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Wars and Warming: Reducing the Footprints

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I. National Security State Indoctrination

If President Eisenhower were saying Farewell today, he would have to say: Corporate-Pentagon-White House-Congress-Secrecy-Exceptionalism--Mainstream Media Complex.

Senator J. William Fulbright is a traitor to my hometown. Everything was settled and clear in my Arkansas home-town puddle, until even our own people like Fulbright (Halfbright to President Johnson) came along to muddy the water with books deploring US militarism and imperialism: *The Arrogance of Power* and *The Pentagon Propaganda Machine*.

The clarity of my hometown certitudes was further disturbed when I undertook a few years of study in a College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Arkansas (now named after Fulbright), and then additional years of reading about Control of Information and Control of the Media in the U.S., the titles of two of my book-length bibliographies.

And now the recent barrage of books on US imperial dysfunctions and derangements blurs completely my smiling recollection of faithful birddog, shotgun, covey of quail, and mother's quail gravy.

I don't smile so much now, but who would like to be forced by some big fellows, who don't seem very bright and sometimes seem deranged, to participate in digging our own graves?

One of the big bullies is called *exceptionalism*. Since the graves

are not finished, and despite the difficulties in talking with such a fellow, let me pose two questions.

Does the US stand within the order of international law or outside it? Does the US still play by the rules it helped create?

But he is busy digging. I must go elsewhere for a reply.

The essays in *American Exceptionalism and Human Rights*, ed. Michael Ignatieff (2005) reply to these questions as they apply to human rights. And their answer is NO more than Yes. The U.S. approach to human rights differs negatively from that of most other Western nations. Three types of exceptionalism separate the US from the others: 1) exemptionalism (supporting treaties as long as Americans are exempt from them); 2) double standards (criticizing others for not heeding the findings of international human rights bodies, but ignoring what these bodies say about the US); and 3) legal isolationism (the tendency of US judges to ignore international jurisdictions and rulings).

Andrew Bacevich in *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (2008) expresses an aversion to claims of US exceptionalism and calls for a realism that respects the limits of power, that expects informed leaders who can avoid unintended consequences, and is skeptical of easy solutions, especially those involving the use of armed force. Only a return to such principles can deal with our many crises: our economy in disarray, our presidency recklessly imperial; our nation infatuated with military power and engaged in endless wars

A part of the doctrine of US exceptionalism is the belief in the US as WORLD TRANSFORMER. Another book by Bacevich hammers on this myth in *Washington Rules: America's Path to Permanent War*. He identifies (quoting *Time Magazine* founder Henry Luce) "the American Credo": as summoning the United States—"and the United States alone—to lead, save, liberate, and ultimately transform the world...for such purposes **as we see fit and by such means as we see fit.**" Alas, and the origin of Bacevich's repugnance to it, from this Credo arises mass killing, torture, assassination, preemptive and other illegal interventions and invasions, massive surveillance, arrest without warrant, and on and on.

One author, Chalmers Johnson, has taken four volumes to report the arrogance of US power; some the titles you will recognize: *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire*; *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic*; *Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic*; and just published, *Dismantling the Empire: America's Last Best Hope*.

These books provide an alternative narrative to the seventy-year-old official, National Security State fiction of a benign nation compelled for the good of the world to invade and conquer and spread its power through some hundred military bases around the world. But how could this have happened?

Noam Chomsky has been trying to explain it for thirty years. It goes like this. The power of the security obsessed over most of the populace these seventy years was not accidental, but was induced by an elaborate, well-financed propaganda system. Chomsky and Edward Herman explained it in their 1988 book, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. They describe filters or control mechanisms through which propaganda messages are created by the mainstream media in support of the Corporate Security State, including: 1. concentrated business ownership; 2. advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; 3. heavy reliance by the media on information provided by the government, business, and "experts" approved and often funded by these agents of power; 4. use of "flak" as a means of disciplining media; and 5. anti-communism, as a national religion. While anti-communist and anti-socialist rhetoric continue to enforce the status quo, it

has been largely displaced by the rhetoric of anti-terrorism.

