

It's hard to write about constructive and peaceful matters before a war. It's difficult to live threatened by war all of your life, and further to know that the reasons are not outwardly determined and serious, but are inwardly caused and frivolous. War is failure. War is caused by carelessness, wastefulness, thoughtlessness, incompetence, complacency, and laziness. That's why war is the solution and dream of governmental bureaucrats, and as well the easiest way out for their subjects. If the Americans, governors and governed, ordinarily thought of war as failure, they would not be in Arabia. But even there, without being able to say why they are there, war is exciting and a little glorious and seems to be a brave defense. This war, which may happen, and which may carelessly grow to be World War III, will be very destructive in lives and in buildings, which are labor and effort, the construction of lives. But war is not just a mindless spasm that goes away. The preparation for war for all of our lives has made our society. At length and steadily it destroys constructive and peaceful activities.

Almost no one in the United States has said that for fifty years the country has been a military state and that the "Cold War" was, and is again, a situation devised to maintain that military state. War is patriotism, which is first, single, and sacrosanct. Hardly anyone dares to complain or object, mostly no one thinks to object. In August no one in the United States objected to soldiers being sent to Arabia. The intention was obviously to set up a situation for further soldiers and for war. Since then there has been even less discussion than accompanied the last election, the least lively in a dead series, the height of freedom worth dying for. War is sacrosanct. There can be no discussion of its benefits and results. Not even the most crass self-interest is considered; war is conspicuously without self-interest. To the Americans it immediately means the total destruction of the enemy. The last time that they couldn't do that was against England in 1812.

They have no grand plan, other than maintaining the military, only little schemes, and no purpose once war begins other than extermination. Here is an example from 1891:

Meagre reports have reached Pine Ridge Agency of the battle fought on New Year's Day between General Carr's troops and the hostile Indians. Several Indians have been wounded and a number of government horses captured by hostiles. General Miles is now at the Agency, preparing for the last act in the bloody drama. His plan is to completely surround the enemy; then, in case they refuse to surrender, he will lose no time in wiping the rebellious Sioux off the face of the earth.

The Americans are supposed to be innocent, which they are not, and naive, which they are, and not good at diplomacy, which is true, having no purpose. They are vicious and naive and just as dangerous as if they were calculating, even more so. The other extreme, however, of the calculating, selfish, and ruthless ruler, is never reached. The originators of war are foolish and lazy and guided by the vague and dying slogans of institutions already dead. One generalization that I found, a better one than most, is that you should constantly check to see whether a big social institution, or its generalizations, is still alive, or if it ever was. Everything, good and bad, decays and all that remains for a while are slogans. Now neither the United States nor the Soviet Union can even speak in slogans – Bush mumbles one from time to time but he has trouble getting it right – and still people of both countries submit and follow. It's like watering the liquor until the drunkard gets drunk on water.

War is rich and lazy. It's simple and easy. Totalitarianism is simple and easy. The Soviet Union thinks it's easiest now, since the bureaucrats solved the threat of reform by moving even more slowly, to go back under the KGB and the military, ever more idle, more wasteful. The President of the United States,

once the chief of the CIA, is not interested in the declining productivity of the country and its debt, the results of the military economy; he is not interested in real problems and solutions. A war can hide these problems. No one has stated flatly that the main purpose of the invasion of Arabia is to provide a reason not to reduce military expenditure. The United States is in Arabia to continue its military establishment. It searched desperately after "the Cold War ended" and finally, since Panama was so quick and the "Drug War" so insufficient, found, even made a justification for the military. All talk of small reductions ceased. I suspect the United States "set up" Saddam Hussein, enticed him into Kuwait, so as to produce a situation of imminent war. They were desperate for the threat of war.

Once there is something to destroy, it's easy to let destruction run in order to conceal the real problems. Destruction can only be of construction and consumes it. The Soviet Union ran what it had into the ground for seventy years and now that's buried. As A. J. P. Taylor said, the Russian people are fine and don't deserve their government. But of course everyone deserves their government since they allow it. The people in the Soviet Union, which is a perfect name for reform, should object quickly, while they can. The United States has been running its economy down for sixty years and had a better start, so that it will be later, but not much, in burying itself. World War II, insofar as it was about anything, was about the somewhat conflicting natures of the large central systems. The present threats and wars are the death throes of these systems, which will fight each other over minor distinctions, to prevent collapse, and especially as they collapse. They all have ideas of the future, based on central authority, joined to ideas of the past created for the nation. None of this hangs together, which is a good reason not to die for it.

