

In Case You Missed...

Some of our special stories in August focused on the worsening crisis in Syria, the injustice of the Manning case, the history of U.S. war crimes using nukes and chemical weapons, and the Right's disdain for reality.

["GOP's Mad Health-Care Agenda"](#) by Beverly Bandler, Aug. 3, 2013.

["Will Zionism Sink Mideast Peace"](#) by Lawrence Davidson, Aug. 7, 2013.

["Would Jesus Drop the Nagasaki Bomb"](#) by Gary G. Kohls, Aug. 9, 2013.

["No Reckoning over Agent Orange"](#) by Marjorie Cohn and Jeanne Mirer, Aug. 10, 2013.

["The Moral Imperative of Activism"](#) by Ray McGovern, Aug. 12, 2013.

["Struggling for Peace in Colombia"](#) by Andres Cala, Aug. 12, 2013.

["The 'Do-Something' Myth in Syria"](#) by Paul R. Pillar, Aug. 12, 2013.

["Who Benefits from the Various Wars"](#) by Arjen Kamphuis, Aug. 13, 2013.

["Blaming Obama for Syrian Mess"](#) by Robert Parry, Aug. 14, 2013.

["America's Upside-Down Morality"](#) by Robert Parry, Aug. 15, 2013.

["How False History Props Up the Right"](#) by Robert Parry, Aug. 17, 2013.

["Did Manning Help Avert War in Iran?"](#) by Robert Parry, Aug. 19, 2013.

["Will the American Right Kill Us All?"](#) by Robert Parry, Aug. 20, 2013.

["Making the World the Enemy"](#) by Todd E. Pierce, Aug. 21, 2013.

["Looking Backward on Bradley Manning"](#) by Robert Parry, Aug. 21, 2013.

["Rick Perry's Neo-Confederate Stance"](#) by Robert Parry, Aug. 23, 2013.

["A CIA Hand in an American Coup"](#) by Robert Parry, Aug. 26, 2013.

["The Broader Stakes of Syrian Crisis"](#) by Ray McGovern, Aug. 27, 2013.

["Rushing to War Against Syria"](#) by Robert Parry, Aug. 28, 2013.

["The Saudi-Israeli Superpower"](#) by Robert Parry, Aug. 29, 2013.

["Who Blocked Syrian Peace Talks?"](#) by Robert Parry, Aug. 30, 2013.

["An Appeal to Gen. Dempsey on Syria"](#) by VIPS, Aug. 30, 2013.

["A Dodgy Dossier on Syrian War"](#) by Robert Parry, Aug. 30, 2013.

["Ignoring Bloody Mideast Lessons"](#) by Ann Wright, Aug. 31, 2013.

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Some of our special stories from July, focusing on the National Security Agency surveillance scandal, the deepening chaos in the Middle East, and the American Right's growing hostility to science and history.

["Climate Denying Libertarianism"](#) by Robert Parry, July 2, 2013.

["Why Snowden's Fate Matters"](#) by Elizabeth Murray, July 2, 2013.

["Flag-Waving to Death"](#) by Gary G. Kohls, July 4, 2013.

["Rethinking Thomas Jefferson"](#) by Robert Parry, July 4, 2013.

["The Right's Made-Up Constitution"](#) by Jada Thacker, July 6, 2013.

["Why MSNBC Defends NSA Surveillance"](#) by Jeff Cohen, July 8, 2013.

["US Finds Influence Hard to Buy"](#) by Melvin A. Goodman, July 8, 2013.

["US Energy Renaissance Shifts Power"](#) by Andres Cala, July 9, 2013.

["Bringing Back Jim Crow"](#) by Robert Parry, July 10, 2013.

["PRISM's Controversial Forerunner"](#) by Richard L. Fricker, July 11, 2013.

["The Impending Afghan Defeat"](#) by Beverly Bandler, July 11, 2013.

["Ignoring the GOP's White Racism"](#) by Robert Parry, July 12, 2013.

["GOP's Noble Past, Ignoble Present"](#) by Robert Parry, July 15, 2013.

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["Truth Requires Truth-Tellers"](#) by Lawrence Davidson, July 16, 2013.

["Israel's War Talk on Iran"](#) by Paul R. Pillar, July 16, 2013.

["The Right's Racism Is Showing"](#) by Robert Parry, July 16, 2013.

["WPost's Cohen Fears the Hoodie"](#) by Robert Parry, July 17, 2013.

["Rand Paul's Neo-Confederate Aide"](#) by Robert Parry, July 19, 2013.

["Gen. Hayden's Glass House"](#) by Ray McGovern, July 21, 2013.

["L'Affaire Snowden Shows US Weakness"](#) by Andres Cala, July 22, 2013.

["How Israel Trained a Diplomat"](#) by Paul R. Pillar, July 22, 2013.

["The Fallout from Nuclear Secrecy"](#) by Beverly Deepe Kever, July 23, 2013.

["Racist Roots of GOP's War on Obama"](#) by Robert Parry, July 24, 2013.

["UK Spy Warns of Iraq War Disclosures"](#) by Annie Machon, July 25, 2013.

["Puttin' the Pressure on Putin"](#) by Ray McGovern, July 28, 2013.

["Zionism's Lost Shine"](#) by Lawrence Davidson, July 29, 2013.

["Scooping the Boys of the Vietnam Press"](#) by Don North, July 30, 2013.

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Would Jesus Drop the Nagasaki Bomb?

The second and hopefully last nuclear bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, Japan, on Aug. 9, 1945. Among the bitter ironies of that day, the U.S. plane was flown by an all-Christian crew that picked for its target the landmark of a Christian church that had survived Japanese persecution, writes Gary G. Kohls.

By Gary G. Kohls

Sixty-eight years ago, at 11:02 a.m., Aug. 9, 1945, an all-Christian bomber crew dropped a plutonium bomb, on Nagasaki, Japan. That bomb was the second and last atomic weapon that had as its target a civilian city. Somewhat ironically, Nagasaki was the most Christian city in Japan and "ground zero" was the largest cathedral in the Far East.

These Christian airmen did their job efficiently, and they accomplished the mission with military pride. There was no way that the crew could not have known that what they were participating in met the definition of an international war crime (according to the Nuremberg Principles that were very soon to be used to justify the execution of many German Nazis).

It had been only three days since the Aug. 6 bomb, a uranium bomb, had decimated Hiroshima. The Nagasaki bomb was dropped amidst considerable chaos and confusion in Tokyo, where the fascist military government had been searching for months for a way to honorably end the war.

The only obstacle to surrender had been the Roosevelt/Truman administration's insistence on unconditional surrender, which meant that the Emperor Hirohito, whom the Japanese regarded as a deity, would be removed from his figurehead position in Japan an intolerable demand for the Japanese and one that kept Japan from surrendering months earlier.

The Russian army had declared war against Japan on Aug. 8, hoping to regain territories lost to Japan in the disastrous Russo-Japanese war 40 years earlier, and Stalin's army was advancing across Manchuria. Russia's entry into the war represented a powerful incentive for Japan to end the war quickly and they much preferred surrendering to the U.S. rather than to the Soviet Union.

A quick end to the war was important to the U.S. as well. It did not want to divide any of the spoils of war with its erstwhile Soviet allies.

The Target Committee in Washington, D.C. had made a list of relatively undamaged Japanese cities that were to be excluded from the conventional fire-bombing (using napalm) campaigns that had burned to the ground 60-plus major Japanese cities during the first half of 1945. That list of protected cities included, at one time or another Hiroshima, Niigata, Kokura, Kyoto and Nagasaki. These relatively undamaged cities were off-limits from incendiary terror bombings but were to be preserved as possible targets for the new "gimmick" weapons of mass destruction.

Scientific curiosity was a motivation in choosing the targeted cities. The military and the scientists needed to know what would happen to intact buildings and their living inhabitants when atomic weapons were exploded overhead.

Ironically, prior to Aug. 6 and 9, the residents of Hiroshima and Nagasaki considered themselves lucky for not having been bombed as much as other cities. Little did they know.

Early in the morning of Aug. 9, 1945, a B-29 Superfortress, which had been christened Bock's Car, took off from Tinian Island in the South Pacific, with the prayers and blessings of its Lutheran and Catholic chaplains. It headed for Kokura, the primary target. Bock's Car's plutonium bomb was in the bomb bay, code-named "Fat Man," after Winston Churchill.

The only field test (blasphemously code-named "Trinity") of a nuclear weapon had occurred just three weeks earlier (July 16, 1945) at Alamogordo, New Mexico. The molten lava rock that resulted from the heat of that blast (twice the temperature of the sun) can still be found at the site today. It is called trinitite.

Japan's War Council

The reality of what had happened at Hiroshima was only slowly becoming apparent to the fascist military leaders in Tokyo. It took two to three days after Hiroshima was incinerated before Japan's Supreme War Council was able to even partially comprehend what had happened there, to make rational decisions and to discuss again the possibility of surrender.

But it was already too late, because by the time the War Council was meeting that morning in Tokyo, Bock's Car and the rest of the armada of B-29s was already approaching Japan – under radio silence. The dropping of the second bomb had initially been planned for Aug. 11, but bad weather had been forecast and the mission was moved up to Aug. 9.

