

CONCLUSION

A Way Forward

It is all too evident that the overall state of the world worsens year by year. Warfare, repression, genocide, starvation, mass migrations and environmental destruction continue. Societal inequalities, poverty, unemployment and moral decline persist. Shameful bullying of poorer Third World countries becomes entrenched, their acute problems increasingly ignored even by the more serious Western media in favour of endless degrading coverage of titillating trivia. These, and the many other disastrous failures of today's 'world order' described in Part One are tragic but not inexplicable: they are the almost inevitable products of capitalism.

During recent decades, by using every form of overwhelmingly powerful military and economic pressure short of actual war, the capitalist elites have succeeded in extending their pernicious influence virtually world-wide. Having done so, standing on the shifting sands of monetarism, they now feel the need to bolster their self-confidence by proclaiming that 'The demise of socialism proves the superiority of the market system.' In doing so, they ignore the fact that true, democratic socialism has never really had a chance to exist; and we have seen in Chapter 2 the all-pervasive ill-effects on humanity of their much vaunted 'market'.

Alternative World rejects emphatically the negative view that humans are innately self-seeking and therefore 'market-orientated'. On the contrary, given the opportunities, very many men, women and young people will always express and act on the natural instinct to work together cooperatively for the good of society. It is important, too, to remember that capitalism has had the opportunity over several centuries to improve the lot of all humanity, but instead has done nothing but entrench widespread suffering for the majority and enrich the few. It is a system which has without doubt forfeited any right to continue dominating the world, and should be replaced by cooperative societies such as Alternative World at the earliest opportunity.

The Western elites encouraged and even demanded that the Eastern Bloc and the Soviet Union open up to the 'free market' as the Soviet leadership sought to revive growth in their stagnating economy. The result has been the familiar attributes of capitalism across the world: corruption, homelessness, hunger, unemployment, violent crime, child prostitution and so forth.

Those developments in Eastern Europe formed part of a world-wide pattern of ruthless aggression by multinational corporations seeking locations having both cheap labour and natural resources. This process has gone hand in hand with unprecedented injections of capital by the World Bank and others into areas such as China, offering potential high returns, but studiously avoiding those in greatest need such as Africa.

These global reactionary offensives, consistently supported by media barrages trumpeting the demise of Socialism, have to some extent succeeded in throwing progressive forces world-wide on to the defensive.

This is not to say that anti-establishment activities have died out completely. For example the inspiring 'World Court Project', aimed at persuading the International Court to outlaw nuclear weapons, received over 3.3m signed declarations of support world-wide, and in July 1996 the Court announced that both the threat and use of nuclear weapons would generally be illegal under international law. In spite of the ending of the Cold War, opposition by the NATO nuclear powers has culminated in the US State Department earmarking \$800,000 to thwart such a judgement.¹ At the same time,

many dedicated and brave people world-wide, often risking their lives, continue to confront a whole range of assaults on the global environment.

However, it has to be recognised that these, and other such valuable activities, are essentially defensive. They do not amount to actual attacks on the root causes of the world's problems, nor do they postulate alternatives.

We have seen in Part One that the world's plight is desperate; there is absolutely no time to lose in taking corrective action. However, realistic account has to be taken both of the insidious anti-socialist hold over many millions by the various forms of reactionary media, and the current undeniable weakness of genuinely progressive forces.

Thus it becomes apparent that both exposures of the evils of capitalism, and constructive advocacy of the benefits of cooperative societies, are likely not only to fall on largely deaf ears, but also to lack adequate support.

So what is to be done?

The author's belief is that the answer lies in the one 'chink in the armour of capitalism', namely the aberration of the continued existence of weapons of all kinds.

Many parts of the world are cursed by increasing levels of unprecedented violence. This already appalling picture looks set to steadily worsen, owing to the numerous degenerative factors listed in Part One. In the US, for example, there are now 300,000 licensed gun dealers, and over 30,000 dead from gun shots yearly; these include some 4,000 killed by 10 to 18 year-olds including, for example, a Los Angeles boy of 14 who shot his mother in the forehead in a dispute over a chocolate biscuit.² Further, many children, wearing bullet-proof vests, bring guns to their schools, some of which have been driven to installing airport type metal detectors.³

At the 'macro' level, since the toll of 55 million dead in World War Two, well over 20 million are estimated to have died in subsequent hostilities. These 'conflicts' can, in some cases, be more appropriately termed 'slaughters', as, for example, the Indonesian extermination of one-third of the total population of East Timor in the 1980s. Even after bouts of fighting die down, some 10,000 Third World civilians are killed annually by indiscriminately scattered mines, and countless more are maimed.

