

Every month since February 1987 the Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation has produced one-hour TV programs on issues related to peace, social justice, economics, the environment, and nonviolence. The Olympia FOR's program airs several times every week for the entire month on Thurston Community Television (TCTV), channel 22 for Thurston County's cable TV subscribers. You can see TCTV's schedule at www.tctv.net.

You can also watch the program described below (and many more than 100 of our previous interview programs and special programs) at the Olympia FOR's website, www.olympiafor.org. Simply click the **TV programs** link, scroll down, and click the program you want to watch. Many of our website's TV program listings also include links to documents describing the program in Word and/or .pdf format.

JULY 2015

“The U.S. Is Risking Nuclear War with Russia over Ukraine”

by Glen Anderson, producer and host of this TV series

Introduction

On January 14, 2015, the Union of Concerned Scientists moved their “Doomsday Clock” closer to midnight – now only 3 minutes to midnight – because of both the climate crisis and the risk of war between US and Russia over Ukraine.

The Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation's July 2015 TV program examines this European crisis, which mainstream American politicians and news media have been grossly misrepresenting. The thorough information below summarizes what we said on this TV program and includes some additional information on the topic.

When the Cold War ended nearly a quarter of a century ago, people around the world were hoping to enjoy peace instead of the toxic polarization that had been threatening worldwide devastation in nuclear war for nearly half a century.

But instead of exploring peaceful cooperation with Russia, the U.S. claimed that we had “won” the Cold War,

proclaimed that the U.S. was “the only remaining superpower,” pushed U.S. military dominance throughout the world (without the Soviet Union, the USSR) to counterbalance us, pushed NATO aggressively up to Russia's borders, kept our nuclear weapons ready to launch, and took other arrogant and aggressive actions.

The rest of the world did not like this.

Two very knowledgeable guests explain what is really going on and how to resolve this dangerous crisis. **Mary Hanson** and **Bernie Meyer** have long and deep expertise in understanding nuclear weapons and international conflicts. Mary and Bernie are active with both the Fellowship of Reconciliation (www.forusa.org and www.wvfor.org) and the Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action (www.gzcenter.org), which is next to the Trident nuclear submarine base 60 miles north of Olympia, 20 miles west of Seattle.

Background to the Ukraine Crisis

The context for the current crisis is rooted at the end of World War I in 1918 and also the end of World War II in 1945.

After England, France, and the U.S. defeated Germany in World War I in 1918, the winning nations humiliated and oppressed Germany. Nobody likes being pushed around, so in the 1920s and 1930s Germany reacted by exaggerating its nationalism and insisting that it deserved to dominate other nations. This reaction led to the madness of Nazism and World War II.

When World War II ended in 1945, the three most powerful winning nations were the US, England, and the Soviet Union. After the war these three nations met at Yalta (on Ukraine's southern coast on the north coast of the Black Sea) for the Yalta Conference and recognized that these three nations are “Great Powers” that are entitled to their respective “spheres of influence” – some dominance over neighboring nations without interference by the other “Great Powers.” From 1945 to the present day, the Russian people have taken very seriously their right to have a

sphere of influence, just like the American people have done.

Twenty million Russians died because of Nazi aggression (12 million soldiers and 8 million civilians), so the Russians felt they had earned their “Great Power” status. They became very deeply concerned about any encroachment toward their borders, and so they feel terribly threatened by the NATO expansion that has been occurring since the Cold War ended nearly a quarter of a century ago, when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

Soon after Mikhail Gorbachev became the Soviet Union’s leader in 1985, he began very significant reforms for his nation through *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring). Gorbachev also sought peace, so he and President Reagan came close to getting rid of nuclear weapons. This progress was stopped by some American neoconservatives (Richard Perle and others) who demanded that the US retain the capability for “missile defense” (the “Star Wars” missile defense system that actually was part of the US’s first-strike policy of starting and winning a nuclear war). The US’s intransigence on this is what crashed the hopeful progress toward peace.

A bit further toward the end of the Cold War – at the end of 1989 – the Soviet Union’s leader Mikhail Gorbachev and the US’s President George H.W. Bush (the first President Bush, before George W.), met on the island of Malta (south of Italy in the Mediterranean Sea) to discuss

the world situation. Gorbachev was hoping for better relations with the US and a “soft landing” for the Soviet Union.

This first President Bush recognized that militarism was destroying the Soviet Union from the inside. But instead of seeking real peace at Malta, Bush saw this as an opportunity to dominate that region, so he set the pattern that led to the crisis in Ukraine now. Under this older Bush, and then Clinton, the younger Bush, and now Obama, the US has broken promises and taken policy initiatives to expand NATO and take other actions to expand US power, intrude into Russia’s traditional sphere of influence, and push right up against Russia’s own borders. Instead of a peaceful Europe that allowed for political and economic experimentation and diversity, the US’s hawks kept pushing for military and economic dom.

