

100 Years of War – 100 Years of Peace and the Peace Movement, 1914 – 2014

By Peter van den Dungen

Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. ... It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results. –Andrew Carnegie

Since this is a strategy conference of the peace and anti-war movement, and since it is being held against the background of the centenary of the First World War, I will confine my comments largely to issues the centenary should focus on and to the way in which the peace movement can contribute to the anniversary events which will be spreading out over the coming four years. The numerous commemorative events not only in Europe but around the world offer an opportunity to the anti-war and peace movement to publicise and advance its agenda.

It seems that so far this agenda is largely absent from the official commemorative programme, at least in Britain where the outlines of such a programme were first presented on 11th October 2012 by Prime Minister David Cameron in a speech at the Imperial War Museum in London[1]. He announced there the appointment of a special advisor, and advisory board, and also that the government was making available a special fund of £ 50 million. The overall purpose of the commemorations of the First World War were threefold, he said: ‘to honour those who served; to remember those who died; and to ensure that the lessons learnt live with us for ever’. We (i.e., the peace movement) may agree that ‘honouring, remembering, and learning lessons’ are indeed appropriate, but may disagree about the precise nature and content of what is being proposed under these three headings.

Before addressing this issue, it may be useful to indicate briefly what is being done in Britain. Of the £ 50 million, £ 10 million has been allocated to the Imperial War Museum of which Cameron is a great admirer. More than £ 5 million has been allocated to schools, to enable visits of pupils and teachers to the battlefields in Belgium and France. Like the government, the BBC also has appointed a special controller for the First World War Centenary. Its programming for this, announced on 16th October 2013, is larger and more ambitious than any other project it has ever undertaken.[2] The national radio and television broadcaster has commissioned over 130 programmes, with around 2,500 hours of broadcasting on radio and TV. For instance, the BBC’s flagship radio station, BBC Radio 4, has commissioned one of the biggest drama series ever, spanning 600 episodes, and dealing with the home front. The BBC, together with the Imperial War Museum, is building a ‘digital cenotaph’ featuring an unprecedented amount of archive material. It is inviting users to upload letters, diaries, and photographs of the experiences of their relatives during the war. The same website will also provide access for the first time to more than 8 million military service records held by the Museum. In July 2014, the Museum will hold the largest retrospective of World War I art ever seen (entitled *Truth & Memory: British Art of the First World War*).[3] There will be similar exhibitions in the Tate Modern (London) and the Imperial War Museum North (Salford, Manchester).

From the beginning, there was controversy in Britain about the nature of the commemoration, in particular, whether this was also a celebration – celebration, that is, of British resolve and eventual victory, thereby safeguarding freedom and democracy, not only for the country but also for the allies (but not necessarily for the colonies!). Government ministers, leading historians, military figures and journalists joined the debate; inevitably also the German

ambassador became involved. If, as the Prime Minister indicated in his speech, the commemoration should have a theme of reconciliation, then this would suggest the need for a sober (rather than victorious gung-ho) approach.

The public debate so far, in Great Britain at any rate, has been characterised by a rather narrow focus, and has been conducted in parameters too narrowly drawn. What is missing so far are the following aspects and they may well apply elsewhere too.

1. *Plus ça change ... ?*

FIRSTLY, and not surprisingly perhaps, the debate has concentrated on the immediate causes of the war and the issue of war responsibility. This should not obscure the fact that the seeds of war were sown well before the killings in Sarajevo. A more appropriate and constructive, and less divisive, approach would need to concentrate not on individual countries but on the international system as a whole which resulted in war. This will draw attention to the forces of nationalism, imperialism, colonialism, militarism which together prepared the ground for the armed confrontation. War was widely regarded as inevitable, necessary, glorious and heroic.

