

ABOLISH WAR

Newsletter No. 13

Winter 2009

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Following our piece on the front page of the last issue, *Lest We Forget*, above a photo of wild poppies, we were contacted by MAW members Jeff Bolam and John Morris, who feel passionately about the assumptions made and the language used around the issue of Remembrance. For instance, the word 'sacrifice' is often used when very few of those who die in war genuinely sacrifice themselves – they can get killed doing their simple best to defend their country, or die simply because, as civilians, they get in the way. And it is something we campaign for – a more honest use of language and a more inclusive form of remembrance. But Jeff and John also wanted to know why there were no white poppies on the front page. As the peace poppy becomes more visible, we need to remind people that it is nearly as old as the red poppy, that its message is as sincere and valid and that we can all honourably wear both, the red to remember those who died and the white as a promise to rid the world of war.



Mayor Sue Jones-Davies with Rhidian Griffiths Photo - Jim Griffiths

Aberystwyth, the Mayor and White Poppies

Wales leads the way, particularly in Aberystwyth, where since 2004, the Town Council has voted in favour of laying a wreath of white poppies in memory of all those who have died in war, at the town war memorial at Aberystwyth Castle. Lotte Reimer of Aberystwyth Peace & Justice Group praised the Council's stand, and hopes that other councils might follow their example. We all look forward to the day when we see our TV presenters wearing white poppies and when symbols of peace are an accepted part of Remembrance Day.



White Poppies on show

Sherborne Museum Window

Dorset is full of retired military folk, and the town of Sherborne turns blood red at Remembrance time. In the main shopping street every other shop window is filled with flags, poppies and wreaths. In the Museum, where there are often interesting mini-exhibitions in the windows, there was a display devoted to memorabilia of two world wars, complete with old newspapers, photos and – of course – poppies. And in the centre, at the front of the display was a little bunch of white poppies. You have to live there to know how amazing this is!

MAW Makes a Day of It

This year, for the first time, MAW held both the AGM and the Remembrance Day Lecture on the same day and in the same place. Our hosts, the Imperial War Museum, did us proud and MAW is fortunate to have built up such a positive relationship with the Museum - no better venue for us than a place exhibiting the awfulness of war.

The day started with the Museum's Remembrance service - prayers and silence, a bugler on the first-floor balcony, and a violinist playing a melancholic piece in the hall - then to the Museum Conference Room for the AGM and a talk by Dr Stuart Parkinson on 'Climate Change and Military Conflict'. In the afternoon the Remembrance Day Lecture, 'Hope in a Time of War', was given by Kathy Galloway from the Iona Community. (See page 3 for a full report)

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Saint Adomnan
*What does an obscure
 Irish saint have to do
 with peace campaigning?*



Movement for the Abolition of War

11 Venetia Road London N4 1EJ Tel 01908 511948 www.abolishwar.org.uk

Editorial

Who are the terrorists? Well, we have lots of reports from Iraq and Afghanistan about the improvised explosive devices (IEDs, or roadside bombs) that have cost our soldiers lives and limbs as they've driven over them in their 'snatch' Land Rovers. Very much a terrorist weapon one would say.

But did you know that at the height of the cold war Britain had secret plans to bury nuclear landmines in parts of Germany to thwart a Soviet attack? ¹ The 10 proposed devices would have had the combined explosive power of more than five Nagasaki A-bombs, resulting in craters more than 600ft deep and would have spread radioactive contamination across vast areas of country if detonated. A roadside bomb in Afghanistan doesn't really compare, does it?

What about another common terrorist device – the nail bomb, where nails are simply packed in with the explosive. Nasty. But much nastier is the flechette shell, generally fired from a tank. The shell explodes in the air and releases thousands of metal darts 3.75 mm in length, which disperse in a conical arch three hundred meters long and about ninety meters wide. The primary military advantage of the flechette over other munitions is its ability to penetrate dense vegetation very rapidly and to strike a relatively large number of enemy soldiers, or indeed, civilians.

Then there are those rockets that militants from both Gaza and Lebanon fire into Israel, correctly labelled as terrorist activity in that it terrorises people. Over a period of eight years some 3000 rockets from Gaza have resulted in 13 Israeli deaths. To take one incident (before the current conflict) – last November under the headline *Gaza Militants Fire Rocket Barrage into Israel*, the Voice of America reported: 'Israeli officials say suspected Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip have fired 20 rockets into southern Israel. There was no immediate report of casualties.' ² 20 rockets, with apparently no casualties.

But 'legitimate' forces use the MRLS (Multi-rocket launcher systems). These have been used in most wars since 1945, being a cheap and simple way to fire a lot of ordnance at once. 'With advanced targeting the modern MRLS is lethally accurate and able to deploy anti armour submunitions from its free flight rockets. A full load of 12 rockets can deliver no less than 8,000 submunitions over an area of 30,000 square yards. These could be anything from anti tank mines, guided anti tanks warheads or high explosive for use against enemy artillery batteries.... (cluster bombs to you and me). The use of MRLS to deliver mines has fallen out of favour due to political reasons in the West but there is no doubt that the Multiple Rocket Launch system has come of age and may now be the future of modern battlefield artillery.' ³ That means that 12 rockets, in a matter of seconds, can spray an area of 30,000 sq.

