

# Chapter 7

## CRIMINAL WASTE ON WEAPONS

In sharp contrast to mankind's much-vaunted 'development', the 20th century has seen an unprecedented succession of disastrous major and minor wars, which have caused immeasurable suffering and benefitted nobody except the arms manufacturers.

The most significant factor underpinning this global mayhem is the ruthless momentum of the money market system, which has vastly expanded the manufacturing of weapons into huge industries demanding customers world-wide. Elites everywhere, anxious either to increase or just maintain their influence, have been only too happy to buy or just to receive arms as 'aid'. Also, tradition has it that wars are almost normal, inevitable, even glorious occurrences; that armed forces are as natural a part of society as football teams; and that making armaments is a wage-earning job like any other.

Further, a cunning psychological transformation was dreamed up around 1945, when what had been honest-to-god 'War Offices' overnight became innocent sounding Ministries, or Departments, of 'Defence'. Needless to say, belying their nice new image, these bodies have been on the offensive on many occasions since.

The term 'Defence' has, in fact, now been adopted throughout the world, as a euphemism for the complete selection of war-like activities. Another particularly tragic example of the extraordinary distortions of language which the 'top brass' can resort to, in their confusion when trying to defend the indefensible, occurred during the 1991 Gulf War. The largest single group of UK soldiers to be killed, nine young men, died from what was officially described as 'friendly fire', when they were bombed by a US plane. In that same war, over half the US casualties were believed also to have been caused by their own weaponry.

*Warfare is not biologically inherent in humans. It is, in fact, only the highly profitable by-product of particular cultures.*

That aggression is not endemic in man is best illustrated by the following extract from *The Gaia Peace Atlas* (Editor: Dr Frank Barnaby):

Homo sapiens has been around for at least 250,000 years. Yet war and military might have been known only in the last 5,000 - 2% at most of our history. War is neither a part of human nature nor, necessarily, of civilized life. The Anatolian city of Catal Huyuk, for instance, has been excavated back to 7,000 BC. In the 800 years of its existence so far examined, there is no evidence of any sack or massacre, nor a single skeleton showing signs of a violent death.

Small arms are increasingly a scourge, but big weapons represent a potential threat to many millions. Tens of thousands of nuclear weapons are still scattered around the world, many of them up to 40 years old and almost certain to bring about appalling contamination resulting from their deteriorating condition, and from the near impossibility of dismantling them safely. This terrible legacy of the Cold War could persist for decades. Such is the lethal nature of these weapons that it is estimated that even the cancerous fall-out from testing the new ones still being made will cause over 400,000 deaths in the 1990s, and over 2m deaths in years to come.<sup>1</sup>

The real, immeasurable costs of militarisation have to include allowances for 'opportunities foregone, human needs not met, retarded and distorted economic growth, and lost opportunities for international cooperation. Behind the facade of "Defence", armaments contribute to social unrest, limit political freedom and foster alienation and upheaval.'<sup>2</sup> Besides the well-recorded carnage of the great wars in history, the International Committee of the Red Cross has estimated that around 20 million people have

perished in over 100 'local' wars since 1945; a further 60 million have been wounded or uprooted, and that approximately 90% of these casualties were civilians.<sup>3</sup> Subsequent to the Vietnam war, more US veterans of that fighting have committed suicide than were killed in the war itself.<sup>4</sup>

Arms purchases are never productive. 'They produce no wealth, and when not manufactured locally do not create jobs. They are nothing but pure consumption...armies themselves are unproductive, and their salaries play havoc with Third World budgets. As defence establishments become more powerful, they demand more and more arms, and often, the generals then take over completely and do as they please.'<sup>5</sup>

The *Guardian* (25/4/92) reported that the Bush administration had cancelled export bans on a wide range of American high-technology products with military applications, as a result of pressure from the defence industry; the equipment includes products for ballistic missiles. Restrictions on the sales of arms to third parties were also eased; the moves could bring up to \$3bn in new business to US arms manufacturers. One of the biggest ever recipients of the lethal products of the arms industry was Afghanistan. Arthur Kent, writing in the *Observer* (19/4/92), reported that the superpowers invested their Afghan client with the power of sudden death, not the gifts of reason and mercy. 'The Mujahideen parties based in Pakistan owe most of their might to the Reagan and Bush administrations, and the largest covert support operation in the history of the CIA, valued at over \$4bn. The outcome has been a tragic power struggle, a whirlwind of hate, greed and treachery.'