There is not enough freedom in the Soviet Union to produce art. There will not be enough to produce science, even technology. At this point destruction collapses upon itself,

like an old star, in fact like a red giant. Uncle Sam can be the white dwarf. The steady pressure of bureaucratization and militarization has pretty much destroyed art and architecture in the United States. Art is back to less than the handful that it was in the 1940s and 1950s. And like the Soviet Union, the United States proves that the large bureaucratic system cannot have its own art. This inability is the sign of its general inability, of its failure as a viable philosophy, just as the inability of Christianity for three hundred years to produce good art is the sign of its demise as a reality. Some institutions have produced good art and architecture, not lately; some at least have barely allowed these, as during the 1950s and 1960s in the United States.

In 1984 I saw the cemetery of Piskaryovskoye in Saint Petersburg. Five hundred thousand people are buried there, even so only a part of those who died during the siege. I made a poster of a photograph of the cemetery as a poster against war. Last winter in considering posters for this exhibition, I was inclined not to put this in the show, since it seemed to have become irrelevant. And now it's relevant. The Soviet Union is going back to 1984 and the United States is in 1984, off in the desert preparing for perpetual war, claiming for itself the biggest justification ever, that of policing the world, forever seeking each Idi Amin. One hundred and seventy years ago Simón Bolívar said that the United States would destroy all freedom in the name of freedom. Or as Simon de Montfort said of the Albigensians: "*Tuez-les tous! Dieu reconnaîtra les siens.*"

The consequence of a fake economy, which is the military economy, is a fake society. One consequence of that is fake art and architecture. As the enforcing bureaucracy grows omnipresent and omniscient, real art and architecture shrinks. As I've said elsewhere, architecture, which is more vulnerable, is gone for now. Art is next. There are certainly architects that I don't know of, but the ones that I do know of internationally are almost all terrible, except perhaps Tadao Ando, of whom I know little. Mario Botta has recently designed an art museum

for San Francisco which establishes him solidly among the terrible. Art museums are the best form of fake architecture since neither the clients nor the architects take art seriously. And then many artists obligingly add fakes to those made by ignorance. The art museum becomes exquisitely pointless, a fake for fakes, a double fake, the inner sanctum of a fake society. Of course, Hans Hollein is good at this. He and the Guggenheim Museum of New York plan a negative and fake Guggenheim for Salzburg, a hole in the ground. And what is the public and what are students supposed to think of the horrifying design of Frank Gehry's museum of design for Vitra? These buildings make a joke of architecture, of art, of culture, of the community, and of the whole society. This allows the present horrifying situation; it decorates it.

The so-called postmodern architecture is a manifestation of the fake economy, even of fake business, of fake institutions. It's perfect that McDonald's has opened in Moscow and that the КГВ can keep the line straight. It's all meeting on the right. Eventually it becomes obvious that fake was fake, but this will be too late for us. And probably when this is recognized new unrecognized fakes will dominate. It's endless. Fascist architecture's main quality is not its aggressiveness but its mindlessness and vague generality, that is, that it is fake. Mostly the fake disappears, which is less likely in architecture than in disposable art, but for a long time now new fakes have far exceeded real work. This is a permanent condition in the United States.

The vague purpose of the museum is to immobilize art, to have culture without culture having any effect, to make art fake. The purpose of fake is to avoid disturbing the social hierarchy. The definite purpose of grand expenditures in a community is to show the power of the central government without disturbing the hierarchy of the community, and without benefiting it. One reason for a great military force is the same. It uses up a lot of money and doesn't do anything. An example of this in architecture is some news from Philadelphia:

“North Philadelphia is the city’s largest area of physical decay along with having the most concentrated poverty in the city,” said Barbara J. Kaplan, executive director of the City Planning Commission. “But despite all the poverty, it has a significant percentage of homeownership, ranging from about 38 to 60 percent in different areas, and that is a real strength...”

On Monday night, the team held a town meeting and dreamed aloud about a utopian North Philadelphia, a place with a Crystal Palace for a train station, a glass-sided School for the Creative and Performing Arts and a Grand Civic Plaza.

