

THE CENTRALITY OF THE MILITARY FOR PEACE RESEARCH - AND FOR PEACE *

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For different reasons - an anniversary here, a convention there, reflections on the crisis of the peace movements elsewhere - peace researchers have been drawing balance sheets of their discipline recently. What has been accomplished, they ask, what is our rapport with the movements, are we doing things that are relevant, which is or should be the perspective, in which direction are we going and where should we be going? No clear answers seem to be emerging. But, I suspect, not because of a lack of debate and the production of papers on the topic - rather for a different reason: Peace Research has become established. After many years of an up-hill struggle (not too many, however, if we compare it historically to other academic disciplines or "schools of thought") it has found its institutional niches everywhere: in the universities, in publicly or privately funded institutes, in its own journals, associations, and conferences. An international "scientific community" of peace researchers has developed which has acquired its own position in the academic-international landscape and which has, more importantly still, become the home of a sizeable number of scholars and intellectuals - "home" in the sense of belonging somewhere, as a point of reference with the participation of periodic meetings in conferences and at round tables, and "home" in the sense of more or less well-paid positions and sinecures. Peace Research has become professionalized - and so has its output in the form of books, journals, and papers, all very well integrated within the overall context of the professionalized social sciences. This is, in some respects, a quite remarkable accomplishment. In terms of numbers, about 2 - 3000 scholars define themselves now as peace researchers, some 150 in the Federal Republic of Germany alone. So remarkable is its success that, for example, the academic politicians of the German Democratic Republic, being afraid to miss this important international development, have recently decided that Peace Research is, after all, something here to stay and have converted, literally overnight, a hundred or so 'marxist' international relations and security experts into peace researchers (after having derided Peace Research for years as a 'bourgeois' invention designed to divert the international class struggle).

Given this success, it should not be too surprising that the stock-taking of Peace Research and the raising of the question: where do we go?, which is the perspective of a discipline originally designed with the implicit purpose of a critique of politics, does not and cannot find an answer because, in the final analysis, it is not willing to accept such an answer since that might threaten and endanger its very achievement of professionalization and acceptance into the realm of respectable scholarship. If I may make a historical-political comparison: the socialist movements of the late

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19th century, designed to overthrow the "capitalist system", were eventually organized into powerful and respectable political (Social Democratic) parties; and to preserve these parties, that great accomplishment of the workers' movement became - almost unnoticed by its own protagonists - an end in itself, they were not to be "sacrificed" in so-called adventurist political actions, i.e. in those revolutionary situations for which they had been created in the first place. Rosa Luxemburg was among the very few who spelled out this contradiction, this perversion of the means (a revolutionary party) into ends (the preservation of the organization) with the result and consequence that the revolutionary party, while maintaining all its radical rhetoric, became objectively a stabilizing force for the capitalist system, an integrated part of the establishment. I suggest that Peace Research, the "party of Peace Research scholars", has travelled a similar road to success - and failure. It is up to us whether it is still possible to change this course, this road to political irrelevance. I am fully aware of the fact that the odds are against it: because such a change in course and direction implies risking the professional and organizational accomplishments, the drying-up of resources, the denial of respectability on the part of other scholarly communities, the self-demolition of a cozy and comfortable home, the exposure of its inhabitants to the cold wind of public critique and hostility. So much for my premises.