An Afghan writer commented: 'our society was once rich and diverse, but now we have been bred only for the arena of war'.

## Lifetimes devoted to weapons

Apart from the all too obvious and terrible end-results of weapons production, their design, manufacture and use involve appalling waste of working lifetimes which the world can ill afford. No less than 80 million persons are involved world-wide, including 25m in armed services, 10m in para-military organisations, 45m civilians in manufacturing or other support roles, and half a million scientists evolving new weapons. All these men and women are, naturally, some of the most highly-educated and trained members of their various societies. They represent a vast reserve of skills and abilities which should and could be put to incomparably better use on constructive and rewarding, peaceful purposes.

The scientists and other professionals involved must, of necessity, be top-class designers. The UK's former Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir Solly Zuckerman, has said 'the nuclear world is the creation of the scientists, not a result of any external demand; they are bringing about the threat of the annihilation of mankind by turning a miracle of nature - the human brain - into a means of self-destruction'. Retired USAF pilot and nuclear expert, Howard Morland, has written:

It is not only money that drives them, but career incentives. Nuclear weapons-builders are highly educated, in-bred bureaucrats; they live in intellectual and physical isolation, in a super-society like a monastic order, except that its members live very well and are paid very well. They see themselves as superior, and have two mottoes: 'Papa knows best,' and 'The public be damned.' They are imbued with the fascination of perfecting techniques superior to any in the world. Hydrogen bombs are considered works of high craftsmanship, comparable to the products of master goldsmiths, cabinet makers, or watchmakers of the past.<sup>6</sup>

One of the most insidious achievements of the military-industrial complex is the dependence of millions, world-wide, on the production of weapons for their livelihoods; this significantly underpins the arms culture. Not only the manufacturers, but

whole communities perceive their destinies to be inextricably linked to churning out arms indefinitely, and their trades unions have also been caught up in this paradox. It is well established, however, that equivalent funding devoted to non-military production would in fact provide considerably more employment.

## World-wide waste on armaments

The money wasted on the Second World War could have provided every family in the world with a five-room house, every child in the world with secondary education, and every 5,000 people in the world with a fully equipped hospital. Since 1945, world expenditure on armaments has accelerated to such an extent, that the global total in 1990 of \$1 trillion represented in real terms a 14-fold increase over that of 1939. Apart from the wanton diversion of funds from desperately needed social expenditure, the actual creation of weapons of all kinds exhausts vast quantities of non-renewable resources, ranging from precious metals to energy in various forms. Addressing the North American Society of Newspaper Editors on 16th April 1953, President Eisenhower said: *'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. This world in arms is not spending money alone, it is spending the sweat of its labourers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children.'*

Current global armaments expenditure is equivalent to the entire income of half the world's population; the average world citizen has to part with 4 years' worth of income for military spending.

The world is now spending more on arms than on health and education combined, which means spending, on average, \$100 pa to teach a child to read, and then spending \$10,000 to teach him how to use a weapon. In the US, three times as much is spent on military research and development as on peaceful r & d; the 'net' expenditure on armaments amounts to one-third of total US government spending. But, if with that is included NASA military spending, interest on the National Debt, due to previous defence spending, and pensions for ex-military personnel, then the 'gross' total of spending, related to defence, amounts to over half of the entire US budget. Just when the US Congress was poised to make significant cuts in this horrendous expenditure, the Gulf War conveniently provided the Bush administration with a pretext to restore 'national security' spending to \$300bn pa.

