

A Spiritual “Special Ops” Christmas Gift. The Nixon-Kissinger “Christmas Bombing” of North Vietnam

By [Edward Curtin](#)

Theme: [History](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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*“It happened that a fire broke out backstage in a theater. The clown came out to inform the public. They thought it was a jest and applauded. He repeated his warning, they shouted even louder. So I think the world will come to an end amid general applause from all the wits, who believe that it is a joke.” – **Soren Kierkegaard**, *Either/Or**

*“In the green fields a turnin’, a baby is born
His cries crease the wind and mingle with the morn
An assault upon the order, the changing of the guard
Chosen for a challenge that is hopelessly hard
And the only single sound is the sighing of the stars
But to the silence and distance they are sworn”*

– **Phil Ochs**, *Crucifixion*

*“Jesus didn’t die on a private cross.” – **James Douglass**, *Lightning East to West, Jesus, Gandhi, and the Nuclear Age**

It was snowing hard in the days before Christmas in 1972 as I sat at my writing desk looking out the back window toward the woods that were filling up with snow. I felt trapped by the heavy snow that made the roads impassable, but even more so by the contemplation of the barbaric “Christmas Bombing” of North Vietnam carried out by **Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger**, and their associated war criminals. I was filled with despair and imagined the snow turning red with blood. Earlier that fall, I, together with a thousand others, had been arrested for protesting the dispatching of these B-52 bombers that were indiscriminately massacring Vietnamese. The corporate media, accomplices to war crimes then and now, refused to report on the demonstration and the large number of arrests, despite repeated requests to do so. They were just doing their job.

So here we are again as Christmas approaches. The same corporate media obsess about Trump as if something has changed over the decades. Nothing has, except for a growing gulf between reality and fantasy, not a small thing. Between Nixon and Trump lies a vacuity of leadership and a history of evil war-making that the media have disappeared, just as they have disappeared the message of peace that connects Christmas to Good Friday, in favor of corporate capitalism’s favorite season of consumption and memory loss. Thus they have accompanied and promoted the growth of the malignant American empire and its violent expansion across the world. But if one knew the history of those years, one could perhaps find one’s way out of the forest of lies into the clearing of truth, a very big thing indeed. Here’s a bit.

Nixon was first elected in 1968 as a “peace candidate” and proceeded to wage savage

attacks on Vietnam and secretly on Laos and Cambodia. He was elected after having [treasonously sabotaged](#) a Vietnam peace deal, but the American people in their naivety believed his lies and elected him. After four years of savage war-making and the Watergate break-in, they reelected him in a landslide with the aid of the 18 year old vote, when his opponent, Democratic **Senator George McGovern**, who campaigned on ending the war and granting amnesty for draft evaders, received 17 electoral votes to Nixon's 520. So much for war crimes. Then came **Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, William Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama** - liars and war-mongers all (I will spare you the details that are easily available) - and now we have Trump, who is no different, just far weirder and therefore a cause of some embarrassment to those who deal the cards.

Nine presidents who claim to be Christians, whose founder was executed by the Roman state for advocating love, not war; presidents who, when they die, we are told by the media, go straight to heaven as their presidential brothers in crime and their acolytes gather round to pray, hold hands, and beam them up in language that would make an idiot laugh. Don't bother to send in the clowns; they're here. They gather periodically in the National Cathedral and other Washington, D.C. venues to give us a laugh. But who is laughing at these jokesters who are an embarrassment to the human race?

When JFK was executed by the U.S. national security state for planning to end the Vietnam War, the Cold War, and the nuclear arms race, he was succeeded by another "peace" candidate, **Lyndon Johnson**, number ten on the list of good Christian Presidents, who claimed his opponent in the 1964 election was prepared to nuke the world; so Johnson only proceeded to escalate the war against Vietnam in the most barbarous ways imaginable, killing millions and using young American war-slaves (draftees) to do so.

But enough history. A little bit can make one laugh; delving deep can shock one into an awareness that we have been snowed for a long time and that that sense of despair and entrapment I felt at Christmas 1972 may run deep into the American soul. Perhaps.

But of happiness and despair we have no measure. What we can measure is the increase in the possibility that nuclear war may happen, making all possibility impossible. Do we need a comedian to tell us that the fire next time will be the last time; that the tinder is set and the match ready to strike? How long will the American people go on believing the absurd lies of the politicians and their sycophantic media mouthpieces that it is the Russians who wish to bury us and are preparing to do so, when the United States continues to offensively provoke Russia in Ukraine and eastern Europe and has pulled out of all treaties that might help prevent nuclear war? The writing is on the wall.

