



(Photograph by 摄影: Chan, Hin Io 陈显耀)

## CHINA AND RUMOURS OF WAR IN THE WEST

中国与西方战争的谣言

---

STEPHAN ROTHLIN 罗世范

*“China has become of central importance not only for East Asia but for the whole of humanity. We want to continue our respectful dialogue with its people, aware that China is an important key for a peaceful world and has great potential for enriching our faith tradition, as many of its people long for a spiritual encounter with God in Christ.”*

(The Documents of General Congregation 35 of the Society of Jesus, Decree 3, 2008, p.65)

## INSTRUMENTS OF PEACE AND THE SPECTRE OF WAR

The spectre of war has again become a devastating reality in the Ukraine. While brutal recent wars in Syria, Sudan, Lebanon, Central African Republic and in many other places did not quite seem to attract broad public attention regarding their destructive and evil impact, the war in the Ukraine seems a brutal wake-up call to everyone to reconsider seriously the multiple ramifications of the catastrophe of war. In this context the present essays of MRIJ9 may in a special way help us better understand how the vicious cycle of violence and war may eventually be broken or may well persist as an all-too-familiar disfigurement cruelly scarring human nature.

Warfare was precisely at the core of an event of cognitive disruption occasioned by a cannon ball which in a 16th century armed conflict that wounded a young man named Inigo from the Basque country. The shock provoked a decisive turn in the life of this young Spanish officer. Inigo had no choice but to surrender to his enemies on the hostile French side where he was confined to a period of prolonged recovery. From reading different books he drew a basic lesson: while romantic stories provided him with short periods of relief, he realized that it was the contemplation of the lives of Saints that led to

lasting inner peace. Learning to weigh the odds and reach better informed decisions was a most precious lesson for Inigo – or “Ignatius,” the new name he gave himself to resonate with one of the eminent first martyrs paying a price for their Christian faith – which he further developed and refined during the rest of his life.

In the period of this so-called “Ignatian Year” stretching from May 2021 through July 2022, Jesuits with their colleagues and friends try to gain inspiration from the amazing turn of events precipitated by that cannon ball, that directed the life of Ignatius away from war and narcissistic obsessions with gunplay, and towards a life totally dedicated in the service of God and others. The “Ignatian Year” also features the miracle that transformed one of his best friends Francis-Xavier (1506-1552), whom Inigo got to know during their studies in Paris, who morphed from a youth fully absorbed in the pleasures of student life in the Latin Quarter in Paris towards the exemplary missionary who ventured to the New World of Asia in the period between 1542 and 1552. Throughout his voyages through India, Indonesia, the Moluccan islands and Japan, he was constantly searching for better ways to root the Gospel of the Crucified and Risen Lord in the local cultures which at times seemed so far away from the Christian values he cherished.

Quite often violent clashes, pervasive corruption and wars posed a deadly stumbling block to the foundation of Christian communities. In Japan he had the intuition that the Middle Kingdom would offer a key and privileged door for the understanding of Asian cultures. Francis Xavier died on Shangchuan Island in Southern China without realizing his dream. The basic dream of his friend Ignatius, however, was quite simple: let me do what St. Dominic and St. Francis did during the time they founded the mendicant orders in the 12<sup>th</sup> century: in the midst of a deca-

dent church they proposed a profound renewal, especially in reconnecting with the evangelical option for poverty.

This striving for genuine renewal going all the way back to that great awakening in the 13th century, unfolding in the context of the Mongol invasions, is strongly echoed in the paper of Natalie Ross. In 2022 the world continues to face a pandemic and wars while the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and China's Belt and Road Initiative argue for peaceful coexistence. History has taught us that the work of peace promotion supersedes ideology; the Silk Road attests to that. Peace becomes indeed an imperative for survival. The challenge is for all of us to continue to process what went before, in order to change the future. The infrastructure of peace making requires analysis and evaluation, and that means East and West must continue to communicate in specific global ways to achieve an ongoing and effective peace process. In light of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, St. Francis' own Peace Prayer seems most timely. His historic meeting with the Sultan of Egypt was certainly a main reference point for the universal vision of peace presented, most memorably, by Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti* (2020).