In April 1991, Dr Paul Rogers of Bradford University wrote:

The current \$14bn shopping list includes 25 fighter and other aircraft, 235 tanks, 52 patrol boats, over 100 attack helicopters, 50 howitzers, 750 armoured vehicles and 4,000 rough terrain trucks. They are also purchasing 7,600 cluster bomb units and 70 multiple rocket systems. The MRLS is seen as the most devastating conventional system, involving the firing of 12 missiles in under a minute, delivering 8,000 bomblets, releasing millions of shrapnel fragments; these will destroy targets and people over an area of 60 acres up to 20 miles away. During the Gulf War, the US army fired 10,000 and the British 2,500, of these missiles. As well as the major industrialised countries and Israel, many others are now producing these weapons, including Chile, Argentina, Brazil, South Africa and India.<sup>7</sup>

Military spending in the Third World as a whole has increased three times faster than even that of the First World, approaching \$200bn pa in 1990 and thus amounting to around 20% of total world military spending. Third World expenditure on armaments has consistently totalled more than the spending on education and health combined.

World-wide, but especially in the US and UK, and in spite of the ending of the Cold War, arms manufacturers are engaged in a headlong rush to produce ever more exotic weapons systems often extolled as 'clean', 'quick', 'surgical', 'smart', even 'benign'.

They represent a fantastic, nightmare collection, on a huge scale, of devices of such sophistication that their laser, 'fly-by-wire', or other control systems can become entangled with each other, creating an invisible jungle known as electro-magnetic-interference. This can render powerless operators or pilots, and cause whole varieties of missiles to either fire themselves or otherwise malfunction, causing even wider casualties or damage than intended.

The world's armed forces are the single biggest polluters on the planet. *The Nation* (8/6/92) quotes from a report by the Toronto University Science for Peace institute, which states that 10 to 30 per cent of all global environmental degradation can be attributed to military activities. The Pentagon, for instance, is the largest consumer of oil in the US. The 200bn barrels it bought in 1989 could run all US public transit systems for 22 years. An F-16 jet fighter consumes as much fuel in 30 minutes as the average US motorist does in a year.

Approximately 25% of the world's jet fuel is consumed by armed forces. World-wide military consumption of aluminium, copper, nickel and platinum, exceeds that of the entire Third World. 6 to 10 per cent of global air pollution is linked to the military, and armed forces are responsible for over two-thirds of the ozone-depleting CFC-113 released into the atmosphere.

The report concluded that under 10% of current resources wasted on arms would suffice to provide safe water and sewage systems world-wide, and reverse both desertification and deforestation.

## Profits: the mainspring of arms production

In *World without War* Professor J D Bernal wrote:

Military expenditure has been invoked to solve one of the recurrent problems of the capitalist economy; how to keep up profits without at the same time flooding the market with useful goods. The answer, as it appears in practice, is to produce useless goods. And from this point of view, weapons are not only useless, but have the additional asset of becoming rapidly obsolescent, so that however many are produced, even larger numbers are soon required.<sup>8</sup>

On his retirement, President Eisenhower warned of the potential menace of the vast and constantly growing 'military-industrial complex' in the US. The top 100 US arms firms employ, in fact, over 2,000 ex-military officers with the rank of colonel or above. Their Boards of Directors - industrialists, generals, bankers, admirals, and others are supported by high-ranking teams of Washington lobbyists, to inject proposals for weapons and garner the contracts. The 75,000 odd armaments firms are the driving force behind US weapons production. They push out a constant stream of every conceivable and inconceivable type, many of which are so complex as to be almost unuseable, or prone to failure. For example, during the first 100 or so flights, the Cruise missile failed 28 times; Pershing trials resulted in 30% failure rates. But one of the major attractions of making weapons, unlike consumer goods, is that accounts are settled regardless of whether the product performs as planned.

In 1930, a Senate committee investigating arms corporations found that profit levels of 100% were common. Now, with the arrival of electronic and nuclear weapons, prospects are even brighter, with the profit rate being 50% higher than in consumer-goods industries. The chairman of Lockheeds, makers of Cruise, Trident etc, has said that, compared to 'traditional weaponry', the 'production of missiles and other weapons of mass destruction is many times more profitable'. In the mid-1970s, Lockheed admitted paying out \$106m in commission to various princes, prime ministers and political parties, to assist in obtaining arms contracts in the newly-rich Third World.<sup>9</sup> In the mid-1980s, Reagan's 'Star Wars' project promised defence contractors potentially their

biggest ever bonanza, the Wall St Journal commenting that ‘the scramble for the pot of gold is on’.