We should ask to what extent these *systemic* causes of war – which resulted in the First World War – are still with us today. According to several analysts, the situation the world finds itself in today is not dissimilar to that of Europe on the eve of war in 1914. Recently, the tensions between Japan and China have led several commentators to observe that if there is a danger of major war today, it is likely to be between these countries – and that it will be difficult to keep it limited to them and the region. Analogies with the summer of 1914 in Europe have been made. Indeed, at the annual World Economic Forum held in Davos in January 2014, the Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, was given an attentive hearing when he compared current Sino-Japanese rivalry with the Anglo-German one at the beginning of the 20th century. [The parallel is that today China is an emergent, impatient state with a rising arms budget, like Germany was in 1914. The U.S., like Britain in 1914, is a hegemonic power in apparent decline. Japan, like France in 1914, is dependent for its security on that declining power.] Rival nationalisms, then as now, can spark war. According to Margaret Macmillan, a leading Oxford historian of the First World War, the Middle East today also bears a worrying resemblance to the Balkans in 1914.[4] The mere fact that leading politicians and historians can draw such analogies should be a cause for worry. Has the world learnt nothing from the catastrophe of 1914-1918? In one important respect this is undeniably the case: states continue to be armed, and to use force and the threat of force in their international relations.

Of course, there are now global institutions, first and foremost the United Nations, whose primary objective is to keep the world at peace. There is a much more developed body of international law and institutions to go with it. In Europe, the originator of two world wars, there is now a Union.

While this is progress, these institutions are weak and not without their critics. The peace movement can take some credit for these developments, and is committed to reform of the UN and to make key principles of international law both better known and better adhered to.

2. *Remembering the peacemakers & honouring their legacy*

SECONDLY, the debate so far has largely ignored the fact that an anti-war and peace movement existed before 1914 in many countries. That movement consisted of individuals,

movements, organisations, and institutions which did not share the prevailing views regarding war and peace, and which strove to bring about a system in which war was no longer an acceptable means for countries to settle their disputes.

In fact, 2014 is not only the centenary of the start of the Great War, but also the *bicentenary* of the peace movement. In other words, a full one hundred years before the start of war in 1914, that movement had been campaigning and struggling to educate people about the dangers and evils of war, and the advantages and possibilities of peace. During that first century, from the end of the Napoleonic wars to the start of the First World War, the peace movement's achievements were, contrary to widespread opinion, substantial. Obviously, the peace movement did not succeed in averting the catastrophe that was the Great War, but that in no way diminishes its significance and merits. Yet, this *bicentenary* is nowhere mentioned – as if that movement never existed, or does not deserve to be remembered.

The peace movement arose in the immediate aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, both in Britain and the USA. That movement, which gradually spread to the continent of Europe and elsewhere, laid the foundations for many of the institutions and innovations in international diplomacy which would come to fruition later in the century, and also after the Great War – such as the notion of arbitration as a more just and rational alternative to brute force. Other ideas promoted by the peace movement were disarmament, federal union, European union, international law, international organisation, decolonisation, women's emancipation. Many of these ideas have come to the fore in the aftermath of the world wars of the 20th century, and some have been realised, or at least partly so.

The peace movement was especially productive in the two decades preceding World War I when its agenda reached the highest levels of government as manifested, for instance, in the Hague Peace Conferences of 1899 and 1907. A direct result of these unprecedented conferences – which followed an appeal (1898) by Tsar Nicholas II to halt the arms race, and to substitute war by peaceful arbitration – was the construction of the Peace Palace which opened its doors in 1913, and which celebrated its centenary in August 2013. Since 1946, it is of course the seat of the International Court of Justice of the UN. The world owes the Peace Palace to the munificence of Andrew Carnegie, the Scottish-American steel tycoon who became a pioneer of modern philanthropy and who was also an ardent opponent of war. Like no one else, he liberally endowed institutions devoted to the pursuit of world peace, most of which still exist today.

Whereas the Peace Palace, which houses the International Court of Justice, guards its high mission to replace war by justice, Carnegie's most generous legacy for peace, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP), has explicitly turned away from its founder's belief in the abolition of war, thereby depriving the peace movement of much-needed resources. This could partly explain why that movement has not grown into a mass movement which can exert effective pressure on governments. I believe it is important to reflect on this for a moment. In 1910 Carnegie, who was America's most famous peace activist, and the world's richest man, endowed his peace foundation with \$ 10 million. In today's money, this is the equivalent of \$ 3,5 *billion*. Imagine what the peace movement – that is, the movement for the abolition of war – could do today if it had access to that kind of money, or even a fraction of it. Unfortunately, while Carnegie favoured advocacy and activism, the trustees of his Peace Endowment favoured research. As early as 1916, in the middle of the First World War, one of the trustees even suggested that the name of the institution should be changed to Carnegie Endowment for International *Justice*.

