



The Newsletter of Pax Christi Metro New York

Spring 2020 Number 123

CLIMATE CHANGE AND NUCLEAR WAR

by Marian Ronan

For years, many of us thought of climate change as an issue quite separate from peace and justice. Perhaps this was because early conservationists were privileged white people fixated on “wilderness.”

Increasingly, however, leaders and thinkers have been highlighting climate change and nuclear war as the preeminent threats facing the planet (to employ a term used recently elsewhere!). Already in 2013, the internationally-recognized linguist and peace activist, Noam Chomsky, was sounding the alarm about these two gravest of threats to our planetary survival. Then in 2015, in *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis called nuclear war a threat to our “common home,” a message he reiterated in his talk in Hiroshima in November of 2019. And in January of this year, the development sociologist, Charles Geisler, in an article in the *National Catholic Reporter*, adds significant details to the wider connections invoked by Francis. These include the enormous damage done to indigenous lands by nuclear testing and the siphoning away of hundreds of billions of dollars from essential climate change actions by the upgrading and expansion of nuclear arsenals in the US and elsewhere. *

For me, however, nothing sealed the deal on the intrinsic relationship between climate change and nuclear war as did the article by peace studies scholar Michael Klare in the January 13 issue of *The Nation*. ** In that article, drawn from his new book *All Hell Breaking Loose: The Pentagon's Perspective on Climate Change*, Klare shows that climate change and nuclear war are not just the two primary threats to planetary survival, or that, as Francis argues, nuclear war would harm our common home, but that climate change is one of most plausible causes of nuclear war.

The most likely development precipitating a nuclear conflict is the massive and widely-anticipated increase in droughts and monsoon rains which would devastate agriculture and cause social chaos in Pakistan. Such a scenario would create an opening for radical Islamists to seize some of the country's 150 nuclear weapons. This possibility is so real that already in 2011 US Special Ops forces had developed plans to access Pakistan's nuclear weapons. But Pakistan, which considers its nuclear arsenal to be its “most prized possession,” would surely judge such a move by the US an act of war for a country thus risking nuclear war between those two countries.

Acute water shortages also increase the likelihood of nuclear show-downs between some of the world's other nuclear powers. The water crises in India, Pakistan and China make much more likely that one or more of these countries, having upstream access to major rivers like the Indus and the Brahmaputra, will construct dams to divert the river flow away from downstream neighbors, thus precipitating war. The rapid melting of Himalayan glaciers only exacerbates this water crisis. Another

possible scenario is water-starved China invading Siberia to access the massive water resources there, thus unleashing a nuclear conflict with Russia.

Momentum has been underway in recent years in the nuclear arms race between the US, Russia, and China, with the Obama administration launching the modernization of the nuclear arsenal in 2010 and multiple nations, large and small, responding in kind. And now the historic rivalry between the three major players is being intensified by the melting of the polar ice cap in the Arctic, with a resulting competition for the natural gas, iron, uranium and rare earth minerals made accessible by the melting. Such resources and the appeal of faster shipping lanes through the Arctic have motivated these three nations to reopen and remodernize Arctic bases and increase the number of nuclear weapons deployed there.

Finally, Klare argues, the intensification of the nuclear arms race is siphoning resources from the essential global energy transition and impeding relations between the great powers whose collaboration is essential if we are to slow global warming. Here's the conclusion to his eye-popping article:

What is essential and still largely missing is a recognition that climate and peace activism must be linked if the twin perils of global warming and nuclear war are to be overcome. People must understand that...the risk of nuclear war will grow as long as nuclear-armed states are threatened by climate disruption. Only by uniting our efforts toward climate and nuclear sanity in a joint campaign for human survival will it be possible to triumph over these destructive forces.

Given Pax Christi's fundamental commitment to peace and justice, may we in the months and years to come find ways to unite our efforts with others in just such a joint campaign for the survival of God's creation.

Marian Ronan is research professor of Catholic studies at New York Theological Seminary in Manhattan and a former member of the Board of Pax Christi Metro New York.

*<https://www.ncronline.org/news/earthbeat/twin-inconvenient-truths-nuclear-arms-and-climate-change>

** <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/nuclear-defense-climate-change/>

A TRIP TO THE BORDER

by Janet & Lou Tullo

In January, we had the opportunity to attend a retreat in El Paso, Texas. The purpose was learn about the issues of migration and opportunities to determine opportunities for volunteers through Maryknoll Missions. We joined a group through the Maryknoll Lay Missions and stayed at a house in El Paso operated by the Marist Brothers. The Marist Brothers are doing this to assist groups in visiting the border to witness the problems there.

