

## H 2. WHY WARS?

In a history class, I learned that we had fought a war to end war, but it did not end war. Indeed history can now report that the first half of the 20th century was probably the most warring half century in human history. The last half of that century had no world wars but a large number of smaller wars, some of which are still going in the 21st century.

Whatever anyone thinks we are on earth for, or whatever one thinks we ought to do with life opportunities, it is hard to imagine that anyone can defend the idea that we ought to spend our lives in organized warfare and killing of each other. Isn't it way past time to learn how to manage human affairs better than that?

Of course there are those who point to the fact that violence is a part of human nature. But it need not lead to wars and killing people. Even animals do not organize into large groups to try to exterminate other groups of their species. Human wars require governments to organize people and train them to wage war against other people. That is not just a matter of individual humans violent impulses getting the better of them.

History has been said to be the record of man's inhumanity to man. The pages of history are red with human blood. The history books are of course written by the survivors of that endless violence, violence which causes more unnecessary human suffering than any one other thing. But we try to glorify as heroes those who were the greatest warriors. Indeed heroism is displayed by all those who risk their lives for a cause greater than themselves. But everyone knows that war and killing is a dirty inglorious activity. We tell ourselves it must always have been necessary. But was it? Did tribal or government leaders always have to extend their power over others at the expense of much suffering from injuring and killing many.

However there have always been wars, so, it is said, nothing can be done about it. That is simply not true. All sorts of evils that lasted for many centuries were finally eliminated when there was widespread agreement on how to end them, slavery being a notable one. Democracy itself replaced the Divine right of Kings, a so-called Divine Right that was properly rejected and replaced finally.

Whatever the causes of wars in the past, present wars are endemic to the system of international relations. It is the structure of that human institutionalized system that continues to produce wars because each nation's military establishment and set of allies constitutes a threat to the military security of other countries, so each responds in kind to the military threats it faces. Almost anything can then result in international war, sometimes just an unimportant incident let alone a serious issue.

That system can be changed. Various disputes between nations

now lead to wars. Indeed wars have developed in the past out of the jockeying for power even without any very serious disputes. All that can be ended. But it can be ended only by demilitarizing nations and developing alternative dispute resolution institutions. If the latter are developed, it should not be beyond the wit of man to dismantle the expensive military establishments with their weapons of mass destruction which then would no longer be needed and which now still continuously threaten to be used in needless mass slaughter.