WAGING PEACE SERIES

We wish to introduce you to the Waging Peace Series. As far as is known, the term "Waging Peace" originated with Warren Wells, late husband of Ethel Wells of Santa Barbara, in a letter to President Eisenhower. It was a long-standing practice of Mr. Wells to keep in close touch with key national figures and give them his views on peace issues as well as other vital matters. This series is dedicated both as a memorial to him and in gratitude to Mrs. Wells for her continued efforts in this cause.

Just as peace is more than the absence of war, waging peace is more than supporting arms reductions. In addition, it embraces positive steps toward genuine harmony. In this series the Foundation will distribute short booklets stressing ideas for attaining peace. Some publications will be scholarly, others more popular in style—most will combine elements of both. Concepts expressed will include views of many authorities, and will not necessarily be those of the Foundation.

Suggestions for topics and your reactions to this issue are welcome. Quantity lots are available at minimal charge from the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation.

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THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY IN THE NUCLEAR AGE

ADMIRAL GENE R. LA ROCQUE

Nuclear Age Peace Foundation
Distinguished Statesman Award
1985

OTHER WAGING PEACE BOOKLETS

1. **Can We Change Our Thinking?** by Charles W. Jamison
2. **Creating a New Institution: A United States Academy of Peace,** by Frank K. Kelly
3. **Preventing Accidental Nuclear War,** by David Krieger
4. **Nuclear Strategy and the Defense of Europe,** by Robert C. Aldridge
5. **Needed: A Nuclear Age Peace Corps—An Alternative to Annihilation,** by Frank K. Kelly

INTRODUCTION

Admiral Gene R. La Rocque was the 1985 recipient of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation's Distinguished Statesman Award. In this issue of **Waging Peace** we have published the speech given by Admiral La Rocque upon accepting his award. The admiral, as one connected with the military for nearly 50 years, in positions ranging from commander of a nuclear-armed ship to a Pentagon planner of nuclear and conventional warfare, is particularly well qualified to address the issue of "The Role of the Military in the Nuclear Age."

Admiral La Rocque is the founder and director of the Center for Defense Information in Washington, D.C. The Center is a non-profit educational organization headed by retired United States military officers. The organization, while supporting a strong defense, opposes excessive expenditures for weapons and policies that increase the danger of nuclear war. In applying a military perspective from outside of government to major strategic measures of the day, the Center for Defense Information has played a unique and important role in educating American citizens on the dangers of a continued nuclear arms race.

It has been asked of us whether it is not incongruous to give a peace award to a retired military leader. We think not. The Distinguished Statesman Award is made to individuals demonstrating courageous leadership in the cause of peace. We believe that such individuals can and do come from all types of background. In honoring Admiral La Rocque we honor much more than a retired military officer—one trained to both follow and give orders that his side may prevail in battle. We honor a man who has been a leader and an inspiration to countless others in seeking peace in the nuclear age.

In his speech Admiral La Rocque says bluntly—as he is inclined to do—that "fighting a nuclear war is utterly insane." He also tells us that fighting and winning a nuclear war is the task that the military thinks we have given them. In other words, the military is simply trying to use its most efficient weapons to do its job. If we want the situation to

be otherwise, we—as citizens of a great democracy—must participate in redefining the role of the military in the nuclear age.

In a special section in this issue of our **Waging Peace Series** we have excerpted from statements by General Douglas MacArthur, General Omar N. Bradley and Lord Mountbatten, all great military leaders of the twentieth century. They share with Admiral La Rocque a common concern for the futility of using nuclear weapons in warfare.

As always, we urge you to share this **Waging Peace** booklet with others, and to send us your comments on the issues it raises.

David Krieger
June 1985

The Role of the Military in the Nuclear Age
Gene R. La Rocque

I am very pleased and very proud to accept this award as Distinguished Statesman. It's an award I will treasure, and I accept with great humility—because for just about as long as I can remember I have been exhibiting a most unstatesmanlike behavior.

For nearly 50 years my profession has been one of war, not statesmanship. When I was 17 years old, the army first put a rifle in my hands, and I've spent the rest of my life in military organizations. Next year that will be an even 50 years. I went from the infantry to the horse cavalry (yes, we had horses), to the army air corps, to the United States Navy and then chose Pearl Harbor to welcome the Japanese. My active duty spans three wars. My last active combat, actual combat, was Vietnam. So for 50 years I've dedicated my intellect and my energies to preparing for wars, fighting in wars and analyzing wars. **I'm here to tell you tonight that war is a very dumb way to settle differences between nations. And nuclear war is utterly insane.**

I'm supposed to talk tonight about the role of the military in the Nuclear Age. As always, the role of the military is the same—it is to fight and win wars. That's our job. That's what you have asked us to do. Our success depends on our professionalism, and a professional military force is one that kills and destroys efficiently. An unprofessional force kills inefficiently, ineffectively.

