they went on alert. But Kim Il Sung knows very well that the question is not going to be decided between the two Koreas alone. Therefore what's crucial is the attitude of the Soviet Union in supplying him, and the attitude of the United States in supplying the country to the South.

America is influenced by world public opinion. Therefore, it's crucial to Kim Il Sung that world public opinion help him push the United States out of South Korea. He's gone to many of the nations which will be debating the continued mandate of the United Nations Command this fall in the General Assembly, repeating the line that, "The key to peace in the Korean peninsula is the withdrawal of all foreign troops." Therefore, the United Nations should leave, and let the question of the reunification of Korea be solved by Koreans alone.

In 1962, the North Korean Workers Party, the Communist Party of North Korea, resolved to enforce Kim Il Sung's so-called Four Military Goals: the arming of the entire people; the fortification of the entire land; officer training; and the modernization of military equipment. By every means, the people of North Korea have been preparing for war. Their athletic games are conducted in such a way which prepares them as reserve units to participate in a wartime struggle, involving their skill at behind-the-lines activities such as changing bandages or resupplying troops with ammunition. In the kindergartens of North Korea, three-year-olds practice stabbing with a bayonet an effigy representing a U.S. soldier.

The most clear evidence of aggressive intentions, however, has only come to light in the last few months. In gross violation of the armistice that was signed between the Koreans, North Korea built tunnels under the demilitarized zone which could be used for infiltration and also for the rapid movement of troops and artillery into the South at the time of renewed hostilities. Only two tunnels have been found, but it's believed that there may very well be work done to some extent on at least 17 tunnels along the front line. At first, the North Koreans completely denied that these tunnels even existed. When it became only too clear that the free press around the world was going to believe and carry the story, and the people of the world were going to accept it, they altered their line, and indicated that these tunnels had in fact been constructed to provide a way for the people of the South to escape to the North when the revolution broke out.

The Communist bloc may make the argument that what Kim Il Sung primarily opposes is the threat of invasion of the North posed by the U.S. troops which are there; if only they would go home, war preparations could end and peace would return to the Korean peninsula. But would withdrawal of troops bring any different results than it did in 1949, when it was after our troops left that war broke out? In fact, it is the presence of American troops over the last 25 years which has been the key stabilizing element.

Korea is in the front line because of the general international situation. It's right in the heart of the struggle between the Communist Chinese, the Soviets, the Japanese and the United States. Therefore the interests of all four superpowers are at stake.

During the war in Vietnam, 80 percent of the aid to North Vietnam came from the Soviets. Many times their Communist Party was ideologically closer to the Red Chinese, but after the take-overs a few months ago, it's the Soviets who are occupying the former American bases, and it's the Soviets who are praised in the Vietnamese press, as reported by French correspondents still in Saigon. Therefore, from the position of China, they find Soviet influence potentially surrounding them. Effectively, Red China has no sea power. Therefore, the Soviet navy can complete the circle.

The Red Chinese are now aware of the dangers of being completely encircled by the Soviets. For that reason, many believe that they're not interested in seeing a renewed outbreak of hostilities in the Korean peninsula. Even if that's true, the most important thing to remember is that they're not really in a position to influence. Words are words, but wars are fought with guns and tanks, and the Soviets can supply the North Koreans with all that they need. The war could get going with aid from the Soviets, and China would not be in a position to effectively prevent it.

On the other hand, a pro-Western Korea gives the United States the potential of maintaining our current position of detente by keeping the balance between the influence of China and the Soviet Union and Japan. A Communized Korea would make the continuing association of Japan and the United States very difficult.

Korea is part of the ideological conflict throughout the world. Unfortunately, instead of facing the moral issue, all too many policymakers in this country -- already black-and-blue and exhausted from such a tragic confrontation in Indochina -- are unwilling to get involved. The logical extension of that policy is that only the United States will be defended. The growing sense of isolation could be dangerous at home, because it was that same isolation which led to so many miscalculations in the past. America is not leaving the world alone, instead we're leaving the world vulnerable and prey to a highly organized and very materialistic Communist force, centrally spearheaded by the Soviet Union but amply supplemented by North Korea and Red China.

