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CHILDREN'S CRUSADE AGAINST NUCLEAR WAR

The Children's Crusade has become history's most famous example of naivete in using children to confront an enemy. The powers-that-be of Thirteenth Century France and Germany sent thousands of their own sons and daughters -- most of them about 12 years old -- on a military expedition to capture the Holy Land for the Christianity.

Few of these pathetic victims of their parents' stupidity ever returned to their homes. They died of hunger, cold and hardships on their long march south to the Mediterranean, or were drowned in storms at sea, or were sold as slaves. They had no effect on military history. Their parents wept while the Muslims laughed.

We are now witnessing various groups of pacifists who presumptuously claim to have a corner on "social responsibility" (Educators for Social Responsibility, Scientists for ..., Physicians for ..., etc.). One of their techniques is to use children to promote pacifism under the false illusion that this will help to prevent nuclear war.

Poor little eleven-year-old Samantha Smith. She was used like a wind-up Barbie Doll to parrot the pacifist propaganda. She allegedly discovered on her much publicized trip to the Soviet Union that the Soviets "don't at all" want war. Who revealed this to her? She was told by Soviet children.

Meanwhile, American schoolchildren are being manipulated to believe that nuclear war can be prevented by their own personal actions and contacts. The major nuclear war curricula now used in elementary and secondary schools direct the students to write personal letters to "Dear Soviet Official" or "Dear Soviet Citizen."

Just in case the children are too immature to formulate their own letters (or are among the thousands who receive "social promotions" even though they are deficient in grammar and spelling), they are provided with a sample letter. Here is the text of the letter children are asked to write when they take the nuclear war courses called "A Day of Dialogue" or "Decision Making in a Nuclear Age":

"Dear Soviet Official: We don't hear very good things about the Soviet Union here. Just the bad things, like the invasion of Afghanistan, or the possible invasion of Poland. ... While writing this letter, I tried to see the Russians as real people; people who have hopes, worries, fears. ... There are bad people in the U.S. But there are plenty of good ones too.

"As for my future, it's hard to say. Will I marry? Will I have children? ... It's hard for me to seriously think of the future, when there is the terrifying reality that I and all of those around me may not even exist in the future. I am, of course, referring to nuclear war. It is overwhelming to me, as it must be to you, that every human being on this planet must live each day to its fullest, because the next day may never come."

Children who study "A Day of Dialogue" published by Educators for Social Responsibility, as well as "Crossroads" produced by "Jobs for Peace," are directed to send their letters to a third curriculum called "Facing History and Ourselves" in Brookline, MA. This letter-writing project shows how the various curricula interlock in purpose.

In addition to this organized letter-writing campaign to the U.S.S.R., the nuclear war courses urge students to write letters to their local newspaper editors. The course called "A Day of Dialogue" gives this sample letter for the children to copy: "I am speaking out. In fact, I am shouting out. Fear and helplessness overwhelms (sic) me when I read articles of the possibility of nuclear war."

When the students in the nuclear war classes are not writing such letters to the Soviets, or hearing terrorizing descriptions of the horrors of nuclear war, they are playing games that also frighten the children. For example, "Duck and Cover" is one classroom game recommended in the nuclear war course called "Crossroads." Here are the instructions to the teacher:

"Ask students to crouch under their desks and put their hands over their heads. Ask them if they think this would protect them if a bomb were dropped over their city. Then write 'Duck and Cover' on the board. Ask who learned its meaning. Discuss their answers."

In between letters and games, the teacher asks the students such apocalyptic questions as: "If only 400 weapons would destroy the Soviet Union, what would 17,000 weapons do to the world?" It's no wonder schoolchildren are having nightmares.