Kiev insists that its 1991 borders are inviolable, while Russia will not cede the areas it has taken. This dispute looms as an insuperable obstacle to negotiations. However, a review of the circumstances of Ukrainian independence suggests a way around.

Ukraine had been part of Russia for 340 years. As the unearthly specter of independence hove into view in 1990, the Ukrainians began bargaining with Russia in earnest. In their declarations of independence of 1990 and 1991 they pledged, “The Ukrainian SSR solemnly declares its intention of becoming a permanently neutral state that does not participate in military blocs . . .”

Four months later, voilà! Ukraine got its independence. It was not written anywhere, independence for neutrality. But that was the unspoken deal. For the next twenty-three years, Ukraine stayed neutral. Russia did not touch an inch of its territory. Russia even rebuffed the Crimeans who voted for independence in 1991 and 1994.

In 2008 the United States got NATO to declare Ukrainian membership a goal. The then-government of Ukraine expressed interest. But 65 percent of Ukraine’s population were native Russian speakers. In 2009 they elected a government that restored neutrality. With clandestine US help, the extra-parliamentary Far Right violently overthrew this government in 2014. The elected president fled for his life. This was called the “Revolution of Dignity.” As the Far Right consolidated its power, Obama sent non-lethal military aid, Trump sent lethal, and Biden transferred directly from US stocks. The United States conducted Ukraine into various NATO anterooms, while Ukraine sought full membership. By this it tore to pieces what was left of its neutrality pledge. This freed Russia from its grant of sovereignty. It could foreclose. It did this with a brutal invasion of two years’ duration whose horror only increases by the day.

To end this horror, it would suffice for Ukraine to merely redeem its founding pledge of neutrality. It did this briefly in the March 2022 negotiations and was to get all its provinces back. The 1991 deal would be restored! But it walked away under Western pressure and Russia formally reincorporated these lands. Since Russia cannot be dislodged, the best thing is to acknowledge its colorable claim under common law and move on. Even after losing these four provinces, Ukraine still has nineteen left. Let it concentrate on planting their rich soil and drawing their fine ores.
OMNICIDAL INCREASES IN THE US NUCLEAR WEAPONS ARSENAL

By Pam Richard

The development and production of US nuclear weapons has been handed over to private corporations. They are getting billions of dollars for a dangerous build-up of the nuclear weapons arsenal. It’s 1 & 1/2 minutes to midnight on the 2024 Doomsday Clock of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists. This is driving a new global arms race, which could end in omnicide.

Lockheed Martin, Northrop-Grumman, Raytheon and others are already reaping record profits for the beginning stages of the “Modernization Program” to rebuild the entire nuclear arsenal to make it operational until the 2080s or longer, if there is no nuclear war. The Pentagon plans to spend an estimated $756 billion over the next 10 years on its nuclear forces, according to the Congressional Budget Office. This includes replacing the Minuteman ICBMs with Sentinel Missiles, launching a fleet of new missile-carrying Columbia-class submarines, and upgrading nuclear warheads and the communications systems.

The most expensive project is to replace the Minuteman III (ICBM) system with the ground based strategic deterrent. Costs were estimated at $100 billion on the new missiles, silos, and control systems to be completed by 2030. The Pentagon announced in January 2024 that the 450-missile Minuteman silos won’t be operational by 2030. In 2009 the projected cost was $61B, $96B in 2020, and had ballooned to $131B in 2024 (a 37% increase). Some projections put the final cost at $250 billion.

The GAO has criticized the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and Pentagon for constant cost overruns, schedule delays, and increases in the cost of materials and labor. Problems have ensued as companies prioritize profits over safety and disregard our environment.

Northrop-Grumman has the contract to build more than 600 of the new Sentinel missiles. They lead a team, including the infamous Bechtel corporation, for reconstruction of 450 silos and dozens of underground control centers. Pentagon officials have called the rehab the biggest “infrastructure” project since the creation of the interstate highway system the 1950s.

The DOE-funded nuclear weapons enterprise is also highly privatized.

The NNSA is building massive new bomb plants. The nuclear weapons complex is expanding at all of the sites across the US, with multibillion dollar buildings, more workers, more radioactive waste disposal problems, and more environmental destruction. The DOE’s NNSA has hundreds of billions of dollars of past nuclear waste to clean up.

Expanded plutonium pit production for the Sentinel missiles is NNSA’s most complex and expensive program ever, now costing approximately $60 billion over the next 25 years. But the GAO has reported that NNSA still has no credible cost estimates and we surely can expect large increases.

The entire nuclear weapons arsenal should be dismantled and retired forever, and the US should join the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.
Because the US peace movement is located geographically and politically in the United States it most appropriately has criticized US policy: on supplying weapons to Ukraine, on increasing involvement of NATO in the Ukraine war, and on pressuring other countries to join the war in support of Ukraine. And the United States has been the principal enabler of Israel’s brutal policy in Gaza and the West Bank. As the violence has advanced, some analysts have begun to worry about an escalation to nuclear war between the West and Russia and a spread of war to the South China Sea, against China, as well as a regional war in the Middle East/Persian Gulf against Iran, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon.

