

Editorial

A disarming Christmas

The current fad in children's toys is model airplanes, trains or other traditional favorites that can be converted into such other toys as robots, missiles, tanks, etc. Several toy manufacturers are promoting these toys to such an extent that they have become status symbols among the younger set. One local school has banned these transformable toys even during recess because they lead to "competitive behavior."

When the nation became disillusioned by the Vietnam War, many frowned upon violent or war-oriented toys. No child, whether boy or girl, should be given a gun to play with, many thought in the pacifistic mood of the early-mid-70s. Yet in the past five to 10 years, the mood of our nation gradually changed and with that change has come a resurgence of war toys. Violent toys sneaked back onto the Christmas list almost without notice.

Sometimes, one needs a jolt to realize just how much circumstances and times change. That jolt came a couple of weekends ago, during an afternoon television movie. One of the movie's sponsors, a toy-store chain, broadcast a commercial advertising transformable toys on sale for Christmas. The movie had resumed before the realization dawned that what had been advertised was a model gas station that could be converted into an armed bunker. Yes, folks, that's what the toy company called it, an *armed bunker*, complete with gun turrets and other niceties.

Shortly thereafter, we received an op-ed piece from an organization called No War Toys, based in Needham, Mass. The article,

excerpts of which follow, was written by Father Emmanuel Charles McCarthy.

The spirit of Christmas is above all the spirit of peace. It is not the spirit of war. It is the spirit of joy and meekness, not revenge and violence. Gentle holiness and good will toward all people is the air in which the soul breathes at Christmastime. The decorations, the lights, the trees, the music all come from and speak to that universal human longing for genuine peace on earth.

Yet, the sale of war toys has increased 350 percent since 1982. The top-selling toys are toys that seduce children into playing homicide. G.I. Joe, a grotesque and vicious killer toy, the utter opposite of the spirit of Christmas is continually a best-seller at this time. It is reasonable to assume that this year, one company or another that could not care less about the truth, love and holiness of this Christian feast day, will try to Rambo-ize Christmas for a quick buck. It is also reasonable to assume that they will succeed and that Christian parents and children will again be "had" by the pagan con artist of Hollywood and Madison Avenue.

What this means is that on Christmas morning in front of the stable of the Prince of Peace, millions of little Christian children will be living in the murderous, hate-filled spirit of enmity that Rambo, G.I. Joe, toy machine guns, etc., require them to use. To play homicide one must put on a homicidal mind. To give a child a war toy is to entice him or her into putting on a killer consciousness in which conflict is self-righteously resolved by the total destruction and humiliation of the other party. Indeed, to give a

child a war toy is to nurture him or her into enjoying the subtle but powerful pleasure of the total destruction and humiliation of those with whom one disagrees.

For a toy to be used, that toy's logic, spirit and reality has to be entered into. If little children are not damaged by presenting them with toys that coax them into homicidal fantasies, then why not present little children with toys that arouse lustful and pornographic fantasies? We all know what the truth in this matter is regardless of how many kept psychologists and educationalists the big toy companies pull out in order to justify the desecration of the Christian holyday.

A person becomes what he or she thinks and desires. As the song from the musical "South Pacific" goes:

You've got to be taught before it's too late,

Before you are six or seven or eight,
To hate all the people your relatives hate.
You've got to be carefully taught.

War toys are a very important teaching tool in the hate-enemy-destruction curriculum. They whet the appetite for the pleasures of destruction. Unfortunately, they teach nothing of the desolation of destruction.

I would ask, therefore, that Christian parents this Christmas refrain from giving their children those toys that will motivate the little ones to enter into and enjoy the dark and vicious world of the spirit of homicide. I ask Christian parents this Christmas to be honest with themselves for the sake of their children's spiritual and human welfare. Pope John Paul II, speaking to the young people of the world, pleaded:

"On my knees, I beg you to turn away from the paths of violence and return to the

ways of peace. I say to you with all the love I have for you, with all the trust I have in young people, do not listen to voices which speak the language of hatred, revenge, retaliation. Do not follow any leaders who train you in the way of inflicting death."

I ask Christian parents not to allow themselves to become the unwitting accomplices of those whom the pope warns. I ask those parents who would consider John Paul's words overly stern to reflect on the fact that John Paul's Master was at least equally stern with those who would lead little ones astray with an education in the spirit of evil:

"Anyone who welcomes a little one like this in my name welcomes me. But anyone who is an obstacle to bring down one of these little ones who have faith in me would be better drowned in the depth of the sea with a great millstone around his neck. Alas for the world that there should be obstacles. Obstacles indeed there must be, but alas for the one who provides them!"

(Matthew 18:5-7)

Please, Christian parents, give your little ones only what Jesus would give them on His birthday. Please stop the desecration. No war toys at Christmas!

Father McCarthy's order is a tall one, especially with children's great awareness of these toys and the toys' amazing popularity. It's not easy to say no when other parents will say yes. It's not easy to make one's child be the only one in school who does not have this or that toy. But if we are to retain the meaning of Christmas and teach children to believe in peace, we must make that effort.

And opinions

Mr. Clark names his sources in response to question on their validity

To the Editor:

"So, you and I, Mr. Clark III, have nothing to say to each other. I will see you on the printed pages of the Courier-Journal." The foregoing is a quote from the "polite note" of May 14, 1985, mentioned in the Nov. 21 letter from Mr. Milich (Opinion: "Resents being compared to Nazi propagandist"). Being familiar with the "party line," I composed the following letter, dated May 15, 1985, and placed it in my file for use at this time.

