



The World Community for Christian Meditation

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A Research Project for Peacemakers

?Naturally the common people don't want war; neither in Russia, nor in England, nor in America, nor in Germany. That is understood. But after all, it is the leaders of the country who determine policy, and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy, or a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament, or a communist dictatorship. Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is to tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country.?

Hermann Goering

Mankind must put an end to war before war puts an end to mankind.

John F. Kennedy

?Of course people don't want war. Why should a poor slob on a farm want to risk his life in a war when he can get out of it is

to come back to his farm in one piece??

Hermann Goering

Herman

"War is just a racket. A racket is best described, I believe, as something that is not what it seems to the people. Only a small

inside group knows what it is about. It is conducted for the benefit of the very few at the expense of the many.

Major General Smedley Butler, USMC.

"In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground. A time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other."

From Wangari Maathai's Nobel Lecture, delivered in Oslo, 10 December 2004.

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There have been many excellent studies showing how companies induce people to buy products or services that they could easily get along without. Vance Packard started with his 1957 classic, The Hidden Persuaders. More recently, Martin Lindstrom's Brandwashed: Tricks Companies Use to Manipulate Our Minds and Persuade Us to Buy show that the companies are far more sophisticated than they were in 1957.

The surprise is that there has been zero detailed research showing how the military industrial complex pulls the big con in history: telling us that war is glorious and necessary.

Progressives must recognize the awesome sales job made by government propaganda that war is necessary and glorious, like a football game. The war sport is like mountain climbing or deep sea diving, far more dangerous than everyday life. As in a football game, we root for our side to win because a defeat would bring catastrophic consequences. In World War Two, a victory by the Axis Powers would have brought slavery for all and extermination for many.

As a teenager (born in 1944), I saw war as a great adventure. Of course, a fellow could get killed. In the comic books, movies and documentaries, I did not see burn victims nor injured soldiers who lost limbs. Dead soldiers looked like they were asleep.

The best war propaganda ever made was the 1952 NBC series Victory at Sea. The editors reviewed 11,000 miles of film, prepared a stirring musical score and narrative making 26 episodes lasting about 26 minutes each. Television reviewers wondered who would want to watch war documentaries on a Sunday afternoon. By the second week, they got their answer: just about everybody.

On YouTube see the finale for the episode, Beneath the Southern Cross, which described the successful efforts by the American and Brazilian navies to protect convoys in the South Atlantic. This is the ending narrative:

And the convoys come through,

Bearing the wealth of the Southern Hemisphere,

Refusing to pay one cent for tribute but willing to spend millions for defense,

The American republics have swept from the ocean highways of the South Atlantic their common foe.

Spread wide across the sea

Guarded by the might of nations that can fight side by side because they have learned to live side by side.

The ships stream toward their goal Allied victory.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ku-uLV7Qups&feature=related>

Progressives must offer a peace vision through songs, poems, short stories, movies and plays. Offer contests with some prize money and much recognition. My favorite peace vision comes from the 1967 hit, Crystal Blue Persuasion by Tommy James and the Shondells:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXz4gZQSfYQ>

Peacemakers must offer specifics. Otherwise, war criminals like George W. Bush and Barack Obama will talk about peace until the cows come home. Here are some specifics:

- 1) reduce the bloated US military budget by 90%,
- 2) tax international arms sales,
- 3) begin a moratorium on weapons research,
- 4) start a world-wide anti-poverty program,
- 5) train our troops for disaster relief,
- 6) establishing a cabinet level Department of Peace,
- 7) reduce nuclear weapons to zero, and,
- 8) negotiate to take all the world's nuclear weapons off hair trigger alert.

Note that each proposal can become a bumper sticker. I invite progressives to copy the excellent communication skills demonstrated our right-winger friends, who have done well with simple slogans. People can instantly understand what right-wingers want.

Make no mistake. Humans must end war or war will end us and all life on our planet. This is not just an idea from hippies and Quakers. See this plea from General Douglas MacArthur when he spoke to the US Congress on April 19, 1951:

?I know war as few other men now living know it, and nothing to me is more revolting. I have long advocated its complete abolition, as its very destructiveness on both friend and foe has rendered it useless as a means of settling international disputes...

"Military alliances, balances of power, leagues of nations, all in turn failed, leaving the only path to be by way of the crucible of war. The utter destructiveness of war now blocks out this alternative. We have had our last chance. If we will not devise some greater and more equitable system, our Armageddon will be at our door. The problem basically is theological and involves a spiritual recrudescence, an improvement of human character that will synchronize with our almost matchless advances in science, art, literature, and all material and cultural developments of the past two thousand years. It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh."

Environmentalists may be the first major group to accept war abolition although, up to now, they have been indifferent to military spending. I hope they wake up for two reasons: 1) a nuclear war will end our civilization in an afternoon and 2) the resources devoted to the military means crumbs off the table for everything else. We all want cleaner energy and to reverse global warming but all these efforts achieve little as long as the military goes full

speed ahead.

Since Lloyd George remarked at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 that making peace was more complicated than making war, seeing this charade will not be easy. However, it must be done. With courage and vision, humans can follow Isaiah by turning swords into plowshares saving ourselves and all life on our planet.

Useful research material:

Kurlansky, Mark (with a forward by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Nonviolence: Twenty-Five Lessons from the History of a Dangerous Idea.

Regan, Geoffrey. Picking the Past: Reclaiming the Past from Politicians. The Spanish language title is better: Guerras, Politicos y Mentiras: Como nos enganan manipulando el pasado y el presente (Wars, Politicians and Lies: How They Deceive by Manipulating the Past and the Present).

Ed O'Rourke is a retired certified public accountant living in Medellin, Colombia.

eorourke@pdq.net

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