Whereas Yalta gave Russia worldwide recognition as a world power, Malta tried to take it away. All US presidents from 1989 on to the present have been pursuing the same approach. In this bipartisan view, the US sees itself as the most powerful nation that is entitled to control every part of the world. In 2015 many Republican presidential candidates are even urging more wars.

This map shows US military bases surrounding Russia and China. Those nations are correct in feeling threatened. It is very reckless and dangerous to box people into a confined space and threaten them while they are trapped.

U.S. Bases Near Russia



The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis

In October 1962 the US and USSR came very close to a nuclear war that would have destroyed much of the world and killed billions of people. In 1961 the US had attempted to overthrow Cuba's government through the CIA's misguided invasion at Cuba's Bay of Pigs. Cuba felt threatened, so its ally, the USSR, moved nuclear missiles into Cuba to protect it from any further attack by the US. The US had already stationed in Italy and Turkey some ballistic missiles that could reach Moscow, the USSR's capital.

All of these actions infringed upon both superpowers' respective spheres of influence. However, the American people did not know about the missiles the US had stationed in Italy and Turkey. The USSR's missiles in Cuba

aroused the US government, so President Kennedy demanded that they be removed. For about two weeks in October 1962 Kennedy and Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev interacted provocatively in public, risking global destruction, and people in both nations were terrified. Finally they reached an agreement to remove the offending missiles from each side, and the world settled back to the ongoing Cold War with ongoing risk of nuclear war, but relieved at having dodged this crisis's bullet.

The US's military interference in Ukraine (part of what was the Soviet Union), on Russia's border, is correctly seen as a reverse of the Cuban Missile Crisis, with the US taking the initial provocative escalation.

The Wolfowitz Doctrine

For decades, one of the driving forces behind U.S. foreign policy has been a neoconservative named Paul Wolfowitz. He was powerful in the past several Republican administrations and continuing through Obama's era. Bernie Meyer briefly explained the Wolfowitz Doctrine and read us some relevant quotations about it.

In 1992, shortly after the USSR collapsed, Paul Wolfowitz was quoted as saying, "Our first objective is to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival, either on the territory of the former Soviet Union or elsewhere, that poses a threat on the order of that posed formerly by the Soviet Union. This is a dominant consideration underlying the new regional defense strategy and requires that we endeavor to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources would, under consolidated control, be sufficient to generate global power."

Wolfowitz played a major role in shaping US foreign policy under the first President George H.W. Bush. His 1992 document titled "Defense Planning Guidance for Fis-

cal Years 1994-99" similarly stated, "Our first objective is to prevent the reemergence of a new rival, either on the territory of the former Soviet Union or elsewhere, that poses a threat on the order of that posed formerly by the Soviet Union."

When George W. Bush was running for President in 2000, this Bush stated that his top goal would be to "take advantage of a tremendous opportunity – given few nations in history – to extend the current peace into the far realm of the future. A chance to project America's peaceful influence not just across the world, but across the ages."

The Wolfowitz Doctrine continues under President Obama. Journalist John Pilger quoted Obama's statement, "I believe in American exceptionalism with every fiber of my being." And the noted researcher/writer Michael Klare cited the part of Obama's May speech at West Point army academy in May 2014: "The United States is and remains the one indispensable nation ... That has been true for the century past and it will be true for the century to come."

The Rapidly Worsening Crisis in Ukraine

In the past few years a crisis has been emerging in Ukraine, which is southwest of Russia on the Black Sea, with Turkey and the Mediterranean Sea farther to the south.

For decades, Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union, but when the Soviet Union collapsed, Ukraine's economy became unstable. Many people in the eastern part of Ukraine identified with Russia (culturally, linguistically, politically, economically), while many people in the western part of the country identified more with Western Europe.

The European Union (EU) and NATO (the US-dominated European military alliance) were trying to include Ukraine into their sphere of influence, but many Ukrainians wanted a closer relationship with Russia. Indeed, Russia offered Ukraine a much better economic deal than the EU was offering. The EU's economic deal would have exploited Ukraine's economy.

Also, Ukraine is an important source and pipeline route for oil and natural gas. The US has used several schemes to hurt Russia's oil and natural gas industry, so pulling Ukraine away from Russia was part of this overall plan.

