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American Militarism, the New World Order and IPPNW

It is good to revisit with colleagues whom I admire for principled steadfastness in the long struggle against the perverse culture of nuclearism. Among these colleagues none has been closer than Ulrich Gottstein who joined our movement 23 years ago and has provided towering moral leadership. Goethe stated "Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough, we must do." Ulli has not stopped doing. Another friend who has inspired me with talents that beggar description, now a world renowned musical impresario, is Peter Hauber. With out his insistent probing I would not be here.

I was last in Berlin in 1990. The atmosphere was exhilarating. The ugly wall embodying the great divide of the cold war was shattered. We were full of hope and brimming with optimism. The battle fatigue of decades of peace struggles seemed well earned. We were certain that the genocidal weapons would now be phased out. After all the only rationale for their stockpiling was to deter a dehumanized adversary. But the adversary, the Soviet Union, was gone into the dustbin of history. Nuclear abolition was in the cards. We Americans would at last gain a big peace dividend denied us after the ill-fated war in Vietnam.

We based our affirmative vision on the fact that IPPNW had been successful in rousing a global public opinion against the nuclear threat. This buoyed our confidence that before entering the new millennium, nuclearism would be phased out from military arsenals.

We were categorically wrong in our romantic prognostication. The imprimatur of historical logic and moral necessity does not necessarily bear the stamp of reality. Even though the Cold War was over, nuclear powers were obdurately committed to holding on to genocidal weapons.

The big questions

Two big questions indeed paradoxes need careful probing. The first relates to the disjuncture between the stockpiling of nuclear overkill and the overwhelming silence of the intellectual community. A silence that reflects a colossal moral bankruptcy. Societies deeming themselves democratic, tracing their institutional lineage to the Enlightenment, having defeated the scourge of Hitlerism, adopted Nazi methods for the uses of genocide -- but with a multiplier. Instead of the crudity of incinerating one person at a time, with the most advanced technologies, genocide has been industrialized to incinerate one country at a time. With raging fire storms leaving little trace for future cultural anthropologies to search in the radioactive debris.

Where are the ethicists, the moral pundits, the intellectuals who are ready to spew millions of words of venom against anyone the establishment designates as part of the "axis of evil," yet rarely if ever address this perversion. Why the deafening silence from religious leaders, whether Christian, Muslim or Jewish, who abstractly proclaim the holiness of each human life, yet remain indifferent to colossal arsenals of mass murder?

The second paradox and question is why has the US government been committed to nuclear weapons? America being the strongest nation on earth by every conceivable military, economic, and scientific measure, a nuclear world diminishes rather than bolsters its homeland security.

Nuclear bombs are potential equalizers, enabling the weak to inflict unacceptable damage on the strong. Few societies are more susceptible to their malevolent consequences than the rich urbanized, highly developed industrialized North, foremost the United States. It is already the object of growing global resentment, envy, anger, fear and hatred. One may surmise that the US will increasingly be the target for terrorist acts. It is therefore only a matter of time before rogue states and fanatics avail themselves of these infernal weapons. A just released IPPNW's publication indicates, no black mail would be as compelling as holding an entire city hostage.

More specifically why the USA, armed like no country ever in the bloody history of mankind, is holding on and even modernizing its nuclear arsenals. In the absence of nuclear weapons, the United States has nobody to fear? In their presence, it needs fear everyone. Why then is it not in the forefront of strengthening the nonproliferation treaty rather than undermining it?

Militarism in America

Nuclear policies stem from the growing American militarism and the increasing role of the Pentagon in shaping US foreign policy. This was clearly evident in the lead up to the Iraq war. In fact Paul Bremer, American viceroy in Iraq, represents Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld.

An appreciation of the seminal role of the military in American life is reflected by the military budget. In fact the Pentagon budget exceeds the combined military expenditures of the entire rest of the world. US military spending approved by Congress for fiscal year 2004 totals \$401.3 billions. If one adds the additional appropriation for war in Iraq This incredible sum is equivalent to spending \$1.3 billion daily. This beggars imagination.

In fact, \$54 million will be spent during this hour and every hour thereafter. For the American people this is a scourge of tragic magnitude. The Pentagon absorbs as much money as the US federal government spends on education, public health, housing, employment, pensions, food aid and welfare put together. The justification for the astronomic military spending according to Mr. Bush is the "axis of evil" who direly threatens US security. Yet all the "evil" countries combined spend a mere 1.4 percent of the Pentagon's bloated budget.

