

## WOMEN'S SEARCH FOR PEACE

For twenty years, we have been exhorting women to plan their education, enter the professions, and participate fully in society. But, basically, there was little examination of gender roles in the issue of war and peace. Such an analysis of those gender roles, which are society's underpinnings, offers us a beginning rather than a panacea to the most pressing issue of our time—one that is seemingly the most abstract, yet the most personal. Will we as a species and life system remain extant or become extinct? For me, these subjects have converged in the international peace movement.

It was not until I heard Helen Caldicott speak in 1979 that I moved past what has been called "psychic numbing," the reaction many of us have to the subject of nuclear war. We can't do anything about it, so we leave it to the experts and hope for the best.

Caldicott was speaking about the impending deployment of cruise and Pershing II missiles in Western Europe. She had the facts, and she used them. For example, the cruise, 15-foot pilotless aircraft, would have the capacity to destroy 15 towns the size of Hiroshima. But she went behind the euphemisms to describe these deadly new weapons. It was not an abstract rational presentation. It was clearly an example of feminist logic that utilized intuition and imagination to expose reality.

At the time, I was president of Wells College, having been ensconced as the first woman president in the 112-year existence of that woman's college. Some

changes had come; women were now in all but one of the top administrative positions, and women were being promoted in the faculty, pay scales were being made more equitable, etc. But what I wasn't aware of at the time was that patriarchal structures were in place and in part I adapted to them. More than adapting, I had been trained to adapt, as we all have. Later, I found in the peace movement the same pattern as in academia. First, women are ignored; once recognized, denigrated and trivialized; and then sometimes grudgingly accepted.

Before speaking more of the international women's peace movement, perhaps we should pause for some definitions:

The definition of feminism I will take from *Winston Simplified Dictionary*, (1930):

The belief that men and women are mentally and socially equal and that women should be given every social freedom, advantage, and opportunity enjoyed by men.

Patriarchy we have accepted without question, for it has defined our society. When I speak of patriarchy, I am speaking of a system we are all part of—a system that is as harmful to one sex as to the other. The underlying problem is not man as a sex. The root of the problem lies in a social system in which the power of force is idealized, in which both men and women are taught to equate true masculinity with violence and domination, and to see men that don't conform as soft.



Patriarchy describes any kind of group organization in which males hold dominant power, in which males determine what part females shall and shall not play, and in which the capabilities assigned to women are relegated generally to the mystical and esthetic, excluding them from the practical and political.

In examining that definition, we can see that it has been somewhat eroded in the recent past. However, the habits of thought that are basic to our functioning as a society have not been dislodged. We can see this in four areas of our lives that are fundamental to our functioning and pivotal in the making of peace that have not changed a great deal. Each of these areas of life, when dominated by the male ethos, serves against peace. The four areas are language, logic, power, and relationship. I will come back to this later.

Some of the most exciting scholarship of the last twenty years has been done by women and about women. It has entailed building on women's experience, history, and insights. It is called women's studies, and women scholars in all fields have struggled to gain academic recognition for it.

Among other subjects, it has instigated a discussion of patriarchy.

Personally, I have found the writings of women very helpful in sorting out my experiences in the peace movement. It is the research and creativity of women's studies that have made it possible now to analyze our society. In turn, that offers us an awareness and then hope for its transformation.

Not unlike other fields of women's endeavors through the ages, women's protests and peace activism have suffered from historical amnesia. Before one dismisses the protestors and non-violent resistance of today, let us recall our foremothers who permitted themselves to be arrested and endured hunger strikes to gain access to family planning, birth control technologies, and the right to vote; who brought women from warring countries together at the first International Women's Peace Congress in 1915 and later mobilized against nuclear testing in the 1960s and during the Vietnam war.

The contact I have had with the international women's peace movement has challenged many of my own patterns of thought and assumptions. My personal encounters are not intended as a travelogue. But where else do we question and learn, but from our own experience?

In 1979, NATO made the decision to deploy a new generation of weapons in Western Europe—the Pershing II, which had first strike capability, and the cruise missiles, which I mentioned earlier. Protests erupted across the continent and in the United States as well.