An overview of today's conflicts presents a very different picture to that of 1914 or 1939. Now, the great majority are in fact 'civil' wars, in which either autocratic elites suppress their fellow citizens, or rival elites battle it out with each other. In either case, the great majority of the weapons are supplied, highly profitably, by the First World, sometimes as 'Aid'. These supplies are often so plentiful that guns are commonly carried by children as young as six. 'Some had spent the whole of their formative years carrying a gun. When the war ends, they've never been to school. All they know is how to shoot.'⁴

Continuing use of weapons in conflicts is clearly essential for the armaments manufacturers in order to justify their existence. Today however, the actual business of fighting has in effect been 'contracted out' to the Third World. Thus the superlatively-equipped armies, navies and air forces of the First World have (happily for them) become largely parade-ground forces, for whom the very idea of actually fighting anywhere is anathema. To forestall adverse publicity from deaths of their own troops in action, First World politicians are increasingly reluctant to commit forces at all, except sometimes aircraft at a safe height. Even their occasional contributions of personnel to UN peace-keeping missions are very sparse.

It is crystal clear that the many millions of desperately-wronged victims of conflicts in the Third World can feel nothing but revulsion for all the increasingly sophisticated weaponry used to torment them. At the same time, millions of concerned citizens in

the First World undoubtedly not only fear the increasing violence in their own societies, but also grieve for those suffering and dying elsewhere in the world.

It is equally clear that all the appalling mayhem in the world is only made possible by the existence of weapons. A logical case has never been made for men to have ready access to death-dealing weapons for solving disagreements between themselves. If all weapons were consigned to oblivion, there would be no alternative to solutions through discussion.

We saw in Chapter 7 that violence is not biologically inherent in humans. Warfare has only been known to have taken place during the last 2% of the duration of mankind's existence. Only misery and desolation has been proven to have resulted from it consistently, with never any beneficial outcomes whatsoever. A significant proportion of respected scientists believe that mankind's very existence might well be in jeopardy during present lifetimes because of gross interference with the world's ecology alone. In such a context it is insupportable that we should not only ignore these warnings, but should actually aggravate an already delicate imbalance. This we shall do if we continue to squander an outrageous proportion of precious resources to perpetuate the ways and means of destroying fellow human beings. Can it credibly be accepted by all sensitive, thinking men and women world-wide that such a macabre distortion of mankind's creative genius should continue to be perpetrated indefinitely ?

We have seen in the Introduction that many traditions form the greatest obstacles to mankind's progress. because they reflect nothing more meaningful than thoughtless repetitions of what has been done habitually in the past, regardless of whether they were beneficial or not. The whole culture of weapons and armed forces rests solely on tradition, and as such has no logical justification whatever; it represents a gross affront to the dignity and intelligence of mankind. Further, its astronomical expense not only bleeds societies seriously, but represents a total waste. The argument that the world must continue staffing armed forces and making weapons for ever in order to provide employment is too crass to merit comment.

If there ever was any honour in 'serving one's country' as a professional combatant, there is certainly none now; for, during the 20th century, the proportion of innocent, defenceless citizens killed in hostilities has risen from 14% to 90%. The comparatively 'disciplined' culture of national armed forces killing each other has given way to the anarchy of all manner of wild-cat, mafia-type eruptions of violence over a wide range of issues. These include narcotics, scarce resources, even jobs, all involving civilians and fuelled by a global flood of second-hand weapons, many abandoned or even sold by the previously disciplined forces.

Abandonment of all weapons would, in fact, have a profound 'freeing up' effect on world societies by removing, at a stroke, the capacity of elites and their state machines to coerce fellow citizens, through threats of the ultimate use of force. By the same token, it would improve dramatically the opportunities for truly democratic societies to develop along the lines of 'Alternative World'. However, in order to initiate movement towards the total rejection of all weapons, it is proposed here to simply build on the belief that the vast majority of men and women everywhere are sickened by the accelerating orgies of killings, and that they all have an inbuilt preference for living rather than dying.

It follows that there should be initiated world-wide DEMANDS for the total destruction, and permanent abolition, of weapons of every size and type on or before 1st January 2001. These DEMANDS would be in similar terms in every country; addressed to the only bodies capable of giving effect to them, namely the governments of each country; by the people most capable of pressuring such governments, namely the citizens of each country.

It would be inappropriate for the campaign to take the form of petitions, which would characterise human beings as supplicants. Rather, it should be based on well-founded, confident DEMANDS by men, women and children world-wide for recognition of their inalienable rights to live at peace with one another, free from the fear of sudden death.

The DEMANDS would provide for a clear understanding by every government and every citizen, that for global weapons abolition to be realisable and lasting, it would have to apply throughout every country without exception. This provision would not only be patently fundamental to success; it would also assist in identifying those countries 'dragging their feet', in announcing their agreement to abandon weapons on 'D-Day', as pariahs to be pressured by the rest of the world community.

