

**LECTURE 04**

First Essay: 7th December

- Questions are not related to any particular lecture
- Quality of Opinion
- Quality of Argument
- Quality of Evidence
- Peer Reviewed or substantial materials

All will depend upon the quality of your reading
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**Fighting for Peace and Freedom**

Today I want us to discuss the contemporary peace movement, its purpose, and its mode of organisation, its alliances, and its relation to anti-capitalism. But in order to frame this discussion I want to begin by talking about war.

War is an extremely ancient human institution. The organisation and deployment of systematic violence by one community against another with the purpose of annihilating an enemy or of compelling an opponent to obey your will is very ancient indeed. It has been the source of great art and poetry, of civic coherence and growth, the source of striking technical innovation and indeed of many of the arts of civilisation. We have no record of any people who lived in cities with writing, developed handicrafts, and extensive agriculture and trade who did not engage in making war. Throughout human history making war appears always to have absorbed

a very large proportion of human productive wealth and activity. Indeed, one need only look at the chain of enormous medieval fortresses strung across North Wales to realise that in many societies the *proportion* of social wealth expended upon war preparations and war fighting was probably larger than it is today.

War is deeply enmeshed with literature, the arts in general, and with religion. War, *even genocide*, has an ancient *worthy*, even a *sacred* pedigree. As Moses says to his followers after the killing of the ‘five kings of Midian’ and the slaughter of all the men of Midian and the destruction of all the cities and lands of the Midianites:

Now therefore ‘kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with ’him.

But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.<sup>1</sup>

You can find this sort of thing in any number of sacred and ancient books. War appears to be sewn into the very fabric of human civilisation. The architecture of war – ancient city walls, fortresses, castles – the clothes, armour, uniforms and other finery – the fine weapons and displays of luxurious craftsmanship – all these things are embedded in the institution of war and war making.

Epics of courage, sacrifice, determination, and heroism are an integral part of this history. There would be no *Beowulf* or *Iliad* without war. There would be no

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Numbers’ 31, verses 17 and 18, *The Holy Bible*, Authorised King James Version, 1611.

Comandante Ernesto “Che” Guevara (1928-1967) without war. There would be no Mao Zedong without war, no Lenin, no Stalin, no Ho Chi Min without war.

Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos is after all the leader of the Zapatista Army Of National Liberation. (EZLN)<sup>2</sup>

War has always been woven together with narratives of assertion and domination and the victory of all that is good and right; war has always been woven together with the struggle for emancipation, freedom from oppression, and, of course, the struggle for peace. Indeed throughout the last century people fought wars *for* peace. During the years 1914-1918 people even fought the Great War to end all wars.

This twinning of war and peace is not, of course, a product of the last hundred years or so. Tolstoy did not invent the phrase ‘war and peace’. Both war and peace have been highly valued for millennia. However, it is in modern democratic societies that millions of people have been ‘*mobilised*’ at different places and at different times in what has come to be called ‘the *fight* for peace’, using now this *tactic*, now another. [The very language is *martial*] And, this idea – the *struggle* for peace – was certainly not restricted to radical opinion but came, from the 1920s onwards, to dominate much public thinking. It has been noted that following the Great War of 1914-1918 there was a fundamental societal shift of opinion on both sides of the Atlantic. As Azar Gat notes in his *History of Military Thought*:

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<sup>2</sup> Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional

From the perspective of time, the reaction against the First World War – particularly noticeable among the West’s most liberal and increasingly democratic societies, Britain and the United States – can be seen as marking such a paradigmatic ‘break’. For leading sectors of public opinion and of the political elite in those societies the idea of a major war, involving massive loss of life and wealth, was simply becoming unacceptable.<sup>3</sup>

This, among other matters, explains (partially, at least) the reason for the reluctance of both Britain and America to prepare for [or to fight] the Second World War.

[BRITAIN: PREVENTION OF GERMAN HEGENOMY & THE FEAR THAT A TOTAL WAR WITH GERMANY WOULD RESULT IN THE END OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE AND IN BRITAIN’S SUBSERVIANCE TO AMERICA]<sup>4</sup>

Consequently, both powers opted for a policy of ‘appeasement’ or ‘containment’ or ‘isolationism’ rather than contemplate an all-out war against Germany, Italy or Japan, the powers that, as the thirties unfolded, were committed to disturbing the *status quo*.

For a variety of different reasons both the general public and the political elites were unwilling to contemplate another total or general war with powers like Germany or

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<sup>3</sup> Azar Gat, *A History of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to the Cold War*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p.824.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p.705.

Japan. And, looming large in this commitment was an unwillingness to contemplate the mass sacrifice of blood and treasure that would be involved in such an enterprise.<sup>5</sup>

As things turned out their policy of ‘appeasement’, ‘isolationism’, or ‘containment’ failed and they were compelled to mobilise all their human and material resources to engage in a war that was even more widespread, and more destructive of human life and wealth than the Great War had been.