When the Endowment recently celebrated its 100th anniversary, its President (Jessica T. Mathews), called the organisation ‘the oldest international affairs *think tank* in the U.S.’[5] She says that its purpose was, in the words of the founder, to ‘hasten the abolition of war, the foulest blot upon our civilization’, but she adds, ‘that goal was always unattainable’. In fact, she was repeating what the president of the Endowment during the 1950s and 1960s had then already said. Joseph E. Johnson, a former U.S. State Department official, ‘moved the institution away from an unswerving support for the UN and other international bodies’ according to a recent history published by the Endowment itself. Also, ‘... for the first time, a president of the Carnegie Endowment [described] Andrew Carnegie’s vision of peace as the artifact of an age gone by, rather than an inspiration for the present. Any hope of permanent peace was an illusion’.[6] The First World War forced Carnegie to reconsider his optimistic belief that war would ‘*soon* be discarded as disgraceful to civilized men’ but it is unlikely that he gave up his belief altogether. He enthusiastically supported Woodrow Wilson’s concept of an international organization and was delighted when the President accepted Carnegie’s suggested name for it, a ‘League of Nations’. Full of hope, he died in 1919. What would he say of those who have directed his great Endowment for Peace away from hope and from the conviction that war can and must be abolished? And thereby also have deprived the peace movement from vital resources necessary to pursue its great cause? Ban Ki-moon is so right when he says, and repeats saying, ‘The world is over-armed and peace is under-funded’. The ‘Global Day of Action on Military Spending’ (GDAMS), first proposed by the International Peace Bureau, is exactly addressing this issue (4th edition on 14th April 2014).[7]

Another legacy of the pre-World War I international peace movement is associated with the name of another successful businessman and peace philanthropist, who was also an outstanding scientist: the Swedish inventor Alfred Nobel. The Nobel Peace Prize, first awarded in 1901, is mainly the result of his close association with Bertha von Suttner, the Austrian baroness who at one time had been his secretary in Paris, albeit for one week only. She became the undisputed leader of the movement from the moment her bestselling novel, *Lay Down Your Arms (Die Waffen nieder!)* appeared in 1889, until her death, twenty-five years later, on 21st June 1914, one week before the shots in Sarajevo. On 21st June of this year (2014), we commemorate the centenary of her death. Let us not forget that this is also the 125th anniversary of the publication of her famous novel. I would like to quote what Leo Tolstoi, who knew a thing or two about war and peace, wrote to her in October 1891 after he had read her novel: ‘I greatly appreciate your work, and the idea comes to me that the publication of your novel is a happy augury. – The abolition of slavery was preceded by the famous book of a woman, Mrs. Beecher Stowe; God grant that the abolition of war may follow upon yours’.[8] Certainly, no woman did more to avert war than Bertha von Suttner.[9]

It can be argued that *Lay Down Your Arms* is the book behind the creation of the Nobel Peace Prize (of which the author became the first female recipient in 1905). That prize was, in essence, a prize for the peace movement as represented by Bertha von Suttner, and more specifically, for disarmament. That it should again become one has been forcefully argued in recent years by Norwegian lawyer and peace activist, Fredrik Heffermehl in his fascinating book, *The Nobel Peace Prize: What Nobel Really Wanted*.[10]

Some of the leading figures of the pre-1914 peace campaigns moved heaven and earth to persuade their fellow citizens of the dangers of a future great war and of the need to prevent it at all costs. In his bestseller, *The Great Illusion: A Study of the Relation of Military Power in Nations to their Economic and Social Advantage*, English journalist Norman Angell argued that the complex economic and financial interdependence of capitalist states had rendered war

among them irrational and counter-productive, resulting in great economic and social dislocation.[11]

Both during and after the war, the sentiment most commonly associated with the war was 'disillusionment', abundantly vindicating Angell's thesis. The nature of the war, as well as its consequences, were far removed from what had generally been expected. What had been expected, in short, was 'war as usual'. This was reflected in the popular slogan, soon after the start of war, that 'the boys would be out of the trenches and home by Christmas'. Meant was, of course, Christmas 1914. In the event, those who survived the mass slaughter only returned home four long years later.