With instructions to drop the bomb only on visual sighting, Bock's Car arrived at the primary target, but Kokura was clouded over. So after futilely circling over the city three times, there was no break in the clouds, and, running seriously low on fuel in the process, the plane headed for its secondary target, Nagasaki.

Nagasaki is famous in the history of Japanese Christianity. Not only was it the site of the largest catholic church in the Far East, St. Mary's Cathedral (completed in 1917), but it also had the largest concentration of baptized Christians in all of Japan. It was the megachurch of its time, with 12,000 baptized members.

Nagasaki was the location where the legendary Jesuit missionary, Francis Xavier, established a mission church in 1549. The Christian community survived and prospered for several generations.

However, soon after Xavier's planting of the church in Japan, it became obvious to the Japanese rulers that Portuguese and Spanish commercial interests were exploiting Japan, and it didn't take too long for all Europeans to be expelled from the country as well as their foreign religion. All aspects of Christianity, including the new Japanese converts, became the target of brutal persecutions.

By 1600, being a Christian was a capital crime in Japan. The Japanese Christians who refused to recant of their new religion suffered torture and even crucifixions similar to the Roman persecutions in the first three centuries of Christianity. After the reign of terror was over, it appeared to all observers that Japanese Christianity was extinct.

However, 250 years later, in the 1850s, after the coercive gunboat diplomacy of Commodore Perry forced open an offshore island for American trade purposes, it was discovered that there were thousands of baptized Christians in Nagasaki, living their faith in a catacomb existence, completely unknown to the government – which immediately started another purge.

But because of international pressure, the persecutions were soon stopped, and Nagasaki Christianity came up from the underground. And by 1917, with no help from the government, the growing Japanese Christian community had built the massive Urakami Cathedral, in the Urakami River district of Nagasaki.

Now it turned out, in the mystery of good and evil, that the massive cathedral was one of two Nagasaki landmarks that the Bock's Car bombardier had been briefed on, and looking through his bomb site 31,000 feet overhead, he identified the cathedral through a break in the clouds and ordered the drop.

At 11:02 a.m., during morning mass, Nagasaki Christianity was boiled, evaporated and carbonized in a scorching, satanic, radioactive fireball that exploded 500 meters above the cathedral. As it turned out, "ground zero" for "Fat Man" was the surviving center of Japanese Christianity which had survived two centuries of persecution.

Nagasaki Christian Death Count

Since the Cathedral was the epicenter of the blast, most Nagasaki Christians did not survive. Six thousand of them died instantly, including all who were at confession that morning. Of the 12,000 church members, 8,500 died as a direct result of the bomb.

Three orders of nuns and a Christian girl's school disappeared into black smoke or chunks of charred remains. Tens of thousands of innocent Shinto and Buddhist Japanese also died instantly and hundreds of thousands were mortally wounded, some of whose progeny are still in the process of slowly dying from the trans-

generational malignancies and immune deficiencies caused by the deadly plutonium.

What the Japanese Imperial government could not do in over 200 years of persecution, destroy Japanese Christianity, American Christians did in nine seconds. Even today those who are members of Christian churches in Japan represent a fraction of 1 percent of the population, and the average attendance at Christian worship services is 30. Surely the decimation of Nagasaki at the end of the war crippled what at one time was a thriving church.

The hidden history of Nagasaki Christianity and its devastation on Aug. 9, 1945, should stimulate discussion and perhaps repentance among those who profess to be followers of the nonviolent Jesus and who stay silent about or support American militarism.

Father George Zabelka, the Catholic chaplain for the 509th Composite Group (the 1,500-man Army Air Force group whose only mission was to drop the atomic bombs on their mainly civilian targets) was one of the few Christian leaders who came to recognize the contradictions between what his modern church had taught him about war and what the early church taught about violence, i.e., that violence was forbidden to those who wished to follow Jesus.

Several decades after he was discharged from the military chaplaincy, Father Zabelka finally concluded that both he and his church had made serious theological errors in religiously legitimating the organized mass slaughter that is modern air war. He came to see that the enemies of his nation were not, according to New Testament ethics, the enemies of God, but rather they were actually fellow children of a merciful God that are to be loved and not killed.

Father Zabelka's conversion away from the standardized violence-tolerant Constantinian Christianity turned his ministry around 180 degrees. His new understanding of the truth of gospel nonviolence inspired him to devote the remaining decades of his life to speaking out against violence in all its forms, especially the violence of militarism and war. On the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Nagasaki, he went to the city to tearfully ask for forgiveness for his part in the crime.

Likewise, the Lutheran chaplain, William Downey (formerly of Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota), in his counseling of soldiers who had become troubled by their participation in making murder for the state, later denounced all killing, whether by a single bullet or by weapons of mass destruction.

A Religion That Has Blessed War

In Daniel Hallock's important book, *Hell, Healing and Resistance*, the author talks about a 1997 Buddhist retreat led by the Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh that attempted to deal with the hellish post-war existence of combat-traumatized Vietnam War veterans.

Hallock wrote, "Clearly, Buddhism offers something that cannot be found in institutional Christianity. But then why should veterans (*who largely have abandoned the faiths of their childhoods*) embrace a religion that has blessed the wars that ruined their souls? It is no wonder they turn to a gentle Buddhist monk to hear what are, in large part, the truths of Christ."

As a cradle Christian who tried hard to follow the tenets of the Sermon on the Mount, I was stung by Hallock's comment, but it was the wake-up sting of a sad and sobering truth that made me try and, so far, apparently fail to raise the consciousness of professed Christians to the truth of gospel nonviolence by being part of an effort called Every Church A Peace Church.

Another motivating factor for me in alerting readers to this important censored-out history is that, as a physician who has dealt with many psychologically traumatized patients (including traumatized combat veterans), I know for certain that violence, in its myriad forms, can irretrievably bruise the human body, mind and spirit

I have learned that psychological, physical, sexual and spiritual trauma, neglect, isolation, brain-altering psychotropic drugs and brain malnutrition can cause neurological damage that can mimic any number of so-called mental illnesses. These traumas are deadly and even contagious. I have seen violence and the resultant traumatic illnesses spread through families even involving the third and fourth generations following the initial victims and perpetrators, just like the progeny of the atomic bomb victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the hibakusha.

The cycle of contagious illnesses will continue until the military and domestic violence that fuels America's current mental ill health epidemics is stopped. One of the most difficult "mental illnesses" to treat is combat-induced posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In its most virulent form combat-induced PTSD may be incurable because it likely represents significant neurological/brain damage.

PTSD is also a serious spiritual problem for any church that fails to teach its young people about the gruesome realities of the satanic war zones that threaten their souls. Years ago I read a Veteran's Administration study that showed that, whereas most Vietnam War-era recruits came from churches where they actively practiced their faith, if they came home with PTSD, the percentage returning to

the faith community approached zero. Daniel Hallock's premise above holds.

Therefore the church is inadvertently promoting anti-Christic homicidal violence (which contradicts gospel themes) by not teaching what Jesus taught about violence and how he lived his life. Therefore, refraining from warning their young members about combat-induced PTSD is directly undermining the "retention" portion of recruitment and retention campaigns that many churches embrace.

Hopefully this essay will promote honest discussions (at least among the followers of Jesus) about the ethics of patriotically making murder for the state. The church, of course, should reject the seemingly persuasive arguments that come from the perspective of national security agencies, the military-industrial complex or from the perspective of pre-Christian eye-for-an-eye retaliation thinking that Jesus pointedly rejected.

Rather it should be obvious that, for such discussions, the church needs to adopt the perspective of the Sermon on the Mount, the core ethical teachings of Jesus (found in Matthew 5, 6 and 7 and Luke 6).

What can be done to prevent the next Nagasaki?

The next Nagasaki can be prevented if Christian church leadership will courageously heed Jesus's call to reject violence in all its forms by learning and practicing active nonviolence, according to the strategies of Jesus, Gandhi and Martin Luther King, and by refusing to cooperate with their government's legal right to conscript their church's sons and daughters into the military and teach them, by coercive methods and psychological rape, the art of homicide that will surely poison their souls.

Gary G. Kohls, MD, is a founding member of Every Church A Peace Church (www.ecapc.org) and is a member of a local non-denominational affiliate of ECAPC, the Community of the Third Way.

Flag-Waving to Death

In American politics and media, anyone who questions the concept of "American Exceptionalism" is banished to the margins of society. But this self-aggrandizing notion has always contained a large measure of self-deception, ignoring the suffering inflicted on other peoples and on U.S. soldiers, as Gary G. Kohls notes.

By Gary G. Kohls

On this Fourth of July, amidst the celebrations of our mythical “American Exceptionalism,” I submit the following moving testimony from Daniel Somers, a once-patriotic Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran who could no longer tolerate the physical and spiritual pain resulting from his visible and invisible wounds, his PTSD symptoms and his guilt for participating, albeit unwillingly, in U.S. military crimes against humanity and international war crimes that have been committed far more often than any of the major media have even hinted.