Although we were there through a Maryknoll retreat, the house is available for various church and school groups to attend and learn about migration issues, including the infamous wall, the border control and the groups that are actively assisting the migrants. We also met with many of the leaders in the immigration support services.

The house is the home of *The Encuentro Project* and there is a director (Fr. Rafael Garcia, S.J.) and a program manager (Br. Todd Patenaude, FMS). They assisted the Maryknoll leader (Ms. Karen Borkvedt) to create a great learning experience for us. Aside from all the learning, the house warmly welcomed the guests with great food and rooms.

We visited the wall and met with a group of Border Control Agents. They provided their perspective about handling immigration and following the laws and rules that our government has established for handling this issue. In this way we were able to start with a clear vision of what is occurring at the border because of our government policies and laws.

We also spent parts of three days at one of the facilities for housing the asylum seekers who come across our borders. Part of the time was helping the volunteers at the facility and part of the time was learning and speaking to the *guests* (as they are called) at the facility. During 2019, thousands of asylum seekers crossed the borders. They were helped by the volunteer groups to contact their sponsors, have a place to stay, shower, and eat while they prepared to move on to live with the help of the sponsors and the volunteer groups.

We were able to speak to the volunteers at the facility. These people are saints! Many of them come for a few weeks each year to assist the full-time people in running the housing for the asylum seekers.

The shelters which were housing hundreds at a time were now assisting drastically smaller numbers. The asylum seekers are given a number and must wait on the Mexican side of the border while our government allows a few to trickle in every day. Thousands of these people are waiting on the streets of Juarez for their number to be called. These include many women and children.

Living on the streets of Juarez is neither safe nor healthy. Unlike the El Paso side, the Juarez side is not prepared to shelter, feed and protect these vulnerable people. They are victimized by criminals and have no recourse. Many of them are not Mexican so they have no choice but to survive on their own. Our government sends some of the asylum seekers to “safe” countries like Guatemala to await their turn.

It wasn't all bad news. One special activity was a Mass at a local church (Sacred Heart Parish) where Bishop Seitz said the Mass. This was a special Mass for the migrants. Following mass, Bishop Seitz joined us at our house for dinner and discussion about the role of the church in support of the migrants. Bishop Seitz was both knowledgeable and positive about the role of the church, the volunteers and the El Paso community. We were happy to learn about how many bishops are supportive of the efforts to help the migrants in their quest for a safe place to live for both themselves and their families.

Other activities included: meeting with a Maryknoll lay missionary who was working as an attorney to help the migrants, meeting with the leader of an institute that assists in creating and maintaining the housing facilities; a visit to the Walmart where a gunman shot and killed a number of people to terrorize the immigrants and to see the monument placed there by Walmart to commemorate the victims and a visit a women's cooperative which not only helped in the sales of their products but has become a political voice for the oppressed in the border area.

When it is again possible to travel, I recommend that many of you consider asking your parish or other support groups to consider a “pilgrimage” to El Paso so see for yourselves and to participate in assisting these people (contact brtodddpat@yahoo.com). As written in Matthew 25, this is your chance

to be one of the sheep who help feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, and visit the prisoners.

Lou Tullo is a retired educator whose work included serving as president/principal at John A. Coleman Catholic High School. He presently volunteers with his parish and Catholic Charities

Janet Tullo is a retired Bureau Chief (attorney) in Department of Social Services in Dutchess County. She presently does pro bono immigration work & prison ministry and volunteers at Catholic Charities.

MILITARY SPENDING COSTS US THE EARTH

by Rosemarie Pace

In this time of covid-19, I've been attending more webinars and conference calls than ever before from the safety of my home. One of the absolute best was a call for the Global Days of Action on Military Spending hosted by United for Peace and Justice and the Global Campaign on Military Spending. The featured speakers were Bill Hartung of the Center for International Policy and Lindsay Koshgarian of the Institute for Policy Studies. You can find a link to the full call at <http://www.unitedforpeace.org/2020/03/17/global-day-of-action-against-military-spending-briefing-call/>, but I provide you with a summary here.