I want to tell you, we've got one of the most professional military forces in the world. Each branch of the service—the army, the navy, the air force and the marine corps—is striving always for greater professionalism. That professionalism leads us to try to acquire better and better weapons; that is, more destructive weapons, weapons that kill and destroy more efficiently. It is for that reason that we're building more and more nuclear weapons. You see, the urge to acquire better weapons leads us to the

acquisition of nuclear weapons. Why? Because nuclear weapons are the best weapons man has ever invented.

Some of my colleagues tell me nuclear weapons can never be used, but nuclear weapons are desired by every branch of the military service because they are the most efficient way to kill and destroy. You may have forgotten—many of you may not—but in World War II we killed 50 million people. We civilized human beings killed 50 million people. So, you see, it's not a great big jump to be talking about killing hundreds of millions.

So pervasive have nuclear weapons become in our military today that they are now the conventional weapons. We've nuclearized our army divisions, our air wings, and 80 percent of U.S. Navy warships routinely carry nuclear weapons. When you see a warship off your coast, if it's a U.S. Navy warship, you've got an 80 percent chance that it is floating around with nuclear weapons.

When I had command of a guided missile cruiser, the Providence, in 1964, we used to ride up and down your coast with nuclear weapons. We were one of the first to get them on surface ships, and when I had command nobody told me I couldn't use them. Nobody said I had to get a message from anybody to use them. They were my main battery. They were, in fact, the only weapons that I had to shoot down a Soviet or any other enemy missile or aircraft that were any good. As a matter of fact, while I'm mentioning that, the only way that we could destroy a Soviet submarine today is with a nuclear weapon. The only way the Soviets can destroy one of our submarines today is with a nuclear weapon. The old fashioned depth charges are gone. We have nuclearized our military forces.

We've got them, you'll say, but we're never going to use them. Well, **the United States and the Soviet Union are both planning, training, arming and practicing for nuclear war everyday.**

We Are On A Collision Course

Okay, you say, but are we going to have nuclear war? Yes, we are. We are going to have a nuclear war if we stay on this course. We and the Soviet Union are on a collision course. They're trying to expand. We're trying to control them. We don't like their economic system. They're anti-God. We don't like their political system. We don't like anything about them, and we and the Soviets are on a collision course. It is a course which is going to lead to nuclear war if we stay on it.

Our Secretary of Defense has identified the Soviet Union as the enemy. Our President says the Soviet Union is an evil empire and ought to be relegated to the ash heap of history. Our Vice-President says we can fight and win a nuclear war. We're dramatically increasing the number of nuclear weapons we have. **You and I are building five nuclear weapons a day. In a ten year period, we're building 17,000 new nuclear weapons.** There's eight billion dollars this year in the Department of Energy budget for the sole purpose of building nuclear weapons. If you don't want them there, do something about it. If you don't want to build those nuclear weapons, then the control you have is not to spend the $8 billion to build them this year. We are also building many new vehicles to carry those nuclear weapons to the Soviet union, as if we didn't already have more than enough.

Nuclear war can start by accident. We may very well work with the **Nuclear Age Peace Foundation** to try to find ways to prevent an accidental start of a nuclear war. Nuclear war can start by miscalculation, computer error, electronic malfunction, or it can start by design. Don't forget: Maggie Thatcher can start a nuclear war. So can Mitterand. So can the Chinese. So can the Russians. So can we. Give us another 15 years to the end of this century, and there'll be a lot more countries that can start a nuclear war.

Everybody says that they don't want a nuclear war. But

both sides are acting as if they did. If we stay on this course, we're going to have a nuclear war. But we don't have to, and that's where I think the **Nuclear Age Peace Foundation** and all of you come in. We don't have to stay on this course, but you'd better do something. Can you win a nuclear war? No. No way to win it. But our Vice-President said we could. He thought we could. When our President, Mr. Reagan, submitted his budget to the Congress of the United States for fiscal year 1983, here is what the budget report said: *"The military posture of the United States is to give us the capability to fight successfully a conventional and a nuclear war."*

That's what we're arming for: to fight successfully a nuclear war. That's why we're building the MX, the Trident II, the Pershing II, and yes, the Star Wars Space Defense Initiative. We are trying to find a way to fight and win a nuclear war, and we're building the weapons to do it. We're not satisfied with simply providing a retaliatory capability to deter an attack. We want to prevail in a nuclear war, which is what Mr. Weinberger says publicly often.