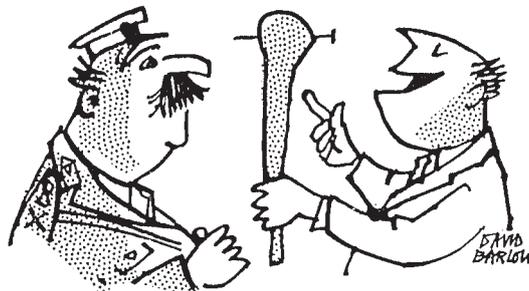
yards with 8000 explosive devices, which could go on being a lethal danger for years. A 'barrage' of 20 rockets carrying no submunitions and with no reported casualties doesn't really compare, does it?

It gets worse. A 2003 article in the Army Times dealt with the controversy over a new bullet made by a Texas firm, RBCD, and distributed by Le Mas Ltd. of Arkansas. ⁴ As the author, John Roos explains, the new 5.66-mm Le Mas round is 'frangible' – it will 'penetrate steel and other hard targets but will not pass through a human torso.' Instead, it effectively explodes inside a body, ravaging tissue in all directions, 'creating untreatable wounds'. The story features Ben Thomas, one of the many mercenaries hired by the US and operating in Iraq. Thomas tells of his first kill with this bullet in a skirmish with Iraqi gunmen in a village near Baghdad. He was given some of the bullets by Le Mas and with one of them shot an Iraqi in the buttock, not normally considered a fatal wound. In this case "It entered his butt and completely destroyed everything in the lower left section of his stomach," Thomas said. "Everything was torn apart. Nobody could believe this guy died from a butt shot." Thomas examined the wound and said there was no comparison whatever between this bullet and all the other ammunition he has used to shoot people with. He said he feels qualified to assess a bullet's effects, having trained as a special-operations medic and having shot people with various types of ammo, including the standard-issue green tip and the Black Hills Mk 262, favoured by spec-ops troops – just the sort of thing a medic would do, I don't think.

The bullet is so controversial that if Thomas, a former SEAL, had been on active duty, he would have been court-martialed for using it. At the time the article was written, the US Army had yet to place an order with Le Mas. They said it creates no more damage than ammo they already use. Le Mas said the Army hasn't tested it properly – firing the bullet into gelatine is worthless. It needs to be tested on real live bodies (presumably why they gave some bullets to Thomas). The Pentagon is in a bind, because if they don't purchase this killer, then Le Mas will simply sell it to the 'bad' men (i.e. the other side). Have they signed a deal or not? I don't know, but I do know this. Money rules and *nothing* compares to this. So who are the terrorists?

The OED definition of 'terrorist' says 'One who favours or uses terror-inspiring methods of governing or of coercing government or community'. That definition necessarily includes arms manufacturers and dealers, those who use the weapons and the governments that sell or buy the weapons and sanction their use. We need a much more accurate and honest use of the word 'terrorist'.

1. *Nuclear mines 'to stop Soviets'*, Guardian, 17 July 2003
2. *Gaza Militants Fire Rocket Barrage into Israel*, Voice of America, 5 Nov. 2008
3. See www.historyofwar.org
4. *One-Shot Killer*, John Roos, Army Times, 24 Nov, 2003 and *US Deadliest Bullet Tested*, Chris Floyd, Global Eye, 12 Dec, 2003



'It's designed for the next war but one.'

Lesley Docksey

Editor's contact details: Lesley Docksey, 1 Court Farm Cottages, Buckland Newton, Dorset DT2 7BT lesley.docksey@abolishwar.org.uk

Our Aims and Goals

To spread the belief that the abolition of war is both desirable and possible

To raise awareness of the alternatives to war for resolving national and international disputes

To develop materials and strategies to educate us all from school children to those in government

Remembrance Day at the Imperial War Museum

The AGM

The morning's speaker was Dr Stuart Parkinson, Director of Scientists for Global Responsibility. His subject, 'Climate Change and Military Conflict', covered what could soon be a pressing problem – the conflicts that will break out as a result of the effects of our changing climate. Drought, desertification and soil erosion, water shortages, sea-level rises (which could result in underground fresh water sources becoming contaminated with salt), and because of all these problems, mass migrations – the danger of escalating conflicts and major wars are clear. For instance – the WHO estimate there are already 150,000 deaths each year from



Stuart Parkinson with vice-Chair Christine Titmus

climate change; by 2050 1 billion+ people in Africa could be affected by water stress; half the world's population live in coastal areas and will be affected by sea-level rises. Climate science says we have to act now but our governments seem content to talk, commission yet more studies, discuss carbon trading, make noises on renewable energy while supporting nuclear and coal-fired power, not to say an expanded Heathrow Airport. They also support a 'techno-fix' approach, but this will simply use resources we can ill afford, and will only be a sticking plaster, not a cure. What can we do? Lifestyle changes (for all of us in the developed world) as well as energy efficiency are a must. But the public are seeing separate bits of the problem. We have to get them to see that the bits are simply aspects of one big problem that will affect the peace and well being of all of us. Finally, said Stuart, as campaigners for peace and conflict resolution we must target the environmentalists so that together we can address the issues of global warming and conflict as one issue.

