

# WHY DO SOLDIERS DIE FOR THEIR COUNTRY?

## Why Do Soldiers Fight?

In war, soldiers fight to stay alive. They fight to keep their friends (their fellow soldiers) alive. When they sacrifice their life, it is to save the life of a friend. And when they are heroes, it is because heroics were what was necessary to save their friends.

In war, soldiers are afraid or they are crazy, or perhaps it is a combination of the two which gives them the *edge* they need to survive. It is not faith or patriotism or duty that drives them. It is their sharpened senses, the degree to which they are able to do their (military) job, even with little or no sleep, and working together as a group. It is also the dream of escape from war to whatever ambitions they may have: whether it is a dream or people they love, which become intangible when they fight to survive.

Soldiers have dreams because it is usually the lack of job opportunity in their community which motivates them to join the military. Without the historical coercion of the law to draft people into the military or sentence them to military service in court as an alternative to jail, the military is either perceived as a job opportunity or a way to get training for a job. Military recruiters take advantage of the failures of the economic system (to provide jobs for those who want to work) by going into the high schools in Working Class and rural communities and harassing young people with talk that 'their only hope for a future is to enlist.' They will make *any* promise it takes to get you to sign up and even promises in writing are made to be broken if the military decides it is inconvenient or costly to deliver. And there are always things you won't find out until it is too late – many that even the recruiters don't know, so, they couldn't tell you if you asked them.

There was a time when soldiers went to war to fight for freedom, to defend their homes, or even for a romantic and idealistic crusade. But most of that is Hollywood movie material now. Most people now join for economic reasons and because they don't expect to have to go to war where their life will be endangered, or worse. They don't know that soldiers die, or are crippled or sterilized by exposure to chemical weapons. They think bad things won't happen to them. They are gambling . . . when all they have seen of war is what is on television. Since the Viet Nam War, media access to war has been tightly controlled by the military so that little of the personal horror of war is ever seen on television or in photographs. The military screens pools of reporters then just shows them what they are intended to see.

## Why Do Officers Fight?

In war, officers fight because they follow orders. They equate *morality* with absolute obedience. Officers fight to satisfy their ego and to convince themselves of their masculinity – they try to camouflage this with a lot of patriotic, religious or macho rhetoric (men try to prove their manliness while women try to prove that they "measure-up" and are as good as men). Officers fight because they think they are *superior*. In their minds, this justifies the killing of other people, including the sacrifice of the lives of soldiers placed under their authority by the military.

Most officers join the military out of a romantic attraction to authoritarianism, a totalitarian lifestyle and military machismo. They are hoping that wearing a uniform will give them power and prestige (social privilege) which they did not have as a civilian. They either think of themselves as *superior* to other people or their ambition is to dominate others. They want to be treated like heroes although they have no conception of what heroism, or even courage, is. They hope to be part of a romantic crusade.

Most officers are graduates of a military academy (West Point, Annapolis, Colorado Springs) or one of a handful of military colleges which historically educated the sons of wealth families (like Virginia Military Institute or The Citadel). Reserve Officer Training Corp (ROTC) students usually don't become officers in the regular military. The officer mentality begins at these schools. Academy cadets must be selected by a U.S. Senator and military college cadets are selected by boards of alumni (rich people who are former cadets). Most cadets are selected from Upper Middle Class and Upper Class families and from academic and cultural backgrounds which suggest a receptiveness to regimentation and political indoctrination (faith in the government and authority figures).

Cadets are stripped of their freedom and told that they are *superior* when they obey orders without question, submit to verbal and physical abuse, and memorize trivial pieces of information. Persons who do not adapt to regimentation, political indoctrination, and military administrative doctrines are harassed until they quit or can be kicked out on trumped-up "demerits" by *secret societies* of alumni and senior cadets.

Cadets are taught that an officer obeys orders absolutely; even at the expense of their life and those of soldiers under their command. They are taught that they are only given information they need to know so it is O.K. if orders sound senseless, reckless or irresponsible. Cadets are trained in infantry military doctrines left over from before the American Civil War which condoned casualties of over 50% and killed thousands of soldiers unnecessarily in the Civil War, World War I and the Pacific Ocean battles of World War II. Before a cadet is made into an officer, they swear an oath to obey orders absolutely.

## Who Do Soldiers Fight For?

In war, soldiers fight for those who order them to fight. Out in the World (civilian life), you work for a boss and the system is run by rich and powerful people you never see. The military rank system is no different except it is harder to quit your job and, if soldiers break a rule or don't follow orders, they don't get fired – they can go to jail! Out in the World, working people die on the job all the time because of the carelessness of their bosses, or their boss' failure to be concerned about workplace safety. The only difference with military life is that it is *illegal* to sue the military if they get you maimed or killed. You may say, "Well, soldiers are supposed to get killed." Obviously, in a war, people get killed, but the fact that soldiers also routinely die in peace time more accurately reflects who you are fighting for and their level of concern for the welfare of their troops.

The similarity with the outside World is no accident. The military rank structure was originally patterned after the European system of social classes where rich people would actually *buy* a commission as an officer. Soldiers like to joke that officers have no "common sense", but the reality is that officers are concerned about other things before the welfare of their troops. If you look at

who is in charge of the military, officers are ultimately following orders from a bunch of politicians and the higher in rank an officer gets, the more they have to act like a politician to keep their job. You see, most politicians are not elected by *anyone* – a “politician” is a person who lies, manipulates and trades favors in order to gain personal power. Ultimately, their power reflects how well they serve the interests of people placed in authority above them. Elected officials are ultimately answerable to the rich people who paid the bills which got them elected and “politicians” are ultimately answerable to the elected officials who give them their job and tell them what to do.

