Wortley Hall

War – and Peace

May 2014

RW's ***Keywords*** and ***War: The Last Enemy*** (Chapter in ***Towards 2000***)

1. The word **Violence** (see KW): "...often now a difficult word' " compare "the violence of a **'terrorist'** with an opposing army where **'force'** is preferred and most preparations for war are described as '**defence'**: or the similar partisan range between 'putting under restraint' or 'restoring order' and 'police violence'".

2. **Revolution** "...in political controversy arising from the actual history of armed risings and conflicts, *revolution* took on a specialised meaning of violent overthrow, and by lC19 was being contrasted by *evolution* in its sense of a new social order brought about by peaceful and constitutional means..."

3. **Ideology** We can take ***ideology*** as meaning *illusion* or *false consciousness,* or "the apparently more ***neutral sense of ideology*** in some parts of Marx's writing" (we are capable of being conscious of the developments, conflicts, tensions and contradictions within a given historical period).

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At least one person present will have recently read, and will have to hand, the chapter ***'War: The Last Enemy'*** *in the book* ***Towards 2000 -*** written over 30 years ago.

These quotes will be discussed in the context of Williams' own life – Normandy tank commander but before and later, a pacifist maybe… - and the whole chapter and argument as above:

i) Williams engages with the popular argument that "*war* is a permanent element of an abstracted 'human nature'…. In the actual human record, the termination and the ending of wars, the making of significant kinds and periods of peace, are in fact more frequent." He argues elsewhere, quoting anthropologist Ruth Benedict's classic, *Patterns of Culture*, that 'human nature' is malleable… We have the potential to be peaceful and co-operative.

ii) "The general massacre of majority populations over one or more continents is now technically possible, especially by nuclear missiles but also by the deliberate spread of lethal bacteria or of nerve-gas. War at this level but also at several lower levels, including high-explosives and fire-bombing on cities, is from the beginning massacre, and should be called by its true name".

iii) "Orwell's '1984' …belongs to a pre-nuclear period, and above all to the experiences of inter-war fascism and of Stalinism… The more persuasive contemporary version of an absolutist system is the idea of a 'military industrial complex': an organised grouping of arms-production, military, research and state-security interests which has, in effect, moved beyond the control of civil society and is the true contemporary form of the State itself."

iv) "…within the *ideology* of deterrence, in which vast political forces, at their extremes of an absolute kind, are at once and necessarily engaged, there can and will be no disarmament." The role of CND, seeking to challeng that ideology…

v) "We have become accustomed to the integral militarism of the modern nation-state, at its most formal and official levels. It is not surprising that this has spread to stain the whole society. But we may now be facing something worse than this: a vigorous, spectacular and consumerist militarism, extending from the toy-missile flashes of the children's shops and the games arcades, to the military tournaments and air displays of general entertainment, and finally to the televised images of safely distant wars. Nobody can purge the acceptance and enjoyment of violence by declaring against 'the Bomb' which might destroy his or her own home and family. War, anywhere, is now the last enemy, and it cannot be opposed or ended with one hand in the export ledger or on the battle-entertainment video switch."