The US government has a long history of intervening in other countries' internal affairs (messing with their elections, funding breakaway groups, and even overthrowing governments). The US government actually played a role in the military coup that overthrew Ukraine's elected government. US politicians and mainstream media grossly distorted the facts and blamed this crisis on Russia.

Our guests summarized the role that Victoria Nuland, a very high-ranking person in the U.S. State Department, played in this. She has a long background as a neo-conservative hawk like Dick Cheney and Paul Wolfowitz. Victoria Nuland's husband, Robert D. Kagan, was the co-founder of the Project for a New American Century, the neo-conservative organization that pushed the Bush/Cheney Administration into aggressive wars.

Ukraine's democratically elected government was overthrown in February 2014. The US actively helped and financially supported the fascists who were part of the violent mobs that overthrew Ukraine's democracy. These included two neo-Nazi groups, Right Sector and Svoboda. The US spent billions of taxpayers' dollars preparing for the confrontation that is rapidly worsening, and now the US is escalating military confrontation with Russia even more.

Four-star General Philip Breedlove, Commander of the U.S. European Command and NATO Allied Command

Operations, has been vigorously urging more military escalation. Some powerful people in the US government – including the US's new Secretary of Defense, Ashton Carter – want to provide military weapons for Ukraine and give Ukraine the [mistaken] impression that they could fight Russia and win. In the spring of 2015 the US sent 300 military trainers to Ukraine, to train their soldiers who are fighting Russians in the eastern part of Ukraine. This is extremely dangerous!

Some of Ukraine's politicians lied about what Russia was doing. They released photos of Russian military vehicles, but those photos actually had been taken elsewhere and years before, in 2008. But some US members of Congress and US news media believed the lies and publicized them further. In general, the US news media have been accusing Russia of aggression, when really the US has been the aggressor, and Russia – as described above – has been feeling increasingly threatened by US/NATO hemming them in.

Knowledgeable people are saying the US is escalating the crisis recklessly into a fight with Russia that could lead to an actual war. The U.S. is doing "saber-rattling" and is even sending nuclear-armed warships into the region, so Russia is responding by sending ships to more places. Many experts are saying that nuclear war is becoming very much more likely.

Nuclear Weapons Are Always Dangerous – And Getting Worse

Nuclear war – whether by political miscalculation or computer accident or technical malfunction – is a hard reality every second of every minute of every hour of every day of every year. The U.S.'s political/economic/military squeeze on Russia is extremely reckless, since both the U.S. and Russia have thousands of nuclear weapons ready to launch.

The notion that a "limited" nuclear war is survivable is nonsense. Any nuclear war between the US and Russia would become an all-out nuclear war. On January 14, 2015, the Union of Concerned Scientist moved their "Doomsday Clock" closer to midnight – now only 3 minutes to midnight – because of both the climate crisis and the risk of war between US and Russia over Ukraine.

American politicians and mainstream media have lulled the American people into complacency about the ongoing, persistent danger from nuclear weapons. The realities, however, are extremely dangerous and actually getting worse!

The US tends to treat nuclear weapons as if they were just bigger, stronger conventional weapons that could be used. But actually the US is designing nuclear weapons to be more threatening to the other side. The US's approach – and intent – is to threaten Russia. Russia does perceive this

increased threat, so we are running the risk of provoking a nuclear war, either by intention or by miscalculation or even by accident.

The government and mainstream news media have covered up the many times when accidents, computer errors, training exercises, etc., have occurred that could easily have provoked one side or the other into thinking it was facing attack, and to launch weapons defensively.

The US's "first-strike" policy makes this even more dangerous, because the US has designed our weapons and strategies to be able to actually begin a nuclear war and destroy everything on the other side, so if Russia thinks (correctly or mistakenly) that it is being attacked, it would feel the need to launch their nuclear weapons at us rather than have them destroyed while still in their missile silos.

The world simply cannot tolerate such irresponsibility – such madness!

Indeed, the International Court of Justice has ruled against nuclear weapons! The ICJ is the judicial branch of the United Nations. In 1996 the International Court of Justice ruled that even possessing nuclear weapons violated international law. The Court also ruled that:

- 1) the threat or use of nuclear weapons “would generally be contrary” to humanitarian and other international law regulating the conduct of warfare;
- 2) under Article VI of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and other international law, states are obligated to “pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.”

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) went into effect in 1970. Nearly every nation signed on to this great bargain, which was designed to stop the spread of nuclear weapons while also moving toward worldwide nuclear disarmament. The deal was that the nations that did not have nuclear weapons agreed to not acquire them. In exchange, the nations that did have them agreed to make real progress toward getting rid of them.

