



## WAR & PEACE



# THE DEADLY DRUMMER

by Ben Lane

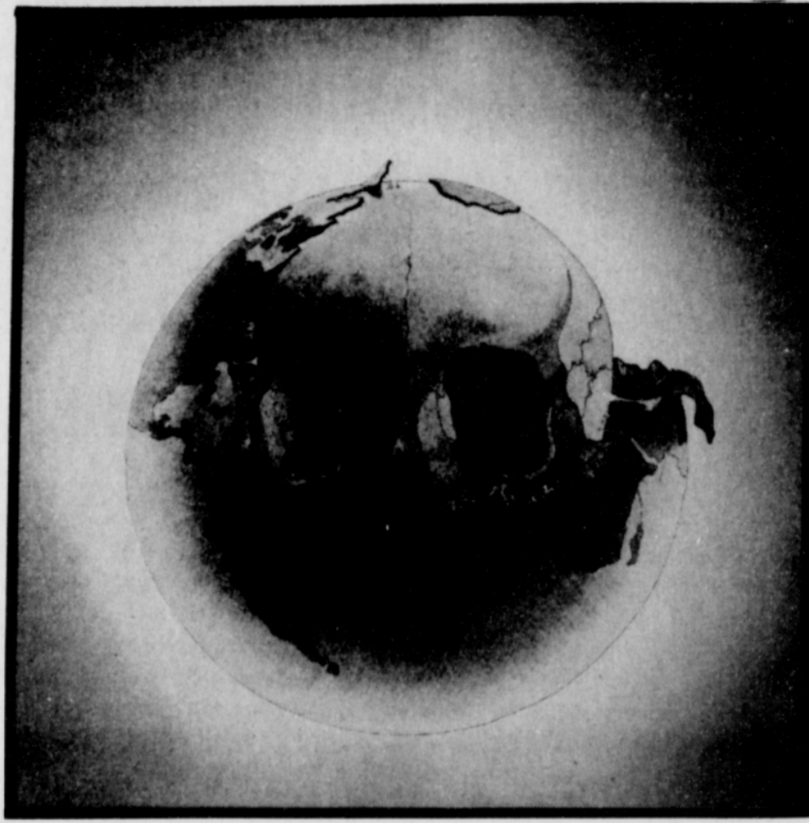
"We learn from history  
that we learn nothing from history."

In 1898 there came, from, of all places, Czarist Russia, a call for a conference of all nations for the purpose of disarmament. The industrial revolution had spawned an arms industry which was rocking out of control. Krupp was the largest single business in Europe, and Skoda, Vickers-Maxim, Schneider Creusot and many others were selling arms to any and all comers. Each year new and more terrible engines of destruction were created, and each of the great powers immediately purchased them as old weapons became obsolete. The Czar realized that they were a crushing burden on everyone, and would inevitably lead to the very disaster they were supposed to avert.

Peace groups throughout the world went wild with joy. It seemed that perhaps at last sanity was returning; that the crushing costs of armaments could be turned to humanitarian purposes. Newspapers were lavish with headlines: "Omen for the New Century", "A New Era", "Most Momentous and Beneficent Movement in History" (this latter from a New York paper).

As usual, the various governments got in the act to thwart popular will. Suspicion, hatred, and greed combined with cynicism to ensure that the peace dove would not go far. All distrusted the Czar and credited his motive with the fact that he was behind in the race; England had control of the seas and intended to keep it; the Kaiser was proud of his Prussians and was itching for a war to prove them; France trusted no one. The United States was heady with success after wresting Cuba and the Philippines from Spain, and with Teddy Roosevelt in the ascendancy, waving his "big stick", was eager to enter the race as a world power.

Nevertheless, public opinion had to be appeased with at least a token gesture, so all finally agreed on a conference. The first Hague conference flatly refused to address the issue of disarmament; instead, it merely drew up the rules for the forthcoming war. America's Admiral Mahan would not even discuss Naval limitation.