Manufacturing Consent has provided a model for analysis of a diversity of subjects. For example, Anthony DiMaggio in *When Media Go to War: Hegemonic Discourse, Public Opinion, and the Limits of Power* (2009) demonstrates indoctrination in US and UK media coverage of the Iraq withdrawal debate, especially how media frame the antiwar movement to limit their effect; the ways human rights violations are highlighted in US media coverage of enemy states and played down in allied coverage; in journalistic values and practices; in US and UK coverage of Iran; in public response to the wars; and in the issue of controlling information to create consent.

These books are only a few of the critiques of National Security (that is, USA today) myths, dogmas, and indoctrination. One might think that enough had been shown to scuttle them. But the doctrines have been successfully infused into our society. They circulate through body politic so seemingly naturally that most people can't see them. That explains the silence of most people; why the public is so passive. And why some peace proponents of alternative practices—nonviolence, compassion, diplomacy, material assistance—losing their sense of humor, feel hopeless at times.

II. Alternatives to Militarism and Empire: Birthdays

But personally I learned eventually to separate myself from the bullies. I have dropped my shovel, though the thing still seems attached to my ankle.

I learned a lot from the British socialist and literary critic, Raymond Williams. He urged all to step outside power systems and inspect them; they're always contradictory. He taught also aggressive insertion of alternatives to official folly and violence into every available niche possible. Facts: The Pentagon has placed contractors in almost every county in the country. The Pentagon has millions of dollars annually to propagandize the US populace to believe our wars are permanent because always in defense of our threatened liberty. Consequently, high ranking officers and military heroes are always high in popularity. They're consistently more successful than civilian candidates for the presidency. More facts: Dozens of official days for national glory, empire, wars and war heroes, and victory, countless monuments, and yes cemeteries. (But cemeteries are not about the dead; certainly not about the horribly wounded; since all live in national glory.) So, Williams would think, let us find ways to promote peace and justice by countering that popularity.

BirthDAYS and National DAYS? Surely they are too obvious for Williams to overlook. Little attention to peace and justice heroes, compassion, diplomacy? Yes, of course. The forces of persuasion and conditioning are vastly unequal financially. But the people have numbers. A counter-conditioning campaign is called for, I imagine him thinking. In every way find niches for persuasion.

Birthdays. When I looked at birthday celebrations local, state, and nation, active or passive supporters of the Security State.Complex seemed to dominate. I scanned the Nobel Peace Prize winners, and only King was honored by a national Day. So I began to gather birthdays of peacemakers, write brief biographies, and send to OMNI's mailing list.

The idea actually was not new. Several years ago a close friend wrote a biographical series on peacemakers, called "Dove Tales," in our alternative newspaper, until the newspaper folded. But the idea was not forgotten.

The new venture turned out to be heuristic. I wanted to reinforce knowledge of well-known peacemakers, as in the "Dove Tales," but also to introduce stellar but little known peacemakers. I knew some nonviolence history, of Thoreau, Gandhi, and King, but I had never heard of Anderson Sa, the Brazilian musician who teaches young people alternatives to

violence. Of the many peacemakers who teach diversity and toleration—Desmond Tutu, the Dalai Lama—, how many had heard of Bruno Hussar, promoter of interfaith harmony in his “Oasis of Peace” village, or Riane Eisler, who taught the partnership over the dominator model in human affairs, as explained in her book *The Chalice and the Blade?* The list grew (and is growing), as we affirm not military heroes but Thich Nhat Hanh, Colman McCarthy, Oscar Arias, Henry Salt, Albert Schweitzer, Astrid Lindgren, Jane Goodall, and on and on.