MAW's Remembrance Day Lecture

The lecture 'Hope in a Time of War; a Religious Perspective on Peacemaking', was given by Kathy Galloway of the Iona Community. Kathy started her lecture with the story of St Adomnan, who became Abbot of Iona after St Columba, and like him was Irish. 7th century Ireland was a patriarchal society of constantly warring tribes. Violence and brutality were endemic and women were subject to horrific oppression and exploitation. Adomnan's answer was the Cain Adomnan, the Law of the Innocents, an early attempt to distinguish and protect non-combatants in war, a problem we are still struggling with. She then explained how, as religion became entangled with state, what had started as a peace-loving ethos in early Christianity

became so belligerent and so connected to war, until we get to the point where religion is used to justify war. But is there such a thing as a 'just war'?



The bugler playing on the balcony at the end of the Remembrance service

She said the "myth of redemptive violence, the notion that hurting and killing people is good for them, has exerted, and continues to exert huge power. It has authorized the beating of children, often by religious people, 'for their own good', the subordination of women, because they are 'weaker', the oppression of whole peoples because they are 'inferior' or 'uncivilised'." This, she says, "saves people from having to engage with the central humanitarian value that people are not expendable as a means to an end, and leaves fundamental abuses of power unchallenged." The myth of redemptive violence relies on being able to blur the distinction between a just cause and a just war. But take just two qualifications of a just war:

- all other methods of resolving the conflict must have been exhausted
- only military targets, not unarmed civilians, can be the targets of military strikes

As Kathy said, "I do not think it possible for modern warfare to meet these conditions". No, indeed. And she set us a challenge. 'It is time for all people of goodwill to embrace a different way - the way of active, and proactive, non-violence. Instead of pre-emptive strikes, we need pre-emptive peacemaking. Not peace liking or peace wishing, but peacemaking.' It is time for active



(from left to right) Diane Lees, Director General of the Imperial War Museums, Tony Kempster and Kathy Galloway.

non-violence, to actively ensure that the people that Adomnan tried to protect remain visible; to actively ensure that the damage of war remains visible; and to actively ensure that the alternatives to war are made very visible to all.

(The full text of Kathy Galloway's lecture is on the MAW website as is the Cain Adomnan.)

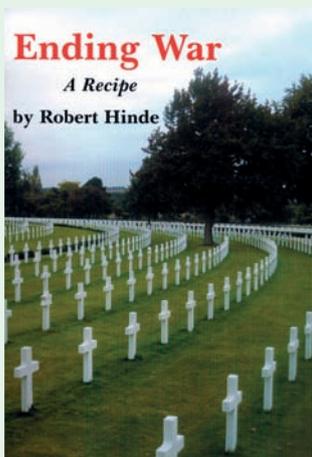
Ending War: a recipe

Robert Hinde (2008)

Spokesman

This 45-page booklet by Robert Hinde, MAW President and deputy chair (recently chair) of the British Pugwash Group, is an excellent overview of the nature of war, its causes, the factors that maintain it as an institution, its machinery and the morality and legality of war. The final chapter discusses what can be done to prevent war including suggestions for what the individual can do. The conclusion ends with the words: 'There are too many people who are against war and do nothing about it. Of course everybody cannot do everything, but everyone can do something' (like joining Pugwash or MAW perhaps!)

The book is well suited to use in schools and MAW is considering what financial support can be provided to promote its use there. Copies can be obtained (price £5 inc p&p in the UK and £6 abroad) from the British Pugwash Group, Flat A, Museum Mansions, 63A Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3BJ. Cheques should be addressed to the 'British Pugwash Trust'. It is also available at www.pugwash.org.



A tribute to Elnora Ferguson who died in December aged 79

Elnora was known to many of us as a tireless worker for peace and justice with an immense enthusiasm for promoting the education of young people. The Universities of Birmingham and Coventry benefited greatly from her support, and both awarded her honorary degrees.

She was also a deeply religious person, living a modest personal life but with immense generosity in her commitment to the causes she championed.

Elnora's life was very varied. She travelled the world with her husband John, always working hard voluntarily or teaching wherever she went. She was banned from South Africa during the apartheid period because of her work to promote equality.



Elnora with Professor Simon Lee, Vice-Chancellor of Leeds Metropolitan University at the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the university and The Peace Museum.

She was a director in the family business of Taylor and Francis plc which funded the Allan and Nesta Ferguson Foundation, which she chaired. The Foundation was a leading charity supporting education and peace work in Britain and internationally. A grant was recently awarded to the International Peace Bureau (Geneva) for its Disarmament for Development project with which MAW is involved.

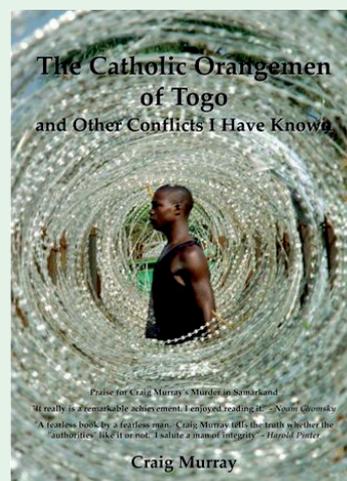
But I knew her best in my role as a member of The Peace Museum board which she chaired. Elnora was indefatigable in overseeing this

large and rather difficult project to establish a national peace museum (involving, of course, education work with young people). Beginning as a peace gallery in Bradford, this has led to the current plan to establish the multi-million pound Senator George Mitchell Peace Centre for peace and conflict resolution at Leeds Metropolitan University (of which The Peace Museum is part). The museum is also a major contributor to MAW's series of Peace History Conferences at the Imperial War Museum.