The NPT went into effect in 1970 – 45 years ago. It has worked pretty well, in that the “have-not” nations have kept their end of the bargain. However, the “have” nations have failed to get rid of them. The US has been bullying Iran – a nation that is actually complying with the NPT – while the US itself has been violating the NPT for more than four decades.

Every five years the NPT comes up for review. In the latest review, which ended in May 2015, the US actually sabotaged the renewal because most of the rest of the world wanted a Nuclear-Free Zone in the Middle East, but the US wants Israel (which never signed the NPT and developed nuclear weapons) to continue being the only nation in that region that possesses nuclear weapons.

Mainstream news media generally ignore this crucial information, and also ignore the fact that President Obama, who won a Nobel Peace Prize for saying he opposes nuclear weapons, is actually pushing for a much, much bigger budget for more new nuclear weapons.

Some US missiles could carry either conventional or nuclear weapons, so this uncertainty makes Russia even more nervous because they would likely assume that any missiles we launch are nuclear-armed. When the US and NATO move missiles closer to Russia, we are reducing the amount of time for Russia to decide whether an apparent attack is really happening. While the US’s satellites allow more time to see what is going on, Russia’s radar is limited only to “line of sight.” They have only six minutes to decide whether to launch or face destruction. This makes nuclear war more likely.

Even routine handling of nuclear weapons is extremely dangerous. There have been many accidents and near-misses, but this news has been suppressed. For example, the US did not really launch an attack in 1995 when a scientific rocket was launched from Norway but nobody notified Russia that it was only a scientific rocket, so Russia nearly launched nuclear weapons at us in defense. The US provides Trident nuclear submarines and nuclear weapons to Britain. Recently Britain experienced a serious scandal about gross negligence and recklessness in dealing with nuclear weapons on their Trident submarines.

The US has been launching many weapons into space, where they are ready to attack any nation on earth at any time. This is part of the US’s strategy of “full-spectrum dominance,” which means militarily dominating all of space in addition to all of the earth’s land and oceans.

Nuclear war – whether by political miscalculation or computer accident or technical malfunction – is a hard reality every second of every minute of every hour of every day of every year. The U.S.’s political/economic/military squeeze on Russia is extremely reckless, since both the U.S. and Russia have thousands of nuclear weapons ready to launch.

The public needs a serious well-informed discussion about all of this!

How to Prevent Nuclear War

Several of the Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation’s previous TV programs have discussed the dangers in more detail than the discussion above, and have discussed how to reduce those dangers. Look for several in the “TV Programs” section of www.olympiafor.org

On this TV program, our guests mentioned just a few remedies. We have been urging all nations with nuclear weapons to take them off of the hair-trigger “alert” status in order to allow time for human thought and evaluation instead of a knee-jerk reaction to launch. Another remedy would be to physically remove the warhead from the missile, to require more time to reassemble before launching.

Certainly diplomacy and mutual self-interest of avoiding world destruction should be a factor. The US should stop provoking Russia into a possible nuclear war. We should work constructively with Russia and other nations toward abolishing nuclear weapons everywhere. The very hawkish Israeli leader from a few decades ago, Moshe Dayan, said something sensible: “If you want to make peace, you don’t talk to your friends. You talk to your enemies.”

We should actively support the parts of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) that would reduce the risk. We should start obeying the Article VI and cut funding for nuclear weapons. Also, we should support the creation of

Nuclear-Free Zones in various parts of the world, as authorized by NPT's Article VII.

International Humanitarian Law is relevant to nuclear weapons. This deserves study, organizing and action.

Psychological Pitfalls and Remedies

The US seems to be trapped in our aggressive foreign policy partly because we are trapped by aggressive demands for oil and trapped in an aggressive “endless growth” economic system that is not sustainable, so it pushes up against limits. We don't like limits, so we pretend that we can overcome them by military violence. Partly this is because Americans somehow think we are “entitled” to “endless growth” and “entitled” to dominate the world. This arrogance causes suffering to other people – and the whole planet's ecosystems. They become merely “collateral damage.”

American capitalism's manic “pro-growth” economic and energy policies are horribly unsustainable, but our political and economic leaders and their media supporters deceive Americans into thinking that we are entitled to be #1 in the world and push other countries around, including countries that have their own large egos. Not only does the US think it is entitled to lord it over all other nations, but that – because of “American exceptionalism” – we are not even subject to the laws of nature, so we can deny limits to “growth,” deny the climate crisis, deny that other people and nations have feelings that we hurt when we dominate and humiliate them.

