

# Anthropology Today

Vol. 4 No. 3 June 1988  
Every two months

## Contents

How can anthropologists promote peace? (BRIAN FERGUSON) *page 1*

JULIE MARCUS

Bicentenary Follies: Australians in search of themselves 3

LILIANE KUCZYNSKI

Return of love: Everyday life and African divination in Paris 6

CHRIS HANN

Christianity's Internal Frontier: The case of Uniates in South-East Poland 9

CECIL HELMAN

Dr Frankenstein and the Industrial Body 14

GEOFFREY GRIFFITH

Shaviyani nights: another despatch from a Maldivian Islands development project 16

CONFERENCES 20 JONATHAN BENTHALL on Tourism, W.C. McGREW on Tools and Tool-Use, RICHARD JENKINS on Youth, Maturation and Ageing

LETTERS 24 G.T. NURSE and VERNON REYNOLDS on 'The Peoples of Southern Africa', R.I.M. DUNBAR and TIM INGOLD on Biological anthropology, ANDREW RUSSELL on Development anthropology, PAMELA SHURMER-SMITH on conferences, ANTHONY SHELTON on 'Bolivian Worlds'

FILM 28 MARGARET WILLSON on RAI Film Prizes 1988

NEWS 29 RAI NEWS 32 VACANCIES ETC 32 *Cover picture caption page 2*

ANTHROPOLOGY TODAY incorporating RAIN (issn 0307-6776) is published by the Royal Anthropological Institute and mailed free of charge to its Fellows and Members. Subscription: £8 or US\$14 (Individuals, includes membership of the Institute), £15 or US\$25 (Libraries). The usual agencies also accept subscriptions. Order form on p. 31.

Editor: Jonathan Benthall (Director, RAI)

Assistant & News Editor: Gustaaf Houtman Editorial Adviser: Loulou Brown  
Editorial Panel: Paula Brown Glick, Veena Das, Stephen Gudeman, Ian Hodder, Caroline Humphrey, Adam Kuper, Peter Lloyd, A.B.M. Mafeje, Juan Ossio Acuña, Chris Pinney, Silvia Rodgers, Michael Sallnow, Eric Sunderland, Robert Thornton, Steven Uran, James Urry, Roy Willis.

RAI Offices: 50 Fitzroy Street, London W1P 5HS (tel: 01-387 0455) for all correspondence except subscriptions, changes of address etc. for which the address is: Distribution Centre, Blackhorse Road, Letchworth SG6 1HN, U.K. (tel: 04626 72555, telex 825372 TURPIN G). (Please note change of RAI Offices to 50 Fitzroy Street, London W1P 5HS. But please do not change the address of mail you may normally send either to the Distribution Centre or to the Museum of Mankind Library.)

Signed articles represent the views of their writers only. © RAI 1988.

Copy date: 1st of odd months. A sheet of notes for contributors is available on request. When possible we like to receive copy on 5 1/4" floppy disks, preferably IBM-compatible though we can read most.

Advertising Rates: Full page £190. Half page £102. Third page col. £70. Half col. £34. Quarter col. £19. Linage for classified £1.50. UK customers add VAT. 10% discount for c/r copy. Copy date for advertising 15th of odd months.



Printed in Great Britain at the Chameleon Press Limited, London

## How can anthropologists promote peace?

Shivering in the cold war of the early 1980s, anthropologists raised the question that accompanies every period of global tension: how can we promote peace? Here I suggest ways of applying widely accepted anthropological findings and concepts to contemporary global conflicts, in ways that conceivably could reduce the dangers of war. First I discuss ideas that could be pursued through academic research, teaching and writing, and then applications for political activism.

### The academic mode

To start, we can help dispel certain myths, myths that make war seem inevitable and so may discourage resistance to war. One such myth is that war is the result of some aggressive instinct. This idea has been thoroughly examined and discredited.<sup>1</sup> The sociobiologists who continue to seek a genetic basis of human aggression have made the 'instinctive' contribution so general as to be irrelevant for understanding the problems we currently face.<sup>2</sup> Passage of the Seville Statement on Violence by a vote of 1,669 to 230 members of the American Anthropological Association is a step toward eliminating this deeply rooted misconception.

Another myth has received less scrutiny. That is, that war is inevitable because all societies have always had war. Factually, that is incorrect, since we know of societies that practised no kind of war whatsoever.<sup>3</sup> More to the point, looking at the world today from the perspective of general sociocultural evolution suggests that the conditions which underlay war in the past may no longer apply among modern industrialized nations. Earlier anthropological writers on war—Boas, Malinowski, Newcomb<sup>4</sup>—all hit upon the same point despite their totally different theoretical orientations: human societies have evolved towards larger, more inclusive polities, within which peace is the rule. They each predicted continuation of this trend, and the decline of war, as a global society emerged.