There have been few attempts to explain why the threat of a relative handful of terrorists should evoke a military buildup comparable to that of the Reagan administration during the height of the Cold War. At the time thousands of Soviet missiles were targeted at the USA threatening its extinction. It would be mistaken to suggest that Bush is the sole

proponent of a bloated Pentagon. Not a single Democrat on the congressional appropriations committee dared to object to the government's latest request. This total is truly staggering, yet it confronts little criticism, or even comment, in the American media. Under conditions of mounting social needs at home, and with no substantial military antagonist abroad, congressional Democrats, the intellectual classes and the American media all support this vast "military-police" buildup justified by the imperatives of the "war on terrorism."

Another aspect of the military machine deserves attention, namely the fact that American military power peppers the globe. In a prior age, the expansion of empire could be counted by the number of lands colonized. America's version of the colony is the military base. These are grown so numerous that even the military is uncertain of their exact number. The Pentagon currently owns or rents about 700 overseas bases in 130 countries in every continent and has another 6,000 bases in the United States and its territories. Deployed over seas are over half a million soldiers, spies, technicians, teachers, dependents, and civilian contractors. To dominate the oceans and seas of the world, the Pentagon has created thirteen naval task forces built around aircraft carriers. A single such task force can challenge any sea power.

The base posture is about to expand. To implement President Bush's preventive war strategy against "rogue states," "bad guys," and "evil-doers," the military is readying to wage war in every corner of the globe, from Central Asia to Latin America, from Africa to China. Many new bases are being planned including at least four and perhaps as many as six permanent ones in Iraq.

When asked recently how long U.S. troops might remain in Iraq, General Jay Garner, Iraq's first viceroy, replied, "I hope they're there a long time", Garner added, "Look back on the Philippines around the turn of the 20th century: they were a coaling station for the navy, and that allowed us to keep a great presence in the Pacific. That's what Iraq is for the next few decades: our coaling station that gives us great presence in the Middle East", It needs to be recalled that US military bases remained in the Philippines for nearly a century, from 1898 to 1992.

The American military refers to the "arc of instability" said to run from the Andean region of South America, through North Africa, sweeping across the Middle East to the Philippines and Indonesia. This is more or less identical with what used to be called the Third World -- and perhaps no less crucially it covers the world's key oil reserves.

(As an aside, why the American military bases in sovereign Germany, for the upkeep of which you contribute \$ 1 billion annually? You are neither in the arc of oil nor the arc of evil. I am impressed with your protest at Ramstein this past March.)

Over the longer time span, bases are only one way of projecting power. Allies will become less important as new generation of weapons now coming of the drawing boards enable America to strike anywhere from its own territory with US-based missiles having global reach. The program is code named FALCON. (Force Application and Launch from the Continental US). In the Orwellian language of the Pentagon, the program aims to fulfill, "the government's vision of an ultimate prompt global reach capability" striking targets 9,000 nautical miles distant in less than two hours. It is a comforting thought that it will not require any bases to blow up someone on the other side of the world.

The United States Space Command proclaims a doctrine of "full-spectrum dominance," involving a combination of global surveillance, missile defense, and space-based strike capabilities that would enable the United States to undertake effective preemption anywhere in the world and would deny similar capability to any other country. This strategy opens a Pandora's box of adventurism. Under such a rubric military action can be justified anywhere, any time. Nearly 40 years ago Martin Luther King bemoaned, "My own country I lament is the greatest purveyor of violence in the world." (1)

Nuclear Madness

Though what I have described sounds daunting, it pales compared to the horror and devastation US can inflict with its awesome nuclear arsenal. They have become integrated into the fabric of life without popular moral repugnance or need of justification.

The US has operationally deployed 6000 nuclear weapons, approximately 2000 of which are intercontinental ballistic missiles, 3500 submarine launched ballistic missiles and a few hundred carried by bomber aircraft. (Weinberg S. The growing nuclear danger. NY Review of Books July 18, 2002.)

The bedrock of American nuclear policy during the past 50 years was deterrence, largely aiming to prevent a nuclear attack. While the US maintained a first strike option, it was intended only as a last resort against an impending nuclear strike. America's declared policy was never to launch nuclear missiles against a non nuclear state or a signatory of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

These long held policies have been abandoned by the Bush Administration. The first signs of a profound shift came in January 2002 with a little publicized White House release of the Pentagon's new Nuclear Posture Review. This Review represents a veritable tsunami in nuclear policy. US will no longer limit itself to deterrence but will be free to strike preemptively against those countries it believes are developing nuclear, chemical or biological weapons.

The current U.S. nuclear plans call for development of new types of tactical nuclear weapons to be used for war fighting on the battle field and suggests the early resumption of nuclear testing. Billions of dollars are being allocated on reducing the time required to launch a nuclear strike and on upgrading missile re-entry vehicles.