The Catholic Orangemen of Togo

"In conflict with Cook over ethical foreign policy, Blair would always overrule his Foreign Secretary, especially if the interest of the UK arms industry could be invoked."

Craig Murray, the former Ambassador of Uzbekistan, who gave such a riveting talk at our AGM in 2007, has just produced a new book. Craig has a passion for Africa and served in Nigeria and Ghana before becoming British ambassador in Uzbekistan. *The Catholic Orangemen of Togo and Other Conflicts I Have Known* is about his experiences in Africa, and takes us once again into the murky world of diplomacy, corruption and, in this case, arms deals and mercenaries. As readable, and as shocking, as *Murder in Samarkand*, this book is also just as educational, particularly for those who insist on maintaining an innocent world view.



For various reasons, Craig has had difficulty getting this book published. However, from January 12th it became available in pdf form on over 100 websites (and from the editor if you email me), and Craig has had some hard copies printed, which are available from www.amazon.co.uk at £11.87

Which War Was Fought Over a Bucket?

'There really can be few worse reasons to go to war than over a bucket, but that didn't stop the soldiers of Modena and Bologna from fighting over one for twelve long years. Of course there were complex political reasons for hostilities between Modena and Bologna but the symbol of the whole miserable business and the rallying call for the 40,000 combatants was a wooden bucket.

Exactly at what stage in the conflict the bucket became central is uncertain. Some sources claim the receptacle was stolen from a public fountain in Bologna by an opportunistic detachment of Modenese cavalry around 1313 and that the twelve years of war that followed were centred on an attempt to get it back.

Others claim that the seizure of the bucket was in fact the crowning achievement of the victors in the final battle of the war, which was fought outside Zappolino in 1325. That engagement proved a disaster for Bologna, even though their army outnumbered the Modenese by over four to one. Some 2000 soldiers died in the short, brutal fight, and in the immediate aftermath the bucket is said to have been taken from Bologna as a sign of Modena's complete victory. Why they should choose a wooden bucket as their chief spoil is not so clear, however.

But regardless of when in the early fourteenth century the precious pail was taken from Bologna, its presence in Modena has been a source of civic pride ever since. For nearly 700 years this most unlikely of trophies has rested in the town, its current location being in the communal palace in the Chamber of the Confirmed. A replica also resides in the bell tower of the cathedral.

The bucket was even the inspiration for the city's finest poet, Alessandro Tassoni, whose 1615 satirical poem 'The Rape of the Bucket' pokes fun at the inhabitants of the city for fighting over what must be one of the least valuable spoils from any war.'

This is an excerpt from *Charge! The Interesting Bits of Military History* by Justin Pollard, published by John Murray at £12.99.

Chair's Report

I visit schools regularly to talk on peace issues, like a number of us involved with MAW, and find the reaction of students a useful indicator of popular interest in political issues. Two days after Obama's inauguration, in a large-scale peace day at Faringdon Community College, I ran six seminars, speaking to some 200 students (14 and 15 year-olds). My subject was *'disarmament for development: changing global priorities'* and the discussion centred on human security and the global threats that we face. And it was astonishing just how much the students knew about Obama the man and his mission. 'He is a good man and is going to put things right after Bush' was the mantra.

In his inauguration speech Obama did, indeed, capture the moment in this way. In the past no president has so repudiated the policies of his predecessor. The veiled quality of criticism ran through the entire speech, following a motif stated early on: 'The time has come to put away childish things ... to reaffirm our enduring spirit, to choose our better history.' It was clear that he was marking that the Bush era had ended.



From MAW's perspective it was the resurrection of 'soft power' that was most significant. Soft power hits the theorists of realpolitik straight in the eye. It suggests that ethical foreign policy, broad public appeal and determined leadership are significant elements in national strength – even if far less tangible and measurable – than are numbers of missiles or GDP. It suggests that the human factor might sometimes possess real leverage.

It is this 'soft power' which might bring Iran in from the cold, bring some rationality to the US's efforts to deploy missile defence systems and the nuclear debate, and introduce a sustainable peace in the Middle East. This would include the provision of assistance to the Palestinians, removing the blockade and reining in the Israeli hawks. The real test will be when soft power meets hard choices. Let us hope that 2009 will indeed be the start of 'a new era of responsibility'.

Global warming and conflict. We continue to work co-operatively with other organisations and are particularly concerned with environmental groups because of the evidence that global warming is beginning to stir conflict around the world. It is no longer just an environmental issue but a 'threat multiplier' in vulnerable countries. The chaos that results from climate change can be an incubator of civil strife, genocide and the growth of terrorism. World leaders have a choice: they can respond to global warming today, or fight because of it in the decades ahead. We are now formulating our plans for a conference and film on these issues.

Visit to Northern Ireland and quilts. Last year I took part in several events in Northern Ireland during a visit organised by Roberta Bacic, our representative there. These included a meeting in Belfast entitled *'Peace education musically illustrated'* to launch our new CD and discuss how it might be used in schools. I took a school class in Derry organised by Children in Crossfire, an organisation which raises awareness of the plight of the poor in Third World countries and funds development/education projects around the world. I met Richard Moore, the founder of the organisation, who as a 10-year old was blinded for life by a rubber bullet in Derry's Creggan Estate. Roberta is an expert on quilts and organises exhibitions (with peace and justice themes) around the world. In October, I attended and sang at the launch of an exhibition entitled *'The politics of Chilean*

arpilleras' which she organised at Cambridge University. We are now planning to have an exhibition at the Imperial War Museum for our events on Remembrance Sunday and possibly at other venues.