I was giving a talk at one of our major war colleges a couple of years ago to colonels, captains, generals and admirals, and I said, "Look, fellows, we're all professionals. You know, I know, there's no way to fight and win a nuclear war, right?" I finished my lecture, and a colonel gets up and says, "Admiral, you're right. We don't know how to fight and win a nuclear war. But it's our job to *find* a way to win a nuclear war!" That's what's driving the arms race. I said, "Colonel, I understand where you're coming from. Sure, you and I didn't join this outfit to fight a war to a draw. We didn't join this outfit to lose a war, but you ought to level with the American public. Tell them you don't know how to win a nuclear war, and stop trying to fool them by suggesting that if they'll give you thousands of more nuclear weapons and billions of more dollars that you can find a way to win a nuclear war. There isn't a way. That's the dangerous part of Mr. Reagan's Space Defense Initiative.

You hear a lot of people, even in the military, talk about controlling a nuclear war. "We're gonna use a few nukes, and they'll use a few nukes. We're gonna control it." That is just *crazy*. Once you start exploding nuclear weapons, the lid is off. You see, it takes only one country to start a nuclear war: the British, the French, the Chinese, the Russians, ourselves. But what does it take to stop a nuclear war once you've started one in Europe? It takes an agreement among four nations, the British, the French, the Russians, and ourselves to stop—otherwise somebody will keep exploding nuclear weapons.

If we have a nuclear war, we can't win it. Can we survive it? I don't know. Nobody knows. That's the tragedy of it—nobody knows. Anybody that tells you that this many people are going to be killed and this many are going to survive doesn't know what he's talking about. I'll tell you why. We've only exploded one nuclear weapon at a time in the history of man. We know what happened in Nagasaki—it killed 100,000 people and destroyed a city with a little peanut of a bomb. But what we don't know is what is going to happen when thousands of nuclear weapons go off in the United States, the Soviet Union, Europe, and God knows where else. We simply don't know. There *may* be some survivors. The only question is, really, whether or not the plants and animals on this planet will survive. They may well not. Carl Sagan and his colleagues don't think that they will.

We're getting closer to a war we don't want, a war we can't control, a war in which we can't defend ourselves, a war we can't win, and a war we probably can't survive. So what do we do? Mr. Reagan's idea is to build a Space Defense Initiative, and try to defend ourselves. I don't think that's going to work. It's going to waste a lot of money. It's a theft from the American public because there is no way to defend a country against nuclear weapons. There are too many ways to get around it, the defense; too many ways to deliver nuclear weapons.

How about the negotiations over in Geneva? Are we going to get a treaty? No. We're not going to get an agreement over there to reduce arms. Because there is not one weapons system that we in the United States want to give up. Can anybody here think of one weapon we'd like to give up? Do you think we're going to give up the MX? The Trident II? The Pershing II? Cruise missiles, the B-1, the stealth bomber? No. Not even the Space Defense Initiative. We want to build them all. So don't look for any negotiated settlement to this arms race. In fairness, I suspect the Soviets don't have any weapons they want to give up either.

Is the United Nations going to solve our problems? No. A hundred and sixty countries there, and they're not going to solve them either. I wish they could, but when we ask can the U.N. do it, we're really saying: "Will somebody else solve our problems?" Nobody else is going to.

Einstein said that we had to have new ways of thinking. I think Einstein was right, but only half right. I think we must find new ways of acting, not just new ways of thinking! We must *act* as if there are nuclear weapons around. Yes, we may have to think differently, but we must find some new ways of acting in this world or we're going to blow ourselves up and end the whole thing.

We Have a Tremendous Responsibility

We have a tremendous responsibility. We're the most powerful country in the world. We started this whole thing! We invented the atomic bomb. We blew up Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We're three to five years ahead of the Soviets in the development in every strategic weapon system that has been built. We're still ahead of them, and we're determined to stay ahead of them. We have a certain arrogance that wants us to stay ahead when it has become meaningless. Once both sides can destroy each other, who is ahead has lost all significance. But we keep the arms race going. We keep building more sophisticated weapons that can arrive more quickly on target. That's not so bad, you

say, that's just technology—but it puts a hair trigger on the response of both sides.