Ross considers the Peace Prayer an important starting point for making progress in the discipline of contemplative action. Becoming "instruments of peace" we learn to respond to the increasingly novel challenges, arising in the face of adversity and war. Thus, we are invited to retrieve the significance of contemplation as a model for individuals and institutions which unfortunately has largely become obscured.

Veronika Saraswati, Bernard Lee, and Jojo Fung explain how the Belt and Road Initiative relies on bilateral and multilateral agreements between China and partner countries to conduct fair and peaceful development focused on the

concept "building a community of shared future for humankind." It appeals to the Confucian wisdom that declares that "our world is the only commonplace for the human being." This ideal recognizes that humankind inhabits a common world which thus binds us together with a shared future valuing cooperation and solidarity rather than domination and hegemony. The wisdom of Confucian tradition should help us to understand that the war in the Ukraine poses a great risk to China. In 2018 China opened a Belt and Road Trade and Investment Centre in Kyiv, an initiative that ought not to be quashed by the war.

In situations of extreme conflict, it is important to recall the promise of religions working together to make peace. As Dennis McCann explains, the Principles of the Global Ethic begin with a statement of the need for a vision of people living peacefully together. While the United Nations 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights is invoked as a model, the Parliament of World Religions' 1993 Declaration observes that "rights without morality cannot long endure, and that there will be no better global order without a global ethic which must declare a fundamental consensus on binding values, irrevocable standards, and personal attitudes which starts with a fundamental demand: Every human being must be treated humanely." The Global Ethic's basic Principle is recognizable as the Golden Rule, honoured in Biblical teaching (Matthew 7:12), in Confucian teaching (Analects 15:24), as well as in Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim and other traditions.

Considering the rise of Putin, we may wonder what is behind the consistent pattern of Western partners failing to have the guts to push back against his repeated violations of international law and ethics. In his analysis of Paul Tillich, Anton Jamnik recalls the key element of courage in the process of bringing about justice. Every act of justice requires the audacity to take



risks. Tillich's own resistance to Hitler's Nazism cost him his academic career in Germany and forced him to seek refuge at the Union Theological Seminary in New York. In our time reflecting on Tillich's work may help us to achieve a better grasp of key messages from Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti* (2020), which like Tillich's vision, reveals the link between superficial communication and the growing gap between the rich and the poor. This striving for a single human family as brothers and sisters, as Tillich also knew, can be realised only through the grace of love, empowered for justice.

nard Lee and Liam Gearon highlight the mission of Jesuit higher education which places great emphasis on forming "people for others" within a true academic community where scholars and students can interact and learn from each other. Based on in-depth interviews with thirty presidents, faculty members, and senior administrators of four Jesuit universities in Asia they suggest three key elements which seem to be crucial to effectively achieve the goal of Jesuit higher education: Commitment from top management, the structure of the Jesuit program, and the spiritual leader.

"By repeatedly watching masterpieces, one may come to realize that martial arts themes, for example, go well beyond superficial fights to reveal key values for a fulfilled happy life. In fact, visual images may in a very special way provide profound insights into the whole range of key Confucian values such as honesty, integrity, modesty, determination, loyalty, and truthfulness..."

Multiple crises may also reconnect us to the vital importance of philosophical inquiry pursuing questions everyone has to grapple with. In his essay on the French philosopher Pierre Hadot, Yves Vendé suggests possible convergences between Chinese and Greek Philosophy especially describing the common situation of unconsciousness in which we live. Classical images such as the frog in the well or of the fly in the bottom of a large barrel ignoring the universe in its entirety, as Zhuangzi suggested, reveal our typical situation, and the humility we need to understand it.

It is not easy at all to shape educational policy, given the fact that the pandemic and overall digitalization have made teaching quite challenging. Students as well as their instructors have returned to their former classrooms at least in some cases as if they had become as unruly as wild monkeys. In this challenging context, Ber-

For over thirty years I have been trying to use the analysis of movies and visual media as a privileged way to deal with a visually oriented younger generation to discover and enhance their empathetic potential. Exploring and better grasping some key lines of a movie's basic story and pointing to the ethical dilemmas the different heroes are struggling with may have a decisive impact on how individuals and groups develop an ability to care for others. Far from strategies of indoctrination this method is grounded in personal experiences which enable the alert viewer to enter at least partially into the complex dilemmas of different characters. By repeatedly watching masterpieces, one may come to realize that martial arts themes, for example, go well beyond superficial fights to reveal key values for a fulfilled happy life. In fact, visual images may in a very special way provide profound insights into

the whole range of key Confucian values such as honesty, integrity, modesty, determination, loyalty, and truthfulness, which may resonate deeply in those who would like to go beyond the superficial perceptions of so many feature films.