Of course, my subject is US peace and justice heroes. US military men and women are lauded for their “service.” Let us concentrate on service to humanity without violence in preventing violence and wars (and now warming). A fine source is Michael True’s two volumes, *Justice Seekers, Justice Makers* (1985) and *To Construct Peace: 30 More Justice Seekers, Peace Makers* (1992), both international in scope but mainly about stellar US peacemakers—Dorothy Day, Joan Baez, Jim Corbett, Penny Lernoux, Maura Clarke, Noam Chomsky, Dolores Huerta, Denise Levertov, and more. But his total is only about sixty, when US peace heroes number in the thousands. So here’s our niche. We can replace the self-aggrandizing National Security State magnifying glass with one that can see another kind of SERVICE. At our events, our work, our homes. I even have a sculpture in my back yard with the names of thirty of Michael’s portraits, 15 women and 15 men.

III. National Days

But the project to enlarge awareness of these heroes in the consciousness of the peace movement and the public at large is simple compared to the project to reinforce some DAYS and to change or even erase others

A. Reinforcing

For whereas the birthdays at least right now require merely the writing and dissemination of a brief bio (though potentially much more could be performed), the national days involve necessarily the preparation of a more elaborate writing or event and commensurate publicity. Here is a partial list of DAYS TO CELEBRATE or COMMEMORATE, in bold indicating OMNI’s active participation, with notes regarding OMNI observance.

February, Black History MONTH

March, Women’s History MONTH

March 1, Nuclear Victims DAY

March 8, International Women’s DAY: In simple ceremonies by women and men, we have focused on celebrating peace, justice, ecology women heroes, locally, nationally, internationally.

March 15-21 Sunshine WEEK

March 22, World Water DAY

Earth DAY, April 22: for three years we had out of town distinguished speakers. Then we merged with Fayetteville’s SpringFest: Donna and Kelly, Jamie and others organized displays and music at Fayetteville’ Walton Art Center’s Rose Garden.

Earth DAY at World Peace Wetland Prairie: OMNI is part-owner with the city of 2 acres of wetland prairie and a half-acre peace-sign rock garden celebrating world peace. At WPWP on the Saturday preceding SpringFest we celebrate world peace with music, gardening, and

children's events..

Martin Luther King, Jr., Assassinated, April 4, 1968.

May 1, May DAY, the international workers holiday. (Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger, among many others, were Wobblies, members of the International Workers of the World, IWW. An opportunity for great music.)

May 3, World Press Freedom Day. We have organized several events and newsletters to examine freedom of information in the US, and to read the names of news people killed in the line of duty.

May 15, International Conscientious Objectors' DAY. This DAY should be observed; maybe next year.

Last Friday in April, Arbor DAY (different dates by states)

June 4, UN International DAY of Innocent Children, Victims of Aggression

June 5, UN World Environment DAY

June 15, International Peace Prayer DAY.

June 15-23, Human Costs of Military Toxics WEEK.

June 19, Juneteenth. A day to celebrate not only freedom from slavery for U.S. African-Americans, but for all people. In Fayetteville the Day has the attention of several groups on and off campus.

June, Gay Pride WEEK. A strong lgbtq org. exists in Fayetteville.

September 1, Labor DAY, for jobs, fair wages, health benefits, right to organize. Newsletter. Unions are very weak in Arkansas.

September 12, Interdependence DAY (www.civworld.org)

September 17, Constitution DAY. For the past 3 years OMNI has celebrated this DAY with a special newsletter.

September 21, International DAY of Peace, Celebration of Peacemakers. We have paid special attention to this DAY, marking it in diverse ways over the years: a press conference at City Center next to the city's Peace Prayer Fountain with church leaders speaking; international flags around the Fayetteville Square; sidewalk silent vigil with placards; and more.

September 25-October 2, Banned Books/Freedom to Read WEEK : OMNI has initiated activities and participated in others for a decade; e.g. roundtables on banned books at public library..

Sept. 25-Oct. 2, Keep Space for Peace WEEK: For almost a decade OMNI has sponsored a variety of programs during this week, including bringing Bruce Gagnon to Fayetteville.

October, Domestic Violence Awareness MONTH. Several organizations in NW Ark. Focus on this subject.

October 1, International/World Vegetarian DAY

October 1-7, International Vegetarian WEEK: Many in peace movement consider Vegetarianism fundamental to peace, justice and ecology, for its positive effects in ethics, nutrition, and checking global warming. Vegetarianism is at the heart of resistance to both wars and warming.