One of the main reasons explaining the miscalculations and misconceptions regarding the war was the lack of imagination of those who were involved in its planning and execution.[12] They did not foresee how advances in weapons technology – notably, the increase in firepower through the machine gun – had made traditional battles among the infantry obsolete. Advances on the field of battle would henceforth hardly be possible, and troops would dig themselves in trenches, resulting in stalemate. The reality of war, of what it had become – viz. industrialised mass slaughter – would only be revealed whilst the war was unfolding (and even then commanders were slow to learn, as is well documented in the case of the British commander-in-chief, General Douglas Haig).

Yet, in 1898, a full fifteen years before the start of the war, the Polish-Russian entrepreneur and pioneer of modern peace research, Jan Bloch (1836-1902), had argued in a prophetic 6-volume study about the war of the future that this would be a war like no other. 'Of the next great war one can speak of a Rendez-vous with death' he wrote in the preface of the German edition of his great work.[13] He argued and demonstrated that such a war had become 'impossible' – impossible, that is, except at the price of suicide. This is exactly what the war, when it came, proved to be: the suicide of European civilisation, including the dissolution of the Austrian-Hungarian, Ottoman, Romanov and Wilhelmine empires. When it ended, the war had also ended the world as people had known it. This is well summed up in the title of the poignant memoirs of one who stood 'above the battle', the Austrian writer Stefan Zweig: *The World of Yesterday*. [14]

These pacifists (of whom Zweig was one, although he did not actively participate in the peace movement), who wanted to prevent their countries from becoming devastated in war, were true patriots, but often were treated with scorn and were dismissed as naive idealists, utopians, cowards and even traitors. But they were nothing of the kind. Sandi E. Cooper rightly entitled her study of the peace movement before the First World War: *Patriotic Pacifism: Waging War on War in Europe, 1815-1914*. [15] If the world had taken greater heed of their message, the catastrophe might well have been avoided. As Karl Holl, the doyen of German peace historians, has noted in his introduction to the splendid vade-mecum of the peace movement in German-speaking Europe: 'much of the information about the historical peace movement will show sceptics how much suffering Europe would have been spared, had the warnings of pacifists not fallen on so many deaf ears, and had the practical initiatives and proposals of organised pacifism found an opening in official politics and diplomacy'. [16]

If, as Holl rightly suggests, an awareness of the existence and achievements of the organised peace movement before the First World War should inspire its critics to a measure of humility, it should at the same time also provide encouragement to the successors of that movement today. To quote Holl again: 'The assurance to be standing on the shoulders of

predecessors who, despite the hostility or apathy of their contemporaries, resolutely held firm to their pacifist convictions, will make the peace movement of today better able to withstand the many temptations to become dejected'.[17]

To add insult to injury, these 'precursors of the future' (in Romain Rolland's felicitous phrase) have never been given their due. We do not remember them; they are not part of our history as taught in school textbooks; there are no statues for them and no streets are named after them. What a one-sided view of history we are conveying to future generations! It is largely thanks to the efforts of historians like Karl Holl and his colleagues who have come together in the Working Group Historical Peace Research (*Arbeitskreis Historische Friedensforschung*), that the existence of a very different Germany has been revealed in recent decades.[18] In this connection I would also like to pay tribute to the publishing house established in Bremen by peace historian Helmut Donat. Thanks to him, we do now have a growing library of biographies and other studies concerning the historical German peace movement of both the pre-1914 and interwar periods. The origins of his publishing house are interesting: Unable to find a publisher of his biography of Hans Paasche – a remarkable marine and colonial officer who became a critic of the German cult of violence and who was murdered by nationalist soldiers in 1920 – Donat published the book himself (1981), the first of many to appear in Donat Verlag.[19] Regrettably, since very little of this literature has been translated into English, it has not greatly affected the perception, widespread in Britain, of a country and a people steeped in Prussian militarism, and without a peace movement.