In such a perspective, special attention is paid to the way different heroes face illness, war, and death. In the case of Wong Kar-wai's "The Grandmaster" the subtle philosophical underpinnings of martial arts emerge with its differences between Northern and Southern schools. During the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937 Ip Man—who is portrayed as the ultimate Master of martial arts, and remembered as the mentor of Bruce Lee—loses his two daughters due to starvation. In the meantime, in northern China, his enemy Ma San becomes a traitor and kills Master Gong Yutian. Gong Er who is the daughter of Gong Yutian vows to never teach, marry or have children, and devotes her entire life to seeking vengeance. Meanwhile Ip Man moves to Hong Kong and founds a martial arts school. In my view the film reveals the true ethical nature of martial arts in the midst of ongoing multiple violent clashes and fights: instead of preparing students to be trained in warfare the true Master embodies self-discipline, and a contemplative's devotion to his mission in the worst kind of situation while breaking the vicious cycle of violence and restoring peace.

"Hero" is also a Chinese martial arts film directed by Zhang Yimou, based on the story of Jing Ke's assassination attempt on the King of Qin in 227 BC. Facing war as well as the pervasive desire to take revenge is a major theme. The distinctive plot of "Hero" finally turns on Jing Ke's decision to give up his intention to kill the Emperor.

In the movie "Youth" by Feng Xiaogang the frightening scenes of the brutal border war between China and Vietnam in 1979 reveal the test of authenticity entailed in caring for others, especially in the horror of a bloody ambush when

Liu Feng manages to save the life of a fellow soldier while he loses his arm. The film covers the time span of about 50 years between 1966 – 2016 and provides glimpses of how exemplary persons succeed in maintaining their ideals of friendship, caring for each other and standing up against injustice while ideologies will always collapse in the face of intractable reality. The reassuring experiences projected in "Youth" recall the ultimate Master of the Cinema, Akira Kurosawa who used his war movies of *Ran* (1985) and *Kagemusha* (1980) as a passionate reminder for all viewers not to fall back again in the trappings of war. The genuine "*perestroika*" on the other side will bring about a transformation on both individual and institutional levels, which reconnects to the core values that bind humanity together even in the face of war.

The challenge of bringing about significant changes within different layers of the society including within the so called "cut-throat" business world is to seriously consider the arguments of Stephen Yong-Seung Park for a profound transformation in responsible management education in business schools away from the exclusive goal of profit making towards promoting sustainable peace and justice in the international community. The brutality of the war in Ukraine indeed cries out not only against a "negative" peace, which means only the absence of violence or fear of violence, but above all towards "positive peace" involving the attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies. The transition from traditional egocentric shareholder-focused capitalism to the new eco-centric stakeholder capitalism opens the possibility of positive peace building by the corporate world.

The more I reflect on the different articles the more I am amazed how strongly the arguments urge us to resist the madness of war. On the other hand, we need also always be reminded

that the spectre of violent conflict and global war demands us to be aware that it may be unleashed at any moment. A much firmer and more comprehensive culture of reconciliation and freedom needs to be built upon the ashes marking the end of the next war.



STEPHAN ROTHLIN is Director of the Macau Ricci Institute, Macau and CEO of Rothlin International Management Consulting Limited, Beijing and Hong Kong

## REFERENCES 参考资料

- Francis, P. (2020). *Fratelli Tutti* (On Fraternity and Social Friendship). Macau: Claretian publications
- The Documents of General Congregation 35 of the Society of Jesus (2008), Taipei: Kuangchi Cultural Group (耶稣会第三五届大会文献 (2008) 耶稣会中华省, 台北: 光启文化事业)