Korea is different in many ways from the other conflicts between the Free World and Communists. In particular, the brand of ideology in North Korea, the "Juche" idea of Kim Il Sung, is now the very idea which is beginning to attract attention and support among the developing nations of Asia. The Communist policies of the Soviet Union are obviously revealing their bankruptcy and the Communist policies of the Chinese so obviously show their shortcomings, to the point where, at the time of the internal revolution in China just a few years ago, they had to have a takeover by the military. The government in Red China is far more a military dictatorship than it is a Communist dictatorship. In many of the provinces of Red China, the Communist Party doesn't even function or exist.

But dictatorship is nothing new to the world. In fact, the "Juche" idea of President Kim Il Sung is very much like the personal, tyrannical ideas of so many leftists before him. The people surrounding him in power in Pyongyang are not his ideological comrades. They were purged long ago. Instead, they are his physical relatives: his son, his wife, some nieces and aunts.

The tragic perception is that so many idealistic young people in America believe that this Marxist ideology is gaining the support of the masses in China, in the Soviet Union, in Korea, and is bringing solutions to the social problems that face us all. In fact, those social questions are solved, but the approach towards them, and the discussion of them is controlled by what are the most terrible dictatorships, the most absolute totalitarian regimes ever established on the face of the earth. The simple rationalization is that a period of dictatorship of the Communist Party has to be established. None of them allow any analysis of their shortcomings, since those shortcomings will be rapidly cleared up as soon as the external threat of U.S. imperialist aggression has been resolved throughout the world.

We in the West have a tendency to overlook the ideological considerations. But this is a mistake which our enemies don't make. So while we might consider the war in Korea to be a war between Koreas, or a war between Asians, in fact the North Korean Communists, in league with their allies in Peking and in Moscow, think of themselves as taking simply more one step in a global confrontation with the imperialistic, capitalistic United States. And having just had such a dramatic victory in Indochina, they feel that the internal situation in America, and the historic momentum must be on their side; therefore, they want to move ahead, to continue to reap the benefits.

For the United States, Korea is in the front line because it's a test of America's commitment to humanitarian values and to our allies around the world. If America fails in Korea, as she did in Vietnam, all the allies of the United States -- so badly shaken now will be completely shaken then and unable to make their policies based on a commitment to peace.

American patience in the struggle against the Communists is not as strong or enduring as the patience of the Communists themselves. Therefore, our allies may think they can't afford to rely on the United States, they have to find their own way, to compromise and relate with the Communists.

In the face of this moral struggle, the most important thing for us to consider is what is our responsibility as Americans? As I mentioned before, the key target of the North Koreans is America, not South Korea. The postage stamps in North Korea show their glorious fighting forces smashing U.S. fighting men. I told you already the story of the children in kindergarten who are taught how to bayonet an American soldier. Their slogans, so easily excused by the State Department as simply put of the way that they keep their population unified, are in fact directed against the United States.

The final target of the Communists is America. So we are already locked in a confrontation. It's simply a question of whether we recognize and accept our responsibilities, or if we choose to ignore them.

At this point, Japan has analyzed very closely the attitudes and policies of the United States. For us, it's simply a question of another country around the world. For them, it's a question of their country. Because we believe in the rights of men and nations to determine their own destinies, we can't adopt the Communist policy of attacking our enemy. Therefore, we can't plan an offensive against the North Koreans, or against the Chinese, or against the Soviets. We have to believe that because their ideologies are so fundamentally in contradiction to basic human nature that they will not endure.

Instead, we have to believe that they represent challenges to our free society, which must be met and responded to with our full commitment. The challenge to the values of our society in Korea is a challenge to our society itself. And it's the one which we must meet not just for the sake of Korea, but for the sake of freedom in all the countries of the world, for the sake of the defense of America, and for the sake of God.

We, as Americans, have a weapon more powerful than any other, and that weapon is the truth. The Bible says, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." We have the weapon, but we don't use it. We have to begin to wage a war of ideology, a war of truth against the Communists -- here at home, in Korea, throughout the world, and ultimately in the Communist countries themselves.

A number of Christian groups have sent Bibles across the Iron Curtain into Eastern Europe countries by tying them to balloons. I think it's very graphic the response of Communist countries, shocking in one way, but also obvious. They have to stand over machine-guns and mow down the Bibles floating by on balloons.

We let Communist literature be disseminated on every corner of America. But because of our belief in the power of the truth, we believe we have the strength to permit that kind of activity and to triumph. And that strength is one that doesn't have to be maintained by fear or by force.