Also elsewhere, particularly in the USA, peace historians have come together in the last fifty years (stimulated by the Vietnam War) so that the history of the peace movement is increasingly well documented – providing not only a more accurate, balanced, and truthful account as regards the history of war and peace, but providing also an inspiration for peace and anti-war activists today. A milestone in this endeavour is the *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Peace Leaders*, and which can be seen as a companion volume to the Donat-Holl Lexikon, expanding its scope to the whole world.

I have so far argued that in the commemorations of the First World War we should pay attention, firstly, to the systemic factors which caused the war and, secondly, also should remember and honour those who, in the decades before 1914, made strenuous efforts to bring about a world from which the institution of war would be banished. A greater awareness and teaching of peace history is not only desirable, indeed vital, for students and young people, but extends to the society as a whole. Opportunities for conveying a more balanced view of history – and, in particular, for honouring opponents of war – should not be absent or ignored in the commemorations for the victims of war in the countless battlefield sites in Europe and throughout the world.

3. *Heroes of non-killing*

We come now to a THIRD consideration. As regards the First World War, we should ask how the neglect and ignorance (on the part of later generations) of those who warned against war, and did their utmost to prevent it, would be perceived by the millions of soldiers who lost their lives in that catastrophe. Would most of them not expect that society would honour above all the memory of those who wanted to prevent the mass slaughter? Is *saving* lives not more noble and heroic than *taking* lives? Let us not forget: soldiers, after all, are trained and equipped to kill, and when they fall victim to the opponent's bullet, this is the inevitable consequence of the profession they have joined, or were forced to join. Here, we should

mention again Andrew Carnegie, who detested the barbarity of war, and who conceived and instituted a ‘Hero Fund’ to honour the ‘heroes of civilization’ whom he contrasted with the ‘heroes of barbarism’. He recognised the problematic nature of the heroism associated with the spilling of blood in war, and wanted to draw attention to the existence of a purer kind of heroism. He wanted to honour civilian heroes who, sometimes at great risk to themselves, have rescued lives – not wilfully destroyed them. First established in his home town of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1904, in later years he established Hero Funds in ten European countries, most of which celebrated their centenary a few years ago[20]. In Germany, in recent years attempts have been made to revive the *Carnegie Stiftung fuer Lebensretter*.

In this connection it is relevant to mention the work of Glenn Paige and the Center for Global Nonkilling (CGNK) that he established at the University of Hawaii 25 years ago.[21] This veteran of the Korean War, and leading political scientist, has argued that hope and faith in humanity and human potential have the power to change society in major ways. Placing a person on the moon was long considered a hopeless dream but it quickly became a reality in our time when vision, willpower and human organisation combined to make it possible. Paige persuasively argues that a nonviolent global transformation can be achieved in the same way, if only we believe in it, and are determined to bring it about. Commemorating four years long the killings on an industrial scale, is insufficient and insincere if it excludes serious consideration of the question that CGNK poses, viz., ‘How far have we come in our humanity?’ While scientific and technological progress is stupendous, wars, murders and genocide continue unabated. The question of the need and possibility of a non-killing global society should receive the highest priority at this time.

4. *Abolition of nuclear weapons*

FOURTHLY, commemorations of the First World War which are limited to remembering and honouring those who died in it (when killing), should constitute only one, and perhaps not the most important, aspect of the remembrance. The death of millions, and the suffering of many more (including those maimed, whether physically or mentally, or both, including the countless widows and orphans), would have been slightly more acceptable if the war which caused this enormous loss and grief had indeed been the war to end all war. But that proved far from being the case.

What would the soldiers who lost their lives in the First World War say were they to return today, and when they would find that, instead of ending war, the war that started in 1914 spawned an even greater one, barely twenty years after the end of World War I? I am reminded of a powerful play by the American playwright, Irwin Shaw, called *Bury the Dead*. First performed in New York City in March 1936, in this short, one-act play, six dead US soldiers killed in the war refuse to be buried.[22] They bemoan what happened to them – their lives cut short, their wives widowed, their children orphaned. And all for what – for a few yards of mud, one bitterly complains. The corpses, standing up in the graves that have been dug for them, refuse to lie down and be interred – even when commanded to do so by generals, one of whom says in desperation, ‘They never said anything about this sort of thing at West Point.’ The War Department, informed of the bizarre situation, forbids the story from being publicised. Eventually, and as a last attempt, the dead soldiers’ wives, or girlfriend, or mother, or sister, are summoned to come to the graves to persuade their men to let themselves be buried. One retorts, ‘Maybe there’s too many of us under the ground now. Maybe the earth can’t stand it no more’. Even a priest who believes the men are possessed by the devil and who performs an exorcism is unable to make the soldiers lie down. At the end, the corpses