The horrors of the Second World War are well known – [LATE SOVIET PICTURE BY KLIMOV – *COME AND SEE* – BYELORUSSIA 1943]<sup>6</sup>. However, it was probably the war’s general and total character, the massacres and genocide, the employment of mass aerial bombardment of cities – cities like Tokyo were literally burnt to the ground – and its conclusion in the nuclear attacks upon Hiroshima and Nagasaki that consolidated *both* public opinion and elite opinion around the notion that another global war between great powers was simply unthinkable.

It was these attitudes that informed both the Cold War policies of mutually assured annihilation, on the one hand, and the wars of containment in Korea and Vietnam, and what might be called the ‘*proxy wars*’ fought in Angola, Mozambique, and Namibia, and in Central America and elsewhere, on the other hand. The objective of the

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<sup>5</sup> See particularly the work and opinions of Liddell Hart in B. H. Liddell Hart, *Europe in arms*, London: Faber and Faber, 1937; *The real war: History of the First World War*, London: Cassell, 1970; *History of the Second World War*, London: Cassell, 1970.

<sup>6</sup> *Come and See* (1985 Soviet Union 142 mins); source: AFTRS Prod, Director: Elem Klimov; Screenplay: Klimov and Ales Adamovich; Photography: Alexei Rodionov; Music: O. Yanchenko, Mozart; Cast: Alexei Kravchenko, Olga Mironova, Lyubomira Lautsyavichyus, Vladas Bagdonas, Yurs Lumiste, Kazimir Rabetsky; <http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/cteq/02/20/come.html>, accessed 19/10/05.

Western powers was to attempt to defend what they regarded as their vital interests without engaging in large-scale warfare with great or substantial enemies. The objective – even in Vietnam – was to limit the scope of involvement and to restrict the nature of the engagement. And, these kind of objectives – limited engagements – the deployment where possible of small professional armies – involving as few troops as possible - continues to be the basis upon which powers like America (or much smaller powers like Britain or France) plan their military engagements. [Indeed it could be argued that the difficulties which Britain and America encountered in Iraq were a direct product of this policy of small deployments and limited engagements – indeed if a quarter of a million soldiers had been deployed quickly in Iraq (immediately after the fall of Baghdad), and the Iraqi state had been *taken over* rather than *dismantled*, things might have gone very much better for the Coalition forces.]

[Now, Afghanistan – troop numbers are again, a critical issue]

However, whatever one thinks about that opinion, it is worth remembering that large democratic states, Germany, Japan, Britain, France, and the United States, are in their various ways all opposed to large-scale military engagements with other large powers. None of these powers is contemplating fighting each other or Russia or China. And, it is a reasonable assumption that they will do all in their power to avoid serious armed engagements with Iran and North Korea.

This reluctance among democratic politicians and administrators, leading capitalist commercial and industrial interests, and military planners in the West, to contemplate large-scale warfare is an expression of a general fear of the disorder and damage

inherent in the global warfare witnessed during the last century, and is, to some extent at least, probably a reflection of widespread popular hostility to military engagements of any sort. The general public in all large democratic states is broadly hostile to what used to be called 'militarism' and appears to have little appetite for the sacrifice and bitter hardships that large-scale war would involve.

This is the context in which the Western peace movements have evolved since the late 1950s at different times and in different places focusing either upon the deployment of the weapons and delivery systems of mass annihilation, or more specifically against the wars of containment, or the 'proxy wars' fought between America and the USSR through their respective clients and allies, and the military interventions fielded particularly by France, Britain, and the United States.

At the core of these Western peace movements have been the radical pacifists for whom opposition to military engagement – any military engagement – is a matter of principle, not of policy or tactics. Pacifists have formed both the 'general staffs' of the various peace movements and the essential continuity between crises – high points and mass mobilisations – and the quiet periods *in between* when much of the movement is lying dormant or is 'mothballed' awaiting the next mass reaction – the next bout of mass revulsion – to the actions of the military planners or the movements of Western military forces. It is in these quiet periods that the pacifists in the local groups, the local churches, and in local community activities, who keep the essential networks of peace activists, their publications, and organisations, alive. It is the

pacifists who provide what Carlo Ruzza refers to as the common “ideological core” that can be identified and traced across periods and contexts.”<sup>7</sup>

However, although the concept of ‘peace’ has a central place in many institutions – peace is a positive goal, a positive value – yet it often remains an indistinct concept, lacking full or coherent articulation; *it is without definition* – to put it bluntly the concept of ‘peace’ can be applied by many different people for many different purposes:

1. Pacifists: Men and women should live in peace – the taking of a single life is unacceptable
2. Contingency – Intervention is not in our national interests
3. Common danger - Fear of consequences of widening warfare - War will only make matters worse
4. Opposition to Western interests
5. National Sovereignty: Those who believe in the inviolability of national sovereignty
6. Those who support the anti-Western forces – those who *implicitly* (or *explicitly*) support those waging war against Western intervention, be it in Vietnam or Iraq, or any of the thousand and one places that have suffered war and Western intervention over the last forty-five or fifty years).

