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Wayne P. Hughes Jr.

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PACIFISTS AND PEACEMAKERS

An article prepared

by

Captain Wayne P. Hughes, Jr., U.S. Navy

Some of my good Christian friends are pacifists. I have struggled to persuade them that the heart of the Christian message is not that war brings evil but that evil brings war. Treating the symptom will not keep the disease from flourishing.

They have not been receptive to any view other than that war is intolerable. Being reluctant observers of our national participation in a decade of nasty, frustrating, killing war, they see the obvious: that war *does* generate pain and suffering. They set aside the possibility that a world without armies could also be intolerably chaotic, avaricious, and cruel.

Some of my pacifist friends deplore only aggressive war. Others hold that any fighting, even in self-defense, is wrong. The Christ taught us we must turn the other cheek. "Blessed are the peacemakers," He said. They promote unilateral disarmament and national renunciation of war. They are quite prepared to endure privation, like Mahatma Gandhi, in a noble cause. Paradoxically, their methods, unlike Gandhi's, can be downright militant. As we saw in the late 1960's, pacifists seem to attract, and accept, those who draw the line at **no excess except killing.**

Most of mankind demonstrates an ambiguity toward war. Subscribing to platitudes for peace, we are profoundly skeptical that pacifism is practical. We argue vigorously for the "right of self-defense," with deliberate vagueness about what that means. We have a deep uneasiness that the idea of pacifism—of a refusal to fight back no matter what the provocation—is somehow unnatural. The more simple and childlike the man, the more he works with his hands, with the earth, and with the beasts of the earth, the more quickly he accepts violence as part of life. The Thoreaus of the world seem to most of us to be the exception that proves the rule.

Anthropologists rage in a debate over whether man descended from an aggressive ancestor who cheerfully fought to survive in an uncharitable world or, à la Rousseau, derived from a gentle, peaceful ancestor whom society corrupted. The answer determines how one views the primary purpose of government: it can be to constrain an essentially combative mankind or it can be to promote the betterment of our fellow man. The former would organize police and armies but eschew social programs as an avoidable concentration of power in the hands of the corruptible; the latter

84 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

would seek honest men and bestow them with great authority to distribute the fruits of our labors equitably.

The answer also dictates whether we believe man is ascending morally and temperamentally. It colors all of our perceptions of our fellow creatures and of what constitutes their progress. Most important, it leads us to divergent conclusions about what would happen if the pacifist dream was fulfilled and war could not happen. The loom of nuclear war, biological war, and chemical war has so impressed us that their dream is not that farfetched. But is it a dream or a nightmare?

The United States is today a Nation that has been persuaded not to fight. For better or worse, at the behest of its people, our Government retreated from Vietnam without a conclusion. Until the memory fades, monstrous provocation will have to be thrust upon us before we make a like commitment again. The world is as close to universal peace as it has ever been, despite continuing, nagging conflicts which are nothing on the scale of the Napoleonic Wars and the two World Wars. In relation to the number of people in the world, we suffer fewer combat deaths than at any time in history. But what we see (as a result?) is hostility directed in new channels: insurrections, intranational violence, and bloody protests. Some would attribute a penchant for aggressive sports, violent books, and bloody movies to the same root. It is as if man must assert himself physically and emotionally in one way or another.

Moreover, we have dramatic new evidence that nations who are secure from war will find ways to exploit one another economically. An Arab world that feels safe from armed intervention, having started by expropriating foreign oil investments, is now forcing powerful nations to their knees by raising oil prices. Mark that the change stems not, fundamentally, from the possession of a vital new raw material. In the past,

economic and military power have walked hand-in-hand. The crucial change is Arab confidence that they will not be punished by force. The fuel shortage brings home the extent of the world's passiveness. A bumper sticker says it all: CHEAT AN ARAB—KILL YOURSELF. We hear nothing of intervention.

There will not be acute suffering in the United States. Real hardship will materialize here long after the pain in Europe and Japan becomes intolerable. But Arab power to generate international misery is frightening. To check them we have depended on their sense of equity at best, at worst on their enlightened self-interest. One may say that the OPEC are not so foolish as to drive Western Europe and Japan into a corner by cutting off their source of heat and power. Yet they have already triggered a chain of economic consequences that may bring on a worldwide depression. Indisputably, the rise in oil prices, over fourfold thus far, will create economic turbulence unlike anything in decades.

