Albert E. Kahn's 'The Game of Death'

A Plea for Peace and Life for Our Children

THE GAME OF DEATH, by Albert E. Kahn. Cameron & Kahn. Cloth $3; paper $1

Reviewed by CLAUDIA JONES

IT IS by no means accidental that the co-author of the startling expose, High Treason, has made his present vehicle the shocking, carefully documented expose of the tragic consequences of the cold war on the seeds of the future—our children.

Kahn's Game of Death, in the deepest sense, cries out its plea that peace, life and happiness for our children, is the nation's concern. For concern for the nation's future, its children, concern for ridding it of McCarthyism—of Smith Act, anti-labor, anti-Negro anti-foreign-born persecution—means ridding it, too, of the reactionary ideological influences which are now being foisted on our schools, and in every other communication medium to our children.

Perhaps it is the expose of this very connection — showing how the nation's schools are being transformed into "instruments of national policy" where children are indoctrinated with the theory of predatory war, racist ideology and killing as their standard, — that is the book's greatest contribution.

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THIS PROCESS he tells us, was publicly initiated in 1949, with the publication of the report of the Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association. Among its members was Gen. Eisenhower, then president of Columbia University.

Besides forecasting that "East-West tensions will . . . keep the world in a state of Cold War for years to come" and that "our children will continue to live under an oppressive shadow of fear," the Report stressed the need for a basic psychological reorientation and sweeping changes of a "social, political and economic nature." Crystallized in a single vivid phrase the role proposed for the nation's schools in the future was that education in the U.S. henceforth must be "an instrument of national policy."

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KAHN illustrates this growing conversion of our schools by showing us pictures symbolic of the U.S. today: children



ALBERT E. KAHN

trooping to schools with white sheets to cover their little bodies in atomic drills, children being separated from their parents because of the parent's stand for peace and anti-Negro persecution; the orgy of witch-hunts, reactionary legislation, cuts in Federal School appropriations, and discharge of teachers for their political beliefs, to terrorization of children by the FBI because of the political opinions of their parents.

And he shows that increasing use of narcotics among teen-agers and the rising casualties of juvenile gang warfare is intimately connected with the incessant plumping for war and the glorification of slaughter witnessed by our children on television, in movies, radio, books, comics and now in school curricular. Convincingly he shows that all agencies of government combine to transform our kids from humans to robots conditioned to favor and participate in world slaughter.

It is in the further shocking chapter in the special persecution of Negro children, in wars hot or cold, in peace and war, and the integration of this subject matter throughout, that awareness as to the original sin towards children becomes rife. For even before the days of loyalty oaths and imprisonment for political belief that original sin, of American "normalcy" in its treatment of Negro children, in the separate but unequeal facilities in education reveals the cynicism and brutality of the capitalist and capitalist society. Such responsibility of course, in the book, is strongly inferred, for example, in Kahn's reference to the "forgotten children," the children of migrant agricultural workers in the Southwest and southern states, one hundred of whom were recently discovered starving in a farm labor camp, and his disclosure of the cynical assertions of the affluent monopoly farm owners that "there is no cause for alarm . . ." the situation is really "quite normal," or, that "is no worse in many respects than for years before."

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BUT NOWHERE does the author show what is the touchstone: the real origins of the plight of our children and the nation's schools, accentuated now by the Cold War. Basically it originates in a society in which as the book reveals, a ship's line is given $50,000,000, or 50 percent more money than we plan to appropriate for maternal and child welfare in this country.

Factionally "Game of Death" reveals that while one half of one percent of steel was alloted for the nation's school buildings (when statistics say one out of five are outmoded or obsolete) some 22 billion were alloted for atomic research and military spending in the Korean war. It is fundamentally the profit motive, therefore, that makes our society wink cynically at what an outstanding liberal American educator recently termed "pseudo educated ignorance." But more—it needs this ignorance and brutalization process, even as did the German fascists, to make its cannon fodder more pliable.

But, all is not going according to plan. Kahn makes this clear enough in his revelations about the truly horrifying effects of the cold war on America's children. He states that it was the peace protests of educators, child specialists, parents and children, graphically demonstrated in the opposition which forced the shelving of the UMT plan for the nation's youth, which indicates opposition to the entire scheme. But it is regretted that Kahn's book did not include more such examples of the parents' fight-back. In recent weeks there have been protests against drills, and jimcrow educational policies. There were cases where mothers locked arms and stopped traffic to get a light for their children, and where others fiercely protested denial of gamma globulin to their threatened children.

The other minor weaknesses in this overall contribution to peace would include the need for examining programs which seek to alleviate these conditions, thereby giving readers at least a key as to how they can intensify work for children's needs—which is to say, for peace and freedom.

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THE GAME OF DEATH is the first selection of the Union Book Club and the first book to be issued by the new publishers Cameron & Kahn. The publishers deserve our profound thanks for a book which focused attention on the children of America, one which not only will awaken American parents to the need for a crusade against the dangers facing their sons daughters, but one which helps to spike the lying assertion that the wielders of atomic war and destruction are defending the children of America.

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was off—mostly too stretched out. Guest John Wayne, for my money, projected nothing and contributed less. A Durante-Wayne skit, satirizing the Royal Mountie movie, died pronto but was kicked around long after it was dead. Too few flashes of the real Durante here. More authority to Durante over character of the show, particularly his own material, might help.

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STUDIO ONE. Caught a script titled 'Music and Mrs. Pratt starring Elsa Lanchetser. The idea behind this one was that a domineering old multi-millionaire, arrogant with her 71 million dollars from oil, could turn out to be a nice old lady after all. Even Elsa Lanchester couldn't make it believable. Not her fault, really: Duse would break her teeth on this one.

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THE UNEXPECTED. A series of whodunits and suspense stuff on film, sponsored by Whelan's. Quality is as low as their wage scale.

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MANY OF the big shows are at the point where, because of the astonishing number of commercials, they're nearing whatever effectiveness their performers may contribute. Unfortunately even a show like the Sid Caeser-Imogene Coca program is being mishandled this way. If there weren't over thirty commercials in their last 90-minute shindig then it certainly seemed that many. It's irritating and disgusting.

On many of the other programs there's another foul procedure: forcing the entertainers to step out of their roles (or sometimes staying within them) to simper over or enact enjoying the products of their sponsors. A degrading business.

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THIS is to acknowledge the letters from J. R. and E. S. criticizing the column on Godfrey as too soft and ignoring the big business interests his program represents. It is still too early in the game for me to be able to judge accurately how best and in what tone to conduct this column. Still experimenting; but anxious to hear opinions and suggestions from our readers. You're the sponsor.