Bonnie Sherr Klein & Terri Nash's

**Speaking Our Peace**

*Speaking Our Peace*, a new hour-long documentary from Studio D of the National Film Board, combines the directorial talents of Bonnie Sherr Klein (*Not A Love Story*) and Terri Nash (*If You Love This Planet*) with the scriptwriting skills of Gloria Demers *Behind The Veil*. The result is a carefully structured and provocative essay on the current global crisis seen through the eyes of dedicated women working for lasting peace. The strength of the film lies in the range of its analysis and the inspiring personalities of the women featured in it.

The opening images shot at Greenham Common, England, establish not only the decentralized, grass-roots basis for 'a different vision of peace' but also the contrasting iconography and methods by which that vision is expressed. As thousands of women surround the fence that surrounds the U.S. Air Force base home of 32 nuclear missiles, their songs, flowers, banners, vitality and obvious affection for one another make the enclosed hi-tech hardware and buildings seem sterile, worthless, and completely out of place. We know, of course, that these and other nuclear missiles are stockpiled 'to keep the peace' — or so the militarist vision of peace-keeping would have us believe.

To counter that perspective, the filmmakers simultaneously unravel the extensive web of militarism while portraying their own network of insights, linkages and human bonds.

Militarism depends on a populace that is both deferential to authority and steeped in fear and distrust of some "other." *Speaking Our Peace* confronts both these psychological tendencies by highlighting women peace activists who challenge existing power structures and concepts, and who effectively establish communication links with women around the world. Dr. Ursula Franklin, a physicist and professor of engineering at the University of Toronto, pinpoints the difference between militarism and a "threat system," "a way of saying do what I say or else" — and feminism, which is "an experience that integrates diversity;:" "that tries to enhance cooperation and respect differences." As one of the founders of the Canadian peace organization *The Voice of Women/La Voix des femmes* in 1966, Dr. Franklin goes to the heart of the problem by discussing militarism's need for the concept of enemy. "We have to realize," she says, "how essential the concept of enemy is for those who are mutual enemies. You can see how well it has served both the Soviet Union and the United States, because for both it has provided the fear of not so much killing people as with a perfectly legitimate dissent and the need for reorganizing their social structures." Given the post-war technological transformations in the Soviet Union and the United States, Dr. Franklin argues that "in both cases, the external enemy was a lovely possibility of not dealing with urgent social problems, and both would find it horrible if the other side would give up. They would have to look for another enemy."

To show us the human face of this "enemy," *Speaking Our Peace* travels to Moscow, following the activities of two Canadian peace-activists who seek to establish communication links with women behind the Iron Curtain. Muriel Duckworth, a community organizer from Halifax and a long-time friend of Dr. Franklin, and Kathleen Wallace-Deering, a Vancouver women who works with Project Ploughshares, talk with Soviet women like Mira Petrovskaya of the USSR Institute for U.S. and Canada Studies, and Olga Lisikova, a pilot in World War Two who flew rescue missions into the besieged Leningrad. Archival footage reveals the terrible suffering of the Soviet people fighting the Nazis — in which more than 22 million Russians died. As narrator Margot Kidder tells us, "War is not an unknown to the Russian people. It is not something that happened to someone else, in some other place." This context underscores the sincerity of Petrovskaya's remark that "the Soviet Union had a very terrible experience with the war and people couldn't feel it, nobody's preparing to fight. People are preparing to defend themselves." Lisikova adds that "the Soviet people are not afraid of American people, or Canadian people, or European people" but there are "certain individuals in the West" who have "a pathological hatred to the socialist countries" and "they are trying to persuade their own people that the Soviet people is different from them, which it's not."