walk off the stage to roam the world, living accusations against the stupidity of war. (The author, by the way, was later blacklisted during the McCarthy red scare and went to live in exile in Europe for 25 years).

I suppose it is fair to assume that these six soldiers would be even less prepared to stop raising their voices (and corpses) in protest against war if they would learn of the invention, use, and proliferation of nuclear weapons. Perhaps it is the *hibakusha*, the survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, who today most resemble these soldiers. The *hibakusha* (whose numbers are rapidly dwindling owing to old age) narrowly escaped death in war. For many of them, the hell they have been in, and the great physical and mental suffering that has profoundly affected their lives, have only been bearable because of their deeply-rooted commitment to the abolition of nuclear weapons, and of war. Only this has given meaning to their ruined lives. However, it must be a cause of great anger as well as anguish to them that, even seventy years later, the world largely continues to ignore their cry – ‘No more Hiroshima or Nagasaki, no more nuclear weapons, no more war!’ Moreover, is it not a scandal that in all this time the Norwegian Nobel Committee has not seen fit to award even one prize to the main association of *hibakusha* devoted to the abolition of nuclear weapons? Nobel of course knew all about explosives, and foresaw weapons of mass destruction and feared a return to barbarism if war was not abolished. The *hibakusha* are living testimony of that barbarism.

Since 1975 the Nobel committee in Oslo seems to have commenced a tradition awarding the prize for nuclear abolition every ten years following: in 1975 the prize went to Andrei Sakharov, in 1985 to IPPNW, in 1995 to Joseph Rotblat and Pugwash, in 2005 to Mohamed ElBaradei and the IAEA. Such a prize is due again next year (2015) and appears almost like token-ism. This is all the more regrettable, and unacceptable, if we agree with the view, mentioned earlier, that the prize was meant to be one for disarmament. If she were alive today, Bertha von Suttner might well have called her book, *Lay Down Your Nuclear Arms*. Indeed, one of her writings on war and peace has a very modern ring: In ‘The Barbarisation of the Sky’ she predicted that the horrors of war would also come down from the skies if the maddening arms race was not halted.[23] Today, the many innocent victims of drone warfare join those of Gernika, Coventry, Cologne, Dresden, Tokyo, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and other places around the world which have experienced the horrors of modern warfare.

The world continues to live very dangerously. Climate change is presenting new and additional dangers. But even those who deny that it is man-made cannot deny that nuclear weapons are man-made, and that a nuclear holocaust would be wholly of man’s own doing. It can only be averted by a determined attempt to abolish nuclear weapons. This is not only what prudence and morality dictate, but also justice and international law. The duplicity and hypocrisy of the nuclear weapons powers, first and foremost the USA, UK, and France, are blatant and shameful. Signatories of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (signed in 1968, coming into force in 1970), they continue to ignore their obligation to negotiate in good faith the disarmament of their nuclear arsenals. On the contrary, they are all involved in modernising them, wasting billions of scarce resources. This is in flagrant breach of their obligations which were confirmed in the 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice regarding the ‘Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons’.[24]

It can be argued that the apathy and ignorance of the population is to blame for this state of affairs. National and international campaigns and organisations for nuclear disarmament enjoy the active support of only a small part of the population. The award, on a regular basis, of the

Nobel peace prize for nuclear disarmament, would have the effect of keeping the spotlight on this issue as well as providing encouragement and endorsement for the campaigners. It is this, more than the ‘honour’, which constitutes the real significance of the prize.