Congress unsurprisingly was compliant with the Pentagon. Virtually without debate it approved repeal of the law banning the development of a new generation smaller, more usable, low-yield warheads. Congress thereby repealed a 10-year-old prohibition of research to develop nuclear weapons with yields of less than five kilotons, often referred to as bunker-busters or "mininukes." Congress also funded the readying of the Nevada Nuclear Test Site. It needs be recalled that underground nuclear testing has been banned since 1992.

On several scores these actions violate US government obligations under the Non-Proliferation treaty, Under the NPT nuclear powers promised to rapidly divest themselves of their nuclear might. This latter objective was clearly spelled out and is explicitly stated in article VI. The NPT promised nuclear abolition not nuclear modernization. The Bush administration also breaches the NPT by abrogating the so-called negative security assurances. The United States government promised never to use nuclear weapons against signatories of the NPT in return for their renewal and indefinite extension of this treaty. This undermining of the NPT is in concert with annulling of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty as well as the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. At the same time piling up contradictions, the Bush administration has proclaimed firm resolve against permitting proliferation.

From the very inception of the atomic age a specter haunted humankind -- the specter of a spreading nuclear infection that could not be readily contained. The NPT has been the only multinational firewall against this malignant virus. A Martian landing on Earth would conclude that Washington is not averse to a nuclear free-for-all, confident that it will be able to intimidate or destroy all adversaries with a richly diverse arsenal of increasingly sophisticated weapons.

But these policies are clearly irresponsible in an age of terrorism. US policies must compel other countries to rethink their nuclear options. The more nations are in the nuclear business, the more access of the global market to fissile material and nuclear know-how. The recent example of Pakistan as a nuclear shopping mall is sobering.

These Bush policies are undermining the security of the US. Nuclear devices in the hands of terrorists could make parts of the US unlivable. If America's nuclear stockpiles were eliminated, its military might would not be impaired, nor would its global hegemonic role be eroded.

I return to the question. Why is the US holding on to these infernal genocidal weapons capable of contaminating the sovereignty of our genes and warp life everywhere forever?

My answer is the North South divide.

Developing World

This divide, in my mind, is the most critical global issue. The present world order is the continuing legacy of Christopher Columbus. We are now in the 512th year of the Columbine era. An era marked by shame when great wealth was plundered, when indigenous cultures were uprooted, when native populations were subjected to genocide. The human chattel and undreamed riches of the new world provided the muscle and sinew for the industrial revolution. Euro-American affluence rests in no small measure on the extraction of prodigious resources from the Third World.

Yet it is a grim fact that the transfer of wealth from poor to rich has not ceased. Pitted against one another are the claims of luxury and the claims of subsistence. The Third World lives excluded from social privilege, political control, as outsiders in their own home. Simply stated it results from a global division of labor wherein the South's resources are bought for cheap while the North sells its technology and intellectual property for dear. The economist Susan George

pointed out a startling fact that by 1990 the abysmally poor nations have provided the equivalent of 6 Marshall plan equivalents for the richest nations. (2)

The North-South divide is mammoth and growing. According to the UN "Human Development Report while the income gap between the richest and the poorest in 1960 was 30-1, by the year 1999 it more than doubled to 74-1. It is not merely reflected by the technologic apartheid, that Tokyo or Manhattan have more telephones, not to speak of fax machines, VCRs, DVDs, computers and the like than the entire continent of Africa. Far more tragic is the lack of minimum basics for subsistence.

Around 2.8 billion people live on less than \$2/day; 2.4 billion have no access to elementary sanitation services; 840 million are continuously hungry. About 50% of global nonagricultural labor force is either unemployed or under-employed. One in every 6 children in the world of primary school age are not in school.

Multilateral trade laws and international financial agreements keep the poor anchored to their poverty. These arrangements institutionalize inequity far more powerfully than colonizing armies. For example coffee growers are subsidized by the IMF and World Bank to grow more, but are denied resources to profitably process the coffee bean. Many of us may have had a cup of coffee today. If obtained in one of the many popular outlets, the cost of the single cup is equivalent to the wages for a long day of back breaking harvesting of the crop. While coffee profits are soaring, wages of the 20 million coffee workers are plummeting. (3).