The peace movement in times of crisis and high activity brings together people who express one or other of these points of view, or an admixture of some of them. In times of crises, rallying around the pacifist core, the strangest collection of allies will assemble – Marxist revolutionaries, Non-conformist Christians, Roman Catholics,

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<sup>7</sup> Carlo Ruzza, ‘Peace Movements’ in Malcolm J. Todd and Gary Taylor, eds., *Democracy and Participation: Popular protest and new social movements*, London: Merlin Press, 2004, pp.290-306, p.290.

Anarchists, Labour Party members, militant feminists, devout Muslims, leftist students, eco-warriors, animal rights campaigners, militant trade unionists, local councillors, even Tory politicians – *all united in the cause of peace*.<sup>8</sup> Indeed it is the great variety of such movements – their broad appeal – that enables them to insist upon the representative and popular character of their point of view. Against the small coterie of government politicians, state officials, military planners, and big corporate interests, they appear authentically to represent the people's urgent demand for peace.

However, these coalitions have proved to be inherently unstable. Whenever the immediate threat of war recedes [or indeed actually breaks out], whenever the deployment of particular weapons systems is cancelled [or indeed is actually deployed] the profound differences, which exist between the different elements of the peace movement come rapidly to the surface. In these circumstances the constituent elements of the movement begin to withdraw from each other – each pursuing their own priority or simply withering away altogether. Eventually, the pacifists are left to 'soldier on' in the fight for peace alone until the next outbreak of fighting and crisis leads to a resurgence of mass participation and a new round of strictly temporary alliances is constructed.

However, this broad character which most peace movements in the West have assumed since the late 'fifties is, as I have argued earlier, to some extent a reflection of a general cultural opposition to war felt as much in ruling circles as it is amongst

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<sup>8</sup> See the extremely interesting collection of essays in Richard Taylor and Nigel Young, eds, *Campaigns for peace: British peace movements in the twentieth century*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987.

the wider population. This fact, together with the extraordinarily broad coalitions of widely different interests which peace movements have been able to construct has also resulted in their achievement of “political legitimacy” and what Carlo Ruzza refers to as “their entrenchment in civil society”.<sup>9</sup>

This process of entrenchment in civil society has allowed various elements of the peace movement to introduce a wide variety of different tactics and methods of organisation into the fight for peace. This was particularly true of the Women’s Peace Camp at Greenham Common between 1981 and 2000 which enabled *literally* generations of women peace activists to depict the fight for peace as a feminist issue springing from a female space constituted by the seven or so encampments strung around the perimeter fence of RAF Greenham Common. Despite divisions, particularly those involving the Wages for Housework Campaign at Yellow Gate, various groups of women were able to sustain this action against the deployment of Cruise Missiles continuously for some nineteen years. In the course of those years from the high point of mass involvement in 1983, to the purchase of land for the camps by the millionaire artist, Yoko Ono, in 1987, to the Greenham Women’s victory in the House of Lords in 1990 – when the byelaws being used to justify the arrest and imprisonment of women activists were struck down by the judges – women peace activists were able to disseminate their demand for peace throughout society.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Carlo Ruzza, ‘Peace Movements’ in Malcolm J. Todd and Gary Taylor, eds., *Democracy and Participation: Popular protest and new social movements*, London: Merlin Press, 2004, pp.290-306, p.301.

<sup>10</sup> Margaret L. Laware, ‘Circling the missiles and staining them red: feminist rhetorical invention and strategies of resistance at the Women’s Peace Camp at Greenham Common’, *NWSA Journal*, Fall 2004 v 16 i3 p18 (24), The Manchester Metropolitan University Library, Electronic Journals, Expanded Academic ASAP, <http://web4.infotrac.galegroup.com>, accessed 20/10/05.

And, even if the Greenham Women and the wider movement of which they were a part were not as influential as Hilary Wainwright (the editor of *Red Pepper*) claims in her essay, 'Once More Moving On',<sup>11</sup> their movement nevertheless was part of a trend in which peace activists were able to establish a presence and to exert considerable influence throughout Western society.

Since those days the expansion of the role of NGOs in the field of promoting the rights of women and girls, education and healthcare (and many other state aided and local authority assisted elements of the voluntary sector) have greatly expanded the arena of operations in which – opposition to the arms trade, the fight for better treatment for refugees, the fight against torture and other violations of 'human rights', have developed and sustained public spaces in which the broad values and ideas promoted by many sections of the peace movement have been able to gain a firmer footing within a wide range of institutions and milieux in Britain and North America.

This broad 'public opinion' which is committed to peace and to the achievement of justice for those who are widely considered to be oppressed or ill-treated has created an extraordinarily open and fluid matrix within which the modern anti-capitalist movement has been able to grow – sharing assumptions and organisational forms and methods of protest. Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the modern

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<sup>11</sup> Hilary Wainwright, 'Once More Moving On: Social Movements, Political Representation and the Future of the Radical Left', *Social Register 1995: Why Note Capitalism*, edited by Leo Panitch, London: Merlin Press, 1995, pp.75-101, p.91.

anti-capitalist movement and the peace movement are merely different aspects or facets of the same movement or of the same array of social movements.