

We are a people that follow after those things that make for peace, love and unity; it is our desire that others' feet may walk in the same, and do deny and bear our testimony against all strife, and wars, and contentions that come from the lusts that war in the members, that war in the soul, which we wait for, and watch for in all people, and love and desire the good of all...Treason, treachery, and false dealing we do utterly deny; false dealing, surmising, or plotting against any creature upon the face of the earth, and speak the truth in plainness, and singleness of heart.

- Margaret Fell, in a paper delivered in 1660 to Charles II directed to the king and both houses of parliament (Quaker Faith and Practice 19:46)

War — The Persistent Enemy

By Kathleen Hertzberg

I vividly recall my own experience in my early twenties during the Second World War when I hear today the constant talk of war on Iraq. I was in London during the heavy bombing. Bombs often fell close to the church basements used as air raid shelters. People were afraid.

When the "all clear" siren sounded after a heavy bombing raid, people were so thankful to be alive, to be able to come up into the daylight and to go about their business. The rubble had to be cleared. Quaker relief service included caring for the very young in the shelters, evacuating old people when their slum tenements had been destroyed and setting up reception centres in the country for the homeless.

Some years later as a relief worker in post-war Berlin, I saw many people in dire circumstances and emotional distress as a result of the war, the saturation bombing and the military action to take the City of Berlin, and among the millions of desperate refugees from the East. They had no time or strength for any philosophic assessment of what had happened to them; their first concerns were how to survive the cold, hunger and homelessness,

Many Germans did feel ashamed of the Nazi regime that had used war as a means to achieve its goals and which had brought suffering and catastrophe upon the whole nation.

We do not know what will eventually happen in Iraq. Most likely there will be very many survivors who will have experienced the loss of family members, the destruction of their homes and the loss of their possessions. Providing immediate aid and rebuilding will be a lengthy process. The Iraqi culture and religion which have evolved over millennia must be respected.

This work will need to be done in the spirit of reconciliation without recrimination. Young people will need to be given hope and faith in a good future for their country and for themselves.

As Quakers, we will need to be alert to opportunities to help where ever possible in the work of reconstruction and reconciliation. The Iraqi people need to know that Quakers care about them and that our hearts go out in warm sympathy to them in their time of trial.

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