In terms of "content", I suggest that we have to focus on and to problematize a subject that has been, strangely enough, almost totally ignored by Peace Research since its very beginning, and that constitutes, to my mind, at the same time the very centre of the problematique of war, violence, and peace: the military. Of course, this seems to be rather an arrogant statement to make. But if you look closely at what has been investigated and discussed by the Peace Research community in all these past years, you will hardly find the military at the centre of concern and analysis. To be sure, there are highly qualified studies on the role of the military in international affairs, on the "threat system", on the arms race, on military regimes and coups d'etat, on the social costs of armaments, on military interventions, on the perception of the enemy by political classes as well as in populations at large, on the demilitarization of education, on the equilibrium or disequilibrium of armed forces and of systems of armaments in the international system - world wide as well as regionally - but did the military itself, as an institution, socially, psychologically, politically, ideologically, economically etc. and, above all, as the sum total of all these dimensions come into the focus of Peace Research? My answer is: no. It has, at best, been treated as a secondary phenomenon, as an instrument of politics, as a factor in economics, as an expression of human aggressions, maybe, but always, to the best of my knowledge, as a derivative of something else. Instead, I suggest looking at the military - or, more specifically, at the man in uniform and at this organization of the monopoly of violence - as the very centre of the peace problematique, as the opposite to peace, the perspective of Peace Research. I shall argue my case in seven points, all of them necessarily extremely reductive, synthetic and apparently 'dogmatic'.¹

¹ Most of these points, the result of extensive historical and systematic research, can be found in my *Staat und Krieg. Die historische Logik politischer Unvernunft*, Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1985.

I

The monopolization of violence, and of the means of violence, in the hands of a ruling group or class lies at the very beginning of the history of those societies who, after the Neolithic Revolution, i.e. after territorial settlement, developed hierarchical structures of internal organization, and thus 'created' a more or less distinct sphere of politics where power, the power over the respective populations, the power of control, the power to command, the power over resources and their distribution was being wielded, contested or shared, fought over or consensually executed. Ruling groups or classes always had the privilege of carrying weapons; in so far as fighting was a matter of such societies as a whole - be it in defence, be it in conquest - to carry and use weapons was usually a matter of delegation to the adult population and not a matter of the latter's right. Needless to say (and to be elaborated later), not only slaves were excluded from this function but also, and more importantly, women. Practically all stratified, territorially defined societies we know of, either through anthropological or through historical research, were organized around the capacity to organize warfare and the means of violence, the training for war, and the use of weaponry. This permeates all of the institutions emerging both in prehistorical as well as in early historical societies, not to speak of the later ones. By institutions I mean not only structures of command, order, property, and control in the narrow sense of the word, but customs, religion, rites, myths, folklore, etc. as well. The very cohesion of stratified societies was (and is) based upon this organization of the capacity to use violence as a means of maintaining power in the hands of ruling groups or classes. Their legitimacy depended on their capacity not only to win conflicts with neighbouring organized societies (territory and slaves being the most important prizes) but also on enforcing and re-enforcing their authority, their leadership over the people they governed. For the latter purpose, the ultimate exclusivity over the means of violence - weapons as well as trained experts to use them - was (and is) essential. Thus, what we have now come to call the military is an integral part of all hierarchical socio-political organizations, is the very backbone of authority and of an order based upon submission to leadership, occupying the political sphere of society.

II

All historical political organizations of societies - from the early empires to the Greek city states (the Polis), from the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire to the feudal kingdoms of medieval Europe, from the Chinese Empire to the Japanese state long before its modernization under the threat of Western conquest - were built and constructed around the best possible way of maximizing their military capacities. This applies to systems of taxation as well as to administrative structures, to the creation of symbols as well as to social values, to educational systems (in earlier times of the ruling elites) as well as to technologies, to laws, constitutions,

the regulation of leadership succession, etc. Popular obedience and submission - in all its most subtle forms-was enforced and coerced by the ruler's primary task, that of strengthening his war-making capacity: from that he derived his legitimacy. But behind the apparent leadership purpose of achieving or maintaining security for the governed - the Pax Romana being the most grandiose and durable example in European history - lay, usually hidden, the essence of all leaderships: to maintain itself, the political class, and/or a given leader, in its power position with all the privileges this entails; and they are not only and exclusively of a material character but contain equally important non-material benefits like fame, honour, religious callings, or historical recognition for the great dead. The Modern State, as it emerged in Western Europe from the 15th century onward, usually claiming to constitute something qualitatively different from all earlier forms of territorialpolitical organizations, appears in this perspective as something not quite that new and different. It can be demonstrated rather convincingly that this state, historically ratified at the Peace of Westfalia in 1648, after a thirty-years war which devastated Europe as much as an atom bomb would do today (one third of the population of Central Europe was wiped out), was very literally created in order to give the standing armies of the time a permanent and legally legitimizing framework. The state of Prussia was only an extreme case for the general rule - but a case that became to a large extent a model and certainly has changed world history more than any other state-military symbiosis. To put it crudely: it was not the states that created and maintained armies but the armies as the organized expression of political domination and power over populations that created their states, the Modern State; it is a variation, though a significant one, of the older structural theme.