The core of the problem of runaway profits is that only 6% of Pentagon contracts are put out to competitive tender.<sup>10</sup> In June 1985, the New York Times reported on the latest ‘charge-sheet’ from the Defence Department’s Inspector-General:

Nine out of ten of the largest Pentagon contractors, and 45 of the largest 100, are under criminal investigation; McDonnell Douglas and Rockwell are being investigated for alleged mis-statements of costs; General Dynamics, for sub-contractor ‘kickbacks’, product substitution, security lapses, defective pricing, cost duplication and false claims; Lockheed for wrong labour charges; Boeing for mis-stating labour and material costs; General Electric for false claims, defective pricing and product substitution; United Technologies for sub-contractor kickbacks, bribery and defective pricing; Raytheon for labour mischarging and product substitution; Litton for bribery and kickbacks, false claims and bid-rigging; Ford for defective pricing and falsifying records; Texas Instruments for product substitution; and Northrop for false progress payments.

Not surprisingly, the lust for massive profits has not been confined to the US. In the UK, for example, a National Audit Office investigation into £6.6bn worth of non-competitive contracts awarded to large armaments firms between 1982 and 1984 revealed excess profits of £400m.<sup>11</sup> Further, at least £100m was ‘spirited away’ by the international ring of fraudsters involved in the Ferranti ‘phantom contract’ scandal.<sup>12</sup> The *Guardian* (3/8/91) reported that ‘a new UK “conventional” submarine, completed in 1991 at a cost of £405m was found to contain faults leaving it no longer watertight, and unable to fire torpedoes; requiring a further expenditure of £16m.’

Ronald Higgins has written:

That the main impetus for the production of weapons stems from so many manufacturers, all pressing for profits, is well illustrated by a 1975 report which recorded that NATO members were wasting \$10bn pa competing between themselves in the development and procurement of weapons. The situation is as insane militarily as it is financially. NATO armies had 31 different sorts of anti-tank weapons, 22 different anti-aircraft weapons, and 7 different tanks. The air forces had 23 different kinds of aircraft. The navies had 100 different sorts of ships of destroyer size or larger, equipped with over 40 different guns and 36 kinds of radar.<sup>13</sup>

### The scourge of ‘small arms’

Small arms are in a sense the source of all evil in the world of ballistics. *Should a scientist refuse to make a hydrogen bomb, it only takes a man with a pistol to make him change his mind.* The overwhelming majority of assaults on human life and liberty are effected, and indeed only made possible, by the use - or threat of use - of hand guns or similar weapons. These are the death-dealing implements used by bloody-minded, domineering bullies the world over, against almost invariably unarmed, innocent civilians, resulting in millions of illegal executions or incarcerations. Handguns enable dictators to take and maintain power. A former Iraqi staff officer, now in exile, has stated that ‘advisers don’t dare give Saddam Hussein bad news. If they do, they minimise it as much as possible, because he easily loses his temper and has shot a lot of people for giving him bad news.’<sup>14</sup>

The scourge of small arms is, of course, felt world-wide. Murder rates are horrific in most cities; Naples suffers 500 per year. In the UK, a 1991 survey found that 75% of women felt unsafe at night, and 64% said they would arm themselves were it not illegal.<sup>15</sup> In the US, however, small arms can still be purchased ‘over the counter’ in some states, and their use is widespread and lethal. If present moves to restrict them are not successful, it is likely that, as with so many aspects of US culture, these perversions of human behaviour could well spread and worsen the situation world-wide. Murders

throughout the US now total around 25,000 pa; there were 2,245 in New York alone in 1990. These figures can be compared with the 47,000 killed in action over nearly ten years in Vietnam. The increasing numbers of deaths are in part due to the switch from handguns to semi-automatic weapons, which can spray bullets through thick doors.