There is an inherent danger in this continual build-up of better and more destructive weapons. We may be the most powerful country in the world, but we're only 5 percent of the world's population. We're only one of 160 countries. We don't run the world anymore. We ran it for awhile, but we don't run it anymore. We're going to have to adjust to the fact that we're one of 160 countries and 5 percent of the world's population; and there are some wonderful things going on in other countries—as wonderful as ours is.

I've been to 86 countries in this business, and everywhere I go I find nice people like all of you. They want to make love, they want to listen to the radio, they want to play tennis, they want to do their own thing. They are not very much concerned about ideological, economic and political differences. They want to live their lives very quietly.

I think tnat you need to do something every day if you want to avert a nuclear war. You ought to be writing your Congressman. Oh, that's old stuff, you say. I've got a better idea that I want to suggest to you. There is one thing in this country that is different from other countries, and that is simply this: You can call the White House. You can't call the Kremlin; you can't call the Blue House in Korea; but you can call the White House. And I want to suggest that you do that on any weekday from 9 to 5. I call every week. When you call, they'll answer: "White House, Executive Office," and you say, "I'd like to speak to the Comment Section, please." Then say, "I want to tell Mr. Reagan to please not buy more nuclear weapons." And the lady will say, "yes, thank you, anything else?" Say that you'll call him next week about something else. I know about this because my wife, Lili, was a volunteer in the White House under Mr. Carter. They do keep records. Here's the telephone number, and you don't even have to write it down. Just call Washington, area code 202, then 4-5-6 (everybody can remember 4,5,6), and then the others are

76-39. You see, I'm 76, and Lili's 39. Now give the President a call; it's a very exciting and wonderful experience in participatory democracy because after you've called the White House a couple of times, you'll want to start calling everybody else, and that's good. The more people you call, the better off we're going to be.

I say do something every week. People often say to me, what should I do? What can I do? Well, I would say do whatever you feel comfortable doing. If you feel like a Daniel Berrigan or somebody else, go do that. If you feel like writing letters, do that. But you must do something. Join a group. If you don't belong to the **Nuclear Age Peace Foundation,** you ought to. One thing you have to do is give a little money to them. My mother sends us $3 every year, and I promise her I'm going to spend it wisely. If you do not do anything, if *we* do not do anything, we're going to spend the rest of our years in perpetual fear and tension, draining the wealth of our nation, or we're going to have a nuclear war. And neither of those options is very nice to contemplate. Perpetual fear and tension, or nuclear war. So we must do something.

We have a great deal of pride in our country, and we should have. But it's *our* country, and I sometimes wonder when we talk about "our leaders" whether or not in fact we have any leaders in a democracy. I think it's a cop-out sometimes when we talk about "our leaders." We're the leaders! Mr. Reagan is on your payroll. He's on my payroll; I've hired him to go to Washington to work for four years, and renewed his contract for another four. He works for us; he works for you and he works for me. So I end on this note: the role of the military is very much the same in peacetime in preparation for the so-called non-nuclear war as it is in the preparation for nuclear war. The military is trying to fight and win a nuclear war. That's the job we've given them. That's the job they think you pay them to perform. But I would submit to you that war, as Clemenceau said, is much too important to be left to the generals, and survival is too important to be left to anyone but us. ■

Question: The military industrial complex seems to have a lot of power over Congress. Do you see any way to convert the complex in any meaningful way?

Admiral La Rocque: That's a very good question. When I came into the navy in 1940 the navy made everything itself. We made our own ships, our planes, our guns, our paint, our rope, our uniforms—we made it all! We did not make it for profit. Maybe we didn't make it very efficiently, I don't know, but we did not make it for profit and we didn't have a great deal of influence on the Congress. Now we don't make anything anymore in the military. We've given our arsenals and everything else over to civilian control for *profit*. It's all big business and, you're absolutely right, they have a tremendous influence on the Congress. A Congressman wants to get re-elected. So he listens to those people who come to him to build weapons, who make contributions to his campaign. It is a bit of a dilemma. After all, the Congressman is the representative. So we can't fault him or her too much either. He or she is representing their constituents, and their constituents have jobs in industries that want to make a profit. So that is a dilemma.