The 30-year-old Somers had been part of Task Force Lightning, an intelligence unit. In 2004-05, he was mainly assigned to a Tactical Human-Intelligence Team (THT) in Baghdad, Iraq, where he ran more than 400 combat missions as a machine gunner in the turret of a Humvee. He also interviewed Iraqis, both civilians and suspected insurgents. In 2006-07, Somers worked with Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) in Mosul, Iraq.



From his military service, Somers suffered from PTSD and had been diagnosed with traumatic brain injury and several other war-related conditions.

Somers’s unbearably honest suicide note of June 10 should help clear up the feigned bafflement of his military command pooh-bahs, their fawning major media and the assorted politicians (who were duped into voting for the wars but have remained unrepentant for their errant behavior since then) as to why 22 American veterans are committing suicide daily and why there are more active-duty soldier suicides and suicide attempts than there are KIAs.

Perhaps a part of our nation’s response (if it was being honest to its veterans, its active duty military and their grieving and confused families) concerning

the tragic deaths and maimings should be to finally admit that the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were based on lies fomented by the many hawkish politicians (most of whom are ChickenHawks) and duly reported on as truth by the corporate-controlled, uber-patriotic media and profitably and eagerly endorsed by uncounted profit-minded corporations and assorted secretive forces that benefit from war without any risk to themselves or their loved ones.

The next step in what could be a logical healing process would be to issue a sincere and repeated apology to the suicide survivors that their sons and daughters and loved ones fought unnecessarily and therefore may have died in vain a cognitively difficult thing for most humans, especially politicians, to do, especially when there has been so much flag-waving, war-glorifying propaganda obscuring the fact that war is anything but glorious, especially for war-traumatized veterans like Somers.

For Frederick Douglas, the heroic ex-slave of the mid-1800s, the annual Fourth of July celebrations inspired him to write one of the most biting critiques of America ever written. Here is what Douglas said in a July 4, 1852, speech that raised irrefutable questions about the supposed freedoms of white Americans who were blind to the crimes against black humanity that they were tolerating right in their own backyards. He spoke for black slaves and all other victims of American imperialism when he said:

“Your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciation of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are, to God, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy – a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of the United States, at this very hour.”

Today, the celebration of “American Exceptionalism” must ignore the fact that the United States is far down the list of “civilized” nations (and sinking fast) in scores of categories. The main exception being its #1 status in military spending, war-making, combat-induced PTSD, and the manufacture, possession and sales of the most lethal collection of weapons of mass destruction in the history of the world.

Before his suicide on June 10, Daniel Somers addressed the following statement to his family. It was published online with their permission and encouragement. Somers wrote: “I am sorry that it has come to this.

"The fact is, for as long as I can remember my motivation for getting up every day has been so that you would not have to bury me. As things have continued to get worse, it has become clear that this alone is not a sufficient reason to carry on. The fact is, I am not getting better, I am not going to get better, and I will most certainly deteriorate further as time goes on. From a logical standpoint, it is better to simply end things quickly and let any repercussions from that play out in the short term than to drag things out into the long term.

"You will perhaps be sad for a time, but over time you will forget and begin to carry on. Far better that than to inflict my growing misery upon you for years and decades to come, dragging you down with me. It is because I love you that I cannot do this to you. You will come to see that it is a far better thing as one day after another passes during which you do not have to worry about me or even give me a second thought. You will find that your world is better without me in it.

"I really have been trying to hang on, for more than a decade now. Each day has been a testament to the extent to which I cared, suffering unspeakable horror as quietly as possible so that you could feel as though I was still here for you. In truth, I was nothing more than a prop, filling space so that my absence would not be noted. In truth, I have already been absent for a long, long time.

"My body has become nothing but a cage, a source of pain and constant problems. The illness I have has caused me pain that not even the strongest medicines could dull, and there is no cure. All day, every day a screaming agony in every nerve ending in my body. It is nothing short of torture. My mind is a wasteland, filled with visions of incredible horror, unceasing depression, and crippling anxiety, even with all of the medications the doctors dare give. Simple things that everyone else takes for granted are nearly impossible for me. I cannot laugh or cry. I can barely leave the house. I derive no pleasure from any activity. Everything simply comes down to passing time until I can sleep again. Now, to sleep forever seems to be the most merciful thing.

You must not blame yourself. The simple truth is this: During my first deployment, I was made to participate in things, the enormity of which is hard to describe. War crimes, crimes against humanity. Though I did not participate willingly, and made what I thought was my best effort to stop these events, there are some things that a person simply cannot come back from. I take some pride in that, actually, as to move on in life after being part of such a thing would be the mark of a sociopath in my mind. These things go far beyond what most are even aware of.

"Force me to do these things and then participate in the ensuing cover-up is more than any government has the right to demand. Then, the same government has

turned around and abandoned me. They offer no help, and actively block the pursuit of gaining outside help via their corrupt agents at the DEA. Any blame rests with them.

“Beyond that, there are the host of physical illnesses that have struck me down again and again, for which they also offer no help. There might be some progress by now if they had not spent nearly twenty years denying the illness that I and so many others were exposed to. Further complicating matters is the repeated and severe brain injuries to which I was subjected, which they also seem to be expending no effort into understanding. What is known is that each of these should have been cause enough for immediate medical attention, which was not rendered.

“Lastly, the DEA enters the picture again as they have now managed to create such a culture of fear in the medical community that doctors are too scared to even take the necessary steps to control the symptoms. All under the guise of a completely manufactured “overprescribing epidemic,” which stands in stark relief to all of the legitimate research, which shows the opposite to be true. Perhaps, with the right medication at the right doses, I could have bought a couple of decent years, but even that is too much to ask from a regime built upon the idea that suffering is noble and relief is just for the weak.

“However, when the challenges facing a person are already so great that all but the weakest would give up, these extra factors are enough to push a person over the edge.

“Is it any wonder then that the latest figures show 22 veterans killing themselves each day? That is more veterans than children killed at Sandy Hook, *every single day*. Where are the huge policy initiatives? Why isn't the president standing with *those* families at the state of the union? Perhaps because we were not killed by a single lunatic, but rather by his own system of dehumanization, neglect, and indifference.

“It leaves us to where all we have to look forward to is constant pain, misery, poverty, and dishonor. I assure you that, when the numbers do finally drop, it will merely be because those who were pushed the farthest are all already dead.

“And for what? Bush's religious lunacy? Cheney's ever growing fortune and that of his corporate friends? Is this what we destroy lives for

“Since then, I have tried everything to fill the void. I tried to move into a position of greater power and influence to try and right some of the wrongs. I deployed again, where I put a huge emphasis on saving lives. The fact of the matter, though, is that any new lives saved do not replace those who were

murdered. It is an exercise in futility.

“Then, I pursued replacing destruction with creation. For a time this provided a distraction, but it could not last. The fact is that any kind of ordinary life is an insult to those who died at my hand. How can I possibly go around like everyone else while the widows and orphans I created continue to struggle? If they could see me sitting here in suburbia, in my comfortable home working on some music project they would be outraged, and rightfully so.

“I thought perhaps I could make some headway with this film project, maybe even directly appealing to those I had wronged and exposing a greater truth, but that is also now being taken away from me. I fear that, just as with everything else that requires the involvement of people who cannot understand by virtue of never having been there, it is going to fall apart as careers get in the way.

“The last thought that has occurred to me is one of some kind of final mission. It is true that I have found that I am capable of finding some kind of reprieve by doing things that are worthwhile on the scale of life and death. While it a nice thought to consider doing some good with my skills, experience, and killer instinct, the truth is that it isn’t realistic. First, there are the logistics of financing and equipping my own operation; then there is the near certainty of a grisly death, international incidents, and being branded a terrorist in the media that would follow. What is really stopping me, though, is that I simply am too sick to be effective in the field anymore. That too has been taken from me.

“Thus, I am left with basically nothing. Too trapped in a war to be at peace; too damaged to be at war. Abandoned by those who would take the easy route and a liability to those who stick it out, and thus deserve better. So you see, not only am I better off dead, but the world is better off without me in it

“This is what brought me to my actual final mission. Not suicide, but a mercy killing. I know how to kill, and I know how to do it so that there is no pain whatsoever. It was quick, and I did not suffer. And above all, now I am free. I feel no more pain. I have no more nightmares or flashbacks or hallucinations. I am no longer constantly depressed or afraid or worried. I am free.

“I ask that you be happy for me for that. It is perhaps the best break I could have hoped for.

“Please accept this and be glad for me.”

Gary G. Kohls, MD, is a founding member of Every Church A Peace Church (www.ecapc.org) and is a member of a local non-denominational affiliate of ECAPC, the Community of the Third Way. [The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 1-800-273-8255.]

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Anti-War Message of Mother's Day

From the Archive: Mother's Day has become a time to thank mothers for the hard work they do raising children and keeping families together, surely a worthy message. But the original Mother's Day in 1870 had a more political intent, urging mothers to stop the horrors of war, as Gary G. Kohls wrote in 2011.

By Gary G. Kohls (Originally published May 8, 2011)

In 1870 five years after the American Civil War ended the disastrous long-term human and economic consequences of the conflict were becoming increasingly apparent, especially to the mothers of the sons and the wives of the husbands who had seen their patriotic men march off to that "inglorious" war and had come home dead or wounded.