In 1982, I had occasion to visit Comiso in Sicily, where cruise missiles were to be deployed at a World War II air base. The deployment was opposed by many, but there had been no local discussion of this deployment. Rather, the edict had come from above—from NATO to the Italian government, and then to the local townspeople. There was great distress; over a million signatures had been



collected from Sicilians opposing the deployment of the missiles, but all to no avail.

The Sicilians were concerned about more than just the presence of the missiles. Comiso and the surrounding area had for years had a land policy that discouraged the presence of the Mafia. There had been no incentive for the Mafia to come to Comiso, but there was fear that the rapid expansion and construction called for by the establishment of a missile base would bring the Mafia in. Comiso was a small village, little known even in Italy, but its fate was being determined by the policies of our country. I learned something about how it looks from below. Where nuclear weapons are involved, democratic processes and self-determination are the first casualties.

I left Comiso, but I returned the following March. En route to Comiso in March 1983, I stopped for a few hours in Greenham Common in England, an RAF base used by the United States. NATO had announced that it was to be a cruise missile base. A group of women were camped outside the base protesting the planned deployment of the missiles. A few months earlier, 30,000 women had joined the protestors. In Europe, much was being written about Greenham Common and the women protestors there.

I arrived as the sun was rising at Greenham Common on a miserably cold and wet day. It was a foreboding place. There were women of all ages, and they were getting up from a night's sleep. They had little only sleeping bags and plastic sheets for protection from the weather. They had already been arrested

numerous times; and, each time, they had been enjoined by the court from using tents.

The mail came, an event that seemed to be a high point of the day. One woman began reading some of the letters aloud. Women were writing from all over the world, thanking the protestors at Greenham Common and wishing them well. Some of the letters enclosed money.

Many of their practices, rituals, and dances puzzled me then, but I was to learn that not only was their presence a protest, but many of their actions were life affirming and celebratory of life. As one woman said to me, they had to leave home to have a home. As another said to me, "Men have always left home for war. We have left home for peace."

I remember vividly seeing across the fence a young service woman in her pressed uniform with a red ribbon in her hair. Such a contrast to the weather worn protestors—one very much a part of the system, the others challenging it.

I was humbled by what I saw. Life for the women at Greenham Common was very difficult, and I realized that their deprivation was suffered for us all. Some of us will always remember Greenham Common. However, at the time of the signing of the INF treaty, the women of Greenham Common were not even treated as a footnote.

On March 7, 1983, the first women's demonstration ever held in Comiso took place. A young woman had been raped in Comiso; but rather than her



assailant being prosecuted, she had been condemned. No women of Comiso took part in the demonstration. Patriarchal tradition there is unbending. However, hundreds of women from around the world marched in solidarity with this victim. For many feminists, violence toward an individual is a microcosm of war. I had never made that connection.

On the next day, March 8, International Women's Day, I visited the base that was soon to be activated. A group of 20 or so women from different countries, including Italy, were protesting by standing in front of the gate. All seemed to be peaceful. One minute, the police were joking with the women protestors. The next minute, the scene turned ugly, and women were being rough-handled by the police. I was standing near a woman whose arm was broken as it was twisted by a policeman. I heard the snapping of the bone. And I still hear it. What was just under the surface, the violence toward women, quickly appeared. This was actually my first experience with unprovoked official violence. I did not have the gentleness of the Franciscan nun I was with. I was angry, but powerless.

Soon after, a women's peace camp was established at Comiso. The harassment was intense, but there was little publicity. Of all the women's peace camps established in the early eighties, this was the one least heard of because of its isolated location.

There is a sequel to the Comiso story. When the INF treaty was signed by Gorbachev and Reagan, the Mayor and town fathers broke out the marching

band for a parade of celebration over removal of the missiles. At last, democracy exploded in Comiso, but only on signal from the males. The joyful parade appeared on U. S. television.