October 2, International DAY of Nonviolence (Gandhi's BirthDAY). We have shown Attenborough's film "Gandhi." This is one of the DAYS we need to accentuate more.

Universal Children's DAY, Oct. 4

World Hunger Day, Oct. 12.

World Food DAY, Oct. 16 These two DAYS we have affirmed once by a newsletter and generally by supporting local food and community gardens. OMNI also has a Home Peace Places Network many of which are vegetable gardens.

United Nations DAY, October 24 (UN Charter became binding treaty): OMNI has celebrated this day for seven years by sponsoring notable speakers, including the president of the Central Ark. Chapter of UN/USA.

October 28, National Immigrants' DAY

November, American Indian Heritage MONTH

International DAY for Tolerance, Nov. 16

International DAY to End Violence Against Women, Nov. 25

Buy Nothing DAY, Nov. 26

International DAY of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Nov. 29

Human Rights DAY, Dec. 10: Ever since OMNI's beginning we have celebrated this DAY, with events of various kinds, including music/readings at the local bookstore.

Bill of Rights DAY, Dec. 15: OMNI has cooperated with the local chapter of the ACLU to celebrate this DAY, sometimes at the home of a member for a talk and dinner. Occasionally we have combined the two DAYS.

If we listed all the possibilities for reinforcing peace, justice, and environmental values, we would be commemorating, that is reinforcing, at least one DAY in every month.

B. Transforming

A more complex initiative directly challenges the conditioning of the public to accept violence and wars through the many patriotic days. The UN initiative called the International Culture of Peace Decade (2000-2010) attempted to define the Culture of War and the Culture of Peace and move away from a war culture to a peace culture.

But we cannot make this change so long as we celebrate the myths represented by the US official ceremonial Days, many of which directly support wars and preparations for wars.

George Orwell wrote in 1984: "Everything faded into mist. The past was erased, the erasure was forgotten, the lie became the truth"—for example, that wars are inevitable, that our species is inherently violent, that the US makes mistakes but is mainly benign. Much of the peace movement's work in building a Culture of Peace involves the struggle to reinforce peaceful values despite the pervasive repetition of numerous nationalistic myths. In behavioral psychology, we are what we do. Most of the public accepts the messages of special Days (Daze?) and holidays that promote the US Security State, because they don't see it (we're not Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union), and anyway overwhelming military force is necessary for our security, never mind it was we who have attacked other nations, and since the War of 1812 have been attacked by another nation only one more time at Pearl Harbor 1941.

Here are some of the Days we must transform, if we are to counter the myths that enable such military expenditure and worldwide intervention.

Valentine's Day, Feb. 14

President's Day, Feb. 15. The rise of presidential and decline of congressional power reached its apex under President George W. Bush, who is guilty of war crimes and is impeachable by a dozen articles, and President Obama has not repudiated most of those powers.

May 1, Law DAY. The purchase of Congress by corporations to make laws favorable to corporations has become another great catastrophe endangering our democracy.

First Thursday of May, National DAY of Prayer. Our alternative should be DAY of Prayer by People of All Faiths.

2nd Sunday of May, Mother's DAY for Peace: The present Mother's Day is another national day commodified for business profit. For six years we have celebrated the anniversary of Julia Ward Howe's Mother's Day for Peace, by a luncheon or newsletter..

Memorial DAY, last Monday in May, formerly Decoration Day, a US holiday in remembrance of members of US armed forces killed in wars. It is time we offered an alternative—the most obvious possibility being all people killed in war. .

June 14, Flag DAY. Traditionally a day of patriotic emotion. We can offer alternatives for world peace.

June 15, Father's DAY. Nothing yet. Like we are doing with Julia Ward Howe's Mother's Day regarding the role of women in the world, we could help redefine masculinity on this day for peace and justice.