MAW is looking for people with special skills or knowledge to arrange events or take part in projects. Please contact us if you would like to be involved or have any ideas.

Visit to Washington At the end of September I visited Washington and attended the international conference of the Council for Christian Approaches to Defence and Disarmament (CCADD). Held at the college of the Washington National Cathedral, this was an excellent event, with expert speakers from the US and ten other countries.

Sessions included 'Reversing the spread of nuclear weapons: realities of the NPT', 'Environmental degradation, security and humanity: the changing role of the military', 'The US Bishops' pastoral 25 years on: transformational responsibilities for the laity' and Ethics and intelligence – dealing with torture'. The programme and papers are on the CCADD website: <http://website.lineone.net/~ccadd>.

Two of the speakers at the conference were especially stimulating, both of them speaking on nuclear matters. One was Tom D'Agostino, undersecretary in the US National Security Administration and responsible for the security of the entire US stockpile of nuclear weapons - for decommissioning them and managing the projects to control and secure nuclear weapons and materials world-wide. An impressive and committed man, he also works closely with Russia on the dismantling of nuclear weapons. He argued strongly that, while other countries are increasing their nuclear capability, the conditions are not right for the USA to comply fully with the NPT.

With a rather different view, the second was Ambassador Max Kampelman, Head of US nuclear and space arms negotiations in the Reagan Administration. He was highly influential in persuading the group of senior US officials (Kissinger, Shultz, Nunn and Perry) to speak out publicly for the abolition of nuclear weapons. From his



From left: Dutch Marine General Kees Homan, Tony Kempster and Vic Allesì, US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

background as a Romanian Jewish family in New York, he explained what this had taught him about religious tolerance and our conflicting tendencies to love or hate, to build or destroy. The challenge was to face such issues in the realisation that survival requires leadership towards total elimination of nuclear weapons. It must be done multilaterally, led by the USA (as the leading nuclear armed nation) and through the UN. 'Remember that people in government do have some noble thoughts', he said.

Other issues. This issue of the new format *Abolish War* reports well on our current activities and there are only a few additional points to note. The new website was launched last November. Some additions and refinements are still being made. Please visit it at www.abolishwar.org.uk to keep abreast with our activities.

Our next event is the Peace History Conference to be held at the Imperial War Museum on 24/25 (see page 8). Sales of our second CD 'Call back the fire' are going very well but we are looking for events, particularly concerts at which we can promote it by performing some of the songs. Please contact us if you have any ideas.

Regional Diary

Sheffield Peace and Craft Fair



Margaret Chamings and members of the Peace Group

The Fair is an annual event held in early November in Sheffield Town Hall. It is organised by a group of local volunteers from some of the many campaign groups in the city covering a wide range of issues - peace, justice, the environment etc. Because it also provides for craft stalls it attracts a great many members of the public who might come with no particular interest in current issues but, as they go around the stalls, they find themselves learning about local and national issues and might even join a particular group. It is always a lively and entertaining event and campaigners and crafts people come back year after year to hire stalls. We used the idea of the circle saying Peace is in our Hands which I copied from a photo in the last issue of Abolish War. Children and grownups drew their own hands, added their names with their own messages. It was a good opening for talking about ways to peace.

Margaret Chamings

London - Mystery Peace Walk

Last September on Sunday 21st, World Peace Day, about 40 children aged from 5 to 9 with parent(s) took part in the London Annual Mystery Peace Walk. They all had their 'peace' passports with their photographs. They were given clues to take them from one peace location to another.

They started as usual in Tavistock Square, where there is both a statue of Gandhi and the massive Conscientious Objectors stone, and ended up at about 3pm at the Imperial War Museum's Buddhist Peace garden. The last stop was biscuits and juice inside the museum where one of the education staff showed everyone how to make Japanese 'Peace' cranes. A London MAW group will be organising the 09 Walk this year on Sunday September 20th.

Why don't you do the same? The kids love it and their parents get involved. It is not difficult to organise. Every major town will have enough 'Peace' locations. Your local library historian will soon come up with ideas. You don't need more than ten locations to have a busy day.

Why do it - because it is a good way of shifting our culture from war to peace. Children get quite enough war events. Let's give them some peace places and people too.

Don't let this become just a London event. Manchester, Liverpool, Exeter, York, Norwich, Glasgow and Edinburgh for instance could all copy. Why not Bradford, the home of peace studies?

But it will not happen unless someone (i.e. you and a few friends) decide to take it up. Help with ideas? Plenty of them available. Just ask!

Bruce Kent

From Cumbria

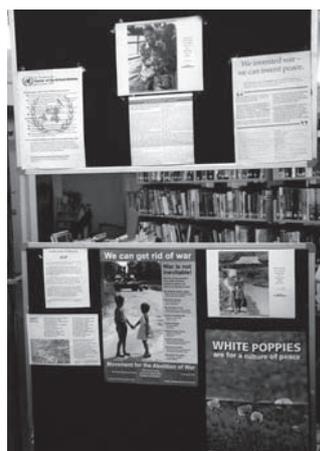
Did you know that the Astute Class submarine is over budget? The first of three subs budgeted at £2.578 million each, it will now cost £3.492 million, and is 3½ years behind schedule. I don't know whether to clap my hands or cry. Believe me, the three vessels are all under construction. In the cathedral-like workshop in Barrow, the third vessel is just a collection of hoops.