\*\*\*

The trend does seem to continue, as indicated by markers as diverse as the transnationalization of capital, the continued viability of the UN, and growth of the EEC and COMECON. One measure of progress to date is that it is difficult to foresee circumstances which could lead to war among the major Western European states. We take this peace for granted, but to have suggested the possibility of harmony among these states would have seemed hopelessly naive one hundred or even fifty years ago. Further, the current East-West alignment, for all its dangers of polarization, does reduce the number of independent war machines; and this, along with developments in intelligence gathering, reduces the uncertainty and lack of predictability that sharpened national confrontation in the past.

We should not think that there is any inevitability to continued evolutionary consolidation of industrial societies. There is no proof that the process will not stop or reverse; but an end to war among the industrialized nations is as much an undeniable possibility as is the possibility of new kinds of war involving other nations.

It is very important that people realize this. One of the most effective arguments of 'realpolitik' militarists is that only the existence of massive nuclear arsenals has prevented a war between East and West. This argument exemplifies the myth of inevitability. It assumes war will

The author is an assistant professor of anthropology at Rutgers University, Newark, N.J. He obtained his Ph.D. at Columbia University with the thesis 'Class Transformations in Puerto Rico'. His main research interests are war and underdevelopment.

happen. But in the past thirty years, since the post-War world settled down, has there been any circumstance in which a war between NATO and the Warsaw Pact was in either side's interest? The only point when war seemed a realistic possibility was in 1962, and that was precisely because of nuclear weapons.

So anthropologists can say that war is not inevitable. When it comes to explaining why war *does* occur, we are on shakier ground. Until recently, anthropological data and theory on war were notoriously thin. That changed with the great increase in research stimulated by Vietnam,<sup>5</sup> but much more needs to be done. Cross-cultural elucidation of the relationships between variables involved in war could be valuable at present. Peace research, in practice the study of modern war, has created mammoth data sets, but has reached a theoretical impasse. Peace researchers are looking for new ideas and models,<sup>6</sup> and some have even called on anthropologists to help.<sup>7</sup>

Elsewhere I develop a general synthetic model of war, from egalitarian societies up to the emergence of the state, and discuss some implications of that model for understanding contemporary conflicts.<sup>8</sup> Basically, those implications are: that in all states the political elite decides military policy according to the interests and relative power of its various parts; that these interests are always different from and may be contradictory to the interests of the majority of the population; that the elite will always portray their interests as the interests of all; and that the majority should always sceptically scrutinize any call for military funding or action. So (speaking to Westerners) don't trust the Russians. But don't trust your allies or your own leaders either. Watch them. No sensible foreign policy strategist would leave vital interests to trust. Nor should any citizen.

\*\*\*

Anthropologists can also make a contribution by emphasizing the relevance of one of the most basic of anthropological concepts: *holism*. In contemporary debates about strategy and spending, unrealistic and impossible separation of issues is the rule. An important illustration of this is when hard-liners talk about military spending as if it could be considered apart from the general economy. 'No price is too high for a strong defence'. But there is ample evidence that high levels of military spending have a pronounced negative effect on national economies, leading to slower growth in employment, investment, innovation, and productivity, along with other ills.<sup>9</sup> A 'strong defence' will not long protect a declining industrial system. This illusion is even more tragic in the underdeveloped world, where combined military spending in 1979 was more than double the size of the annual capital infusion requested to promote development in 1980 U.N. deliberations on North-South relations.<sup>10</sup>

Citizens of European NATO nations should pay close attention to this connection between military strength and economic weakness. It suggests that their assuming more of the costs of Western European defence—as the U.S. is pressuring them to do—would have an economic impact far worse than just an increase in taxes. Moreover, there is every reason to expect that U.S. pressure will increase in coming years, not just because of anti-militarist neo-isolationism, but because the hard-line advocates of an aggressive foreign policy want to spend those dollars elsewhere, for example the Persian Gulf, or to push pet high-technology programmes.<sup>11</sup>

As budgetary conflicts heat up in coming years, U.S. military spending in Europe will be an increasingly attractive target for cuts. An August 1987 poll found 58% of the American public in favour of reduced defence

spending as the preferred way of cutting the deficit, versus 35%. A poll in November 1987 found that 86% favoured having Western Europe, and other allies, 'pay for their own defence'.<sup>12</sup> Even those who favour continuing high spending for the military in Europe link that to major increases in NATO ally expenditures.<sup>13</sup> In short, there seems to be little support for the *status quo* anywhere on the political spectrum. Realistically, the only way for Western European nations to avoid the catastrophic burden of swelling military spending, may be to reduce drastically the level of military confrontation along the East-West frontier.

\*\*\*

Demilitarization of that frontier may seem utopian at present (just as demilitarization of Western European borders would have seemed fantastic at an earlier time). It is not being 'realistic'. This criticism suggests another basic anthropological concept with contemporary relevance: that all understandings of reality are cultural constructions (although all are not equally accurate).