July 4, Independence DAY. We have published an occasional newsletter suggesting alternative ways to celebrate Independence DAY: What should we celebrate? Declaration of Independence and empire? Or declaration of *Interdependence*? Earth Charter? Resistance and Liberation today? Patriotism.? Nationalism.? Democracy? Wars? Pacifism? Etc. The DAY is especially an opportunity each year to promote the value of freedom from oppression, for the people of the US,

and for all people.

August 6 and 9, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Remembrance of Victims/Celebration of Peace Heroes: OMNI's oldest activity, begun in the 1970s by our predecessor Peace Organizing Committee. Each year we encourage people to think about the bombs and about air war: Were the bombs justified? What were the consequences globally up to today and projected into the future? For many years the event (walk, speakers, music) occurred at the Greek Amphitheater on campus of U of Arkansas; now it is held at the Fulbright Peace Fountain at the center of the campus.

2nd Monday in October, Indigenous People of the Americas DAY (Columbus Day): As of 2010 OMNI will have sponsored this event for six years in conjunction with UofA's Native American Symposium Committee. Our annual event has grown significantly into a half-day remembrance: a film at UA, readings from accounts of the Trail of Tears and talk also at UA, Walk to Trail of Tears Monument, Ceremony. Read the opening chapter on Columbus in Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*.

9-11/Patriot Day/Peaceful Tomorrows DAY. Following 9-11, another kind of immense explosion instantly occurred, characterized by xenophobia, patriotism, ethnocentrism, nationalism, chauvinism, and exceptionalism. Because 9-11 was employed by the Bush Administration to so horrendously escalate the so-called "War on Terrorism" as part of the 70-year-old US permanent war, asserting an alternative is particularly important. President Bush named 9-11 "Patriot Day." In search of the criminals behind 9-11 he invaded the entire country of Afghanistan, and then invaded Iraq, began bombing Pakistan, and the cowed Congress passed the "Patriot Act" ostensibly to apprehend terrorists but in effect to restrict dissent. But we have living alternatives. Following 9-11, the September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows asked our leaders not to order our troops to engage in retaliatory war, but to consider the consequences both to our troops and to the civilian "enemies." They cried out for international law, negotiation, and reconciliation. (See OMNI's 2009 Newsletter on 9-11/Patriot Day/Peaceful Tomorrows for an extended statement.) In 2009 OMNI commenced its alternative to Patriot Day—Peaceful Tomorrows DAY.

November 11, Veterans' Dat. Our 2008 Newsletter is a large compilation of articles and bibliographies about illegal and ruinous US wars. Since then we have published less, but our intention to counter Veterans' Day as a traditional day to reinforce patriotism remains the same.

December 7, Pearl Harbor Day. Increasingly, historians have questioned the simple explanation of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor as a dastardly attack by Japanese imperialists; for example, Roland Worth, Jr.'s *No Choice But War*. December 7 offers the peace movement a time to discuss the causes of the war in the Pacific and the causes of other wars, toward understanding better how to prevent them. OMNI issued a newsletter in 2008 elaborating these arguments. During the past two decades, the official, patriotic, illusory enthusiasm for US wars that has led to permanent war has received significant deflation.

Conclusion

When people ask, Aren't they still digging our grave? We can reply: Nobody promised a quick fix after 70 years of threat, fear, and hatred. When people ask, What can I do, what can one person do, to change the world from war to peace? We have one answer at least: We can reinforce a peaceful DAY or Change a warfare Day! Instead of digging graves, build a DAY.

When scoffers ask, what difference can we make? We can answer: we are engaged in a struggle with bullies over the meanings of our ceremonies and myths, and there is something we can accomplish. If it is true that the US warfare state—Corporation-Pentagon-Secrecy-Surveillance-Violence-White House-Congress-Mass Media-Permanent War—is a dominant system that filters through a thousand political and social capillaries of repetitive transmission, yet is not finished, not complete, we can counter it, point by point, place by place, day by day, niche by niche by concrete actions building a Culture of Peace inside the Culture of War.

We will be offering a model to the world, and sometimes models grab the world's imagination.

And remember the subtitle of Gandhi's autobiography: *My Life of Experiments*.

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