Long after handfuls of men in governments in London and Russia have gone, millions of sane human beings will see the enormous expense of these weapons. I choose Russia, because Russia is alleged to have more nuclear warheads than any other country in our globe.

Several British nuclear subs. have suffered collision damage. In May 2008 HMS Superb hit underwater rocks in the Red Sea. Also in May Tireless was damaged in a collision, the third submarine in three years to be damaged this way (the other two were Triumph and Trafalgar). It would appear that the more subs. we have, the more accidents will occur. Did you know that we have a Defence Analysis Dept? They say little about submarine collisions.

If there were a nuclear accident, would we expect our enemy to act rationally? I am afraid not. It is lack of rationality which would lead to escalation.. The danger of accidental release is always present. Today the danger that weapons-grade material will be stolen by terrorists is also present. At the end of the day, it is appropriate to emphasize that the very possession of nuclear weapons is immoral. An international agreement on the total abolition of nuclear weapons is the only solution.

Derek Longmire



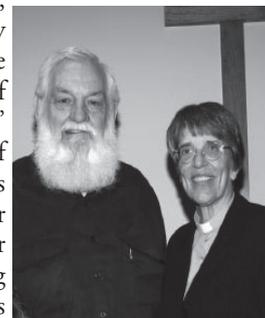
Penzance

And here is another idea for campaigners to take up -

Peace campaigners down in Penzance set up this exhibition in their library in November, to remind people to work for peace while they remembered those who had died because of war.

Sherborne - Gene Stoltzfus on Tour

Yeovil & Sherborne Stop the War played host to a wonderful talk and debate with Gene Stoltzfus, co-founder and director of the Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT). Gene was on a 2-week speaking tour of the UK, and must have inspired many people around the country with his commitment, humour and humility. Among the many pieces of information he presented to the audience was the fact that the list of names of those Iraqis who had 'disappeared' into US custody following the invasion of Iraq (up to 20,000 by August 2003) was slipped to the CPT on a disc by a member of the US military, and there were regular updates by the same method. According to Gene, the military were as puzzled as the Iraqis as to why they were being instructed to arrest and detain so many innocent people. The debate that followed his talk was chaired by Christina Le Moignan, and was wide-ranging and thoughtful - and appreciated by all, seeing how reluctant everyone was to leave at the end!



Gene with Christina

Lesley Docksey

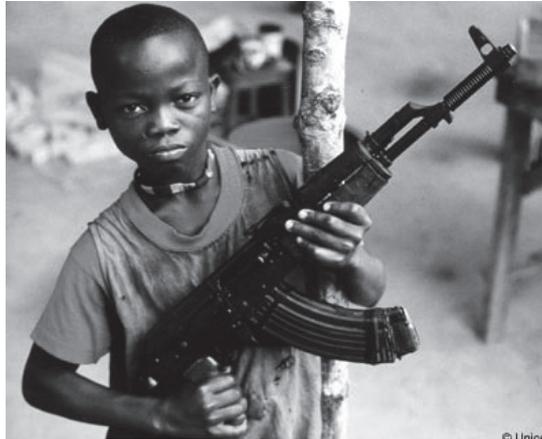
African Women in Action

I was invited to attend a UK Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) seminar 'Voices of African Women' in London last November. Former MAW committee member Martha Jean Baker chaired the morning session. It is clear from this event that women, and the empowerment of women, especially at the local community level, are crucial to reducing world violence and poverty. I've never heard the phrase 'grass-roots' mentioned so often in such a short space of time. This is not a criticism. It says everything about the passion with which the women spoke, the importance they gave to making changes at the local level, and their reservations about intervention from outside Africa.

The speakers were not referring solely to political intervention. A quote from a Congolese woman: "Corporations, blood-thirsty individuals, just want to get rich. People getting into power - we should look behind the killings. It is the local people who get killed, because the corporations want them to be silent. Let the people speak for themselves..." and "...the Congo was created by Belgium. It is now controlled by multi-corporations based in the west, especially the USA and the UK."

Colonialism is still flourishing. It's just called something else. The speakers complained that they were tired of the 'West' thinking and speaking on their behalf - "Allow us to speak and act for ourselves." They don't want to hear what 'we' are going to do for them. They would like to be asked what they want. They do not want the UN: "UN Peacekeepers are ineffective, and have a different agenda from the local people...how dare they!" This is surely right. Sending UN Peacekeepers is not the long-term

answer; it is just fire fighting. Yes, there seems to have been an increase in violence in the Congo recently, but the violence has been there since at least 1990. Well over 5 million people have been killed in the Congo since then. Why do the media and 'western' governments say so little about this? If 5 million people had been deliberately killed over the same period in the USA or UK, the world would know about it. Such news might even have displaced the saturation coverage of the Barack Obama election, if only for a day or two.



Child soldier in the Congo

What is it about women's concerns that make those concerns special? For a start, mothers and their children tend not to participate in the killings. A very good argument, I would say, for greater involvement of women in decision-making. Small weapons tend to be owned by men. What is the 'west' doing? Does 'western' intervention make things worse or better? The incongruity must be addressed whereby some British government representatives call for UN intervention in the Congo, yet British companies - with government approval - are selling arms in the Congo and other African countries. Where is the logic?