I will tell you what we have been suggesting. I've been testifying in the Congress that **we ought to take the profit out of preparing for war.** As long as you are making a profit, I think we'll keep building up. But there is no reason, in my view, for a little old man from upper state New York to be making a profit on General Electric stock when General Electric is making weapons designed to defend General Electric! There shouldn't be a profit motive there. Now, how do you do it? We can treat defense production like a public utility, and give it a 10 percent profit. You see you don't necessarily make a lot of money making weapons, but you can't lose if you are building weapons for the military. You are certain to not only break even, but to make a handsome profit if not a great big one.

Question: How do you feel about American foreign policy and our involvement with the third world?

Admiral La Rocque: In 1947, this great nation of ours changed course. We did it consciously with a law in 1947, the National Security Act of 1947. We became a national security state. One of the things we did at that time was to provide for dividing up the *whole* world into military districts. We're the only country in the history of the world that has ever done it to this day. There is a Commander-in-Chief Pacific, a Commander-in-Chief Atlantic, a Commander-in-Chief Europe, a Commander-in-Chief South, a Commander-in-Chief Middle East, and so on. Now what happens when a problem occurs in a Third World country? The commander looks through his military binoculars and he sees a military problem, so he's got an immediate military solution. That generates a requirement for him to collect intelligence, have supplies, troops ready to fight, and something called a *Rapid Deployment Force.* That sounds almost benign, doesn't it? You know, quick start, dash off somewhere: Rapid Deployment Force. What that means is, we're going to send a lot of soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen to go someplace to kill people, destroy their homes, blow up their bridges—very rapidly. I would submit that in terms of dealing with other countries as far as the military is concerned, we need a **Slow Deployment Force.** In other words, if we're going to kill a bunch of kids somewhere and destroy homes and factories, we ought to go very carefully, cautiously, deliberately, and know why we're doing it and say it's all worthwhile. Perhaps in that process we'll decide that it isn't necessary.

I think that we ought to let other countries decide what kind of political system they want and what kind of economic system they want. I don't think we ought to be supporting dictators anywhere.

I would like us to be interventionists everywhere in the world. I would like to intervene everywhere with whatever benefits we've had from living in this land—health care, education, housing. We also need to learn from those people, learn how their cultures have prospered in the past, learn from their mistakes and their successes. **We ought to be actively involved everywhere in the world all the time, but not militarily.**

THOUGHTS OF OTHER MILITARY LEADERS

"The central problem of our time—as I view it—is how to employ human intelligence for the salvation of mankind. It is a problem we have put upon ourselves. For we have defiled our intellect by the creation of such scientific instruments of destruction that we are now in desperate danger of destroying ourselves. Our plight is critical and with each effort we have made to relieve it by further scientific advance, we have succeeded only in aggravating our peril.

"As a result, we are now speeding inexorably toward a day when even the ingenuity of our scientists may be unable to save us from the consequences of a single rash act or a lone reckless hand upon the switch of an uninterceptible missile. For 12 years now we've sought to stave off this ultimate threat of disaster by devising arms which would be both ultimate and disastrous.

"This irony can probably be compounded a few more years, or perhaps even a few decades. Missiles will bring anti-missiles, and anti-missiles will bring anti-anti-missiles. But inevitably, this whole electronic house of cards will reach a point where it can be constructed no higher.

"At that point we shall have come to the peak of this whole incredible dilemma into which the world is shoving itself. And when that time comes there will be little we can do other than to settle uneasily, smother our fears, and attempt to live in a thickening shadow of death."

General Omar N. Bradley
November 5, 1957

"Now, electronics and other processes of science have raised the destructive potential to encompass millions. And with relentless hands we work feverishly in dark laboratories to find the means to destroy all at one blow.

"But this very triumph of scientific annihilation—this very success of invention—has destroyed the possibility of war's being a medium for the practical settlement of international differences. The enormous destruction to both sides of closely matched opponents makes it impossible

for even the winner to translate it into anything but his own disaster.

"Global war has become a Frankenstein to destroy both sides. No longer is it a weapon of adventure—the shortcut to international power. If you lose, you are annihilated. If you win, you stand only to lose. No longer does it possess even the chance of the winner of a duel. It contains now only the germs of double suicide."

General Douglas MacArthur
July 5, 1961

"As a military man who has given half a century of active service I say in all sincerity that the nuclear arms race has no military purpose. Wars cannot be fought with nuclear weapons. Their existence only adds to our perils because of the illusions which they have generated.

"There are powerful voices around the world who still give credence to the old Roman concept—if you desire peace, prepare for war. This is absolute nuclear nonsense and I repeat—it is a disastrous misconception to believe that by increasing the total uncertainty one increases one's own certainty."

Lord Mountbatten
August 1979

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