Most Civil War-era women on either side of the battle lines had willingly participated in the flag-waving fervor that all war planners and all war-profiteers of all ages cunningly elicit from the people who will be expected to

patriotically pay their war taxes.

Such propagandistic techniques are universally aimed at the poor and working-class soldiers who must be fooled into doing the soul-damning dirty work. But the war finally ended in 1865 with the North and South experiencing mutual exhaustion.

The war had resulted in a total of 600,000 dead American soldiers, with no accurate count of the probably much larger number of those soldiers who were wounded, missing in action or committed suicide after the war was over.

Julia Ward Howe, author of the Mother's Day Proclamation of 1870, was a life-long abolitionist and therefore, early on, she was a supporter of the Union Army's anti-slavery rationale for going to war to prevent the pro-slavery politicians and industrialists in the Confederate South from seceding from the Union over the slavery issue.

Howe was a compassionate and well-educated middle child of an upper-class family. She was also a poet who, in the early days of the Civil War, wrote "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" using many biblically-based lyrics.

Howe had intended her song to be sung as an abolitionist song; however, because of some of the militant-sounding lyrics and the eminently marchable tune, it was rapidly adopted by the Union Army as its most inspiring war song, a reality that Howe likely regretted when the true nature of the world's first modern "total war" became clear to her.

Howe, who wrote the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" in one sitting (in the early hours of Nov. 18, 1861), later became a pacifist and antiwar activist.

At the time she wrote the song, the Civil War was just starting and had not yet degenerated into the wholesale mutual mass slaughter that was made possible by the technological advances in weaponry that would eventually make cavalry charges, the bayonet and the sword obsolete.

Howe's evolution into pacifism came about because of the horrors of the War Between the States (1861-1865). By the time she proposed a national day of mourning for the war's victims, she had also become aware of the carnage that was occurring overseas in the Franco-Prussian War, which had started in July of 1870.

That war, won by Germany, was a very short war but nevertheless it had resulted in almost 100,000 killed in action plus another 100,000 severely wounded.

Howe's awareness of the new realities of war had been made possible because of

the relative lack of press censorship about the barbaric nature of modern warfare, which appropriately horrified sensitive humans like her.

It hadn't taken too long for peace-loving, justice-oriented and compassionate observers to recognize that war was indeed, the equivalent of hell on earth. Howe recognized that reality even before the infamous U.S. Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman uttered his famous statement about the satanic nature of war.

Sherman's statement had indicted his era's "ChickenHawks": "I confess without shame that I am tired and sick of war. Its glory is all moonshine. It is only those who have neither heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded, who cry aloud for more blood, more vengeance, more desolation. War is Hell."

(ChickenHawks are flag-waving war-mongers who have never truly experienced the gruesome realities of combat war and yet have no problems sending their nation's sons and daughters off "into harm's way.")

Women have often seen their sons and husbands returning home broken in body, mind and spirit. These men, no matter what side they had fought on and whose side claimed the hollow victory, were all equally defeated when the war ended. And none of them regarded themselves as heroes. Their minds had been forever changed. They had at last seen through the lie that war was glorious.

What was an unexpected development for many of the families of the returning soldiers – both North and South – was the fact that many of the veterans who had no visible scars were still disabled mentally, many of them getting worse after they came home.

The healing effect of time didn't work like it was supposed to in the combat-traumatized victim of war. These ones commonly became melancholy, suffered horrendous nightmares, couldn't function in society and were frequently suicidal, homicidal and/or turned to a life of crime. It is a fact that many of the most infamous train and bank robbers and serial killers of the late 1800s got their start as Civil War soldiers (the members of the James gang were a good example).

Because of the inability of normal families to deal with the massive numbers of traumatized warriors, the first "veterans homes" in America were constructed for the long-term care of invalided ex-soldiers who, without society's help, would have otherwise starved to death – homeless, despairing, jobless and helpless.

Many of these unfortunates were diagnosed as having "Soldiers' Heart", also known in the Civil War era as "Nostalgia", a commonly incurable malady, then as well as now, known today as "Combat-Induced PTSD" (posttraumatic stress disorder).

Julia Ward Howe was a humanist who cared about suffering people. She was also a feminist, a social justice activist and a suffragette, and it was because of her ultimate antiwar commitment that she wrote the famous "Mother's Day Proclamation" in 1870, five years after the end of the Civil War.

The Mother's Day Proclamation was partly a lament for the useless deaths and partly a call to stop future wars. The call to action was not directed at men, most of whom would have refused to admit, because of their masculine pride, that their dead buddies had actually died in vain.

Rather, the call was directed at women who were more thoughtful, humane and compassionate than the more violence-prone male members of the species.

Sadly, Howe's original intent in calling for a Mother's Day protest against war has been censored from the consciousness of our capitalist, militarized, war-profiteering culture. Her call to action has been watered-down to a sentimental shadow of its original intent.

Rather, Mother's Day in America has been exploited into a profit-making venture, as have most other holidays (including the originally religious ones like Easter and Christmas). Mother's Day seems to be just another annual opportunity for gift-buying, gift-giving and the marketing of non-essential consumer goods to a gullible public.

No mention is made of its original purpose. What was originally a call to mobilize outraged mothers to keep their sons and husbands from going off half-cocked to kill and die for some corporate war profiteer or other, has become just another opportunity for boosting the corporate bottom line. One wonders what "irrelevant agencies" Howe was talking about in line two of the Proclamation below.

One can be sure that the predecessors of our modern militarists, politicians, bankers, media moguls, autocratic corporatists and various bureaucratic agencies that have been royally messing things up in places like Vietnam, Central America, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Muslim oil states, the Gulf of Mexico, Japan (and the rest of the irradiated world), were also ignoring the wishes of compassionate mothers and the critically thinking public back in 1870.

Note in Howe's manifesto how strongly she felt about wives and mothers never again having to be put in the position of comforting or applauding their soldier-husbands or soldier-sons when they come home from war "reeking of carnage."

Howe clearly felt that mothers should never again let war-making institutions make killers out of their sons who they had raised to be ethical, humane sons

with a love for humankind. The prevention of such "reeking" is so much simpler than the attempt to reverse the often untreatable consequences of the gruesomeness of combat war.

Let the people of good will begin again to promote the peacemaking vision of Julia Ward Howe in our current chaotic time of perpetual war. A good place to begin would be this Mother's Day.

Julia Ward Howe's 1870 Mother's Day Proclamation

Arise then, women of this day! Arise, all women who have hearts, whether your baptism be that of water or tears!

Say firmly: 'We will not have great questions decided by irrelevant agencies.

Our husbands shall not come to us, reeking with carnage, for caresses and applause.

Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn all that we have taught them of charity, mercy and patience.

We women of one country will be too tender of those of another to allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs.

From the bosom of the devastated earth, a voice goes up with our own. It says, "Disarm, disarm!"

The sword of murder is not the balance of justice. Blood does not wipe out dishonor, nor does violence indicate possession.

As men have often forsaken the plow and the anvil at the summons of war, let women now leave all that may be left of home for a great and earnest day of counsel.

Let them meet first, as women, to bewail and commemorate the dead. Let them solemnly take counsel with each other as to the means whereby the great human family can live in peace, each bearing after his own time the sacred impress, not of Caesar but of God.

In the name of womanhood and of humanity, I earnestly ask that a general congress of women without limit of nationality may be appointed and held at some place deemed most convenient and at the earliest period consistent with its objects, to promote the alliance of the different nationalities, the amicable settlement of international questions and the great and general interests of peace.

Dr. Kohls is a retired physician from the Duluth, Minnesota, who writes about issues of war, peace and mental health.

The Long Shadow of Auschwitz

Before his execution by hanging in 1947, Auschwitz commander Rudolf Hoess confessed to his role in the industrialized slaughter of millions of Jews and other “enemies” of Hitler’s Third Reich. But Hoess’s guilt while extraordinary in its numbers extends to all leaders who carelessly choose war, Gary G. Kohls observes.

By Gary G. Kohls

The ending of my last column was the powerful Thomas Merton prose poem that gave voice to the infamous international war criminal, the Commandant of Auschwitz, Rudolf Hoess. Merton has Hoess speaking from the gallows with a haunting accusation directed at history’s pro-war presidents, monarchs, dictators, prime ministers and assorted politicians who know that wars always involve the mass murder of defenseless civilians (euphemistically known as “collateral damage”).

The self-admitted war criminal Hoess accuses of war crimes every commanding officer who has ever ordered lethal bombings or artillery attacks that inevitably involve innocent non-combatants. That also would apply in modern times to the U.S. policy of extra-judicial assassinations of suspected “terrorists” by drone warfare as well as to every Apache helicopter crew (and their commanders) who targeted “suspects” in Iraq and Afghanistan. [See the horrifying war crime “collateral murder” video courageously made available to the public by Bradley Manning and WikiLeaks at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5rXPrfnU3G0>.]

Hoess seems to be accusing every combat platoon that has ever blindly participated in night raids or mortar attacks in areas where civilians are known to be present. Merton has Hoess say, “Do not think yourself better because you burn friends and enemies with long-range missiles without ever seeing what you have done.”