At the same time, progressive forces in the United States are increasingly mobilizing against the far rightwing in domestic politics. In the arena of electoral politics, the Republican Party primarily stands for economic deregulation, increasing the concentration of wealth at one pole and economic impoverishment at the other, recreating Jim Crow racism in virtually every institution, brutalizing desperate immigrants, and returning to the long history of patriarchy, and homophobia. Progressives realize that the rightwing, a majority of the Republican party, have to be opposed.

Therefore, while progressives strategize about defending and rebuilding America, they feel obliged, many claim, to support the Democratic Party. Unfortunately, this same Democratic Party, seeks to recreate US global hegemony in a multipolar world, willingly risks nuclear war, and imposes economic sanctions (starving) on at least 30 countries.

Today a bipartisan coalition of Democrats and Republicans have revitalized a permanent war economy that effects science, education, culture, and how scarce resources are allocated.

And recently, the Biden Administration transferred cluster bombs and, through NATO allies, the F-16 fighter planes to the Ukraine War. The use of cluster bombs is opposed by at least 120 countries and major human rights organizations. Cluster bombs, along with land mines, can survive long after the wars for which they were used. Plans are underway now to hit alleged pro-Iranian targets around the Middle East.

Therefore, progressives are faced with a profound contradiction: oppose rightwing reaction at home (represented mostly by the Republican Party) by supporting very modest progressive policies (mostly in the Democratic Party) advocated by politicians who support war and militarism overseas. This dilemma is felt everywhere by peace and justice activists.

What is often left out of the calculus is the fundamental contradiction that exists between pursuing a better life in the United States while United States foreign policy causes more pain, suffering, and risks of wider wars overseas. In short, privileges at home exist at the expense of others around the world.

The project for US progressives is to create a movement, or movements, that is based on Che Guevara’s injunction: “always be capable of feeling deeply any injustice, committed against anyone, anywhere in the world.”
On February 5, Peace Action of Wisconsin volunteers - Chris Breihan, Jim Morrell, Pam Richard, and Ann Batiza - prepared boxes of materials to send across the country. These contained postcards in support of H. Res. 934, which calls for all charges against the publisher Julian Assange to be dropped. The front of the postcard, designed by Paula Iasella of New Hampshire with text from Ann Batiza, also lets members of the House know why the term “let justice take its course” is meaningless, given all the injustices so far that would make a fair trial impossible.

Later in the week, the large cadre of volunteers pictured below stamped, signed, and wrote messages on 432 postcards (missing are Jim Morrell and Ann Batiza) for all members of the House.

This is just one effort among many worldwide in anticipation of “Day X”, February 20 and 21, when Mr. Assange’s lawyers will request that a final appeal be heard. If denied [the outcome was not known as of this printing,] Assange could be extradited to the U.S. immediately to stand trial in the Eastern District of Virginia. To mark this event, we also planned a banner drop at the Brady Street Bridge across Lincoln Memorial Drive, beginning at 4 PM.

Approval was granted to two resolutions introduced by members of Peace Action of Wisconsin at the Milwaukee Democratic Party Special Session on February 18. The authors were pleasantly surprised by the overwhelming support for each.

The first was submitted by Jim Carpenter and eleven co-signers about the War in Gaza. After noting that “… WHEREAS, collective punishment of Palestinians is an egregious violation of humanitarian law and is, according to South Africa’s ICJ case, genocide, … THEREFORE, RESOLVED, DPMC calls for an immediate, unconditional ceasefire.” This resolution passed with 35 voting “Yes” and only 3 voting “No.”

The second resolution submitted by Ann Batiza called on the Milwaukee Democratic Party to endorse US H. Res. 934, which calls for the charges against the publisher, Julian Assange to be dropped. This resolution noted, “… WHEREAS, Joe Biden on World Press Freedom Day, 2023 stated, ‘No journalist – American or not – should have to risk their lives and livelihoods in pursuit of that truth,’ THEREFORE, RESOLVED, the DPMC endorses House Resolution 934, which calls for all charges against Mr. Assange to be dropped and the extradition request to be rescinded.” This resolution passed with 33 members voting “Yes,” and 9 members voting “No.”

In order to be considered for a vote at the State Convention of the Democratic Party of Wisconsin, these resolutions must now be approved at the county and Congressional District levels.

On January 12th, about 100 of us departed from the Islamic Society of Milwaukee’s Center. We were bound for the demonstration and march for Gaza, in Washington, DC the next day.

On my bus, the warmth of the sisters (as Muslim women call each other-and me, a stranger!) astounded me. They laughed raucously and a lot; although I couldn’t understand a word, I had to join in! They happily offered to help me in any way, and stuffed me with unfamiliar, delicious food. When I expressed my delight at their generosity, one of the sisters exclaimed, “It is the Arabic way!”