One hundred years ago, even 50 years ago, no Western nation would have gone through the intermediate stages of considering, first, accommodation, then, economic reprisal. Imperialist Britain, Germany, or France would have had a fleet full of marines in the Persian Gulf. The *people* would have raged for armed intervention. The Government of Japan accepted suicidal war with the United States to maintain its supply of oil and raw materials. Is Western Europe so weak that it must swallow an Arab oil embargo? Probably yes, with Soviet strength standing at the other door. Both Western Europe and Japan have chosen "peace," that is to say, military weakness, behind U.S. strength. Nuclear war could not happen, and Soviet nonnuclear attack would not. Few of us considered another kind of threat so grave and far-reaching.

Besides redirecting violence into new

PACIFISTS & PEACEMAKERS 85

channels and generating economic exploitation, (oil is not the only instance), what else can we predict for a world without war? I suspect a kind of tyranny of the mind. Let George Orwell, the great conscience of the intellectual, speak:

There are families in which the father will say to his child, "You'll get a thick ear if you do that again," while the mother, her eyes brimming over with tears, will take the child in her arms and murmur lovingly, "Now, darling, is it kind to Mummy to do that?" And who would maintain that the second method is less tyrannous than the first? The distinction that really matters is not between violence and non-violence but between having and not having the appetite for power. There are people who are convinced of the wickedness both of armies and of police forces, but who are nevertheless much more intolerant and inquisitorial in outlook than the normal person who believes that it is necessary to use violence in certain circumstances. They will not say to somebody else, "Do this, that and the other or you will go to prison," but they will, if they can, get inside his brain and dictate his thoughts for him in the minutest particulars.

I have been describing a world in which war is not renounced, but merely unfashionable. What then if war were somehow eliminated? We would suffer unimaginable destabilization and a still greater rush among the exploitive into new ways to power: 1984 portrays one way. I suppose a pacifist would say that a world without war would lead to a world without greed. I say trying to abolish war is like trying to cure acute appendicitis with a bromide. The appendix will rupture. Sometimes the knife must draw blood and excise the poison.

War is the symptom not the cause of

our cupidity. Christians call it sin. Individuals may be touched by God and find peace and release from their own selfishness, but they cannot, by their own devices, impose goodness on a world that has not been touched universally by the same hand in the same way. Until we change the hearts of men, it would serve no good purpose to eliminate war.

I can respect the pacifist who renounces war and pays the personal consequences fully, while never forgetting that men who have not done so will influence his life for the better as well as for the worse. Under other circumstances, which would include having no wife, no family, no accumulated professional responsibilities, and no inherited national institutions that I feel a responsibility to perpetuate, I might have been such a man. I cannot respect, however, a pacifist who promotes his position by encouraging disarmament and attacking men who make or use the weapons of war, without at the same time telling his followers the kind of nation his advocacy would lead

 BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY


Capt. Wayne P. Hughes, Jr., U.S. Navy, has commanded U.S.S. *Hummingbird* (MSC-192) and U.S.S. *Morton* (DD-948), and has served three tours in the Korean and Vietnam war zones. He is

an elder in both the Northern and Southern Presbyterian Churches. He has an M.S. in operations research; has taught U.S. foreign policy and naval history at the U.S. Naval Academy; and served on the Superintendent's staff and contributed to the 1959 Academy curriculum revision. He has published six articles, including "Missiles and Missions," winner of a Naval Institute special award in the 1963 prize essay contest. Captain Hughes now serves as Deputy Director of OP-96 on the CNO's staff.

86 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

to: a nation that either hid behind the protection of another's armies or was humiliated and exploited; a nation in rags, of log cabins, of tenant farms, of brutally hard labor, of few comforts. Or worse, a nation of slaves. I would not advocate pacifism without telling my listeners this, because I know when it came time to pay the price, for the few followers remaining, it would be too

late to reconsider.

"Blessed are the peacemakers," said Jesus. Considering his acceptance of government, his respect for soldiers, and his unremitting fight against evil, I do not think He was speaking of peacemakers, or peace-enjoyers, or even of peace-lovers. The children of God are the peace-keepers, or as He said, the makers of peace.



Rational pacifism must be based on a new maxim—"If you wish for peace, understand war."

B.H. Liddell Hart: Thoughts on War, i, 1944