At the same time, the responsibility and culpability of governments and political and military elites is obvious. The five nuclear weapons states which are permanent members of the UN Security Council have even refused to participate in the conferences on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons hosted in March 2013 by the Norwegian government and in February 2014 by the Mexican government. They apparently fear that these meetings would lead to demands for negotiations outlawing nuclear weapons. In announcing a follow-up conference in Vienna later in the same year, Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz pointedly observed, ‘A concept that is based on the total destruction of the planet should have no place in the 21st century ... This discourse is especially necessary in Europe, where cold war thinking is still prevalent in security doctrines’.[25] He also said: ‘we should use the commemoration [of World War I] to make every effort to move beyond nuclear weapons, the most dangerous legacy of the 20th century’. We should hear this also from the foreign ministers of the nuclear weapons states – not least Britain and France whose populations suffered so greatly in that war. The Nuclear Security Summits, the third one of which is being held in March 2014 in The Hague, are aimed at preventing nuclear terrorism around the world. The agenda is careful not to refer to the real existing threat represented by the nuclear weapons and materials of the nuclear weapons powers. This is ironic, given that this summit is being held in The Hague, a city that is explicitly committed to the global abolition of nuclear weapons (as mandated by the UN’s supreme court based in The Hague).

5. *Nonviolence vs the Military-Industrial Complex*

Let us come to a FIFTH consideration. We are looking at the 100-year period from 1914 to 2014. Let us pause for a moment and recall an episode which is right in the middle, viz. 1964, which is 50 years ago. In that year, Martin Luther King, Jr., received the Nobel Peace Prize. He saw it as a recognition of nonviolence as the ‘answer to the crucial political and moral question of our time – the need for man to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to violence and oppression’. He received the prize for his leadership of the nonviolent civil rights movement, starting with the Montgomery (Alabama) bus boycott in December 1955. In his Nobel lecture (11th December 1964), King pointed out the predicament of modern man, viz. ‘the richer we have become materially, the poorer we have become morally and spiritually’.[26] He went on to identify three major and connected problems which grew out of ‘man’s ethical infantilism’: racism, poverty, and war/militarism. In the few remaining years that were left to him before he would be struck down by an assassin’s bullet (1968), he increasingly spoke out against war and militarism, notably the war in Vietnam. Among my favourite quotations from this great prophet and activist, are ‘Wars are poor chisels for carving out peaceful tomorrows’, and ‘We have guided missiles and misguided men’. King’s anti-war campaign culminated in his powerful speech, entitled *Beyond Vietnam*, delivered in the Riverside Church in New York City on 4th April 1967.

With the award of the Nobel prize, he said, ‘another burden of responsibility was placed upon me’: the prize ‘was also a commission ... to work harder than I had ever worked before for the brotherhood of man’. Echoing what he had said in Oslo, he referred to ‘the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism’. Regarding this latter point, he said that he could no longer be silent and called his own government ‘the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today’.[27] He criticised ‘the deadly Western arrogance that has poisoned the

international atmosphere for so long'. His message was that 'war is not the answer', and 'A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death'. He called for a 'true revolution of values' which required that 'every nation must now develop an overriding loyalty to mankind as a whole'.[28]

There are those who say that it is no coincidence that it was exactly one year to the day later, that M.L. King was shot dead. With his anti-war speech in New York, and his condemnation of the American government as 'the greatest purveyor of violence' in the world, he had begun to extent his campaign of nonviolent protest beyond the civil rights agenda and thereby threatened powerful vested interests. The latter can best be summed up in the expression 'the military-industrial complex' [MIC], coined by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in his farewell address in January 1961.[29] In this courageous and only too prophetic warning, Eisenhower stated that 'an immense military establishment and a large arms industry' had emerged as a new and hidden force in US politics. He said, 'In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence ... by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist'. The fact that the retiring President had a military background – he was a five-star general in the US army during the Second World War, and had served as the first Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe (NATO) – made his warnings all the more remarkable. Towards the end of his poignant address, Eisenhower admonished the American public that 'disarmament ... is a continuing imperative'.