As you probably already know, the U.S. military budget is huge. This year the U.S. is spending over \$740 billion on the Pentagon and nuclear weapons work, which is much higher than the U.S. spent during the Korean or Vietnam wars or the Reagan build-up of the 1980s. In 2018, when the U.S. military budget was smaller than now, U.S. spending on the Pentagon was already greater than the amount spent by the next seven nations combined: China, Saudi Arabia, India, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and Germany. Four of these nations are allies! U.S. military spending comprises one-third of global spending which is \$1.8 trillion. It is ten times that of Russia and two and a half times that of China.

The \$740 billion does not include intelligence, military aid to other nations, homeland security, veteran benefits, or interest on debt. If we add those in, the one-year U.S. military budget jumps to \$1.2 trillion. Over the last 20 years, Brown University's Cost of War project estimates the total U.S. military spending to be \$6.4 trillion, which is not only unimaginable, but also an indication of just how our military spending has exploded in one year compared to the previous 19.

What is all this money paying for? 800 to 1000 bases overseas. Presence in over 100 countries. 180,000 troops overseas. Engagement in eight wars (Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen) by means that include troops on the ground, drone strikes, and support to other nations like Saudi Arabia in its war on Yemen. A 20% increase in the nuclear weapons budget amounting to \$45 billion, part of a \$1.7 trillion 30-year plan. A 25% increase in the nuclear budget line of the Department of Energy. Government contracts with weapons manufacturing corporations consuming 40-50% of the \$740 billion budget. And more.

It gets worse. This "offense budget," not defense budget, currently absorbs 53% of the discretionary budget. It is scheduled to rise to 55% next year. By 2030, Donald Trump wants to raise it to 62%. Some of that is from raising military spending, but some is due to cuts in almost everything else.

Trump's budget would cut the Center for Disease Control 16% for starters, potentially increasing that to 32%. His budget would also cut school breakfasts and lunches, school programs for homeless children, food aid, rental assistance, workforce health programming, OSHA training for seasonal farm workers, and public radio and TV. It would change eligibility for welfare and SNAP, Medicaid and other similar lifelines for needy people. The justification? Many of these programs are considered "redundant." Compare that to having more than one doctor in a town!

At the same time, the proposed budget would NOT cut, but likely would increase money for the military and foreign military aid, nuclear weapons, the Department of Energy, the Department of Homeland Security, ICE, and the border wall.

Why? Very simply and succinctly put: to win wars everywhere, but especially with Russia and China. In this mindset, "the military is the answer to everything."

What is the alternative? When our real enemies are the covid-19 pandemic, the threat of climate change, extreme inequality, and nationalism, we should not, nor do we need to, be spending one-third of the world's military budget. We do not need to be spending more than the next seven nations of the world's military budgets combined. We can easily afford to cut the size of our military by at least 10%, cut the number of our troops and bases overseas by one-third, cut corporate waste by 15%, and eliminate our nuclear weapons arsenal. We could also cut what we spend on fossil fuels. Shifting our energy grid would carry a cost but still leave more than enough for the military. A shift to Medicare for All would also actually *save* money over what we have now. And we'd still be safe—and well.

Clearly, we need to get out of the war business and into building a more peaceful and just society. It can be done, but we need the will to do it. The price of *not* doing it is what we cannot afford.

Rosemarie Pace is the Director of Pax Christi Metro New York

A prayer for peace and solidarity in a time of pandemic

Creator God,

We look to you during this time of illness, uncertainty, & physical distancing from others.
Be with us as we place our anxieties and fears in your hands.
Free us from the illusion of invincibility, so that we might remember our actions affect others, especially the most vulnerable.
Free us from the fear of scarcity, which leads to competition and hoarding.
Free us from painful anxiety, so that it can be transformed into caring actions for ourselves and others.

Jesus, our brother,

As your ministry of healing brought physical wellness and connection and restored community, help us remember that we are not alone.
As you mourned the death of your friend Lazarus, be with those who grieve the loss of loved ones. May they feel your presence and peace.
As you experienced death, be with those who have died from the coronavirus.
May they be in your eternal embrace.

As you challenged your disciples to act for the common good, be with national and local leaders who have the power to ensure that the “least of these” have their basic needs met. Inspire them to have a global vision of solidarity, a consciousness and priority to provide healthcare to all.

Spirit of God, breath of life,

Thank you for the countless nurses, custodial staff, doctors, receptionists, therapists, healthcare providers, and all others who are working to care for those who are sick and suffering. As they live their vocations, may they be sustained by your Spirit.