He said that new markets were opening up in the Orient and the United States intended to get its share and needed sea power second to none. (At least he was honest.) The Kaiser ridiculed any efforts to limit his Prussians in any way. The peaceful arbitration of disputes was honored in the breach. "Realism" — that is, the recognition of greed, hatred, misguided patriotism, and all of the other negative attributes of homo sap — prevailed. The second conference did little more (and the world was at war when the third was scheduled) than refine the rules of that war. When the spark was struck, the stage was already set, and in a few short months the trenches were filled with millions of men killing each other for reasons that have never been entirely clear. "Saving the world for democracy" and other slogans were hastily invented as pap to feed the population so as to ensure a steady flow of bodies to the trenches.

As we approach the last part of this same century, the wheel has made a full turn. The present administration like to think that it "is stopping Hitler" by confronting Russia at every turn. Rather, conditions are more like 1914, with old empires dissolving, and shifts in power occurring. Under Reagan, Americans are committed to the status-quo, and view any effort of people anywhere to overthrow an oppressive regime as a communist plot. Such doctrinal thinking is bound to lead to trouble. Are our leaders so naive?

No, of course not. They have a vested interest in keeping the arms race going, and do not seem to realize that the rules have been changed. No one at the "table" will win this time, the table itself and the entire building will be destroyed.

It should be obvious to even the dimmest wit that Reagan is a creation of the industrial-military complex which is now in power. Somewhere along the line, a Faustian bargain was struck. A clean-cut individual with name recognition was needed, one who was likeable and with political views to the right of King George III. Reagan was ideal; his part of the bargain is to keep the Pentagon well supplied with whatever it needs; never mind that the more of those terrible things we pile up the less secure we are. "Defense" must come ahead of everything, even our lives.

Defense? Did you know that Uncle Sam is actively merchandising the latest in deadly weapons to all comers — a sort of McDonalds of the arms industry? Consider this exact quote from Deputy Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci, made on July 29, 1982: "We must selectively but actively encourage the foreign procurement of the new FX fighter jet, not leaving this marketing effort to the manufacturers." How do you like that? Our beloved Pentagon is now an active huckster of all the latest and most deadly weapons known to humanity. Never mind that they are used in such things as the Beirut massacre. Never mind that they may be used against us. Our tax dollars are being used to ensure that every rinkydink conflict becomes a major war. Some "defense" department.

Now, as in 1900, there is a cry for disarmament. People everywhere yearn for peace. People are crying for relief from the arms burden which costs more than one hundred million dollars per day. There are enough nuclear weapons piled up to extinguish all animal life on this planet a hundred times over. Yet our "experts" babble about "windows of vulnerability", "nuclear superiority", and the ghastly "permissible collateral population damage." (This latter refers to estimates of how many millions of our fellow citizens we can lose and still survive.) Weinberger glibbles about a five year protracted nuclear war, after which we would "prevail". He does not say over what we will prevail, presumably the irradiated insects that will be running things.

Each tick of the clock brings us closer to the brink. Each day one hundred million dollars is spent that could do so much to ease the poverty, malnutrition, ill health and ill housing in the world, and aid of all of our brothers and sisters (of whatever nationality, religion or skin color) to have a share in the good and God-given bounty of this beautiful planet.

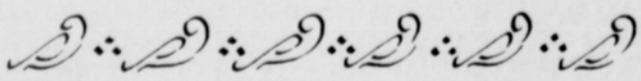
Will we wake up in time? History suggests not. Every arms race has ended in a war; they have in fact been the cause of the very wars they were supposed to prevent.

What has happened to the once bright image of America as a strong moral force in the world? Instead of "the arsenal of democracy" it has become just the "arsenal." America was the land of the free, the hope of the oppressed. Now it is the home of the corporate conglomerates, the arms merchants, friend of militarists everywhere. The human race is now hostage to never ending greed. When those missiles start flying — as they certainly will — I want to know that as an individual, at least, I have done everything possible to end this terrible thing.

Ben Lane of Tolovana Park is spending a year in Sweden with his wife and son. "Really a joy to live in a country where the government is taking care of its people instead of building weapons to destroy them," he wrote in a letter that accompanied his article. "Socialism is expensive, taxes highest in the world, but you get so much back it is worth it. Subtract what you privately pay (in the United States) for health insurance, doctor bills, high interest rates on housing, etc., and (Sweden's) taxes seem quite low. Of course it is the people that make the country and... I love them."

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to a gathering that will take no more than an hour or two of your time and help guarantee that earth will survive the peril it now faces.

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