After Comiso, I had occasion to visit other women's peace camps in Geneva, near the site of the United Nations meetings and where, again, the women were harassed by the police; in Seneca Falls, site of the Seneca Army Depot, from which nuclear weapons are shipped abroad; in Amarillo, where all U.S. nuclear weapons are assembled; and the desert site in Nevada, where nuclear weapons are tested. The women at all of them shared a common perception, that the roots of violence lie in patriarchy itself. And that nuclearism that constantly creates, makes, tests, trusts, and plans to use these weapons of annihilation is the ultimate violence.

As I traveled in 1983 and 1984, I heard a great deal about the upcoming women's meeting in Nairobi under U.N. auspices. Although many of us do not realize it, the United Nations has particular significance for women. The U.N. is frequently maligned in the U.S. and considered by some to be inconsequential, but in other parts of the world, the imprimatur of the U.N. carries great weight. In many countries, women have the opportunity to participate in U.N.-sponsored gatherings where they would not be able to do so without that sponsorship.

1985 marked the end of the U.N. Decade for Women, which began in 1975. World-wide conferences had been held in Mexico City, in 1975, and in Copenhagen, in 1980. The 1985 official conference and the NGO Forum were



held in Nairobi and were attended by 17,000 women. The official conference adopted unanimously "The Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women," which, among other issues, called for greater women's participation in the promotion of peace and disarmament. However, the official conference was composed largely of women delegates who were under the constraints of their respective government. So duty-bound, many delegates harbored thoughts they did not feel free to express.

So a group of us organized the Peace Tent, a place where women of all nations could meet. In that tent, the First Amendment flourished, and peace was a feminist issue.

The Peace Tent statement was formulated by members of Feminist International for Peace and Food and became an integral part of every program in the Peace Tent. It states succinctly the purpose of the Peace Tent, and it set the tone for conflict resolution:

The Peace Tent is the international feminist alternative to men's conflict and war. It is the place where finding peaceful solutions to conflict, both in personal lives and in the public arena, is the priority. The opportunity is offered for every woman's voice to be heard.

It is important that women whose countries are locked in conflict meet and communicate to expose the patriarchal

barriers to peace. Patriarchal values and logic constitute the roots of violence: men against women, men against men, race against race, nation against nation, religion against religion, and rich against poor. This logic and its values create hunger and death for millions.

The Peace Tent offers the opportunity to all women at the Forum to share life experiences and information on common causes, and a place where women can celebrate differences and rejoice in similarities. The Peace Tent creates the space for women to demonstrate their skills and knowledge of human relationships for use in the public sphere which has been denied them. In the Peace Tent, women can substitute women's truths for patriarchal myths through dialogue, films, and exhibits; women's joy for patriarchal pessimism through song, dance, and art. The aim of the Peace Tent is to bring women's peacemaking will and consciousness to the world, which so desperately needs it.

At the Peace Tent, we heard. The victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the victims of the Pacific nuclear testing, the women of the Third World who are victims of poverty, militarism, revolution, and wars of intervention. All spoke. My distress grew as I listened; my reaction was visceral. How had the world



reached this level of terror and pain? Once, Margaret Mead had said that war was invented and can be uninvented. Further, it was clear that there will be poverty, starvation, and injustice as long as the world arms itself. Our resources are finite. The link between disarmament and development became clear.

Since the 1985 meeting in Nairobi, international conferences for women have proliferated. I have participated in some, only some. Since we are in the midst of Summit IV, I will limit my remarks to Women for a Meaningful Summit.

Before 1985, summits were limited to heads of state and their entourages. However, beginning with the 1985 summit in Geneva, citizens have been present, not as participants but as observers and, yes, demonstrators.

In the fall of 1985, an ad hoc group of women from various U.S. women's organizations organized Women for a Meaningful Summit. It has grown since then and now has two elements—WMS USA and WMS International. WMS International is headed by Margarita Papandreou, wife of the Greek premier, and Sarah Hayder, the former president of the American Association of University Women. It has broadened its agenda to make contact with women from the Eastern bloc and NATO nations. This group met in April of this year, agreed on a statement, and has taken it to Moscow, where they are meeting today.

Each of the earlier summits have had its memorable events. In Geneva, in addition to our meeting with Mr. Gorbachev, I remember especially the ecumenical gathering of representatives of the world's religions and lay people,

who joined together in prayer the night before the summit.