Open our eyes to see the devastating implications of economic and racial injustice during this crisis. Be with vulnerable populations who are unable to have “social distance” from others, thereby increasing their likelihood of contagion.^[1]

Inspire our actions for equitable access to testing, treatment, and financial support for all affected by coronavirus.

We pray together as Pax Christi USA that, during this [Easter] season and current pandemic, we can turn away from fear and be faithful to our sacred and civic responsibility for others. AMEN.

This prayer was written by Michelle Sherman, Pax Christi USA National Council member.

^[1] *Those in detention centers or prisons, workers who are unable to work from home, people experiencing homelessness, etc. ...*

Gifts of Peace

have been given in honor of:

Judy Lewis* Lorenzo Tafuno*

and in memory of:

Dr. Julie Butler* Lucille Byrne*

Maria Mercedes Colon Blanco* Joan Comiskey*

Edward Dalpe, Sr., MCA* Charles Irvin Dom, Sr.*

Martha Mencia, ACM* Mary A. Piccolo*

Altagracia Quezada, ACM* Angie Tullio, MCA*

Please remember them in prayer.

Kerux No. 123

Spring 2020

“Kerux” is the Greek word meaning “herald”. As the name of our newsletter, it reminds us that we are to be heralds of God’s nonviolent love. We welcome letters, articles and reviews.

Kerux

371 Sixth Avenue New York, NY 10014 Phone: 212-420-025 Fax: 212-420-1628

info@nypaxchristi.org www.nypaxchristi.org

PCMNY Board

Pierre Fidelia
Jill Frasier, interim treasurer
Joe McDonough, president
Kirin Taylor

Director

Rosemarie Pace

Editor

Karen Mack

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Peacemaker Awards Reception

Due to the covid-19 pandemic, our Peacemaker Awards Reception is on hold. We plan to re-schedule when we can, but for now this is what we *can* tell you with great joy:

Our Peacemaker honorees for 2020 are Betty Reardon, Peace Educator, Author, and Speaker and Nancy Lorence, long-time activist and advocate currently focused on the Catholic Climate Movement. Our Young Peacebuilder is Stella DiCicco of The Mary Louis Academy. Please plan on being with us to celebrate these newest Peacemakers and Young Peacebuilder. We'll let you know the date, time, and place as soon as we are able

Hiroshima/Nagasaki Memorial

Another unknown, but, please God, we'll be up and running come August. If so, we're aiming for Sunday, August 9th. Time will tell the details.

Annual Appeal: If you haven't already done so, please reflect on the many reasons you value PCMNY, especially in the current political climate, and respond as generously as possible to our annual appeal. If you did respond, THANK YOU!

Other Ways to Support Your Pax Christi Region: Support us by searching the Internet with GoodSearch.com (powered by Yahoo) or shopping online with GoodShop.com. Just indicate Pax Christi Metro New York as your charity. You can also turn your online shopping and searching into much-needed donations at: www.iGive.com/PaxChristiMetroNewYork and <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/13-3424349>.

“Gifts of Peace”: Donate to PCMNY in honor of those you love, whether they're celebrating a special holiday, a birthday, anniversary, jubilee, or new baby, are in need of encouragement, or mourning a loss. Cards are available from the PCMNY office for a recommended donation of \$5each.

Pennies for Peace: On your own or with others, collect pennies throughout the year. Convert them to dollars and send them to PCMNY as a year-end gift.

Matching Gifts: Ask your company if it will match your gift to PCMNY.

Bequests: Please remember PCMNY in your will. Our legal name is Pax Christi Metro New York and our tax ID number is 13-3424349.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Due to the covid-19 pandemic, we cannot guarantee any particular schedule of upcoming events. We do plan to have our Peacemaker Awards Reception as soon as we are able to re-schedule it. We are also hoping to be able to host our annual Hiroshima/Nagasaki Memorial in August, but we will only be able to provide confirmation and details when the current crisis eases. Meanwhile, we invite you to keep connected with us at our website, on our Facebook page, and on Twitter. You can also keep in touch via e-mail. Even though we're working from home, technology can keep us together.

Thank you for all you do for peace and for one another. Be well. Stay safe.

Contact the office for updated information on all events:
info@nypaxchristi.org, 212-420-0250, or www.nypaxchristi.org.
Also visit us on Facebook and Twitter.

Pax Christi Metro New York
371 Sixth Avenue New York, NY 10014