Merton also accuses the war-profiteering industrialists that bid for the jobs of designing, manufacturing and equipping the camps with increasingly efficient extermination machinery. German ingenuity in action.

Merton’s poem contains actual quotes from some of the documents that were found

after World War II had ended. The innovative SS Lt. Col. Hoess was proud of and well rewarded for – his part in improving the craft of high-tech, industrial-strength mass murder.

He said: “Another improvement we made over Treblinka was that we built our gas chamber to accommodate 2,000 people at one time whereas at Treblinka their 10 gas chambers only accommodated 200 people each.

“The way we selected our victims was as follows: We had two SS doctors on duty at Auschwitz to examine the incoming transports of prisoners. The prisoners would be marched by one of the doctors who would make spot decisions as they walked by. Those who were fit for work were sent into the camp. Others were sent immediately to the extermination plants. Children of tender years were invariably exterminated since by reason of their youth they were unable to work.

“Still another improvement we made over Treblinka was that at Treblinka the victims almost always knew that they were to be exterminated and at Auschwitz we endeavored to fool the victims into thinking that they were to go through a delousing process. Of course, frequently they realized our true intentions and we sometimes had riots and difficulties due to that fact.

“Very frequently women would hide their children under the clothes, but of course when we found them we would send the children in to be exterminated. We were required to carry out these exterminations in secrecy but of course the foul and nauseating stench from the continuous burning of bodies permeated the entire area and all of the people living in the surrounding communities knew that exterminations were going on at Auschwitz.”

Hoess and others among the Nazi hierarchy had noticed the terrible psychiatric toll (alcoholism, depression, suicide, etc) that the up-close and personal massacres were having on the common soldiers who reflexively obeyed the illegal orders to kill noncombatants. The decidedly less personal killing methods of starvation, shellings, bombings and gassing was far less traumatizing to the soldiers who were there at the end of the chain of command.

Hoess was hanged in 1947 for his role in the deaths of 3 million people at Auschwitz during his 3½ years (May 1940 to December 1943) as the camp’s commandant. In a postwar affidavit (April 1946), Hoess confesses to his crimes:

“I commanded Auschwitz until 1 December 1943, and estimate that at least 2,500,000 victims were executed and exterminated there by gassing and burning, and at least another half million succumbed to starvation and disease, making a total dead of about 3,000,000. This figure represents about 70% or 80% of all persons sent to Auschwitz as prisoners, the remainder having been selected and

used for slave labor in the concentration camp industries.

“Included among the executed and burnt were approximately 20,000 Russian prisoners of war (previously screened out of Prisoner of War cages by the Gestapo) who were delivered at Auschwitz in Wehrmacht transports operated by regular Wehrmacht officers and men. The remainder of the total number of victims included about 100,000 German Jews, and great numbers of citizens (mostly Jewish) from Holland, France, Belgium, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Greece, or other countries. We executed about 400,000 Hungarian Jews alone at Auschwitz in the summer of 1944.

“It took from 3 to 15 minutes to kill the people in the death chamber depending upon climatic conditions. We knew when the people were dead because their screaming stopped.

“These so-called ill-treatments and this torturing in concentration camps, stories of which were spread everywhere among the people, and later by the prisoners that were liberated by the occupying armies, were not, as assumed, inflicted methodically, but were excesses committed by individual leaders, sub-leaders, and men who laid violent hands on internees.”

In his autobiography, written while he was awaiting his war crimes trial, Hoess wrote: “I want to emphasize that I personally never hated the Jews. I considered them to be the enemy of our nation. However, that was precisely the reason to treat them the same way as the other prisoners. Besides, the feeling of hatred is not in me. It is tragic that, although I was by nature gentle, good-natured, and very helpful, I became the greatest destroyer of human beings who carried out every order to exterminate people no matter what.”

The Willingness to Kill

One has to ask out loud, given the fact that Germany was an overwhelmingly Christian nation: What kind of Christianity was it that justified, contrary to the teachings of Jesus, cruelty in parenting, hateful attitudes toward the “other,” and the justification of the organized mass slaughter of war? What kind of Christian leadership was it that did not stand up and courageously and prophetically say “NO” to its nation’s manufacture and stockpiling of (and its willingness to use) weapons of mass destruction whose only purpose is to kill humans and scorch the earth?

From where in the human soul comes the willingness to kill, wound, torture, enslave or starve another human or even cooperate with the evils of state-sponsored homicide or genocide, whether your militarized nation is fascist Germany or “democratic” America?

Harshness in childrearing is one of the realities that can easily result in the willingness to obey illegal orders to kill. Rudolf Hoess was a victim of cruelty in childrearing, a violent, xenophobic culture, a vicious anti-Semitism and an aberrant form of Christianity that was silent on or supportive of its militaristic nation's glorification of war.

Being a part of the inhumane society that Hoess was raised in, he never had a chance to be all that he could have been. He was hanged on April 16, 1947, at the age of 45 on a gallows built near the Auschwitz death camp's crematorium in Poland.

Gary G. Kohls, MD, is a founding member of Every Church A Peace Church (www.ecapc.org) and is a member of a local non-denominational affiliate of ECAPC, the Community of the Third Way.

Recalling the Crimes of Inhumanity

The Boston Marathon bombings have brought forth a frenzy of right-wing hate speech against Muslims who are depicted as mindlessly violent. But many of history's worst atrocities including the Holocaust, the Vietnam War and even today's "war on terror" – have been carried out primarily by Christians, as Gary G. Kohls recalls.

By Gary G. Kohls

April is Holocaust Remembrance month, an annual month-long event that encourages us humans to again confront the sobering reality of one of history's most egregious examples of man's inhumanity to man, known in the Jewish community as the Shoah.

Sadly, however, for anyone who has been paying attention to the epidemic of worldwide violence since the end of World War II, it is obvious that the promise of "Never Again" has been repeatedly violated. The cruelty of militarism, racism, anti-Semitism and poverty seem to be alive and well.

Man's inhumanity to man is clearly not a thing of the past. In fact it appears that nothing has been really learned since the last German Nazi extermination camp was revealed in 1945 or the last mass murder of innocent civilians was exposed in Vietnam or the CIA torturing was uncovered in the "war on terror."

This essay will attempt to perhaps shed some light on some of the unlearned

lessons of the above atrocities by examining some of the realities of what the Nazis called the Final Solution and what the rest of humanity calls the Holocaust.

Arbeit Macht Frei

A few years ago the wrought-iron gate to the infamous World War II-era extermination camp at Auschwitz, Poland, was stolen by thieves who had been paid to do so by a Neo-Nazi from Sweden. Ultimately the gate, which had been cut into three segments, was returned and replaced.

The top of that gate contained a bit of cunning propaganda that mockingly proclaimed to the slave-laborers at Auschwitz who walked under it twice a day, "Arbeit Macht Frei" (Work Makes One Free, a play on the words from the gospel of John: "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free"). Members of the radical right-wing, xenophobic, communist-hating and Jew-hating Nazi SS soldiers very likely chuckled at the cruel joke as they looked up at that gate.

"Arbeit Macht Frei" probably did have a positive message for the "Good Germans" who kept their mouths shut. In the triumphant "Deutschland Uber Alles" period of the late 1930s, most Good Germans, in the habit of fearing verbal or physical punishment from anybody in a position of authority, thought it was important and patriotic to work hard to help the Fuhrer build his Thousand Year Reich and then defend it by being willing to kill and die defending it.

Possibly inspired by the Arbeit Macht Frei slogan, obedient young German workers were conscripted, often against their wills, into the German Labor Front (Deutsche Arbeitsfront) after Hitler had abolished labor unions in Germany (and with them, the socialism that capitalism and its evil twin fascism – despise so vehemently).

The Labor Front's involuntary low wages helped to create Hitler's "economic miracle" which resulted in essentially full employment with thriving industries that were connected to weapons manufacturing and other aspects of Germany's military/industrial complex.

Transportation systems involving railroads and automobiles (especially the building of the famous Autobahn) plus textile, chemical, agricultural, mining, pharmaceutical, metals production systems and concentration camps all thrived. Satisfied and therefore increasingly obedient Good Germans applauded Hitler for his economic genius.

After the post-World War I pain of hyperinflation, economic depression, market crashes, joblessness, homelessness, malnutrition and breadlines that followed that disastrous war (as happens after almost every war), Good Germans really

appreciated having the jobs, the affordable vacation time, the affordable health care and the affordable educational opportunities.

Things were going well for Hitler's Good Germans until the rest of the world finally was so fed up with the Nazi bullies that they retaliated against them with the full force of boycotts, sanctions, blockades and ultimately bombing. But by then it was already too late for the many oppressed minorities like Jews, gypsies, Slavs, foreigners and homosexuals, all of which were being killed, almost to extinction in the case of Jews and gypsies, under the military jackboot. Good Germans, with some notable exceptions, had been, during the good years, busy averting their eyes from what they saw happening all around them, too frightened to speak out.

By the end of the war, there were 140 or more Nazi concentration camps (1/3 of which were located in "occupied" and ethnically-cleansed Poland), starting with Dachau in 1933. Each one of the camps needed both military and civilian workers to keep them running smoothly, and thus the camps were also a part of Hitler's economic boom. Torture, forced labor, starvation and death grew Germany's GNP substantially.