There is another aspect to what 'grass-roots' means. It means people going about their everyday lives; people who are not part of the government power structure; people who have no power over large corporations; who may have only an elementary education and few resources; people whose main concerns are to look after themselves and their families in peace. They aren't allowed it, nor given a chance to be heard. Let their African voices be heard - lasting peace is unlikely without them.

NB Several African countries were mentioned at this event; this article is centred on the Democratic Republic of the Congo.)

Brian Heale

Strategic Trends

By now, readers will know my penchant for exploring interesting websites. An acquaintance introduced me to this one - this is how they introduce themselves:

Strategic Trends is an independent view of the future produced by the Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC), a Directorate General within the UK's Ministry of Defence (MOD). It is a source document for the development of UK Defence Policy.

It's also quite terrifying, and the ideas within it will be familiar to science fiction readers (but then SF writers have always been good at predicting the future). Under 'Strategic Shocks/Resources' you will find this:

'Africa Becomes a Failed Continent

Challenges, including climate change and HIV/AIDS, scarcity of food and water and regional conflict could lead to Africa becoming a failed continent, where even large, currently self-sustaining states become chaotic. Outside engagement and intervention would effectively be limited to a small number of well-defended entry points and corridors, which would provide access to raw materials essential to the global economy. Nations or corporations wishing to trade with Africa would increasingly be required to provide security for their nationals and the

necessary support to sustain critical areas of access and security.'

Note, the well-being of Africa does not really rate against the need to maintain access to its raw materials. On the slightly brighter side, another section looks at:

'Legal Complexity' The legal context for future conflict could become too complex for participants to be confident of compliance with international law and national responsibilities.

The risk of subsequent legal challenges might be perceived to be too great by most states, inhibiting their willingness to engage in any conflict that did not involve a direct threat to their own national security or stability. This would have a significant impact on the international availability of forces for Peace Support Operations and other discretionary enterprises, leaving the field open to private or

irregular forces and to those less concerned by the ethical or legal implications of their conduct.'

I like the bit about 'other discretionary enterprises'. I think they mean war, which, under international law, is illegal except when a country (*not* the country's 'interests') is physically under attack and needs to be defended.

You may download a pdf of the document from www.dcdc-strategictrends.org.uk



The Cost of War

At the beginning of November last year Major Sebastian Morley, in his resignation letter, was said to have warned the MoD that forces were suffering from 'chronic underinvestment', creating a storm in the media, questions in the House and cheers from the Army blog sites.

The week before, the BBC World Service broadcast *The Lost Veterans*, detailing the damage (and cost) of the US actions in Iraq and Afghanistan – the injuries, illness, mental disorder and homelessness of returning servicemen, who are discharged from or leave the services. They become 'lost' when they end up on the streets, and the authorities can forget about them. This was followed by a BBC Radio 4 File on 4 programme, *Traumatised veterans' fight for care*, which dealt with the damage to UK Forces and the lack of care and resources this country offers its 'brave heroes', as though calling them that helps us to ignore the damage our military adventures have done to all concerned – and of course, provide the money needed.

But on 21st December up pops an article in the Independent under the headline 'Luxury for Generals but hovels for soldiers. Millions of pounds are being spent annually on dozens of luxurious homes complete with domestic staff, including cooks, cleaners and gardeners, for Army top brass.... The figures have provoked anger among politicians and campaigners who called the amounts 'horrendous' last night and contrasted them with 'appalling' accommodation conditions faced by most ordinary soldiers.... But while many soldiers face spending years in crumbling homes badly in need of repair, the head of the British Army, General Sir Richard Dannatt benefits from living in a residence that could cost up to £256,000 a year to run.' Sir Richard Dannatt, mind you, the General who spoke up so publicly and loudly for his men and the poor housing they had to endure. The army blogs went wild over that. What sort of noise are they making now?

In view of this, this Punch cartoon from the 1850's seems appropriate. Nothing changes, does it?



*'Well Jack, here's good news! We're to have a medal.'
'That's very kind. Maybe one of these days we'll have a coat to stick it on!'*

'Buddy, Can You Spare A Dime?'

At the beginning of 2008 I came across an article titled *How To Sink America* by Chalmers Johnson, an account of the hidden costs of the US defence budget. Since then, of course, we have run into the global financial crisis. It is worth revisiting the figures and asking what they might mean for the UK. Whichever set of figures you look at, and none of them match, we are talking of huge sums of money. The SIPRI report gives the total US defence spending for 2007 as \$547 billion, 45% of the world total. But Johnson's figures are worse, because he adds in all those items that *should* be counted in and which are not. Here is what he writes:

'In the US 2008 defence budget (made public on 7/2/07) the Department of Defense requested \$481.4 billion for salaries, operations (except in Iraq and Afghanistan), and equipment. They also agree on a figure of \$141.7 billion for the 'supplemental' budget to fight the 'global war on terrorism' -- that is, the two on-going wars that the general public may think are actually covered by the basic Pentagon budget. The Department of Defense also asked for an extra \$93.4 billion to pay for hitherto unmentioned war costs in the remainder of 2007 and, most creatively, an additional 'allowance' (a

new term in defense budget documents) of \$50 billion to be charged to fiscal year 2009. This comes to a total spending request by the Department of Defense of \$766.5 billion.