III

Again as a variation of the older theme, warfare and the political legitimation through successfully conducted military campaigns was and is the ultimate "raison d'etre" of states. We should not be blinded by historical shortsightedness when pointing out that this is a matter of the past. It was, after all, only a few decades ago that this mechanism was in full operation, i.e. with the Nazi regime in Germany, Fascist Italy, and Imperial Japan, to name only the three protagonists that brought about the last World War. In the longer view of history, this took place only yesterday, if not today. The extremely bloody war between Iran and Iraq, originating from a wanton attack by the ruler of Iraq for the purposes of aggrandizement of that country's territory and the historical fame of its leader is still with us. One million human beings were slaughtered, 1.7 million crippled for life, 200 billion dollars were wasted -for literally nothing except a political miscalculation. This was not madness but the continuation of a historical and structural pattern of the symbiosis of the military and the state; people, human beings as subjects to state organization and to the power of political classes, are by its standards expendable, numbers only, objects of power calculations, pawns of a game called foreign

policy. In the game of nuclear diplomacy, played since the 1950's between the so-called superpowers and their respective allies, whole populations have become explicit hostages to mutual destruction, while the political leaders, the political classes, have constructed nuclear shelters for themselves where they hope to (and probably even would) survive. The pattern is the same as in earlier periods, or as in seemingly more remote zones of the "underdeveloped": the capacity to wage or at least threaten war is built into the state organization of society and it is the military - not the "hardware", not armaments and weapons systems - that is at the core of it, that is the blood-pumping heart of the state.

IV

I suggest that we look at the military in a broader political sense than the structural one of command and institution. The empirical evidence is overwhelming that it is in most cases the political class rather than "the man on horseback", the generals and professional strategists, who advocate, plan, and push for war. Politics deals with power and power in any society is ultimately based on the willingness and the capacity to employ physical violence to reproduce itself - or to assert itself. But that would be too general an explanation. The reason why it tends to be civilians rather than military men who start wars has to be sought in that very symbiosis of state power and militarily organized violence indicated earlier. The military is a comparatively primitive, simple form of a social organization; it has been correctly compared to a machine, and a machine, even a complicated one, is still something that you can - given a certain technical competence - control and employ for specific and clearly circumscribed purposes. It is one-dimensional and, therefore, relatively easy to calculate, to make operational. The military always offers, by its very structure, simple solutions to complex problems - if they become seemingly unmanageable by other means. And there lies the seductive fascination of it to which political leaders succumb so often and so easily. You have an unruly and hostile neighbouring government? A social rebellion either within or outside your territory that you fear might be or become a threat to your political position? You think your industry needs certain raw materials that are vital to its growth but are under the control of a competitive political class elsewhere? You think you can broaden your power base by the acquisition of more territory? You think that your neighbour wants to swallow your country (and thus depose you and your classfellows) just as you have been thinking of doing to him at a later stage yourself? In all of these cases it is the military who, by its very existence, is offering the means to resolve such questions with just one well organized and "surgical" stroke. It is not the means - the military - that forces and determines the ends, but it is the offer of a simple, clean, and calculable solution to complex socio-political or economic problems that makes it acceptable. The political classes always think, when pushed against the wall of social problems running out of their control, in terms of military solutions. And, at least in our times, they are assisted in this ironically by