The Commandant of Auschwitz, Rudolf Hoess

Auschwitz was the most infamous of the camps. Good Germans almost universally lied when the camps were liberated, claiming that they hadn't known that torture and mass murder were going on right under their noses, despite the fact that the distinctive odor of burning human flesh was unmistakable.

The commandant of Auschwitz, Lieutenant Colonel Rudolf Hoess of the Waffen-SS's Death's Head (Totenkopf) Unit, in testimony under oath following his capture in 1946 refuted that notion when he wrote:

"We were required to carry out these exterminations in secrecy but of course the foul and nauseating stench from the continuous burning of bodies permeated the entire area and all of the people living in the surrounding communities knew that exterminations were going on at Auschwitz."

Hoess was not the equally infamous Rudolf Hess who was Hitler's Deputy Fuhrer until he disgraced himself in the eyes of Hitler by flying to, and then crash landing in Scotland, without Hitler's fore-knowledge or approval, on a misguided attempt to meet with the British and negotiate a peace settlement. Hitler ordered Hess to be shot on sight if he ever came back to Germany.

The Rudolf Hoess of Auschwitz infamy was the son of a devout Roman Catholic family whose father was well-to-do, conservative, anti-Semitic and a strict disciplinarian. His family actually had wanted him to go into the priesthood.

(Hitler, interestingly enough, was also a baptized Catholic who had likewise considered entering the priesthood as a child. However, unlike Hitler, who never left the Catholic Church (and was never excommunicated from it), Hoess renounced his Catholicism when he was 20, around the time he joined the Nazi Party.)

Hoess learned unconditional obedience to authority at the hands of his harsh military veteran father (as did most Germans who had been immersed in the legacy of Prussian militarism). The child-rearing methods used on little Rudolf were probably not much different from what most German and Austrian children had experienced for generations (and even centuries) prior to Hitler's obedience-demanding fascist regime.

Inflexible harshness was naturally inflicted upon German military recruits in basic training and was demanded of the Death's Head Units that were responsible for the Nazi concentration camps. And since violence is contagious the previously victimized Nazis then obediently inflicted it upon the inmates.

Punitive parenting and harsh discipline was also the norm in both the secular and religious schools; and thus Hoess was able to write the following explanation for his willingness to reflexively carry out the decidedly un-Christ-like orders he received at Auschwitz:

"Above all, I was constantly reminded that I was to comply with, and follow, the wishes or commands of parents, teachers, priests, etc., indeed all grown-ups including the servants, and that I was to allow nothing to distract me from that duty. Whatever they said, went. These fundamental values of my upbringing became part of my flesh and blood."

Military recruits who have been victimized at home by physical abuse more easily adapt to learning the killing arts. They somehow are more obedient to orders and can therefore react automatically in the war zone, obeying even illegal orders that are given in the heat of battle.

If SS soldiers working in the camps exhibited any compassion for prisoners or refused to obey illegal orders (such as the gassing of prisoners or the shooting of innocent women and children) they were threatened with transfer to front-line duty, a clear disincentive to be merciful. It can be assumed that Hoess never was conscious of the connections between his harsh child-rearing experiences and his unconditional obedience in reflexively carrying out illegal orders at Auschwitz.

In an affidavit read at Nuremberg, Hoess wrote:

"I commanded Auschwitz until 1 December 1943, and estimate that at least 2,500,000 victims were executed and exterminated there by gassing and burning,

and at least another half million succumbed to starvation and disease, making a total dead of about 3,000,000. This figure represents about 70% or 80% of all persons sent to Auschwitz as prisoners, the remainder having been selected and used for slave labor in the concentration camp industries.

“Included among the executed and burnt were approximately 20,000 Russian prisoners of war (previously screened out of Prisoner of War cages by the Gestapo) who were delivered at Auschwitz in Wehrmacht transports operated by regular Wehrmacht officers and men. The remainder of the total number of victims included about 100,000 German Jews, and great numbers of citizens (mostly Jewish) from Holland, France, Belgium, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Greece, or other countries. We executed about 400,000 Hungarian Jews alone at Auschwitz in the summer of 1944.”

In his autobiography, written while he was awaiting his war crimes trial, Hoess wrote: “I want to emphasize that I personally never hated the Jews. I considered them to be the enemy of our nation. However, that was precisely the reason to treat them the same way as the other prisoners. Besides, the feeling of hatred is not in me. It is tragic that, although I was by nature gentle, good-natured, and very helpful, I became the greatest destroyer of human beings who carried out every order to exterminate people no matter what.”

A Recipe for Disaster

Duty and honor; solemn oaths; obedience to god and country and uber-patriotism (in the form of “my country right or wrong” nationalism, “Deutschland Uber Alles” and “America # 1”) are common examples of patriotic urges that have driven the killing machines on all sides of every war throughout the history of the world. Internalizing such propaganda allowed Hoess to proudly and honorably perform his duties at Auschwitz, without any obvious signs of remorse when he was later tried, convicted and then hanged, overlooking Auschwitz, for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The baptized Catholic Heinrich Himmler (who was idolized by Hoess) and the Lutheran Adolph Eichmann (a direct superior of Hoess and a frequent visitor to Auschwitz) had also learned to obey orders from their abusive fathers, their dictatorial schoolmasters, their clergy leaders and ultimately their Nazi superiors, while simultaneously demanding obedience from their subordinates in the chain of military command below them.

Such victims of physical, emotional, spiritual or sexual abuse, especially in the case of males, are often driven to seek revenge against the original persecutors when they become strong enough. Unfortunately, the revenge is often taken out against weaker victims who often turn out to be innocent, often

defenseless, scapegoats. This reality often explains the motivation behind the bullying behavior of individuals as well as nation-states.

One has to wonder: What kind of German Christianity was it that justified, contrary to the teachings of Jesus, cruelty in parenting, hateful attitudes toward the "other", and the justification of war? What kind of German Christianity was it that did not stand up and courageously say "NO" to its nation's manufacture and stockpiling of and willingness to use weapons of mass destruction whose only purpose is to slaughter humans and scorch the earth?

From where in the human soul comes the willingness to kill, maim, torture, enslave, or starve another human or even cooperate with the evils of state-sponsored homicide or genocide, whether your militarized nation is fascist Germany or "democratic" America?

Harshness in child-rearing is one of the realities that can easily result in the willingness to obey illegal orders to kill. Rudolf Hoess was a victim of cruel parenting, a xenophobic culture, an aberrant form of Christianity that justified war, violence and anti-Semitism and a war-glorifying Prussian militarism.

Do not think yourself better because you burn up friends and enemies with long-range missiles without ever seeing what you have done.

Thomas Merton wrote a powerful poem referring to the obedience of Rudolf Hoess. It follows below:

Chant to be Used in Processions Around a Site With Furnaces

By Thomas Merton (first published in The Catholic Worker)

How we made them sleep and purified them

How we perfectly cleaned up the people and worked a big heater

I was the commander I made improvements and installed a guaranteed system
taking account of human weakness I purified and I remained decent

How I commanded

I made cleaning appointments and then I made the travelers sleep and after that
I made soap

I was born into a Catholic family but as these people were not going to need a
priest I did not become a priest I installed a perfectly good machine It
gave satisfaction to many

When trains arrived the soiled passengers received appointments for fun in the

bathroom they did not guess

It was a very big bathroom for two thousand people It awaited arrival and they arrived safely

There would be an orchestra of merry widows not all the time Much art

If they arrived at all they would be given a greeting card to send home Taken care of with good jobs Wishing you would come to our joke

Another improvement I made was I built the chambers for two thousand invitations at a time the naked votaries were disinfected with Zyklon B

Children of tender age were always invited by reason of their youth They were unable to work They were marked out for play

They were washed like the others and more than the others

Very frequently women would hide their children in the piles of clothing but of course when we came to find them we would send the children into the chamber to be bathed

How I often commanded and made improvements and sealed the door on top There were flowers The men came with crystals

I guaranteed always the crystal parlor

I guaranteed the chamber and it was sealed You could see through portholes

They waited for the shower It was not hot water that came through vents though Efficient winds gave full satisfaction Portholes showed this

The satisfied all ran together to the doors awaiting arrival It was guaranteed They made ends meet.

How I could tell by their cries that love came to a full stop I found the ones I had made clean after about a half hour

Jewish male inmates then worked up nice They had rubber boots in return for adequate food I could not guess their appetite

Those at the door were taken apart out of a fully stopped love for rubber male inmates strategic hair and teeth being used later for defense

Then the males removed all clean love rings and made away with happy gold

A big new firm promoted steel forks operating on a cylinder They got the contract and with faultless workmanship delivered very fast goods

How I commanded and made soap “12 pounds fat 10 quarts water 8 ounces to a pound of caustic soda” but it was hard to find any fat””For transporting the customers we suggest using light carts on wheels A drawing is submitted”

“We acknowledge four steady furnaces and an emergency guarantee”

I am a big new commander Operating on a cylinder I elevate the purified materials “boil for 2 to 3 hours and then cool”

For putting them into a test fragrance I suggested an express elevator operated by the latest cylinder It was guaranteed

Their love was fully stopped by our perfected ovens but the love rings were salvaged

Thanks to the satisfaction of male inmates operating the heaters without need of compensation Our guests were warmed

All the while I had obeyed perfectly

So I was hanged in a commanding position with a full view of the site plant and grounds

You smile at my career but you would do as I did if you knew yourself and dared

In my days we worked hard we saw what we did Our self sacrifice was conscientious and complete Our work was faultless and detailed

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The Choice of Guns Over Butter

The American political system continues to ignore President Eisenhower’s dour warning about the Military-Industrial Complex and embrace President Reagan’s happy “We’re No. 1” illusions. The long-term consequences of this choice have been devastating to most U.S. citizens and to the world, writes Gary G. Kohls.