Americans do not seem to realize that during World War II, the Soviet Union lost 12 million soldiers' lives and 8 million civilians' lives because of Nazi aggression against them, so today's Russians strongly oppose nuclear war and strongly oppose the rise of fascism and Nazism in Europe. When the US supports fascists and neo-Nazis in Ukraine and pushes NATO up against Russia's borders we are provoking serious psychological fears and potentially violent reactions. Militarism simply provokes more polarization.

The rest of Europe recognizes that this is not a “mind game” and cannot be dismissed as cavalierly as many US politicians and media do. Europeans have suffered war on their territory and do not want this increased tension and danger.

When one nuclear-armed nation provokes and challenges another nuclear-armed nation, this is like playing a suicidal game of “chicken.” Calculations and recalculations could miscalculate – or result in an accident, as mentioned above.

U.S. politicians and mainstream media demonize Russian President Vladimir Putin with the same kind of ignorant animosity that right-wing Republicans demonize U.S. President Barack Obama. Putin is bad in some ways, but American politicians and media have veered far away from

reality in order to create a demon for us to hate. We need to understand the nations with which our government is fomenting conflicts, but our politicians and media do not want us to understand, just to hate and mobilize for a new Cold War. This smacks of a profound lack of empathy and compassion – like a psychopath who can torture someone without concern for that person's feelings.

Increasing fear only makes things worse. People do not want to feel afraid, so they don't want to recognize the seriousness of the problem. This results in denial.

It can be hard to speak out about these matters. During the early-to-mid-1950s, U.S. Senator Joe McCarthy terrorized our nation's political scene and demonized people who did not toe a rigid hardline anti-communist agenda. Now we are experiencing a new McCarthyism in which people are demonized if they do not agree with the government's line about Russia. The new McCarthyism deceptively spins peace as “appeasement.” But instead of forced orthodoxy, we need honest, accurate discussion of foreign policy.

How can we help people think more open-mindedly, seek alternative sources of information, and break free from a doctrinaire “group-think”? How can we help people be willing to consider these difficult issues?

Instead of provoking Russia into a possible nuclear war, the U.S. should be working constructively with Russia and other nations toward abolishing nuclear weapons everywhere.

Let's change US policy away from polarization. Find things the US and Russia can cooperate on – not just in terms foreign policy but also scientific and cultural cooperation and other ways to cooperate. Pursue “confidence-building measures” (CBMs) that will build good working relationships and trust, starting with small matters and building up toward big matters.

A creative, constructive approach would be to explore ways for the US and Russia to collaborate in win-win projects. What do the US and Russia have in common? Both are being seriously affected already by the climate crisis, and extreme weather will cause more crises. Could we use our militaries to collaborate to deploy resources to address the climate crisis – and rescue people from crises?

Russia and the US are pushing hard to extract fossil fuels from the Arctic and elsewhere. Instead of competing militarily, we should cooperate for better solutions that will not make the climate crisis worse and will not provoke a

new Cold War. We need solutions that are not driven by profits and military competition.

Actually, solar power is being adopted at a faster rate than had been predicted.

Good Non-Profit Organizations and News Sources Support Peace

Both TV guests and the host studied a lot to prepare for this thoughtful, informative interview about the crisis in Ukraine. We appreciate many great articles by several authors in *The Nation* Magazine.

Both of our guests are active with the **Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action**, which is located next to the Trident nuclear submarine base at Bangor in Kitsap County. Ground Zero exists because we have the world's 3rd largest concentration of nuclear weapons in our backyard. Trident is a first-strike weapon. GZ's website is www.gzcenter.org

The **Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space** provides a wealth of information and organizes activities, especially about the US's militarization

of space, but also about related concerns. See www.space4peace.org and www.space4peace.blogspot.com

Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility (www.wpsr.org) is our state's affiliate of a great nationwide organization. They work on nuclear weapons, nuclear waste, and more.

One of the US's major nuclear weapons plants is in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, so I get information from the **Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance (OREPA)**, www.orepa.org.

Many more organizations work on the issues we have been discussing. Contact the Olympia FOR at (360) 491-9093 www.olympiafor.org for additional referrals.

Conclusion

A quarter of a century ago, the end of the Cold War should have resulted in peace. If we had slashed the military budget, we could have used the savings to actually end poverty, end hunger, and end homelessness in the US and worldwide. Instead of endless wars, we could have met the world's needs for education, health care, and alternative energy.

But powerful forces wanted to keep the military-industrial complex rich at our expense.

Apart from economic greed, probably there are some psychological motivations that cause some people to want to bully other people, which they were able to do without the Soviet Union to resist that.

The problems are political, economic, psychological, and even spiritual.

Likewise the solutions must include political, economic, psychological, and spiritual.