The big square where we demonstrated gradually filled until it was packed with people. Massive crowds flooded in from every side street. Many Palestinian flags flew proudly, as well as those from countries around the globe. Impassioned speakers told of their Palestinian families, living and dead, who had suffered atrocities at the hands of Israeli soldiers. Many of us wept tears of sorrow and rage.

Then the march to the White House began. We shouted until we were hoarse. I climbed a hill and could see neither the beginning nor the end of the march.

I cannot describe the joy I felt to share this with 400,000 other people, all for Palestine!

Thanks to Laura-Kukor Shea, Steve Shea and Jim Carpenter for organizing and sustaining the Stand for Peace. Mailing Crew- Marsha Vila, David Lindberg, Ken Gass, Jim Morrell, Elden Carpenter, Trish Beausang, Babette Grunow, Tom Neibler, Julie Enslow, John Payton, Roger Hanson, Jan Watson, Sue Cottrell, Jan Watson, Joyce Ellwanger, Barbara Markoff, Jill Ferguson, Don and Roberta Timmerman. • Super volunteers: Julie Enslow, Kristina Paris, Tom Rodman • Thanks to Brian Bunzel for organizing our storage space.
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April 13, Saturday, Noon, Stand for Peace Against Military Spending for Tax Day, Silver Spring Dr & 51st St, Global Days Against Military Spending.

April 22, Monday, Earth Day, Check the Peace Action of WI website for actions.

May 4, Saturday- Save the date! WI Grassroots Festival in Appleton, WI at Lawrence University. Volunteer to help Peace Action of WI table. Contact 414-269-9525 if you need a ride.


March 7, Thursday, Noon-12:30 PM, Women in Black Weekly Peace Vigil, La Crosse, WI at Main St & 4th St. Contact: Debora Buffton, dbuffton@yahoo.com

March 8, Friday, International Women’s Day. Check the Peace Action of WI website for details.

March 9, Saturday, 11 AM-12PM, Driftless Palestinian Solidarity Vigil in Viroqua at Decker and Main, driftless.solidarity@gmail.com

March 15, Friday, 5-6 PM, Monthly Peace Stand- Eau Claire. Meet at Trunk & N Gulf Road on the 3rd Friday of the month. Info: Mark Helpsmeet helpsmeet@usa.net

March 16, Saturday, 10-11:30 AM, United Nations Association of Milwaukee presentation “Inspire Inclusion,” online, for International Women’s Day. A panel of women speakers includes Ricky Gard-Diamond of WILPF, Bianca Shaw of the WI Women’s Network, and Bernadette Karanja, Chief Equity Officer.

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March 2, Saturday, 11 AM-12 PM, Fox Valley Monthly Stand for Peace, Houdini Plaza, W Lawrence St, Appleton (first Saturday of every month) Contact ronnajean61@gmail.com

March 2, Saturday, 11 AM-12 PM, Capitol Square in Madison, WI: Poor People’s and Low Wage Workers March on the State Assembly. A day of nationally coordinated actions at over 30 statehouses across the country. For information, e-mail wisconsin@poorpeoplescampaign.org

March 2, Saturday, 3-6 PM, Building a Liberated Future: Panel, Pop-up Gallery & Makers Market, ISM Community Center, 815 W Layton Ave, Milwaukee, sponsored by the Milwaukee International Women’s Day Coalition.

March 2, Saturday, 11 AM-12 PM, Racine Coalition for Peace and Justice, Stand for Peace (weekly), 909 Martin Luther King Dr, Racine, racinepeace.wordpress.com


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**Remembering Tommy Smothers**

By Steve Shea

We lost an old friend of the peace movement, Tommy Smothers. Tom and Dick Smothers grew up as sons of a US Army major who died in a Japanese POW camp. The Smothers Brothers started out as a duo in the folk music boom of the early 1960s with Tommy on guitar and Dick on bass. They added comedy to their act with Tommy as an obtuse doofus and Dick as a straight man trying to bring his brother back to reality. Tommy’s signature line after one of their discussions was, “MOM ALWAYS LIKED YOU BEST!”

In Feb. 1967, *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* debuted on CBS. It is hard to believe now, but in the 1960s the US Federal government was given almost religious reverence, especially the US military. *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* regularly had skits critical of the Vietnam War. Tommy battled the CBS censors. The most memorable instance came when Tommy had Pete Seeger make his first network TV appearance since being blacklisted in the McCarthy era. Seeger sang, “Waist Deep in the Big Muddy,” a blatant reference to President Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam. CBS censors cut the song from the show, but inexplicably let it air during the episode’s rerun.

When Richard Nixon was elected president, the Nixon White House put high pressure on CBS. In the most notorious case of network censorship in TV history, CBS cancelled the show in April 1969. In 1973, the Smothers Brothers won a landmark breach of contract suit over the show’s cancellation. Years later, Tommy admitted he enjoyed playing censorship chicken with CBS.

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**TELL CONGRESS:**

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You can leave a message on the public comment line.

**NO TO GENOCIDE! CEASEFIRE NOW!**
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