

Road to Hell: Globalising to Catastrophy A Review of *Five Holocausts* by Dennis Small. (Excerpts from a twelve page review in the December 2002 *Watchdog*.)

In his most timely study, Wilson does a grand job in describing the increasingly desperate challenges for humankind. He identifies five looming paths to a coming holocaust (or holocausts) – militarism, human oppression, economic destitution, the population explosion, and environmental destruction; and as he makes clear throughout his study these problems are deeply interrelated and continue to compound their effects as we move further into the new Millennium... The major theme of *Five Holocausts* is the worsening conflict between rich and poor... Wilson as well points out, quoting British historian Mark Curtis with regard to the Cold War, "... the 'Red Scare' was useful for hiding the fact that British and US 'economic interests' in the so-called Third World in the post-war period have been 'synonymous with the systematic exploitation and impoverishment of the local population'." Later, citing a 1949 US State Department document, Wilson notes how according to Western strategy the Third World would "... fulfil its major function as a source of raw materials and a market for capitalist societies." In 2002, a few hundred billionaires and multi-millionaires, many of them American, have more wealth than billions of poor people in the South. In fact, a mere 1% of the global population controls 60% of the world's wealth...

In the first chapter specifically, and also later in *Five Holocausts*, Wilson traces the advance of militarism around the globe with a focus on the 'Iron Triangle' of the US military-industrial complex. The Iron Triangle is that combination of political interests, defence contractors, weapons researchers, and military force Establishment (the Pentagon) that lies at the heart of American capitalism. This is the system that President Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, & Co., epitomise in all its malevolent darkness. This is the system that abrogates unilaterally the right to itself to endlessly develop and wield weapons of mass destruction in order to keep the bulk of the world's population in subjugation to its dictates (at the same time, ironically enough, as fostering the spread of these weapons in other ways!). The Iron Triangle feeds on the military waste it creates outside the market production generated by supply and demand. Militarism is integral to capitalist growth, and in the long run militarisation is set to prevail unless... As Mike Moore's namesake in the US, anti-corporate activist and media presenter Michael Moore, can aptly declaim – this is indeed 'the awful truth'. Wilson quotes analyst Douglas Roche on the 'under-the-table' reasons used to justify the existence of the nuclear weapons held in the West: they "are for the protection of the Western way of life against the rising clamour of the disenfranchised of the world."

In the chapter on Human Oppression, Wilson takes as his three exemplars of despots the dictators Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler and Saddam Hussein. Throughout its history the US has had many SOBs [son-of-a-bitch] like Saddam, some of the more recent other outstanding examples being the Somozas of Nicaragua, the Duvaliers of Haiti, Stroessner of Paraguay, Mobutu of Zaire, Marcos of the Philippines, Suharto of Indonesia, Pinochet of Chile (soul-mate of Britain's ex-Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher), Noriega of Panama, Fujimori of Peru, the death squad regime rulers of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Argentina, and so on and on, *ad nauseam*. The latest is President Alvaro Uribe of Colombia, engaged today in carrying out a US-mandated programme of governmental murder. In the opening pages of his Human Oppression chapter, Wilson pertinently quotes from a revealing *Listener* article:

Now that the Soviet threat has receded, (former North Atlantic Treaty Organisation commander Sir James) Eberle was candid about the role of security pacts like ANZUS within the Western alliance. Such pacts will exist not so much to defend the West from an external threat, he explains, but to serve as platforms for launching forces to ensure our access to key resources in the Third World. 'The new divide is not one of ideology, but of prosperity'. Military alliances will still be needed, he concludes, to confront those who do not recognise 'the norms of civilisation' about who should be the haves, and who should be the have nots.

While ideological mobilisation along Orwellian lines is still basic to the dominant strategy of the ruling Western elite, the mask is increasingly slipping as the age of naked power politics heralded by George Kennan dawns upon us. Gross over-consumption by the rich is fundamental to globalisation, and free trade is the cutting edge of late capitalism, i.e. other than outright military projection.

“How is it that Western establishments can invert the public truth of their own power and terrorism?” asks John Pilger. ‘The answer is that it is apostasy in Britain and the US (also NZ, etc.) to describe the democracies as terrorist states... The omission from public debate of these truths is given respectability by a legion of Western academics, think tanks, ‘defence’ correspondents and popular Western culture’.”