When we think of nuclear war, we enter the realm of the religious. Once upon a time the power to destroy the world was reserved for God. With the invention of nuclear weapons that power, and its accompanying symbolism that runs deep into our psyches, passed to the possessors of nuclear weapons. In the U.S., our psychopathic nuclearists like to play the religious clowns by jocularly naming weapons of mass extinction and their delivery systems in such a way as to reduce them to sick jokes ("Fat Man" and "Little Boy"), an ancient god's spear (Trident), and even the body of Christ (the nuclear submarine the "Corpus Christ"). Although they have set the world on a course toward extinction, it's all a joke to them.

Last month in a courthouse in Georgia, a hearing was held for seven Catholic peacemakers

who take the possibility of nuclear war very seriously and believe Kierkegaard's clown. They have acted on their Christian faith that there is a direct link from a child born in a manger to a man executed by the state on a cross and the hope of an Easter rising. They know the theater is on fire. On April 4, 2018, the fiftieth anniversary of the national security state's execution of **Dr. Martin Luther King** in 1968, they entered into the Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay, the east coast home of the Trident submarines that carry half the American strategic nuclear warheads, where they poured their own blood and indicted the military for crimes against peace. Their actions follow a long string of such action that have followed from the actions of the Catonsville Nine when they burned draft records in Catonsville, Maryland on May 17, 1968, six weeks after King's murder and a few before Bobby Kennedy suffered the same fate at the hands of the same killers. At Catonsville, the words that Fr. Daniel Berrigan, S.J. read over the flaming basket of draft files ring true today as they always will:

Our apologies, good friends, for the fracture of good order, the burning of paper instead of children, the angering of the orderlies in the front parlor of the charnel house. We could not, so help us God, do otherwise.

For we are sick at heart, our hearts give us no rest for thinking of the Land of Burning Children. And for thinking of that other Child, of whom the poet Luke speaks. The infant was taken up in the arms of an old man, whose tongue grew resonant and vatic at the touch of that beauty.

And the old man spoke; this child is set for the fall and rise of many in Israel, a sign that is spoken against. Small consolation; a child born to make trouble, and to die for it, the First Jew (not the last) to be subject of a "definitive solution." He sets up the cross and dies on it; in the Rose Garden of the executive mansion, on the D.C. Mall, in the courtyard of the Pentagon.

We see the sign, we read the direction: you must bear with us, for his sake. Or if you will not, the consequences are our own. For it will be easy, after all, to discredit us. Our record is bad; trouble makers in church and state, a priest married despite his vows, two convicted felons.

We have jail records, we have been turbulent, uncharitable, we have failed in love for the brethren, have yielded to fear and despair and pride, often in our lives. Forgive us. We are no more, when the truth is told, than ignorant beset men, jockeying against all chance, at the hour of death, for a place at the right hand of the dying one.

These current witnesses for peace in Georgia include long-term peace activists **Elizabeth McAlister**, 78, of Baltimore; **Jesuit Fr. Steve Kelly**, 69, of the Bay Area in California; **Carmen Trotta**, 55, of New York City; **Clare Grady**, 50, of Ithaca, New York; **Martha Hennessy**, 62, of New York, granddaughter of Catholic Worker co-founder **Dorothy Day**; **Mark Colville**, 55, of New Haven, Connecticut; and **Patrick O'Neill**, 61, of Garner, North Carolina.

At this hearing, **Bishop Joseph Kopacz** of Jackson, Mississippi testified on their behalf that they were doing what Christians are called to do: resist war and the weapons of war, especially nuclear weapons that are sinful and that will destroy all of creation if used. He said they were "a spiritual special ops team."

They are being charged by the government with conspiracy, trespass, and destruction and depredation of government property, charges they are seeking to have dismissed. The judge in the case has said the hearing will be continued at an unspecified future date.

And perhaps at another unspecified date - today? Christmas? - the gift that such courageous people offer to us will be accepted and we will come to the realization that time is short, as it always is in genuine living, and the evil that glides silently under the seas with those Trident submarines will be recognized for what it is: the evil that resides in us when we refuse to unwrap the gift that this spiritual special op team offers us and we continue to dwell in the illusionary unreality of the American dream that is sustained by lies, myths, and what Rev. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, executed by Hitler for his ant-Nazi dissidence, called "cheap grace" that we bestow on ourselves - the belief that our "leaders" mean well.

They don't.

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