those who, for professional reasons, should be trained in dealing with complexities rather than reducing them to simplicities: the so-called strategy-intellectuals. The Vietnam war, now almost forgotten as a simple little "mistake" in the game of state-power-politics (more than 1 million Vietnamese were slaughtered because of this mistake, not to mention some 100,000 American soldiers, expendable pawns in the game), was largely the product of academics and their thinking in military terms. The world view, the world map of all of our political classes when they embark on world politics being, or claiming to be, world powers with global responsibility is a rather simple one, composed of a checkers board where quantities count and are weighed against each other; and the most calculable weights in this game seem to be troops, tanks, and missiles. And it is the academic experts on International Relations who legitimise this potentially and actually deadly game through their theories which eventually trickle down via their students to the newspaper columns and TV commentators into the heads of a public which enjoys - until it is too late to realise that it itself and its life is being played with - following the moves the leaders make on the international stage.

V

Being such an integral part of international state politics, with its ultimate resort to war but with its equally powerful conditioning of all of our political world views or perceptions, the military tends to make us forget the central role and function it plays in the maintenance of the internal stability of all states. "Us" refers here obviously to most West European and North American societies. Already, if we look only a little bit beyond this narrow segment of contemporary states, we could and should realize how ethnocentric such a view is. Every citizen of any Latin American or African country knows without having to be told that his or her military has no international or defence function whatsoever and is there only as the guarantor of political order and political power, either in the hands of a social class or of its own privileges. Pinochet, to name only one example, because he took over a state that was considered by every expert to have a sound democratic tradition and a constitutionally most loyal army, is the revealed truth of all of our states when certain privileges are being threatened by a fundamental process of social change, by the politicisation and the mobilisation of large popular masses. We all have our own Pinochets at home, and they are as unknown and anonymous to us as was Pinochet himself before that bloody September 10, 1973. We should not forget that only recently, i.e. only 20 years ago, President and General de Gaulle was all prepared for a military coup in France had his successful trick of calling general elections not worked and he thereby averted the employment of this ultimate state weapon to restore law and order. In democratic America serious people were playing with the idea of a military government back in 1932, had not Roosevelt successfully restored stability and faith in the constitutional process. In Poland an internal state of war was officially declared in order to "cope" with popular unrest, with socio

economic demands, and with the call for political changes. These are, obviously, only random examples in order to point towards the structural problem of the statemilitary relationship as the twins in power: it is certainly a dormant problem, but to anybody looking at societies in historical and structural terms it should not appear as absolute folly to reflect upon it. People in the West German peace movement, bitterly disappointed that their enormous mobilisation of hundreds of thousands of people back in 1983 did not prevent the dislocation of those deadly weapons on German soil have been asking themselves: maybe if we had been five million instead of one, or ten instead of five, then we would have impressed our parliament and the politicians with our strength. I think it is not black phantasy to speculate about a different reaction: given the repeated decisions of all the courts who qualified sit-down demonstrations at military depots as a violation of public law and as criminal acts, it is very likely that a government threatened with more massive civil disobedience and unrest would have called out in the last resort its armed forces to defend law, order, and the state. Or a West German Pinochet would have stepped forward.

VI

It is not enough, however, to look only at structures and processes when dealing with the "military problem" as the central problem of state organisations and as the necessary focus of Peace Research. We should also think and reflect on the "material incarnation" of the military as an institution, i.e. about the soldier, the man in uniform. Who is he, or rather what is he? I skip the problem of why people become soldiers: there are, in various and often very different historical and socio-economic situations very different and plausible reasons why people join the armies; where we have the draft, no decision has to be made by the individual (why we have the draft, however, is an important and very central issue); where there is voluntary recruitment the motives can range from purely social ones to psychological ones, from economic reasons to professional ones. Instead I would like to look at the man who has become a soldier: what is or becomes of the man once he has joined "the machine" He is or soon will not be the same as he was before. The most important thing for him to "learn" is to obey orders. "Learn" should be understood in quotation marks because all armies all over the world and way back into history are based on transforming the man, the individual, the civilian, into a different type of human being: a functioning particle of a big machine, and functioning means somebody who acts upon and reacts to orders, preferably blindly and without asking questions. An army is not and cannot be a parliament or a party or a free association to debate issues or to form opinions on issues by discussion and argument. An army has to function in a disciplined way - both for the purposes for which it stands as well as for the security of its members, because time-consuming questioning of orders might indeed endanger your fellow soldier or the unit as a whole. The man turned soldier and put into a uniform has to be

