

The Way of Peace

ISSUE 3

Militarism and the arms industry

This is the third in a series of eight pamphlets offered by the Columban Centre for Peace, Ecology and Justice focusing on peace and active non-violence.

'These will hammer their swords into ploughshares, their spears into sickles. Nation will not lift sword against nation, there will be no more training for war'. Is 2:4s

God's vision for the world is one of harmony and right relationship where peace can flourish and human beings reach their full potential unhindered by conflict or violence.

The arms industry is one of the largest industries in the world. Billions are spent on the research and development of more deadly and sophisticated ways of killing people and destroying the environment. Militarism is promoted as necessary for defence and most nation states regard war as an acceptable tool of foreign policy. Many western nations are economically reliant on the 'industrial military machine'. The arms industry needs wars to keep it functioning.

Corrupt governments and people are given easy access to arms, which helps keep them in power and profits the arms manufacturers.

The majority of conflicts currently taking place are, in fact, within nations rather than between nations, eg. Sudan, Ethiopia, Colombia, Venezuela, Palestine, and are the target of small arms dealers the small arms industries are among the most destructive with landmines being the worst culprit. Women and children are usually the first victims.

Armed response to conflict teaches a defence consciousness that will only disappear through global disarmament.

While the Christian tradition has long held to the principles of a 'just war', in the face of new and ever more deadly modern weaponry, increasingly these traditional reasons are no longer valid. Therefore the argument for a 'just war' is difficult to defend. The catastrophic consequences are too great for the future of the planet and all its peoples.

'Peace results from that harmony built into human society by its divine founder and actualised by people as they thirst after ever greater justice' (Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes, #78).

Peace must be born of mutual trust between nations rather than imposed on them through fear of one another's weapons.

Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes, #82

"Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed."

Dwight D. Eisenhower

" Mankind must put an end to war or war will put an end to mankind." John F. Kennedy

To wage war on misery and to struggle against injustice is to promote, along with improved conditions, the human and spiritual progress of all people, and therefore the common good of humanity. Peace cannot be limited to a mere absence of war, the result of an ever precarious balance of forces. No, peace is something that is built up day after day, in the pursuit of an order intended by God.

Pope Paul VI
Populorum Progressio, #76

'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God'. Mt 5:9



"War is expensive.
Peace is priceless."

PROFILE OF A PEACE PERSON

What can you do?

Gather a few friends and watch the film 'Bowling for Columbine'. Discuss the issues that are raised. What are the alternatives? Find out more about active non-violence as a way of life. The Landmines Campaign has been hugely successful but is not yet complete. Contribute to its ongoing work.

Sr Patricia Pak Poy is a Sister of Mercy, based in Adelaide, who has coordinated the Australian Network of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines since it began in 1993. Through the Mercy charism of working with and for "the poor, sick and ignorant", Patricia recognises that the devastating effects of landmines are felt more by ordinary people trying to go about their everyday lives than the deterrent effect promoted by military strategists. She is involved in many committees and groups whose aims are disarmament and peace. Among the awards she has received in recognition of her peacemaking are Member of the Order of Australia, and the 1998 RSL Peace Prize.

FACT FILE

- In the past 10 years:
 - 2 million children have been killed in conflict;
 - 4-5 million children have been disabled;
 - 12 million children have been left homeless;
 - 300,000 children have been recruited as soldiers in active combat.
- Global military expenditure for 2002 exceeded \$US800 billion dollars.
- **Top spenders were:**

USA	\$US 343.2 billion
Russia	\$US 60 billion
China	\$US 42 billion
Japan	\$US 40.4 billion
UK	\$US 34 billion
Australia	\$US 7.9 billion
- The world's suppliers of major conventional arms for 1997-2002:

USA	\$US 44.82 billion
Russia	\$US 17.35 billion
France	\$US 9.80 billion
UK	\$US 6.70 billion
Germany	\$US 4.82 billion
Australia	\$US .62 billion
- The US based Carlyle Group, with major investments in the arms industry, includes such world figures as George Bush Snr and John Major in its management.
- The financial assets of Saudi Binlarden Corporation are managed by the Carlyle Group.
- For approximately 30% of annual world military expenditure (\$US 810 billion) all of the following could be accomplished:
 - **Eliminate starvation**
\$US 19 billion
 - **Provide shelter**
\$US 21 billion
 - **Remove landmines**
\$US 4 billion
 - **Eliminate nuclear weapons**
\$US 7 billion
 - **Refugee relief**
\$US 5 billion
 - **Eliminate illiteracy**
\$US 5 billion
 - **Provide clean safe water**
\$US 10 billion
 - **Provide health care, Aids control**
\$US 21 billion
 - **Stop deforestation**
\$US 7 billion
 - **Prevent global warming**
\$US 8 billion
 - **Prevent acid rain**
\$US 8 billion
 - **Energy efficiency**
\$US 33 billion
 - **Renewable energy**
\$US 17 billion
 - **Stop ozone depletion**
\$US 5 billion
 - **Prevent soil erosion**
\$US 24 billion
 - **Retire poor country debt**
\$US 30 billion

(Source: Victorian Peace Network, Fact Sheet No. 1
www.vicpeace.org)

USEFUL WEBSITES:

www.acaat.org

Australian Campaign Against Arms Trade

www.australia.icbl.org

International Campaign to Ban Landmines-
Australia

www.vicpeace.org

Victorian Peace Network

Another useful resource:

An excellent Kit, 'Cultivating Peace', for use in parishes or groups can be downloaded from the National Council of Churches in Australia site

www.ncca.org.au



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