I wish that I could take credit for the following, but I can't.

"The communists and their allies are engaged in a war to destroy the United States. This war knows no frontiers and uses many weapons. Marcuso (Herbert Marcuso, leading theoretician of the Sensual Revolu-

tion) urges the Left to break 'the conformist and corrupted universe of political language.' Whatever the cause, this has been done and it is now very difficult to engage in rational discussion on political issues, because words have been subverted and no longer have an accepted meaning." This passage is from Dr. Fred Schwarz's 1972 book, "The Three Faces of Revolution." I will leave it to the reader to decide the worth of the observation rather than insist that it be accepted because it is a quote or source.

I, myself, have noted that the communist and his allies first attack the statement, then its accuracy. Failing this, he will attack the author, his intent, his sources, his politics, his associates and if necessary the meaning of the individual words. He keeps his adversary so busy with the inconsequential that his

adversary is unable to devote his energies in pursuit of the important. By the time the "revolutionary" has finished his tirade, the initial charge of the statement is lost, which in this case would be Dr. Schwarz's contention that "The communists and their allies are engaged in a war to destroy the United States and the use of words has been one of the revolutionaries' most effective weapons."

End of file letter.

Mr. Milich says "The issue is one of life and death, freedom or continued slavery for our neighbors." Removing this statement from his context, I agree with him, and I for one do not intend to spend time and effort in challenging every accusation he makes while he continues to waltz a very serious confrontation around the mulberry bush with his documented sources, witnesses who don't

have axes to grind, witnesses who have experienced profound changes of heart and ex-CIA officers and respected journalists, each of whom have sacrificed a livelihood in order to report the news correctly. (Incidentally, that is the way Pravda reports the news, "correctly.")

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Although we encourage our readers to exercise their right to debate issues on this page, we are now calling a halt to the name-calling banter between Mr. Clark and Mr. Milich. Henceforth, gentlemen, please confine your arguments to the issues at hand and refrain from attacking each other. When you see each other "on the printed pages of the Courier-Journal," please greet each other in a Christian fashion. Otherwise, you will have to see each other elsewhere.

Society, Church continually turn their backs on handicapped

To the Editor:

I read with considerable interest the article on St. Mary's Church of the Deaf ("St. Mary's Church of the Deaf: Demonstrating God's word in a world of silence," November 21). I am glad to hear that the diocese decided to build on the 35 years of experience of Father Erdle to re-establish a parish for the deaf.

Back in the early 30s, and possibly before then, the Redemptorists operated a special chapel for the deaf in the auditorium of St. Joseph's School. They also tried to help the deaf socialize and had Sunday afternoon movies in the school basement. When an experiment was made to see if "talking picture shows" could be used with the deaf, we learned that, amazingly, the deaf could combine some lip reading with the vibrations of the speaker system to more fully experience the action than they could with the old silent flickers.

I forget the name of the original pastor who died of cancer around 1935. He did have time to train a successor. I left Rochester around 1939 and so have no idea of what happened subsequently.

There are many people in this world "who must interpret a turned head as silence." Periodically, our society takes an interest in their alienation. Finding it too puzzling for comprehension, society then once again turns its head to show its silence.

In the late 60s, a good number of organizations interested in the handicapped pushed for a so-called Bill of Rights for the Handicapped. This was culminated in 1973 when the Congress overrode a presidential veto to pass the Rehabilitation Law. The goals of this law were pinpointed by President Gerald Ford by the inclusion of special enforcement procedures in the revenue-sharing extension of his last year in office.

Thereupon, society once again turned its

head. And seemingly the Church has gone right along with a society in which each half constantly proclaims its own worth by damning the other half.

By 1979, a group of paralyzed veterans sued 42 U.S. agencies for (failing in) implementation of an executive order that included a provision to "conduct a self-evaluation of compliance ... with the assistance of interested persons, including handicapped persons and organizations representing handicapped persons; and otherwise consult with interested persons, including ..."

Who in your parish has asked the local government how much it receives in revenue sharing, when a self-evaluation was conducted, who was consulted, and where is the self-evaluation report?

How long shall this Church ignore the Sermon on the Mount?

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"CHARLIE'S RELIGIOUS INDIFFERENCE HAS BLOSSOMED INTO AN ALL-ENCOMPASSING APATHY."

While Christmas shopping, consider message of war toys

To the Editor:

At this time of year when we're celebrating the birth of Christ the Prince of Peace, it's appalling to go into our local stores and see what's being offered in the guise of potential gifts for children.

Everywhere the theme seems to be one of violence. We see camouflage-type uniforms with assorted army weapons, giving the impression to the innocent that there's something glamorous about war. Then we

have cars that crack up on impact and even little children's clothes with ugly, ghoulish-looking monsters printed on them. The list goes on and on.

In the spirit of the season, let's become aware of the messages our gifts are conveying and select presents that emphasize the love and beauty of the world, not the dark side.

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Guidelines

The Courier-Journal welcomes your opinions. Letters must bear the writers' signatures, full addresses and telephone numbers. They should be sent to: Opinion, Courier-Journal, 114 S. Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607

Opinions should be brief, typed, double-spaced, and no longer than 1 1/2 pages.

We routinely condense letters, edit offensive words and libelous statements, and reserve the right to reject letters. Generally speaking, however, only limited grammatical corrections will be made, and the letters will reflect the writers' own styles.

Because submitted opinions exceed the space reserved for letters, we publish only original letters addressed to us. We will not use poetry, open letters, or copies of letters sent to other publications or persons. To ensure diversity, we limit each writer to one letter per month.