More and more young US citizens are becoming involved; 12% of murder arrests in 1989 were of teenagers under 18.<sup>16</sup> Guns are now killing more teenage males than all natural causes combined.<sup>17</sup> Deliberate killings are tragic enough, but accidental killings of bystanders begin to resemble what has come to be expected for civilians in war situations. Deaths from stray bullets in 1990 caused 40 deaths in New York alone. The US National Centre for Health Statistics records that in 1984 there were 1,668 unintentional firearms deaths in the US, of which 287 were children under 15.<sup>18</sup> *The Nation* (17/6/91) reports on a poverty-stricken area of New York:

It takes much planning and energy to avoid walking into a drug deal, witnessing a shooting, or being shot. A caretaker reports a strange silence, broken by bursts of gunfire during weapon sales...signs of violence are everywhere - in the shells on the ground; in windows so full of holes as to suggest urban warfare; in the home-made targets to test guns, and in memorials to the young who have died. A housing project is nick-named 'Dead Man's Plaza'; nearby someone has written hurriedly, in huge letters; 'Still Alive.'

According to the US Academy of Paediatrics, an average US child watches 18,000 murders on TV before leaving high school. Bullet-proof blazers, jackets and raincoats in all sizes, from toddler to young adults, are selling fast in New York, at from \$250 to \$600. 'Urban Survival' as a subject has been added to the curricula in various schools. At the end of a period of almost daily shootings, a *Time* magazine poll revealed that, given the opportunity, 59% of New Yorkers would prefer to live elsewhere.<sup>19</sup>

All this mayhem stems from the weapons manufacturers' long-standing success in bolstering the belief throughout a high proportion of US society, that owning a gun is perfectly normal, and indeed a cherished right. The existence of approximately 200m privately-owned guns, including 50m handguns, in the US gives some indication of the rich pickings to be made. The US gun manufacturers are represented by the powerful, and hitherto all but unstoppable, National Rifle Association. It has an income of \$70bn pa, including \$10bn from gun makers for advertisements to oppose all forms of gun control, including even a proposed ban on new plastic guns which would, for example, allow a hijacker to move successfully past a metal detector.<sup>20</sup>

In 1989, one of the major US gun makers, Smith and Wesson, marketed the 'Lady-smith' .38 calibre revolver at \$415, designed 'specifically for the physiological requirements of women'.

However, a report at the time pointed out that, in spite of 12m US women owning guns, 4 are killed every day, and went on to say that the fantasies of women 'fighting back' are, in fact, eclipsed by the following far more likely scenarios, typical of people owning guns, including men: they shoot a lover or spouse in the heat of a quarrel, or are shot themselves; they are overwhelmed by a stronger assailant who turns the gun against them; their child finds the gun and thinks it is a toy; they hear noises, panic, forget all safety instructions, and shoot someone who is not an intruder; they over-react and shoot someone who could have been restrained or pacified; they shoot when they could have chosen to escape; they shoot and harm an innocent bystander; their gun discharges accidentally, or misfires; they get depressed and shoot themselves.<sup>21</sup>

1 *Guardian* 4/8/91

2 World Military/Social Expenditures 1986, Sivard, Washington

3 *Guardian* 22/1/91

4 *Observer* 16/12/90

5 A Fate worse than Debt

- 6 The secret that exploded, Morland, Random House, NY 1981
- 7 *Guardian* 28/4/91
- 8 World without War, J D Bernal, Routledge/Paul, 1958
- 9 *Guardian* 27/9/89
- 10 *Observer* 26/5/85
- 11 *Guardian* 18/5/88
- 12 Ditto 18/11/89
- 13 The Seventh Enemy, R Higgins, Hodder/Stoughton 1978
- 14 *Guardian* 19/1/91
- 15 Ditto 13/5/91
- 16 Ditto 19/7/90
- 17 Ditto 15/3/91
- 18 Ditto 19/10/89
- 19 Ditto 9/10/90
- 20 Ditto 19/1/89
- 21 *The Nation* 15/5/89