The solution is a palace, of course, “postmodern,” as in Dallas, Texas, where the crime rate is among the highest in the United States. The solution is an unnecessary token, a fake community. Thirty-eight to sixty percent of the people own their own homes. Since they are poor and since their ownership is stable, constituting a real community, the obvious way to help them would be to abate their property and income taxes, even to “grant” to each family a little money to repair their homes. This seems harmless. But it’s unthinkable. Conceding money would bring them up a little in the hierarchy, which is absolutely forbidden. The implications are fearful: it’s undemocratic, it’s unfair to others, it’s a violation of free enterprise, it’s tampering with the market – who knows what might happen – it’s tampering with nature; and then the hand of the central government wouldn’t show – the dispensation wouldn’t be clear. Even to think of such a thing admits the existence of hierarchy and unleashes, who knows, my god, class war, and then they will never again be able to be upwardly mobile. Ten years ago in the once wealthy cattle town near where I live in West Texas, declining since the triumph of the United States in World War II and now sped to poverty by the invasion of Arabia, a tin “senior citizens’ center” was built

over the town swimming pool with a \$500,000 grant from Washington, D.C. First, there’s not a person in town who will admit to being a “senior citizen.” Second, throughout the town the water line is contaminated by the sewer line. Then part of the town doesn’t have sewers anyway, or paved roads, and most of the other roads need repair, as well as many of the homes. The solution to real faults is a tin box over a pool in a sunny climate. Of course this is a better monument to the central government than the ones for the eighty thousand coffins which it has just ordered for the soldiers in Arabia. But the attitude is the same.

The consequences of the invasion of Kuwait would have been minor and a lengthy embargo would have punished and moderated Iraq. The consequences of the invasion of Arabia are war and vast death and destruction and poverty worldwide. The consequences are the solidification of all right-wing governments – the Soviet Union now dares to send more soldiers to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – and the final, complete respectability of violence. The consequence is the culminating victory for the totalitarianism which has been growing for the last twenty years, for the last fifty, for sixty. Last year’s freedom is put down; last year’s moderation is discredited. What China did is worse than what Iraq did and China is forgiven now. For me and others, the consequence of the invasion of Arabia to the town in West Texas was that since August we have had to fire some twenty people because of the disastrous effect on the economy of the United States. Death is next. The consequence of the invasion to employment was as direct as drinking makes you drunk.

The war of next Tuesday is a military fantasy. Allowing this fantasy is a failure of the society, of people everywhere, just as allowing the rise of Nazi and Stalinist totalitarianism was. The people in the United States said nothing in August against the first soldiers, just like Vietnam, or the second soldiers, also like Vietnam, and have not said anything since, and

Congress mumbles OK, whatever you want. Only people in the streets can stop this waste of their labor and lives. Only they can return this extreme fantasy to fantasy and make their fantastic problems real.

The two vast military systems, the United States and the Soviet Union, after being rattled for a couple of years, are recovering and cooperating to stop all change and freedom. Without opposition they will solidify a totalitarianism which will last for ten or twenty years or so, until incompetence and the poverty of thought and freedom cause the congealing systems to collapse. Their attitudes will continue in the collapse and into nuclear war. This solidification of totalitarianism might be stopped now, but opposition next year will be too late. In fact, the fatal mistake may have occurred last year when the people didn't go far enough, quickly enough. The Baltic republics, for example, may have lost their freedom through their own reasonableness and moderation. Even last August, for the first time, Russia, for the last time, was free.

We had all left our countries as a result of the war. Ball and I came from Germany, Tzara and Janco from Rumania, Hans Arp from France. We were agreed that the war had been contrived by the various governments for the most autocratic, sordid and materialistic reasons; we Germans were familiar with the book "*J'accuse*," and even without it we would have had little confidence in the decency of the German Kaiser and his generals. Ball was a conscientious objector, and I had escaped by the skin of my teeth from the pursuit of the police myrmidons who, for their so-called patriotic purposes, were massing men in the trenches of Northern France and giving them shells to eat. None of us had much appreciation for the kind of courage it takes to get shot for the idea of a nation which is at its best a cartel of pelt merchants and profiteers in leather, at worst a cultural association of psychopaths who, like the Germans,

marched off with a volume of Goethe in their knapsacks, to skewer Frenchmen and Russians on their bayonets.

– Richard Huelsenbeck, 1920

The signers of this manifesto are well aware that the recent venomous attacks on modern art are no accident.

The violence of these attacks stands in direct proportion to the worldwide growth of the totalitarian idea, which makes no secret to its hostility to the spiritual in art or its desire to debase art to the level of slick illustration.

– Richard Huelsenbeck, 1949

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– Donald Judd