That his warnings have not been heeded, and that the dangers to which he called attention have materialised, is only too obvious today. Many analysts of the MIC argue that the US does not so much *have* a MIC as that the whole country has become one.[30] The MIC now also incorporates Congress, Academia, the Media, and the Entertainment industry, and this widening of its powers and influence is a clear indication of the growing militarisation of American society. The empirical evidence for this is indicated by facts such as the following:

- * the Pentagon is the world's largest consumer of energy;
- * the Pentagon is the country's greatest landowner, referring to itself as 'one of the world's largest "landlords"', with about 1,000 military bases and installations abroad in more than 150 countries;
- * the Pentagon owns or leases 75% of all federal buildings in the US;
- *the Pentagon is the 3rd largest federal funder of university research in the US (after health, and science).[31]

It is well-known that the US annual arms expenditures surpass those of the next ten or twelve countries combined. This is indeed, to quote Eisenhower, 'disastrous', and madness, and very dangerous madness at that. The imperative for disarmament that he stipulated has been turned into its opposite. This is all the more remarkable when one takes into account that he was speaking at the time of the Cold War, when communism was seen as a serious threat to the US and the rest of the free world. The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union and its empire have not hampered the further expansion of the MIC, whose tentacles now encompass the whole world.

How this is perceived by the world is made clear in the results of the 2013 annual 'End of Year' survey by the Worldwide Independent Network of Market Research (WIN) and Gallup International which involved 68,000 people in 65 countries.[32] In answer to the question, 'Which country do you think is the greatest threat to peace in the world today?', the US came first by a wide margin, receiving 24% of the votes cast. This is equal to the combined votes for the next four countries: Pakistan (8%), China (6%), Afghanistan (5%) and Iran (5%). It is clear that more than twelve years after the launch of the so-called 'Global war on terror', the US appears to be striking terror into the hearts of much of the rest of the world. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s courageous characterisation and condemnation of his own government as being 'the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today' (1967) is now, almost fifty years later, shared by many people around the world.

At the same time, there has been a massive increase in the proliferation of guns held by individual citizens in the US exercising their right (which is contested) to bear arms under the Second Amendment of the Constitution. With 88 guns for every 100 people, the country has by far the highest rate of gun ownership in the world. The culture of violence seems to be deeply ingrained in American society today, and the events of 9/11 have only aggravated the problem. Martin Luther King, Jr., a student and follower of Mahatma Gandhi, exemplified the power of nonviolence in his successful leadership of the civil rights movement in the US. The US is as much in need of rediscovery his legacy as India is in need of rediscovering Gandhi's. I am often reminded of the answer Gandhi gave to a journalist when, during a visit to England during the 1930s, he was asked what he thought about western civilisation. Gandhi's reply has not lost any of its relevance, 80 years later, on the contrary. Gandhi answered, 'I think it would be a good idea'. Even though the veracity of this story is disputed, it has a ring of truth – *Se non e vero, e ben trovato*.

The West, and the rest of the world, would indeed be a great deal more civilised if war – 'the foulest blot upon our civilization' in the words of Andrew Carnegie – was abolished. When he said so, Hiroshima and Nagasaki were still Japanese cities like any other. Today, the whole world is threatened by the persistence of war and the new instruments of destruction that it has brought forth and continues to develop. The old and discredited Roman saying, *si vis pacem, para bellum*, must be replaced by a saying which has been attributed to both Gandhi and the Quakers: *There is no way to peace, peace is the way*. The world is praying for peace, but paying for war. If we want peace, we must invest in peace, and that means above all in peace education. It remains to be seen to what extent the large investments in war museums and exhibitions, and in untold programmes about the Great War (such as is happening now in Britain but also elsewhere), is education about and in favour of nonviolence, non-killing, abolition of nuclear weapons. Only such a perspective would justify the extensive (as well as expensive) commemorative programmes.

Commemorations of the centenary of the First World War during the next four years provide the peace movement with many opportunities to promote a culture of peace and nonviolence which, alone, will be able to bring about a world without war.

Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little. – Edmund Burke

Peter van den Dungen
Cooperation for Peace, 11th Annual Strategy Conference, 21-22 February 2014, Cologne-
Riehl – Opening remarks (revised, 10th March 2014)

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[3] Full details at www.iwm.org.uk/centenary

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[5] Cf. her foreword in David Adesnik, *100 Years of Impact – Essays on the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. Washington, D.C.: CEIP, 2011, p. 5.

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