By Gary G. Kohls

Years ago I read a newspaper story about an elderly man who lived in an impoverished area of Cleveland, Ohio. The man was a friendless loner who seemed

to have no caring family members. Neighbors had noticed his mail piling up on his porch, and, with no responses to knocks on the door, they called the police who broke into the man's house.

What they found is an allegory for our time, especially after another, peculiarly American school shooting, the latest one involving non-hunting weapons and the gunning down of 26 defenseless little children and staff members at an elementary school.

The withered old man was found dead in his bed, surrounded by rifles, pistols and guns of every description. Boxes of bullets and cartridges were stacked on the floor. He had a knife in his cold, dead hand and an actual harpoon was leaning against his refrigerator, *which was empty*. In a nation of plenty and with grocery stores in the man's neighborhood, the well-armed man had starved to death.

He had fiercely exercised his precious Second Amendment rights but had ignored his neighbors, family and his health. He had apparently heard the National Rifle Association's sermons about defending one's property against intruders by lethal means if necessary but he had chosen to remove himself from civil society and starved to death, all alone in his well-defended room.

The man had wasted away, in a paranoid state, while "defending" himself against imaginary "others" who never did come to rob him. He had spent all of his money, including his Social Security and pension checks, on guns and ammunition, but he had spent nothing on food or life-sustaining activities. He was obsessed by the fear of burglars and thieves, and it had cost him his life.

And, what was perhaps a more tragic reality, he had been suspicious of his neighbors, all of whom were potential friends, although many were probably keeping their distance from the crazy old man with the guns.

Painful Lessons

Our paranoid, militarized and heavily armed nation will probably ignore the lessons that should be obvious from that story. The arms race that financially bankrupted the Soviet Union and morally (and nearly financially) bankrupted the United States during the Cold War, was run at the expense of the sick, hungry, under-employed, homeless and desperate people everywhere, including many who were living, unnoticed, in our own neighborhoods and in our local ghettos on the other side of the tracks.

Mutual fear of the "other" caused the two Superpowers and their allies to spend obscene amounts of money on inedible and unnecessary weapons systems. The training of tens of millions of "kill or be killed" warriors who were both

spiritually and emotionally deprived and deformed (often for the rest of their lives) inevitably weakened the moral integrity of the nation as well, all in the name of “national security.”

Contrary to what patriots who believe in American exceptionalism (and expect the rest of us to believe as well), America hasn't been able to afford both guns and butter without borrowing money in order to keep that delusion going.

The Pentagon's wars ever since the Reagan years have been mostly paid for with massive amounts of borrowing and huge indebtedness rather than with increased taxes, and the return on that “investment” has been lousy. The investor classes and lending institutions were happy however for they are the ones who receive the guaranteed interest payments on the T-bills and Treasury bonds.

But the increasing number of under-water private citizens are finding themselves forced to use credit cards to even pay for basic human necessities like food, water, clothing, health care, shelter and education. The increasing amount of joblessness, homelessness, home foreclosures and bread lines shouldn't surprise anybody.

Emaciation of Militarized Nations

During the Cold War, the two saber-rattling superpowers each spent/wasted an irretrievable \$12 trillion. America spent trillions of dollars recruiting, training and retaining troops; researching, developing and producing expensive weapons systems; maintaining hundreds of budget-busting military bases in countries ruled by brutal dictators and friendly fascist states as well as quasi-democracies, all the while virtually ignoring the growing numbers of impoverished and under-privileged people of color who helplessly watched their health, savings, civil rights, jobs and food security wither and disappear.

America has been ruled by a powerful insider group of over-privileged, body-guarded, chauffeured and essentially conscienceless Wall Street elites who live in gated communities. They are also among the One Percenters who have been fingered by the Occupy Wall Street movement as the criminal culprits who created the financial mess America is in.

The so far unindicted and not yet behind bars One Percenters were responsible for the Great Recession, which may still become the 21st Century's version of the Great Depression. The nefarious corporations that are responsible for the economic crash of 2008 have, with their ill-gotten gains, bought and paid for most of the major media and also many of the bribed politicians and judges, all of whom are faithfully serving their paymasters by helping to implement their agendas in statehouses around the nation.

Most of these pro-corporate political leaders (both un-elected and elected, including five of the nine U.S. Supreme Court justices) are dutifully promoting their greedy agendas. These traitors to real democracy only preach fiscal responsibility when the bottom lines of their paymasters are at risk, but they never seem to act when people in the lower 99 percent are in a financial crisis including those needing jobs, healthcare, relief from Hurricane Sandy or protection from illegal foreclosures.

The moneyed ruling class, with large fortunes and investments to hide and protect, has conveniently forgotten that its Reaganomics-inspired predatory lending and the massive borrowing and spending tactics (the propaganda trick called "trickle-down" economics) sky-rocketed America's national debt to its current unsustainable level.

The debt crises that follow are only being met with more borrowing and cutting spending for programs of social uplift, while never questioning the obscene, nearly \$1 trillion annual budgets that continue to bloat the Pentagon. National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) budget requests are, year after year, approved by nearly unanimous majorities of our chicken-hearted legislators of both political parties in the dark of night, when the daily news cycle is at hibernation status.

Chickens Home to Roost

And now, predictably, the chickens (in more than one sense of the word) have come home to roost. Strongly deluded that there is "glory" in war and with blank-check borrowing and spending on weaponry America has spawned tens of millions of sick, hungry, homeless, under-employed, under-educated, addicted, psychologically-traumatized and impoverished people, many of whom are conveniently hidden in inner cities that the out-of-touch policymakers never see.

Universal health care, which large majorities of the population desire, is habitually rejected by the powers that be in the medical, pharmaceutical and insurance industries. After all, the politicians who have been financed by such industries have great health insurance and health care themselves. So why would greedy One Percenters want to have their taxes go up to help those whom they have made sick, poor and hungry? (For that matter why should the One Percenters want to pay taxes that support public libraries and parks when they themselves have personal libraries and private playgrounds?)

"Let 'em eat grass" was the fateful comment made to starving Indians by the thoughtless Minnesota territory Indian Agent who was later found dead with his mouth stuffed full of grass.

But America's rapidly deteriorating infrastructure can't and won't be fixed while bloated and wasteful military budgets go unopposed in Congress. You can't afford both guns and butter!

If you are seeing cuts to the programs that make life worth living, understand that much of the blame should be placed on the massive Pentagon borrowing and spending that has gone on every year since the massive increases in spending on nuclear weaponry during the administrations of old 666 Himself, Ronald Wilson Reagan.

Who's in Charge?

What is the eventual outcome of putting a society's basic human needs last? Poor mental and physical health, poor educational opportunities, a poorly trained workforce, underemployment, drug use (both illicit and prescription), hopelessness, suicidality, homicidality, addictive behaviors (including gambling), domestic abuse, street gangs, prostitution, ignorance, malnutrition, desperation, poverty and, inevitably, anger at and a desire to retaliate against a system of government and corporate control that neglects its people and then shows no signs of remorse for having done so.

It shouldn't surprise us that the Occupy Wall Street and Arab Spring movements have emerged and then were put down by the powers-that-be.

Are average Americans going to continue to be perpetually sickened and impoverished while blindly cheering our unaffordable #1 Military Superpower status? Are we going to continue to waste scarce resources on bankrupting wars and military occupations worldwide while refusing to make investments at home that would ensure a sustainable economy, a healthy planet and citizens whose physical and mental-health needs are met?

Are the weapons-makers, the gun-runners, the Pentagon, the FBI and the CIA (and the dozens of other intelligence agencies) really just expensive make-work jobs programs that protect the global investments of the obscenely-wealthy war-profiteering, multinational corporations that further impoverish the rest of society? Knowing that the "black box" budgets of the dozens of American intelligence agencies now approximate \$1 trillion a year makes one wonder if our nation has a military or if our military has a nation.

Are we going to continue ignoring the fact that wasteful war-industry jobs cost twice as much to generate and fund as jobs in health care, education, infrastructure repair or green technology? Are we going to continue to allow excessive military spending at the expense of the disappearing middle-class and an expanding lower class?

Are we going to continue fearing the wrath of the 800-pound gorillas of the One Percent that intimidate and threaten us into silence and inaction? Or are we going to courageously organize and band together to refuse to cooperate with the One Percenters?

Is It Too Late?

The military/industrial/congressional (MIC) complex that President Dwight Eisenhower warned us about in his farewell address has increasingly parasitized the U.S. economy since World War II, and it has proven to be disastrous for average Americans.

