EDITORIAL FOREWORD

This book is about institutional violence. Most of the writing is by philosophers. Philosophy is the search for root causes and significant interconnections. Institutional violence encompasses many facets from the empirical to the regulatory. Making these explicit may help those trying to deal with violence in its many forms.

The book opens with a preface that analyzes the nature and types of violence. The first section examines forms of violence found in poverty, imprisonment, capital punishment, language, work, and society. Other sections treat international, racist, environmental, and military dimensions of violence. There is a section on feminist perspectives, and the book closes with essays contrasting violent and nonviolent ways of thinking.

Throughout the cold war philosophers concerned about peace wrote extensively on violence caused by wars. A steady stream of military entanglements around the world fueled these writings. Superpower troops were always "defending" some group or another, and when the major cold war antagonists took a breather the unending madness of regional conflicts came into focus.

The Berlin Wall, which symbolized the great division between East and West, came down in November 1989 and there was a noticeable pause in peace discussions. Philosophers who had debated war and peace issues for years suddenly found themselves watching the unthinkable happening. Militarism seemed to be taking a back seat. Peace appeared at hand.

But what kind of peace? Peacemakers speak about negative and positive peace. Negative peace is the absence of hostilities, the absence of war. Many claim that negative peace is brought on by power or might. By overpowering the enemy war ends and a tenuous peace begins, or so the theory goes.

Nobody overpowered the Soviet Union; rather the empire dissolved from internal political struggles. Some Eastern European nations declared their independence and went uncontested. At the end, the Russian Republic withdrew its large population from the empire and the Soviet Union ceased to exist. The other republics and all Eastern European nations found themselves to be independent nations. Some would split up and contest a central government.

Positive peace is more complicated. Positive peace ensues when internal national and societal divisions are genuinely mediated and eventually reconciled in a process that respects multicultural differences. This process entails equality and democratization of all the people, which is more than adherence to some democratic form of government.

When positive peace succeeds within the nations of a region war among those nations no longer serves a purpose. The processes used to settle internal disputes become the mechanism for rectifying international problems. Institutional violence strikes against the heart of positive peace. When violence prevails unattended within a society that same violence, in only a matter of time, spills out into rioting, terrorism, ethnic cleansing, and
outright war. Positive peace is thus more essential to good international relations than negative peace.

Concerned Philosophers for Peace a few years ago put out a call for philosophers to examine institutional violence at an annual conference. Most of the papers in this volume were read and debated at that meeting. Afterwards they were rewritten in light of comments made through a process called blind reviewing. The quality of the book’s content is accordingly high.

I wish to thank the coeditors Deane Curtin and Robert Litke for overseeing the development of this book from beginning to end. They have had many discussions with the authors and with others involved in bringing this book to publication. I was present at the inception and am delighted with the results. The volume is timely in addressing issues that divide our society, and as such makes a superb addition to the Philosophy of Peace special series within the Value Inquiry Book Series.

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