In Reyjavick in October 1986, a candlelight prayer vigil was held in the town square. It was bitter cold; little children were bundled up, sitting on the shoulders of their fathers. The scene was infused with great solemnity and hope. For the next two days, several of us stood outside the meeting house in the bitter cold with a banner reading "U.S. citizens for a CTB." During this time, the sky would change in a few minutes from dark clouds to rainbows, and then to sleet and snow.

During the December 1987 summit in Washington, WMS was joined by World Women Parliamentarians for Peace, representing seventeen countries, where we held our own hearing with women arms experts.

Earlier, I mentioned four areas that are pivotal to our making peace: language, logic, power, and relationship. At the outset, let me say I am indebted to feminist writers for this analysis. Such scholars as Carol Gilligan, Sister Juliana Casey, and Riane Eisler, among others.

I would like to illustrate the problem of language dominated by patriarchy. For the sake of time, I will not dwell on the exclusionary quality of English, but I will go to the more pressing concern of what I call the language of nuclear arms and war.

This language accomplishes the opposite of what language is meant to do. Instead of communicating, illuminating, and revealing meaning, nuclear language



obfuscates and disguises meaning. The unending list of acronyms applied to these weapons conceals the gruesome facts of the peril of nuclear weapons. It privatizes language and keeps the average non-scientific, non-military from what is being discussed: PK (probability of kill); MARV (maneuverable re-entry vehicles); MIRV (multiples independently targetable re-entry vehicles; and the only apt acronym, MAD (mutually assured destruction).

New terms that signify new distinctions also disguise devastating new theories such as the seemingly innocuous distinction of combatant and non-combatant—instead of military and civilian. Combatant is a much more inclusive term than military and includes civilians around military operations. In effect, this language sedates the understanding that the killing of many more persons is contemplated. This new language has been described as a “constellation of deception and self-deception.”

In patriarchal logic, logic and reason are honored for their own sakes, with no question as to their relationship to flesh and blood reality.

The cult of the rational, of provable facts of elaborate theories of logic combined with a profound mistrust of emotion is not a new phenomenon. It has been an essential aspect of the male ethos for centuries. What is new is the risk involved today in acting on the basis of abstract theories. This risk is life itself, for everyone and everything on earth except the cockroaches. It is, as one former Secretary of Defense agreed, “the rationalization of insanity.” Yet, it continues.

Patriarchal power has three characteristics. It seeks to control and dominate; it does so by relying on secrecy; and it is intensely rigid. Power is equated with strength and force.

When power controls by relying on secrecy, only a few possess the facts necessary to make correct decisions. When secrecy is used by those in possession of power, it displays a disturbing tendency to transform itself into paranoia.

Patriarchal power is power by domination, It not only legitimizes violence, it encourages it and relies upon it. Power that functions as control must be able to overpower that which—or those who—threaten it.

Where dominance prevails, almost all forms of relationship are hierarchical, that is, ordered in terms of rank, grade, or class. In the development of the male separateness and autonomy are priorities. These traits encourage competitiveness. Competitiveness encourages an adversarial relationship. In this continuum, the most significant relationship is that of the enemy.

Language, logic, power, and relationship all profoundly affected and colored by a masculine world view are inadequate in our world today.

There are many new voices among us these days. They are saying new things. As I said earlier, a massive amount of work has been done in the past twenty years covering women's experience, moral development, feminine psychology, and spirituality. Let us return to the four areas of language, logic, power, and relationship, and view them in terms of women experience. We will



find much to think about.

To change language is to change the world view expressed therein. It is a fundamental and radical shift in perspective and in values. Language can exclude. In the past, language was used to make one-half of our society—the female—virtually invisible, and as long as any group remains hidden, it can be ignored. If language cannot make oppressed groups disappear, it is often used to discredit and insult. Questioning sexist language inevitably leads to questioning the language of nuclear arms.

Once it is recognized that the language system is structured by the dominant group. Feminists must test that language against their own lived experience and those of other non-dominant groups. Words and expressions are no longer taken at face value; the bias from which they come is critically examined.

