

Goodbye War...?

A few brief comments to help put “Goodbye War” in context:

This video was made in the 1980's, prior to the demise of the USSR as the one major nuclear threat to the free world. Since the breakup of that totalitarian regime during the tumultuous years, 1989-1991, the United States has emerged as the world's single superpower. Initially, then, it may appear that this video is outdated. But recently we have seen the emergence of new nation states and so-called “rogue regimes” which have or are about to have weapons of mass destruction – and the capability to deliver those weapons over significant distances. (The nuclear countries currently include the U.S., Russia, Great Britain, France, China, India, Pakistan, and possibly Israel, North Korea, and Iran.) Thus there has been a shift in the equation – from a past situation in which two superpowers were in a tense oppositional standoff, threatening one another with such massive nuclear destruction that neither side was willing to risk open warfare, to a present situation in which perhaps smaller, but equally lethal weapons of mass destruction are likely to become widely distributed among nation-states, “rogue regimes,” “peoples,” and terrorist groups of varying instability and unpredictability. These groups may be much more likely to threaten the use of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction – and since their use might be considered less massive and more contained, they may actually become more realistically viewed – and used – as legitimate instruments of foreign policy – or of war – or of terrorism.

Thus it turns out that this video, which may have been seen as *passé* during the 1990's, has become most unfortunately even more relevant today.

We are seeing this video for several reasons – primarily because it is articulated in the language of sovereign nation states, but also because some of the events we will be witnessing from the past are eerily and perhaps alarmingly prescient of events which are unfolding before our eyes on a daily basis, right now.

A word or two about some of the people interviewed, in order to provide some basis for assigning validity or weight to their views:

- **Paul Fussell**, professor of English, author of a number of books about war including *The Great War and Modern Memory* (considered a classic analysis of the First World War), *Thank God for the Atomic Bomb and Other Essays*, and *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War*.

- **William Manchester**, professor of history, author of several books about war including *American Caesar* (a biography of General MacArthur) and *Goodbye Darkness* (a memoir of his experience as a U.S. Marine in the Second World War).

- **General Sir Arthur “Bomber” Harris**, the controversial British Air Marshal and Commander-in-Chief of the RAF's Bomber Command in World War Two who devised the technique of saturation or area bombing of German cities (with their inevitable “collateral damage” – the death of countless non-combatants).

Nationality & Peoplehood – Things to Think About & Mull Over....

1. a) What is a nation? Is it different than a “people”?
b) What does it mean to be an American? It seems clear that “American” is a nationality; is “American” also a people?
c) Prior to 9/11/01 did you think of yourself as having a homeland? What does it mean to have a “homeland?”
2. a) Nations claim to have sovereignty... What is sovereignty (i.e., what does it consist of)? Where does it come from?
b) Various peoples in the past (e.g., the Cherokee) and various peoples today (e.g., the Kurds) claim the right of sovereignty. What made/makes those claims legitimate, valid, worthy of recognition?
3. a) Where do you (as an individual) stop and somebody else begins? In other words, where do you draw a line around yourself (one that would establish a sovereignty that others should recognize)?
b) Where do “we” (as a group) stop and everyone else begin? (Again, in other words, where do we – whoever that “we” is – draw a line around ourselves, one that would establish a sovereignty that others should recognize)?
c) What should those boundaries be where I or we stop and something/everything else begins? How should those boundaries be established and maintained?
d) What portion of your individual or primary group sovereignties are you willing to give up? To whom are you willing to give them up, and under what conditions?
4. The President of the United States is required by law (the Constitution) to be an American citizen – that is why he (or she) has to be a “natural born citizen of the United States.”
But should the President have to be an American, either native born or naturalized (I am expanding the qualification here to include all American citizens)? And if so, why? (The distinction we are working with here is between the legal imperative and a moral or social imperative, i.e., we know what the Constitution says, but why would this need to be stated. Isn’t this something that seems immediately obvious, or just common sense...and if so, why does it seem so? Stated another way, would you feel equally comfortable with a French citizen or a citizen of Latvia becoming President of the United States....?)