The same trade regulations accounts for the fact that countries growing 90% of the world's cocoa beans, produce only 5% of the world's chocolate. It is the reason why three million Mexican farmers are being forced off the land where they have been growing corn for 10,000 years. The US is now flooding Mexico with cheap corn sold below the cost of production in Mexico. This free market miracle is due to government subsidizing American corn farmers to the tune of \$10 billion annually (4)

The divide between North-South is maintained, nurtured and made cancerous by one additional factor-- the arms trade which is a substantial source of debt. Large debt limit investments by governments of poor countries in education, in health care, in clean water, in sanitation and in critical infrastructures. In the year 2000 African debt stood at \$334 billion. Debt repayment devastates social services. Tanzania for example, spends 4 times more on debt repayment than on education; debt repayment is 9 times more than the amount expended on health.

Added to the abysmal misery and deprivation is the AIDS epidemic which is bringing devastation comparable to the Black death that depopulated Europe in the middle ages. Three-quarters of the people in the world with HIV/AIDS live in sub-Saharan Africa. As a result in countries like Zambia, in the past decade- and-a-half, life expectancy has fallen from 58 years to 37 years. According to the World Health Organization, due to the exorbitant cost, only about 300,000 people receive anti-retrovirals of the of 6 million who desperately need them. (5) The WHO plan to treat 3 million by 2005 is now collapsing for lack of adequate funding. It would take a diversion of one weeks US military expenditures to prevent millions of deaths from AIDS, TB and malaria.

African hospital wards, that I have visited, are crammed with stick-thin patients doubling in beds, lying on the floor, their agony unrelieved. Some 9,600 people die of AIDS-related diseases in Africa every single day.

Imposition of a free market by IMF, World Bank and other lending institutions on economically weak countries, compels them to open borders to the inflow of cheap agricultural imports which forces peasants of the land into urban slums.

Bursting shantytowns, resembling animal pens, strain meager social services.

Joblessness and hopelessness promote desperation in the young who become ready fodder for fanaticisms of all ilks. The result is a world seething with unrest and readily destabilized. Those living in the big house are filled with dread, that sooner rather than later, the mindless terrorists will resort to nuclear devices.

September 11 has been a loss of innocence for Americans. The two mighty oceans no longer afford a secure unbreachable moat. Over the past 50 years US spent more than 12 trillion dollars for national defense, yet without protecting its people. The most powerful military ever assembled, armed with a panoply of exotic weapons that can project devastating destruction anywhere proved ineffective against determined suicidal terrorists with paper cutters.

To contain a world that is so grossly divided is part of the deep thinking of military long range planners. When facing the explosive pressures from restive billions of people, that threaten a life style of unconstrained abundance, nuclear weapons appear to have a utility. At least that is what mini-nukes and like weapons may be for.

Change is on the Horizon

Yet while the analysis is bleak there has never been more reason for hope. This is not a romantic whistling in the dark. The optimism derives from a number of deep global transformations which augur the unleashing of enormous social forces now waiting in the wings.

One basis for optimism is the ongoing information revolution, a social transformation of true epic proportions. In public imagination the information age is embodied in the Internet. Indeed nothing in prior human history has provided a potential for making readily available more information, for more people, at lower cost. The Internet showed its potential as an unmatched organizing tool when on February 15 last year it mobilized the most massive global protest against war ever in history. Twelve million people took to the streets, in over 700 cities, in 60 countries, on every continent protesting the impending war in Iraq. The impressive outpouring of anti-war sentiment led the New York Times to editorialize that there were now two superpowers: the US and global public opinion. Another testament to the power of the Internet is the fact that the unknown politician in quest for the presidency, Howard Dean, cleverly utilizing the Internet's organizing potential, assembled in brief time an army of volunteers and raised more than \$40 million from ordinary people to threaten the establishment

Another factor in the equation of optimism is the rising level of literacy and education globally. People living on the edge of subsistence are seeded with expectations of a life other than backbreaking toil and premature death. Television constantly projects a vision of a world able to provide luxurious abundance for some. It teaches the possible. When the voiceless multitudes begin to whisper, the resulting shout becomes deafening and transforming.

Another important source for optimism is the fact that the colossus bestriding the entire world is standing on feet of economic clay. Unlike other advanced industrial countries --the European Union and Japan—that are running surpluses, the American economy is living on borrowed money. This year the US will be experiencing a deficit close to \$500 billion or 5% of its gross domestic product. Recall that 3 % has been the fixed ceiling for Euro participants. The mightiest militarized machine ever is financed by an economy more familiar in a developing country, depending on foreigners to service its debt from trade imbalance. China, Japan, the Europeans will not permanently subsidize these gargantuan US trade deficits and continue to finance America's destructive militarism.