To reveal human similarities, the camera singles out Soviets engaged in those daily activities that link us all: selecting food at the market, the care of children, the joys of Russian couples on holiday. The shots would be cliché were it not for the necessity of countering the notion of a dehumanized "Soviet personality" so well-constructed in the West. Of course, as Dr. Franklin notes: "If people like us talk about the uselessness and senselessness of the arms race, and the senselessness of that concept of an enemy, in this 'win/lose', 'either/or' picture, if you aren't against the enemy you must be for it. You cannot be against the institution of the enemy." Author Solanges Vincent asserts: "Our Peace, a different vision of peace' but also the subversive activities. If peace is subversive, in God's name what is war?"

Having established a basis for shifting the polarization, to militarism vs. peaceful communication and cooperation, the second half of the film concentrates on the extent to which World War Three has already begun. As narrator Kidder informs us: "In the half-hour since this film began, the military around the world has spent $45 million dollars. In that same length of time, a thousand children have died of starvation, one every two seconds." Solanges Vincent, author of *Women for World Peace*, examines the links between militarism and economic dependence in the Third World — a relationship by which client states are "preparing the way of the nation to buy food, equipment and arms. The relative 'peace of exploitation', a 'peace of domination and repression' can't last."

But World War Three's victims are not only the starving poor, left to die in order to feed the military machine. Darlene Keju, an activist from the Marshall Islands, tells of the effects on her people of the nuclear testing conducted in the south Pacific by the U.S. military in 1967 and 1978. Besides the multiple tumors, the kidney, liver, and testicle cancer among the people from islands vaporized by bombing, Keju describes a new phenomenon of foetal abnormalities linked to nuclear pollution: the birth of what are called "jelly-fish babies that are 'nothing like a human at all.'" Following her frightening description, the narration reminds us that "they all now carry a small amount of cancer-causing plutonium in our bodies" as a result of worldwide nuclear testing. "World War Three is already claiming its victims."

One of the hallmarks of the work of Studio D is that its films inevitably circle back to focus on the Canadian link to whatever issues are being explored. In this case, that link is biostatistician and Roman Catholic nun, raises the issue of uranium mining and milling — a central process in the manufacture of plutonium. In Canada, the world's largest exporter of uranium, is not only not contributing to worldwide nuclear pollution in all its forms. This is shown by the contamination of its own people. Speaking Our Peace takes us to Elliott Lake, Ont., where the mining of uranium has so polluted the Serpent River and the surrounding lands that the area will remain radioactive 'for much longer than the entire span of
Paul Donovan's Def-Con 4

Here's something nice for a change: a Canadian exploitation movie that didn't die on its feet. Def-Con 4 is an ultralow-budget, action flick that moves right along and even displays flashes of intelligence now and then. It isn't up to the level of Morlocks on the run or even on a par with early Cronenberg. It's got problems all over the place and its strengths aren't really as strong as they should be, but, if you've got a taste for schlock in the first place, Def-Con 4 is good enough to make the problems worth putting up with.

Its greatest strength is its storyline. Basically, it's the science-fiction standard about the post-nuclear-holocaust good guys trying to get to safety and running running running. What makes it fairly predictable, though, is that you know science fiction fairly trite. But Def-Con 4 doesn't arrive at its slave state until it's almost half over and it uses its build-up time well, creating a set of dramatic crises that are enjoyable in themselves and that develop character for the space capsule, that you get captured and make 'em look as stupid as she does. Jordan's steps completely out of character in refusing to save himself by hanging the others and reverse our expectations of what comes later.

We start with three astronauts going quietly mad in an armed satellite. Captain Walker (John Walsch) is the hero-type - cool, calm and conventionally handsome, yet he's the one who doesn't want to push the button when World War III starts. Jordan (Kate Lynch) is the love interest, written and played excellently on both hands by Paul Donovan. She's not going to melt into anybody's arms. The writer-director Paul Donovan keeps it up by our usual crew of schlockmeisters and it's meant to move right along and even displays flashes of intelligence now and then. It isn't up to the level of Morlocks on the run or even on a par with early Cronenberg. It's got problems all over the place and its strengths aren't really as strong as they should be, but, if you've got a taste for schlock in the first place, Def-Con 4 is good enough to make the problems worth putting up with.

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