The choice of 1/1/2001 as 'D-Day' would have the important psychological advantage of representing a New Year/New Century resolution of totally unprecedented significance. A period longer than the four years suggested (from the time of writing) might well make it difficult to maintain the high level of enthusiasm world-wide for the campaign which would be essential for success. At the same time, around four years would be sufficient for plans to be drawn up for diversification of labour, from both weapons production and armed services, to peaceful activities.

It is reasonable to believe that the novel concept of millions of world citizens acting together contemporaneously in a deeply common cause could well excite and catch imaginations widely, and stimulate positive emotions of global 'togetherness', and loyalty to humanity as a whole, rather than just one's individual country. Such an initiative could also well rekindle the enthusiasm of many thousands of peace organisations and activists globally who have to some extent been thrown on to the defensive in recent years. Such local enthusiasms could also well culminate in supportive activities such as marches and demonstrations of unprecedented sizes, and pledges of non-violent direct action such as blocking weapons-factory gates, to provide powerful support for the DEMAND.

Such irrefutable efforts to promote the triumph of good over evil should reasonably be expected to gain widespread support, including that of believers of every faith world-wide. While appreciating the prodigious problems confronting a successful outcome of such a campaign, it is necessary to keep them in proportion. The vast majority of mankind, including in the First World, neither likes weapons nor profits from them.

Further, a highly significant pointer to what can be achieved by concerted popular demand evolved in the UK in 1996, following widespread revulsion to the massacre of children in a school classroom. Though not yet enacted, the total elimination of all privately held handguns throughout Britain looks set to become an historic, inspiring example for other countries, especially the US, to follow.

The essential foundation for such a campaign would be an inspiring Manifesto, which would generate confidence in the potential for success. This could become one of the world's most historic documents; one on which the future of much of humanity might well depend. It would need to be succinct; appropriate for translation and use in every community of the world, rich or poor. It would need to include clear guidance on how the collection of signatures (or crosses), pledges of non-violent direct action and other forms of support for the local DEMAND could best be made.

The Manifesto should make it clear that the DEMANDS would be for the total, permanent elimination of ALL weapons, including nuclear, chemical, biological, planes, ships, tanks, guns of every type and size, land mines and others. It should affirm that use of weapons represents a denial of humanity, and has never solved problems, but rather worsened them.

Further, the manifesto would explain clearly that closure of weapons factories and dismissal of armed services personnel would NOT need to result in unemployment. On the contrary, it has become established statistically that equivalent funding spent, for example, on building housing, schools and the like would provide work for MORE men and women. Employment would become meaningful, precious material resources would not be squandered, and lasting community facilities would be provided .

A small, ad-hoc committee would need to initiate the campaign, for which, because of its broad appeal, sufficient start-up funding should be readily forthcoming. That committee would first need to agree an initial draft of the Manifesto. This could then be circulated to a small number of appropriate prominent persons world-wide, who would be asked both for comments, and whether they would be prepared to join a launch committee, or at least lend their names as sponsors.

Decisions could then be taken on printing the finally agreed Manifesto in appropriate languages, on involving the media, and numerous other organisational issues which would evolve naturally. These would require the immediate establishment of a small full-time secretariat .

The first task would then be to identify an existing or ad-hoc body in each country which would be prepared to promote the campaign locally. It is recognised, and all too evident, that in many countries such activity would result in persecution, unless given resolute support from more liberal sectors of the world. Such support would need to take every possible form. The General Assembly of the United Nations should be called upon to recognise the basic morality and logic of the DEMAND, and its correspondence with the UN' s own constitution, and call for the protection of all promoting it.

The initial support of persons well-known globally would be invaluable. However, to maximise support within countries, it would be important for local organising bodies to obtain sponsorship of the Manifesto from individuals in their particular countries who are well-known, popular and respected, such as sportsmen or media personalities .

Liaison between country organisers and the secretariat would be important for exchange of information, advice and progress reports. To this end many forms of communication could be used, including the Internet. At the same time advantage could be taken of the dramatic increase of tourism, including in countries with repressive regimes; in this way invaluable personal contacts could be made in support of the campaign.

The time is long overdue for the vast, peace-loving majority of mankind to stand shoulder to shoulder and INSIST that the whole culture of problem-solving by violence is archaic and an insult to their intelligence.

A WORLD WITHOUT WEAPONS OF ALL KINDS WOULD PROCLAIM A NEW LEASE OF LIFE FOR HUMANITY!

Anyone who, having read this book, would like to write to the author about any of the issues raised is welcome to do so by email at nares.craig@narescraig.co.uk.

1. Ex-Services CND News letter, May 1994
2. *Guardian* 22/8/96
3. *Observer* 19/9/93; *Guardian* 6 & 8/11/93
4. Oxfam News, Winter 1993