

The Rhetoric of Chiasmus #11

War

*War, of some form, has been a constant in humanity's progress - beginning with inter-family squabbling in earliest times. The types of wars may change, but the players remain the same: the soldiers, the generals, the politicians, the financiers, and of course the long-suffering civilians caught in all those cross-fires. The full irony of war is surely this: **war ends peace but peace never ends war.** Here's why....*

WAR

It's often said: **The first casualty of war is truth.** Surely though, **the first truth of war is casualties.** That's more important, in my opinion; and those who have lost loved ones would probably agree.

The oddity about war is that they are all the same while being all different. At the very lowest level of comparison though, **all wars are just bloody ... and each is just another bloody war.** And from another perspective, **any wars of attrition are never about the attrition of any wars.** And, since all wars are about liberty or freedom somewhere, some how, the simple fact is **fighting for freedom never results in freedom from fighting.**

Perhaps humanity, as a whole, just *likes* to fight?

That's a view held by one of America's World War Two generals, George S. Patton, with reference to the American people. On the other hand, there *are* those who will *not* fight, come what may. In a way, I tend to be on that side of the whole issue because **the cost of any war should never be a war at any cost.** I guess that's also a practical way of regarding any decision to go to war. Morally, of course, there should be a good case and, most importantly, **if you're going somewhere to war, better make sure it's a war that's going somewhere.** Because, of you don't, you wind up in situations like the Americans and others have in Iraq and Afghanistan. Which should give the powers-that-be heartache and heartburn because if they think there are **no alternatives to war left, eventually they will be left in a war with no alternatives.**

But, as history and many writers have shown, **the folly of war is surpassed only by those who engage in a war of folly.** Does that condemnation await the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan? Unhappily, there is section of most societies which would disagree: namely, the merchants, who have always known that **war is always good business for those who make it a business of going to a good war.** That's arguably the worst kind of symbiotic relationship because **war is always a dirty business - just as business is always a dirty war.**

So, do wars actually *ever* end? Consider the animosities that continue to fester between India and Pakistan; between China and Japan; between Sunni and Shiite; between Arabs and Jews;

between Christian and Muslim; and so on, and on. Despite hundreds of years of enlightenment, education and development, the fact is permanent reconciliation that ends war is difficult, to say the least. And that's why I think **reconciliation of enemies is only possible when there are *no* enemies of reconciliation**. Humanity has a long way to go yet....

GENERALS

As a first comment, **war is a time for general alarm; it's also a time for alarming generals**.

Hence, just as there is always a class clown in any group action, generals come in for a lot of flak about their behaviour and actions. The singular aspect of generals in war is probably their sense of righteousness about what they do, basically: lead men and women on to kill other women and men. So, I constructed a suggested maxim for all generals to help alleviate any sense of guilt: **the prosecution of war is good for the forces when the forces of good prosecute the war**. Yeah, man, right on! Not all wars go well, naturally; nor do all the battles. Troops often lose heart, even before they lose their lives. And generals just want to hold the line, using such exhortations as: **"Men! Pull out all the stops and stop all the pull outs!"**

So, it's *not* all plain sailing for the generals: they also have to contend with politicians who continually get in the way. Look what happened in Vietnam in the sixties and seventies; or the general mess still in Iraq and Afghanistan. That's the result, all too often, **when generals elect to go to war: politicians generally go to war with the electors**. And then the damn wars just go down the toilets....

Courage and sacrifice must be rewarded though, regardless of the outcome of any war - like all those Wall St banksters who ripped off the finances of the economic war still in progress. Generals avoid blatant bribes, of course. They'd rather **accumulate medals and stories; but again, a politician meddles and stories accumulate**. Ain't that the truth?

GRUNTS

We must have compassion for the soldier: misused, maligned, mismanaged and mangled. And always in the cross-hairs of snipers of death and slogan-sellers of life after death. So, **if mindless grunts are religious cannon fodder, are religious canons mindless fodder for grunts?**

Death is their trade, necessarily. Little wonder so much effort goes into injecting comedy, wherever possible, into their daily duties. How do you adapt? Well, here's my suggested slogan for gung-ho band of soldiers: **Part of us do death till death do us part**.

Last, but not least, have some pity for the guy who gets new recruits into shape. Those sergeants have just a few weeks to get those new dogfaces sorted out. Sure, it's stressful for

the new guys. But - how would you like to do it, over and over and over again, year in, year out?

Anybody recall *Re-enlistment Blues* in the 1954 movie *From Here to Eternity*? Well, here's the flip side - my suggested song title for Army Master Sergeants: **"Ah Got The Take In Blues Every Intake, That Ah Cain't Take In Anymo'!"**

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