Perhaps the most important and least obvious factor for optimism is an enormous shift in peoples perception of shared interests. During the entire Columbine era ordinary working people were indirect benefactors from imperialism and colonialism. Now for the first time global capitalism and its all dominating market forces lowers the standard of living of the working and middle classes in industrialized countries. Manufacturing as well as white color jobs are being outsourced anywhere on the globe where subsistence wages and the absence of environmental laws maximize profits. It matters far less how strongly unionized workers are in developed countries, they can be defeated by moving an entire industry to another hemisphere. This reality is a powerful compeller of global solidarity. There can no longer be indifference to the level of exploitation in distant lands. Their economic destinies have become intertwined. Their shared self interests compels cooperation. This is akin to a major tectonic plate movement.

Once the system begins to unravel as it must, it will spin rapidly. These are the basis of the momentous events in Seattle and Cancun and are being expressed in the World Social Forum that attracts more than 75,000 participants. We are listening to the distant drum beats of a new age. In 1999, the global justice movement first captured mainstream attention in the U.S. when, on the streets of Seattle, it protested and shut down a meeting of the World Trade Organization. Never before in the US was there such a diverse alliance of environmentalists, truck drivers, farmers, women, college youth etc. coalesced into a single movement challenging corporate globalization.

IPPNW

For me personally a source of deep optimism is reliving the experience of IPPNW. It needs be recalled that the 1980's were far more threatening times. At present there are wars and untold violence, but then the very survival of the world was in precarious balance. Indeed IPPNW played a vital role in changing the course of history away from the nuclear brink. The health profession proved a powerful constituency for educating the public and for influencing global leaders. From the decisive first meeting

with Chazov and his colleagues in Geneva to the stunningly successful first Congress at Airlie House was only four months. From this beginning to receipt of the ultimate Nobel accolade was a mere four years.

In a very brief time, an extraordinary number of health workers and students responded to our call worldwide to address the nuclear threat. We identified a large medical community of kindred spirits, unstinting in social dedication. At our Fourth Congress in Helsinki in 1984, we promulgated an innovative strategy for ending the cold war -- We urged a strategy of unilateral disarmament, deeds rather than endless negotiations, and this was to begin with a cessation of nuclear testing. Single mindedly we pursued a global cease fire campaign that involved all our affiliates. We were fortunate that, at the time, the Soviet Union was led by a singular statesman, Mikhail Gorbachev. He saw wisdom in our campaign and embraced it. Our novel brand of people's diplomacy contributed to dismantling the cold war.

In this new age, IPPNW has a vital role. A peace movement, to be relevant, must give priority to the issues I have discussed in its strategic plan. In my mind IPPNW has to find health links in addressing three key issues: American militarism, the growing North South divide and the continued existence of stockpiles of genocidal nuclear weapons.

Each one of these issues undermines health, threatens life, deprives scarce resources from improving human well being and degrades our fragile environment. We need to counterpoint the trade offs between death dealing and life saving investments. We need provoke moral revulsion at the obscenities that prevail. For example the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has estimated the cost of resolving and providing basic health and nutrition for every person in the developing countries at \$13 billion per year over a decade. This seems like a large figure, but, to put it in perspective, in 2000 the US population spent \$11.6 billion on dog and cat food. The occupation of Iraq is costing the US 65 billion a year or nearly five times as much of what it would take to bring the rudiments of health and food to deprived populations.

We need to hammer away at certain elemental facts: It is not possible for affluent nations to purchase security when deprived and hungry multitudes are clamoring outside the gates of the big house. Nuclear abolition is the most effective way to keep these weapons from suicide bombers, prevent catastrophic accidental launches, inhibit proliferation and end the moral depravity of the colossal barbarism that tolerates us to coexist with genocidal weaponry.

Conclusion

Brooding over the nuclear threat for over a half century now, I am led inexorably to the conviction that only unprecedented arousal of moral revulsion will provide the necessary social energies to prioritize a global order fit for human beings. When freed from Auschwitz, Dr. Victor Frankl warned, "Since Auschwitz we know what man is capable of. And since Hiroshima we know what is at stake."

Human history is yet to begin. Required is an abandonment of the instruments of violence to adjudicate differences between peoples and nations. Doctors in their innermost being know of the fragility, brevity and the miracle of life. We physicians have a vital historical

role today. The Swedish poet Berndt Rosengren, captures an essence of what I deeply believe.

There exists a necessary sort
of madness: to believe that precisely you
can change the world.
Madness that borders
on genius
and that it is also the
simplest
everyday wisdom:
You are capable of it and you do it
together with others.

Only by not shutting our eyes
can we see to it that peace
will reign and that freedom
will thrive.

We better not shut our eyes and remain passive, for hope without action is hopeless. Posterity has no lobby with politicians; each of us must speak for generations yet unborn. We shall succeed as we empower millions of people with our vision of the better world that is possible.

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