Defenders of 'realpolitik' think they are 'facing the facts' when they rely on ready force to preserve the peace, but substantial evidence indicates that that path actually leads to war.<sup>14</sup> Even a moment's reflection shows that the world of the 'realists' is built upon unrealistic expectations: that deployment of nuclear weapons can continue forever without there being a global holocaust; that Northern nations can be secure while Southern nations continue in ever deepening underdevelopment. And then we come to the 'super-realists', who plan how to fight and win a nuclear war.

The international *status quo* will not persist. History has not stopped. A realistic realism would aim to identify probabilities and possibilities that correspond to what actually happens in the world. It is a probability that continuing militarism would lead to ruin. It is a possibility that gradual but persistent demilitarization of the industrialized nations might avoid that fate.

Anthropologists often claim that one of our functions is to offer alternative visions of how things could be. I suggest that we offer a vision of a (relatively) demilitarized industrial world. (I fear that militarism in the Third World may be more intractable, but it certainly cannot decrease while it remains a battle ground for the superpowers.)

### The activist mode

Some anthropologists want to go beyond this, to move out of academia into activism in promoting peace. Despite the real problems entailed by mixing politics and science, this is within a well-established anthropological tradition of advocacy, except that now we may be doing it for our own people, instead of some other. What are the strategic and tactical issues for an anthropological activism?

In a paper written in 1986,<sup>15</sup> I consider two approaches to activism, a 'policy route' and a 'protest route'. I argue that as a general strategy, trying to join the policy apparatus and change it from within offers faint opportunities and substantial dangers. On the other hand, working to strengthen the ideas and organizations of those who mobilize popular opposition to militarism seems less problematic and more likely to have some positive impact, however slight. And it is consistent with the theoretical model to which I have referred, which holds that the surest preventative of war is a lack of support for war. Public opinion is only one element of many in the decisions made by our political elites, but it is one that we may be able to affect.

In 1988, Cold War II seems to be on the wane, just

when pro-peace initiatives begun in darker days begin to produce results. Publications, teaching programmes, research support, and activist groups dedicated to reducing the risk of war, are all appearing in gratifying numbers. What will happen to all this effort if peace breaks out? What happens to an anti-war movement when war seems to lose its menace? The probability based on past experience is that promoting peace will lose its relevance, and be left to fade away. That is a danger, and one which, like war, is not inevitable.

It is a danger because there are great military and industrial power bases that have a vested interest in maintaining a high level of international tension, and there are right-wing political groups and ideologues who have already begun to regroup. Already in the U.S. we can see planning, organization, and fund-raising for a major militarist propaganda campaign<sup>16</sup> along the same lines followed, successfully, in the latter 1970s.<sup>17</sup> Now is the time to begin opposing war, by throwing harsh light on these machinations before they gather strength, and by continuing other efforts already begun.

\*\*\*

In this time of lessened confrontation, peace activists could push for measures to institutionalize anti-militarist sentiments. One way to do this is through legislation mandating that defence industries establish plans and procedures for conversion to non-military production, as advocated by Seymour Melman.<sup>18</sup>

\*\*\*

Activists also have a great opportunity to internationalize the public peace lobby. Anti-militarist action and opinion is flowering in Poland and other Warsaw pact nations,<sup>19</sup> and even becoming visible in the Soviet Union.<sup>20</sup> *Glasnost* offers a chance to forge links with independent (i.e. non-governmental) peace groups in the East, and thus raise the prospective political costs of any contemplated Eastern block suppression of peace activists. (The 'Free Soviet Jewry' campaign offers tactical lessons here.)

#### A challenge to sceptics

Can any of this make any difference? The answer is not known. Those who remain sceptical about the ability of anthropologists to change the world may count me as with you. But I challenge anyone to prove that we cannot. And until it is proven useless, it is worth trying.

#### Brian Ferguson

1. Ferguson, R. Brian, 1984. Introduction: Studying War. In *Warfare, Culture, and Environment*, R.B. Ferguson, ed., 1-81. Orlando: Academic P.

2. Shaw, R.P., 1985. Humanity's Propensity for Warfare: A Sociobiological Approach. *Canadian Rev. of Sociology and Anthropology*, 22(2): 158-183.

3. Fabbro, David, 1980. Peaceful Societies. In *The War System: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, R. Falk and S. Kim, eds., 180-203. Boulder: Westview P.

Ferguson, R. Brian, 1987. War in Egalitarian Societies: An Amazonian Perspective. Paper presented at the 86th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Assoc., Chicago, November.

4. Boas, Franz, 1912. An Anthropologist's View of War. *International Conciliation* Pamphlet 52, The American Association for International Conciliation, New York.