The MIC has caused the extinction of many family farms, family businesses and trade unions starting with Reagan, and it has created the heartless union-busting multinational corporations that yearn to pay slave wages to its workers.

The Complex has been behind the "fouling of the nest" (the poisoned environment) with tens of thousands of lethal, immune system destroying and cancer-causing industrial pollutants, radioactive waste disposal sites and toxic military dumpsites that will continue to foul the food, water, soil and air for generations unless effective programs are instituted.

Unsustainable levels of personal credit-card debt, college loan debt, healthcare debt and home mortgage debt among the lower 99 Percent, who were tempted, by predatory lenders, to imitate what seems to be the norm for the One Percenters, have resulted in an epidemic of home mortgage foreclosures, personal bankruptcies and homelessness.

Although it might already be too late, the lower 99 may finally be waking up and trying to reverse the nation's descent toward total economic collapse, at which time the One Percenters, with their fortunes intact, will snap up everything they covet at fire sale prices. However, for the nation as a whole, being armed to the teeth and universally feared and hated (because America's exploitative bullying behavior around the world) is not a sustainable path to global security.

Because of America's bullying behavior and its misbegotten generations-long over-spending on its weapons systems (that continues to victimize billions of people, including its own citizens), we will soon have nobody interested in rescuing us from our massive indebtedness and our self-imposed, suicidal path towards collapse.

Without a change, America is destined to become a despised pariah state a national version of that heavily armed dead man in Cleveland as the U.S. sinks further and further into moral and spiritual depravity.

We Americans have to stop deluding ourselves into thinking that we can spend borrowed money on both guns and butter. America cannot continue to go the route of empty refrigerators and lethal weapons everywhere.

Gary G. Kohls is a peace-and-justice activist and retired mental health physician.

Dulling Down Dr. King's Message

In life, Martin Luther King Jr. was often demeaned for his radical vision of peace and justice and not just by crude racists and warmongers but by well-spoken members of the elite. Then, in death, King became a national icon but with his sharpest criticisms dulled down or forgotten, writes Gary G. Kohls.

By Gary G. Kohls

Where did Martin Luther King draw his courage to risk martyrdom for the cause of black liberation, to keep on going despite the daily death threats against him and his family? King was motivated by his unshakable faith in the practicality of the non-violent gospel ethics of Jesus of Nazareth, teachings that had also inspired a multitude of similarly silenced courageous and embattled prophets.

Those prophets include such inspirations as Hindu Mohandas Gandhi of India and Russian Leo Tolstoy, both anti-imperialist and anti-war activists. But such whistle-blowers always get marginalized, demonized or disappeared by the Principalities and Powers.

Those shadowy-elite One Percenter groups are usually very adept at censoring out, via their media empires, the unwanted truths that hinder the agendas of state, corporate and even church elites, most or all of whom utilize the violence of racism, militarism, poverty, brain-washing, fear, ignorance and suspicion to keep the increasingly impoverished and brain-washed masses under control.

The anti-Vietnam war stance of King, when combined with his leadership efforts demanding the liberation of blacks, minorities and poor people, was so intolerable to the powers-that-be that he and his radical left-wing message had to be eliminated.

The suspicion that King's gospel-based nonviolent message has been effectively scrubbed from our consciousness a view widely held in the Christian faith-based

peace-and-justice movement was reinforced for me a few years back when my wife came back from a trip that included Atlanta's King Center and all I got out of the trip was an official tee shirt that had printed on it the "seven steps to social change."

That tee shirt was the most radical one available at the center, and it totally ignored King's oft-repeated message about the ethics of Jesus. Any non-religious social justice advocate could have authored the quote. Clearly something is going on behind the scenes to silence the real voice of the prophet.

As black poet Carl Wendell Hines wrote:

Now that he is safely dead let us praise him

build monuments to his glory

sing hosannas to his name.

Dead men make such convenient heroes:

They cannot rise to challenge the images

we would fashion from their lives.

And besides, it is easier to build monuments

than to make a better world.

So, in support of the assertions above, I submit some quotes from King's writings. Most of them won't even get honorable mention in the media reports about this Monday's National Holiday celebrations "honoring" King. We can only hope that some of the events will talk about King's and Jesus's disappearing truths about Christian nonviolence, the reality that is perhaps the last and only hope for real peace on earth.

"We have power, a power that cannot be found in bullets and guns, but we have power. It is a power as old as the insights of Jesus of Nazareth and as modern as the techniques of Mahatma Gandhi. ... The Christian doctrine of love operating through the Gandhian method of nonviolence is one of the most potent weapons available."

"Evil may so shape events that Caesar may occupy a palace and Christ a cross, but one day that same Christ will rise up and split history into AD and BC so that even the life of Caesar must be dated by His name ... God is more fundamental than sin or evil. Good Friday must give way to Easter Sunday."

"I have traveled the length and breadth of Alabama, Mississippi and all the

other southern states. I have looked at her beautiful churches with their lofty spires pointing heavenward. I have beheld the impressive outlay of her massive religious education buildings. Over and over again I have found myself asking: 'What kind of people worship here? Who is their God?'"

"The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and the critic of the state, and never its tool. If the church does not recapture its prophetic zeal, it will become an irrelevant social club without moral or spiritual authority."

"In recent months several people have said to me: 'Since violence is the new cry, isn't there a danger you will lose touch with the people and be out of step with the times if you don't change your views on nonviolence?' My answer is always the same. Occasionally in life one develops a conviction so precious and meaningful that he will stand on it till the end. That is what I have found in nonviolence.

"I have decided I am going to do battle for my philosophy. You ought to believe something in life, believe that thing so fervently that you will stand up with it until the end of your days. I can't believe that God wants us to hate. I am tired of violence. What kind of nation is it that applauds nonviolence whenever Negroes face white people in the streets of the United States but applauds violence and burning and death when these same Negroes are sent to the fields of Vietnam?"

"A time comes when silence is betrayal but the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony."

"A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death."

"We must pursue peaceful ends by peaceful means. Many people cry, 'Peace, Peace' but they refuse to do the things that make for peace. ... The stage of history is replete with the chants and choruses of the conquerors of old who came killing in pursuit of peace."

"We shall match your capacity to inflict suffering by our capacity to endure suffering. We will meet your physical force with soul force. Do to us what you will; we will still love you. We cannot in conscience obey your unjust laws. Non-cooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as cooperation with good."

"We must pursue peaceful ends by peaceful means. I'm committed to nonviolence absolutely, I am just not going to kill anybody, whether it's in Vietnam or here

at home. ... If nonviolent protest fails this summer, I will continue to preach and teach it. ... I plan to stand by nonviolence (because) only a refusal to hate or kill can put an end to the chain of violence in the world and lead toward community where people live together without fear."

"Violence and nonviolence agree that suffering can be a very powerful social force. But there is a difference. Violence says suffering can be a powerful social force by inflicting it on somebody else, so this is what we do in war. ... The nonviolent say that suffering becomes a powerful social force when you willingly accept the violence on yourself, so that self-suffering stands at the center of the nonviolent movement. ...

"There is no easy way to create a world where people can live together ... but if such a world is created ... it will be accomplished by persons who have the language to put an end to suffering by willingly suffering themselves rather than inflicting suffering on others. ... Unearned suffering is redemptive."

"Those who adhere to or follow the philosophy of nonviolence must follow a consistent principle of non-injury. They must consistently refuse to inflict injury upon another."

"Humanity is waiting for something other than blind imitation of the past. ... If we want truly to advance a step further, if we want to turn over a new leaf and really set a new man afoot, we must begin to turn humanity away from the long and desolate night of violence. May it not be that the new person that the world needs is the nonviolent person. ... A dark, desperate, sin-sick world waits for this new kind of person, this new kind of power."

"I am in eternal opposition to poverty, racism and militarism and committed to nonviolence absolutely."

"What is the summum bonum of life? I think I have discovered the highest good. It is love. This principle stands at the center of the cosmos. As John says, 'God is love.' He who loves is a participant in the being of God. He who hates does not know God."

"There is no graded scale of essential worth (among people); there is no divine right of another. Every human being has etched in his or her personality the indelible stamp of the Creator. Every person must be respected because God loves him or her. The worth of an individual does not lie in the measure of his intellect, his racial origin or his social position. Human worth lies in relatedness to God. An individual has value because he or she has value to God."

"The greatest purveyor of violence in the world today is my own government."

"If America's soul becomes totally poisoned part of the autopsy must read Vietnam. It can never be saved so long as it destroys the deepest hopes of men the world over."

"War is not the answer. We still have a choice today; nonviolent coexistence or violent co-annihilation. We must move past indecision to action. We must find new ways to speak for peace and justice throughout the developing world a world that borders on our doors. If we do not act we shall surely be dragged down the long dark and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality and strength without sight."

"Now let us begin. Now let us rededicate ourselves to the long and bitter but beautiful struggle for a new world. This is the calling of the sons (and daughters) of God, and our brothers (and sisters) wait eagerly for our response."

Gary G. Kohls is a retired physician, a co-founder of Every Church A Peace Church, and an anti-war activist from Duluth, Minnesota.