first de-composed and then re-composed in order to become fit for the task. Those who are lucky enough not to have had the experience personally can find ample evidence for what it takes to make a good soldier in scholarly studies, in memoirs, in literature, in plays, or on screen (the last and most gruesome example seems to me the Vietnam film "Born to kill" by Sidney Lumet). But, seen in a broader and more fundamental perspective, that man in uniform is not so far removed from man as a subject in any political state where the rules of behaviour are only more subtly trained and learned. In fact, most young soldiers would not experience their time in the army as being so qualitatively different from the pressures and humiliations, the hierarchies and awards and punishments they are subjected to in civilian life. And yet, there is a difference in the sense that in the figure of the soldier, man as subject to the authority, power, and will of another, superior man has found its purest expression. The man in uniform is man as a state's subject reduced to its barest essential: to take orders is the ultimate in human degradation and in the violation of human dignity, the order - the command - and its execution without asking questions (or questions at least being suppressed) is both the metaphor and the reality of hierarchical societies organized as the institutionalisation of power wielded by men over men. While in international politics, where states appear as actors, whole populations are the means in the hands of political classes (or powerful individuals as their representatives) to achieve so-called higher goals like the creation of powerful empires or ever stronger states, the uniformed soldier represents the very bottom of the hierarchy. It is his obedience to the military machine on which the hierarchy in the last resort rests. He is, in his silence, his sworn loyalty, his stability and willingness to use, on order, the arms given to him, the very foundation of the state as that political form which guarantees and institutionalizes the power play of all political classes. He is the condition of their existence and their politics, domestically and internationally. And statesmen all over the world, independent of culture, tradition, or the socio-economic structure of their societies, are fully aware of it: the military rituals with which, without exception, they greet, receive, and visit each other, to gun-shot salutes, raised flags, military bands playing national anthems, the presentation and goose-stepping of honour companies with the drawn swords of their officers, make this more than evident - and last but not least to their people watching these ceremonies from the wings (or on television). The laying of wreaths at the tomb of the unknown soldier (not "unknown" to his mother ...) symbolizes more than words or historical analysis could possibly do that states are institutions based on war and institutionalized, murderous violence.

VII

From so many other dimensions that could still be pointed out and that should become the focus of Peace Research, I want to chose one last, and certainly not the least significant one - on the contrary, it is possibly the most important one if we think of the military. The monopolization of organized physical violence for the

purpose of hierarchical, stratified political orders - a long and not always linear historical process in the formation of states - took place almost without exception within the male part of societies. Women are excluded from the right to carry arms and to fight in combat: they were the first victims of this monopolization, i.e. of the process of power stratification. The world of politics, the political sphere where power was and is the "good" to be fought for and fought over, its distribution or concentration, the means to control populations for the purposes of achieving higher goals and values in or rather with societies. This world has historically been a male world. The fact that women have very recently been accepted as co-players of this game as well as as soldiers is, of course, no counter-argument. They had to pay a high and often brutal price for it. Obviously the state and the military, its twin-brother (not twin-sister), have a socializing and absorptive capacity much greater than commonly thought - they are a most difficult, complex, and extremely capable whole to dismember and to disintegrate, politically as well as analytically.

But, to conclude, the difficulty of this task should not and must not stop us from confronting the problem itself. If Peace Research wants to be or to become again meaningful it must move the military in all of its multifaceted existence into the centre of the stage, it must face the armed man in uniform squarely and openly. It would thus give consciousness, concepts, and analytical tools to tens of thousands outside, in the peace movements everywhere who already have a dream of a world without armies but who need our support to give that dream the strength of a realistic perspective and of reason.