

## I. Paying for Development, Cutting Off War

# As Wars Spread, Leaders Call the Weapons Merchants to Task

*This is part of Harley Schlanger's weekly webcast dialogue with Helga Zepp-LaRouche, founder and leader of the Schiller Institute, on Dec. 27, 2023. Video of the full dialogue is [here](#).*

**Harley Schlanger:** You, Helga, put out a statement, “Turn Swords into Plowshares” [see below in this issue], which is posted on the Schiller Institute website, and over the Christmas weekend, there were calls from a number of religious leaders, including Pope Francis, demanding a ceasefire and a peaceful resolution [see below]. Let me start by asking you: What is the significance of these calls, and what will it take to bring an end to this ongoing conflict?

### Retool the Military-Industrial Complex

**Helga Zepp-LaRouche:** The significance is the general spreading awareness that unless we do something about the growing power of the military-



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industrial complex, even if we stop the war in Gaza or the war in Ukraine, that they will find another war, as they have found many wars before—Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya—about 55 wars around the globe—in which the military-industrial complex is involved in making lots of profit by selling lots of weapons. And while I’m not reducing the whole economic theory of the financial system and the neoliberal system to the idea of the military-industrial complex, nevertheless, I think it’s correct to say that it’s the final stage of the money-making, profit maximization, neoliberal model.

I had once a very dear friend in India, J.C. Kapur, who used to call this “armored consumerism.” And if you remember, it was President George H.W. Bush who in 1992 said the United States has to do what it does in order to protect “the American lifestyle,” meaning that the United States



U.S. Army

*The U.S. has wasted billions in war materiel sent to Germany, destined for the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Here, M1A1 Abrams tanks arriving at Grafenwoehr, May 12, 2023.*

belongs to what they call in Russia “the Golden Billion.” And that the continued poverty of many billions of people in the world is being perpetuated by simply having a system whereby, in the past, only some nations were allowed to process raw materials, to have value-added production, and that in that way, a system was perpetuated which kept colonialism in place for hundreds of years, and even after the so-called independence of the former colonial states, colonialism did continue to exist.

Now, in order to maintain that system, which only allows the well-being and profit of a relatively small portion of the population—namely the speculators, those who are either directly involved in the military-industrial complex or in the related financial corporations which run these military firms on Wall Street and in the City of London—that [system] generates these wars and increases the killing for profit’s sake.

The more you look at that, the more you think about it, it is very clear that the old demand from the Bible, from *Isaiah* 2:4 that “they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more,” is so very, very relevant today. All military production is the pure destruction of physical wealth. President Dwight Eisenhower, in his April 16, 1953 [address](#), “The Chance for Peace,” to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, said that every plane produced, every bomb produced, takes something away from the people in terms of hospitals, kindergartens, and other useful things.

It has come to a point where we really have to demand in earnest that the military-industrial complex be retooled. These firms have extremely high-technology capacities that can produce something useful! All you have to do is make the political decision to do it, then take some design engineers, tell them “Here are the capacities. How long does it take to retool these and produce, instead of F-35, F-15, F-16 bombers or missiles or other military goods—What does it take to retool these industries to produce fast train systems which can go 350 km/h, soon 600 km/h as the Chinese are doing, or other useful things, including really high technologies in the nuclear field?” In other words, you could use all this productive capacity to produce what is so urgently

needed in the world.

This, however, does need a political mobilization because it’s not going to be a voluntary act by the owners of the military-industrial complex to do this. But given the fact that society is falling apart, I think there will be a growing demand. I, therefore, wrote my Christmas message, just thinking about it.

### **Pope Francis’ Message**

I was extremely encouraged when I listened to the [Angelus prayer](#), the message *Urbi et Orbi* [to the city and the world] of the Pope for Christmas, in which he made exactly the same point: He said that people have to know who makes the profit from these military productions, because it takes away from their well-being.

Pope Francis demanded the naming the names of the military-industrial complex and said that we must turn swords into plowshares. So, I was very encouraged, and there are obviously many Christian groups, like Pax Christi in America, who already for quite some time have been making that argument very strongly.

But I think we are now reaching the point where the connection between the terrible destruction going on in Gaza—which is unbelievable to even think that this should happen in this day and age—or even the situation in Ukraine which becomes more terrible by the day as well, and also has to stop.

We have, therefore, to make a worldwide mobilization along these lines: what I said in my Christmas Message, and what, very independently, Pope Francis chose to make his topic as well.

So, I would ask you to take these three: my Christmas Message; our short leaflet in which we say who is running the military-industrial complex from Wall Street and what has to be done to retool it; and the slightly longer article, and help spread the message as far as you can. Join our mobilization to have this kind of change!

**Schlanger:** Those three documents are available online: Your “Christmas Message from Helga Zepp-LaRouche: Turn Swords into Plowshares!” [here](#); “The Military-Financial Complex Is Bloated on Blood Money from Wars” [here](#); and “Turn the Military-Financial Complex to Useful Production” [here](#).