Derek Wilson also cites another incisive comment: “‘Terrorists’, wrote the historian Frank Furedi, ‘become any foreign people you don’t like. Moreover, terrorism is redefined to serve an all-purpose metaphor for the Third World, demanding concentrated action from the West’.” Wilson repeatedly emphasises the critical aspects of this new imperialism and the resulting reinforcement of ‘global apartheid’. There is thus plenty of overlap among his chapters on Militarism, Human Oppression and Economic Destitution. In his own words: “It is difficult at times to distinguish between human oppression and militarism for when the latter (‘undue prevalence of military spirit or ideals’) dominates or gets out of hand, oppression is inevitable. It has thrived under numerous names. 2002 sees power “redesigned in the image of a corporate elite which has substituted for whatever standards of morality may have existed its own measure of power and greed... the quest for profit and power as ends in themselves.”

With reference to ‘the new global anarchy of the international marketplace’, Wilson notes that the capitalist casino could easily implode. He likens the ultimate implications of global speculation to geological plate tectonics: “When these enormous, unstable, electronically controlled plates finally slide, as they surely will, although no one knows when, the damage could be horrendous.”

As the world’s most powerful country, the US could do enormous good for the future through sponsoring constructive, cooperative initiatives on disarmament, economic reform, sustainability, etc, instead of blowing it all away as is happening at present. The great civilised values of human rights, democracy, freedom, and justice as embodied in the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights are under enormous threat as never before – ironically, of course, the very values that the US is proclaiming to uphold. Wilson pertinently records the Declaration’s Articles on pages 146 to 149 of *Five Holocausts* (most usefully, his book reproduces many such key statements and declarations on human rights, peace, development/justice and the environment).

Wilson discusses the Population Explosion because of its importance as a ‘growing problem’. On the political Left there has always been much unease in looking seriously at this issue, while the Malthusian tradition has been firmly based in the Right of the political spectrum; and the solutions proposed to solve alleged over-population problems have sometimes been barbaric and obscene, as well as being clearly promulgated from a grossly privileged and self-interested perspective. There is certainly no sense of Western responsibility for the devastating results of free trade/market policies, debt repayment, and structural adjustment programmes imposed through the agency of the World Bank, International Monetary fund, and the GATT/WTO. There are obviously dimensions to the population issue that cannot be ignored, or only ignored at the price of stupidity. About four and a half billion people were added to the one and a half billion at the start of the 20th century. From 2002, the world human population is set to double in about 30 years. In the natural world, animal populations can also at times undergo such phenomenal growth and then die back rapidly as their numbers become unsustainable due to lack of food/nutrients, competition from other species, damage to their environment, disease – indeed a whole range of factors, often operating in combination. The big question is whether this is likely to happen to the human species in the near or not so distant future. Resource wars are happening right now. The war against Iraq has already been going on for the past 12 years and includes child-murdering sanctions, the effects of uranium-depleted munitions, and regular bombing. Capitalist ideologues recognise no limits to growth. The

wider reality, as Wilson continually emphasises in *Five Holocausts* is that the third World in a vast variety of ways subsidises a parasitic and predatory Western style of life.

In his chapter on Environmental Destruction, Wilson presents an overview of the major problems as well as a range of others, some of which may yet be little understood, laced with plenty of practical recommendations as to what we can do to alleviate or obviate them. He covers everything from declining biodiversity to AIDS, including air pollution, global warming and climate change; the plunder of marine fish stocks; eutrophication of waterways; out-of-control urbanisation; the rape of tropical forests; excessive irrigation; species extinction; soil erosion; and genetic engineering. The combined effects are damaging human, animal and plant existence in a multitude of ways; and increasing poverty, unemployment, disease, racism and ethnic conflict, refugees, and a whole array of local, regional and global problems. Wilson rightly warns against the impending threat of the privatisation of essential resources like water and public assets in general, now continuously menaced by TNCs, often in the form of the NZ Business Roundtable and other manifestations of predatory greed.

After charting a litany of woes throughout *Five Holocausts*, illustrated with lots of searing examples of rampant inhumanity, it is certainly challenging for Wilson to help us see much light at the end of the tunnel. But this is what he valiantly endeavours to do in the last third of his book with chapters on Our Common Future, Survival, and the need to invest in peace. In fact, his analysis is extended on as well into the ruling power structures of the global economy, and both includes and extends an interesting review of hard Right organisations from the Mont Pelerin Society to the Heritage Foundation.

Five Holocausts does incorporate lots of recommendations for things to do, to help make a better world with an emphasis on peace education. To be sure this is more than ever vitally necessary today. In this connection, Wilson refers to the imperative of managing conflict non-violently.

Unless we genuinely confront the trends documented so well in Wilson's book, we don't even get off first base. In the field of future studies, *Five Holocausts* is a very readable and highly comprehensive compendium of information vital for understanding the state of the world, and for informed campaigning. It should be widely used and promoted. Written with fervent passion, it is indeed "a cry from the heart".