Critical interpretation of the language of nuclear arms is important. It dares to say that the patriarchal, hierarchical, abstract vocabulary is disfigured language. For example, when the Pentagon says more bombs are necessary for our national security, many people look beyond those words and realize they do not feel safer. They question the meaning of “national security” and offer alternatives.

Suspicion characterizes how one hears the myriad of euphemisms. Both “collateral damage” and “counter-value targeting” mean killing civilians. Are any human beings collateral? Yet, this is the description of the 100,000 killed at Hiroshima. Is that chilling phrase, “final solution of the Jewish problem,” any

more concealing than "collateral damage" and "counter-value targeting"? Language makes possible the living of double lives. Feminist efforts to transform the language have met with enormous resistance.

One of the most important functions of feminist language is the challenge it poses to the absolute supremacy of abstract logic. Feminine logic does not deny the importance of clear, rational, objective thought, nor does it dismiss scientific theories and hypotheses. It values these, but does not idolize them. Primary to feminine logic are persons and relationships. Feminist logic expands the meaning of logic in that it involves persons and the human context in its knowing. It also honors such non-logical faculties as imagination, vision, and emotion. There is a woeful lack of imagination in U.S. foreign policy. Imagination invites one to envision possibilities other than the status quo. We have had the expansion of "respectable thought" to include imagination and vision. Actually, they offer the world peace in the only place it can begin: the heart, the mind, and the dream.

Public and private display of emotions are taken as a sure sign of weakness, intellectual inferiority or demagoguery in the male-dominated world. But as Ron Dellums, Congressman from Oakland, California, says,

A generation which does not get angry about its future is a generation preparing to die.

Fear, despair, and sorrow are other emotions involved in nuclear terror.

Feminist logic, far from being inferior to the objective, abstract,



emotionless thought system of the male-dominated culture, is broader, wider, and deeper. It does not allow for the separation of the mind from the person or the person from the human reality. It claims value for all that is human.

As logic has been transformed, so has power as women found their voices. The accepted understanding of power has been questioned. Rather than reject power per se many begin to redefine it and discover the true meaning of power as energy and movement.

The central value of Western society is power expressed as control and domination. Feminist power is non-hierarchical and non-controlling. It values collaboration rather than control. Patriarchal power functions in secrecy, rigidity, and from strength. Feminist power chooses openness, fluidity, and vulnerability.

Feminist power eschews violence even as it continued to name it in all of the manifestations. In doing so, women actively seek to undermine a fundamental prop of patriarchal power and thus opens it to profound transformation.

In the growth of women is the centrality of relationship. In the development of males, the focus is on separation and autonomy. A feminist world view focuses on interrelatedness and interdependence as primary values of life.

Relationship and networking are keys to women's growth. They are also a key to peacemaking. Even a brief overview of language, logic, power, and relationship from the perspective of women's studies reveals a strikingly different world view from that proposed in the "real" male-dominated world. Language is

inclusive, imaginative, and celebratory of the feminine. Logic is expanded beyond the limited horizon of abstract, objective rationality to include creation, imagination, and vision. Power is not domination, control, power over, but, rather, energy that grows in relation, which enables and informs others. Relationship is fundamental to development, It enables caring .

One would ask where do we begin? First, we need to retrieve and protect our own nature and openly value it. And that means not rejecting feminist theory, but exploring it.

1. We can step behind the facade of language and test it. The corruption of language has been a pervasive and dangerous development. For example, a silo is no longer a place to store grain, but storage for deadly weapons. Mushroom cloud is not some benign mist, but deadly radiation.

2. Question the supremacy of wooden logic that functions in a vacuum. When it is carried to idolatry, we have our present situation.

3. Challenge domination and hierarchy as the only model of relationship. Be open to other types of power.

4. As to relationship, look critically at the concept of "enemy" and beware of its psychological underpinnings.

A recognition of our interconnectedness with our own species as well as other species as well as the planet itself is of greatest urgency. Nor will these weapons disappear until we begin to recognize the world views and the pattern of



behavior that makes their existence not only possible, but logical. Such recognition has come to us in large part as a consequence of a growing movement among women and men, a movement that seeks not merely to give women their due, but, more importantly, to transform the culture.

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*Federation*