Malinowski, Bronislaw. War—Past, Present, and Future. (1941) In *War as a Social Institution: The Historian's Perspective*. J. Clarkson and T. Cochran, eds., 21-31. New York: Columbia U.P.

Newcomb, W.W., Jr. 1960. Toward an Understanding of War. In *Essays in the Science of Culture*. In *Honor of Leslie A. White*. G. Dole and R. Carneiro, eds., 317-336. New York:

Thos. Crowell.

5. Ferguson, R. Brian. *The Anthropology of War: A Bibliography*. New York: Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, in press.

6. Eberwein, Wolf-Dieter, 1981. The Quantitative Study of International Conflict: Quantity and Quality? An Assessment of Empirical Research. *Jnl of Peace Research*, 18(1): 19-38.

Singer, J. David, 1981. Accounting for International War: The State of the Discipline. *Jnl of Peace Research*, 18(1):1-18.

Vasquez, J. 1987. Foreign Policy, Learning and War. In *New Directions in the Study of Foreign Policy* (C. Henmann, C. Kegley & J. Rosenan, eds.) 366-83. Boston: Allen & Unwin.

7. Falk, Richard, and Samuel Kim, eds., 1980. *The War System: An Interdisciplinary Approach* (page 160). Boulder, Westview P.

8. Ferguson, R. Brian. Explaining War. In *The Anthropology of War*. J. Haas, ed. In preparation.

Ferguson, R. Brian. Anthropology and War: Theory, Politics, Ethics. In *Cold War and Nuclear Madness: An Anthropological Analysis*, P. Turner and D. Pitt, eds. South Hadley: Bergin and Gavey, in press.

9. Melman, Seymour, 1987. *Profits without Production*. Philadelphia: U. of Pennsylvania P.

Oden, Michael Dee, 1988. The Military Dollar Really Is Different: The Economic Impacts of Military Spending Reconsidered. A Report of Employment Research Associates, Lansing, Michigan.

10. Melman, Seymour, 1984. The End of War. In *Warfare, Culture, and Environment*, R.B. Ferguson, ed., 387-396 (page 392). Orlando: Academic P.

11. Poser, Barry, and Stephen Van Evera, 1983. *Defense Policy and the Reagan Administration: Departure from Containment*. *International Security* 8(1): 3-45.

Record, Jeffrey, 1984. *Revising U.S. Military Strategy: Tailoring Means to Ends*. New York: Pergamon-Brassey's.

12. Anonymous. Military Outlay Cut Wins Favor in Poll as a Deficit Tactic. *New York Times*, August 13, 1987, p.A21.

Dionne, E.J. Jr., U.S. Poll Puts the Economy over the Military in Importance. *New York Times*, November 11, 1987, p.A26.

13. Cushman, John, Jr., Top Pentagon Officials Back Plan Keeping Arms Balance in Europe. *New York Times*, January 23, 1988, p.A1.

14. Beer, Francis, 1981. *Peace Against War: The Ecology of International Conflict*. San Francisco: W.H. Freeman.

Naroll, Raoul, Vern Bullough, and Freda Naroll. *Military Deterrence in History: A Pilot Cross-Cultural Survey*. Albany: State U. of New York P.

Vasquez, John. 1987. The Steps to War. *World Politics* 40, Oct. 108-145.

15. Ferguson, R. Brian. Anthropology and War: Theory, Politics, Ethics, *op. cit.*

16. Smith, Hedrick, 1988. The Right against Reagan. *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, January 17.

17. Wolfe, Alan. *The Rise and Fall of the 'Soviet Threat': Domestic Sources of the Cold War Consensus*. Washington: Institute for Policy Studies.

18. Melman, Seymour. 1988. Law for Economic Conversion: Necessity and Characteristics. *Bulletin of Peace Proposals* 19(1): 143-47.

19. English, Robert. Eastern Europe's Doves. 1984 *Foreign Policy* 56: 44-60.

Kamm, Henry, 1986. For Romania, a Vote Today on Military Cuts. *New York Times*, November 23, 1986, p.A9.

Kaufman, Michael. Warsaw Journal: Hippie Foes of the Draft Handled with Kid Gloves. *New York Times*, January 2, 1987, p.A4.

Tagliabue, John. Poles Organizing Draft Resistance. *New York Times*. December 12, 1987, p.A7.

(also see) Herspring, Dale, and Ivan Volgyes. The Political Reliability of Warsaw Pact Armies. *Armed Forces and Society* 6(2): 270-296, 1980.

20. Anonymous. 1987. Soviet Arrests 16 Protesting Afghan Role. *New York Times*, December 27, p.A3.

Keller, Bill. 1988. Soviet Official Says Press Harms Army. *New York Times*, January 21, p.A3.

(also see) Medvedev, Roy, and Zhores Medvedev. 1981. The USSR and the Arms Race. *New Left Review*, 130: 1-22.)