All this means that soldiers are really fighting for a bunch of politicians and things which have importance to those politicians. So, when the individual soldier is thinking about how to *survive* another day, the politician sees the soldier as just a *resource* which can be used to help the rich people who put them into office.

## Why Do Politicians Start Wars?

The only thing more important to rich people than money, property, and social privileges is getting *more* money, property, and social privileges. In their minds, the primary functions of the government are: (1) To protect their property, (2) To help them get more money and property, and (3) To pass laws which protect their social privileges, including their influence over the government. When nations go to war, they are almost always protecting economic interests or promoting economic ambitions. Politicians use military force when they can't get what they want by more secret means. What politicians tell us are “national interests” are, in truth, the interests of the rich people who put them into office. Most of the hardships of war are borne by ordinary people whose children are soldiers while rich people get richer from wars, even using the money of ordinary people to get richer through government sales of war bonds. Politicians claim that war is about ideology, but that is all eyewash to persuade ordinary people that they should sacrifice their lives for the economic interests of the rich and their pet politicians. Profit is the only real “ideology” behind war.

The American Civil War was fought over who would control the government: rich landowners (the South) or rich industrialists (the North). World Wars I and II and the wars of the Cold War were fought to control natural resources and enable the rich to move good paying jobs overseas where they could force people to work for less. The U.S. entered WWI to protect the profits of New York banks who got rich lending money to the British and French so they could buy American armaments. Since the Cold War, the rich want “stability”: They want the military to be a police officer ready to beat-up anyone who might hurt their profit – regional conflicts, rebellion against governments who support them, immigration (international migration caused by corporations taking away poor peoples' ability to feed their families; forcing them to go to cities to look for work), the underground economy (economic competition they can't control like the so-called “War on Drugs”), and even economic competition. “Peacekeeping” has little to do with a love for peace and everything to do with suppressing conflict which interferes with corporate profiteering. Most people know that the Middle East/Gulf Wars are about controlling oil for use by Europe and the United States. The mystery of the recent Balkans war is that it is about supporting Western European “colonization” of eastern Europe while stopping Eastern European refugees from immigrating into Western Europe who has double-digit unemployment because they are exporting jobs to eastern Europe.

## What is Patriotism?

Politicians treat war like a football game where it is important to “support the home team” and *armchair patriots* can kick back in their houses while soldiers put their lives on the line. Politicians will tell you that anyone who is not “patriotic” about their wars is *the enemy*, but this calls into question “what is patriotism?” and WHO is “the enemy.”

To the ordinary soldier, “patriotism” is an abstraction which they associate with those things which they dream about while they are being shot at: Their *freedom*, people they *love*, their hopes for the *future* . . . . . Patriotism to them is all the good things in life that have nothing to do with war – all the things they would rather be doing than risking their lives.

Patriotism to the rich is not a love of freedom or democracy. It is a love of social privilege. They love to look down their noses at the rest of us and consider themselves superior. They spend money like water that would take the rest of us a year to *earn*. They compete with each other to see who can have the biggest house and the fanciest car because they think possessing these things demonstrates their superiority. When they talk of patriotism and war, they talk about preserving “our” way of life (or “the American way of life”), but what they *really* mean is THEIR way of life!

The rich idea of “freedom” is not the same as for the rest of us. In the English Civil War and the American Revolution the rich wanted freedom from the king so that they would be “free” to exploit the rest of us for profit. The American Revolution was actually won by guerilla warfare by ordinary citizen armies who attacked the British colonial economy. The aristocratic writers of the U.S. Constitution were so afraid of the desire of ordinary people for social equality that they designed the American form of government to protect the property of the rich and make sure they could determine who was elected. Rich people run the world through bureaucracy, a theory of dictatorship perfected by Max Weber in Nazi Germany!

Soldiers fighting and dying for “their country” are in truth fighting to preserve the wealth, property and social privileges of the rich and the corporations they use to get rich off of our hard work. They are fighting for the very people who are busy destroying their communities by attacking family businesses, putting people out of work, and disinvesting public education. Think about why it is that there are no jobs back on the block which pay enough to pay for rent and food. Why can the government afford to hire cops and build prisons, but not hire teachers and build schools? Why is it that you need a military college fund to afford an education? Where is your tax money spent if it isn't spend on ordinary people like those you know? The fact that you are risking your life rather than living it, isn't because of something *you* did, but it is a result of something *someone else* did. Who has the power to decide who gets jobs and where tax money is spent? It is the same people that are sending you off to war where you could be crippled by a land mine, permanently sterilized by chemical weapons or killed. If you want to fight for your community, you've got to do that IN your community – not in some *far away land* where you only fight for *rich* people. If you believe in freedom and protecting those you care about, you don't need to look overseas for cruel dictators who are conspiring to abuse ordinary people. There is plenty of that sort of thing going on now in this country. There are two classes of people in this World: The ordinary people who work and try to survive and the rich people who make money from our work and send us off to war to fight for them. The only way we can help our community is to take control of it and our lives and not be ruled by rich people. You can't do that as a soldier, but you can do it if you **bring the war home** and fight for your freedom and those you care about against your real enemies: Those who run the current system. Semper Repugnare! ( *Always Fight Back!* ) NO WAR BUT THE CLASS WAR!