The strategy is to bring an ideological victory over Communism. The first step to win this ideological struggle, we have to avoid a war. So, how to avoid a war in Korea? The same way that we've avoided one for the last 25 years -- by a substantial American commitment. The presence of our troops, and the faithful reiteration of our treaty obligations in Korea has effectively prevented the North Koreans from renewing their hostilities for the last 25 years. And it will continue to do so, as long as we continue to maintain that presence.

The history of the last quarter century gives a clear answer: if the Communists can win, they'll attack. But if they don't attack, it's because they believe they can't win. In 1949, the U.S. withdrew from Korea. In 1950, the Communists attacked. In 1972, the U.S. withdrew from Vietnam. In 1975, Vietnam fell to the Communists.

Therefore, the argument that it's the U.S. troops in Korea that are causing the danger of war is simply not supported by the facts. In fact, exactly the opposite is true: it is the presence of American troops in Korea which is guaranteeing peace, and a strong reiteration of our presence in that country will be the only effective way to guarantee the peace of that country. This is one lesson which must be clearly understood and accepted by all of our people, and all the people of the world. It is the lesson the Communists themselves understand very well.

The next step in an ideological offensive is to educate the people of Korea and throughout the world, through programs, discussions, literature, seminars. If the real story of what life in North Korea is should be told to all the Korean people, and to the people of Asia and America, no one would be attracted and everyone would easily join together, and there'd be no aggression at all.

If even the people of North Korea understood what life is like in the West, in the Free World, even in the South, their unity and aggressive intentions would be seriously impaired. Reverend Moon has been

conducting massive educational programs in Korea, under the auspices of the IFVC, since 1965. Over 700,000 private citizens have been trained and have been made aware so clearly of the ideological considerations.

These people are now unshakeable in their opposition to the Communists. And they are effective exponents: they can tell their children why they are against Communism -- not just because of a conflict in the past, or because of an immoral nation in the present. So there is an enormous ideological effort already under way.

There is a tremendous momentum building up, and it's because of this that the Communists want to act even now, before the ideological attack of private groups like our own will effectively steal their chance for reopening the hostilities. The chance for the North Koreans to renew their attack is rapidly passing. It's in this crucial period that we have to be most vigilant.

In Korea, there are approximately 15 million people in the North and over 32 million people in the South. So the Communists have never felt that a supervised election was a proper approach to reunification in that country. We must not be deceived into thinking that in this period of detente, that while we seek to placate them throughout the world so that the value of our society can compete peacefully with the values of the Communist bloc, that they have in any way abandoned their hope to take a short-cut by force when possible.

The United States must keep troops in Korea in order to maintain the peace. Not for war, but for peace. We must recognize that a war will not advance the interests of the United States or of South Korea, but only of the Communists. Therefore, we have a moral duty to continue to maintain a strong and ready-to-act military force in Korea to deter invasion by the North.

Not only the people of South Korea but the people of North Korea as well demand that we use this time of peace to launch a massive ideological offensive for the ideological and political liberation of not only the free peoples of the world, but the Communists as well. Let us expose by all peaceful means the deceptive nature of the regime in North Korea, the aggressive military preparations, the ideological, totalitarian nature of the State, and the gross inhumanities that have been practiced in that country since the take-over by the Communists after World War II.

Edmund Burke has said, "All it takes for evil to triumph in the world is for enough good men to do nothing." This is the time when in the face of such a blatant challenge from the force of evil, good men must rise up and accept the responsibility to speak out and to campaign on the ideological level. If there's any God at all, He must be totally opposed to Communism.

He must have created a heart within each one of us which is capable of realizing a free and prosperous and harmonious society -- not just in one city, not just in one nation, not just in one continent, but throughout the world. The same things that we want for ourselves, we can only but believe that all other citizens of the world want for themselves. And until their liberties and their security and their peace are guaranteed, our own continues to be in danger.

Many people in the U.S. believe that we have a fundamental choice between meeting our obligations at home, and meeting our obligations abroad. In fact, that simplistic choice is not really the question at all. It's not an either-or choice. It's not a scarcity of resources, but an absence of commitment and moral concern that threatens us. The American people have always demonstrated their readiness to support, with manpower, with taxes, with economic aid, any effort, any national goal which was clearly and candidly presented to them by their leaders. There's a need once again for our people to hear, clearly and forcefully, the domestic and foreign requirements of this nation for our national survival and for success, and the price of failure on both counts. If the cost of meeting the obligations abroad and at home is high, we must remember that the cost of not meeting them is much higher. At this crucial time, it's the United States alone which has the capability of responding to the threat of the offensives of world Communism.