But there is much more. In an attempt to disguise the true size of the American military empire, the government has long hidden major military-related expenditures in departments other than Defense. For example, \$23.4 billion for the Department of Energy goes toward developing and maintaining nuclear warheads; and \$25.3 billion in the Department of State budget is spent on foreign military assistance (primarily for Israel, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Republic, Egypt, and Pakistan). Another \$1.03 billion outside the official Department of Defense budget is now needed for recruitment and reenlistment incentives for the overstretched U.S. military itself, up from a mere \$174 million in 2003, the year the war in Iraq began. The Department of Veterans Affairs currently gets at least \$75.7 billion, 50% of which goes for the long-term care of the grievously injured among the at least 28,870 soldiers so far wounded in Iraq and another 1,708 in Afghanistan. The amount is universally derided as inadequate. Another \$46.4 billion goes to the Department of Homeland Security.

Missing as well from this compilation is \$1.9 billion to the Department of Justice for the paramilitary activities of the FBI; \$38.5 billion to the Department of the Treasury for the Military Retirement Fund; \$7.6 billion for the military-related activities of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration; and well over \$200 billion in interest for past debt-financed defense outlays. This brings U.S. spending for its military establishment during the current fiscal year (2008), conservatively calculated, to at least \$1.1 trillion.'

We know what the UK *basic* defence budget is. Following Johnson's principle, can we add on the cost of pensions to war veterans; the compensation packages to wounded soldiers; the cost to the NHS given the closure of military hospitals; the cost of keeping in prison all those soldiers who, ill with PTSD, have committed crimes? In these times of real economic hardship for the average person, how much of this country's dwindling wealth is being swallowed by hidden military costs?

And another hidden cost – 'Hundreds of soldiers are returning from Afghanistan suffering from severe and permanent damage to their hearing because of the overwhelming noise of intense combat.... Nearly 240 of 691 soldiers in the 1st Battalion The Royal Anglians, which returned from a six-month tour of duty in Afghanistan last October, suffered hearing difficulties; 35 were categorised as either undeployable or with limited deployment potential.... The MoD said that compensation ranged from £5,250 for a blast injury with minimal or no sensorial hearing loss to £46,000 for total deafness. These figures are due to increase to £5,775 and £92,000 respectively.'

From '*Deafness is the new scourge of British troops in Afghanistan*', Michael Evans, The Times 30 October 2008

Editor

Peace History Conference

lessons from the past – hope for the future
Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Rd London SE1
Friday 24th and Saturday 25th April

Speakers:

Peter van den Dungen - Bradford University
Gabriele Matzner-Holzer - Austrian Ambassador
Paula Pearce - Franciscan International Study Centre
Sandra Butcher - Pugwash History Project
Terry Charman - Imperial War Museum
Lyn Smith - Imperial War Museum
Joseph Fahey - Manhattan College New York
Debates, peace films and live music.

Registration fees: both days £30, 1 day £25

Full time students: both days £10, 1 day £5.

Details and booking forms from:

MAW, 11 Venetia Road, London N4 1EJ

Images of War



Suffer the Little Children...

For those of us who campaign against war, the year started badly – with the horrendous conflict in Gaza. Forget the history, forget the politics and the grievances. While the weapons of war damage children like this, we cannot rest.

I cannot credit these photos – they came directly out of Gaza to various Arab media outlets, then emailed to contacts in this country.



Inside Gaza, a Channel 4 Dispatches programme, looked at the media management of the Gaza conflict. The difference between the graphic images broadcast by the Middle Eastern media and the more 'sanitised' scenes played out on our televisions was quite clear. In this country we cannot show much of what happens in a war zone because it would 'offend public taste and decency'. But war is not tasteful nor decent. And until the public is fully aware of the damage caused by the weapons we invent and make and sell and use, the public will not demand that our leaders turn away from the policies of war.

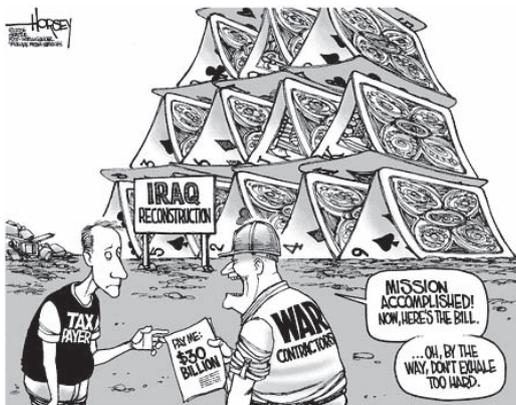


Hard Lesson

The report *Hard Lesson: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience* details the catastrophic attempt by the US to rebuild Iraq. In addition to the devastating illegal invasion that has cost so many civilian lives and displaced Iraqis there was a failed rebuilding plan. *Hard Lesson*, compiled by Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR), describes how billions of dollars were wasted on projects between 2003 - 2008. The security situation had an impact on the rebuilding efforts, including projects that doubled in cost. That it was dangerous in Iraq is also evident; one contributor to the report itself (an auditor) was killed by indirect fire.

In the pre-war planning, the office for reconstruction had three pillars in mind: humanitarian assistance, civil administration and reconstruction. In regard to the civil administration it was the least developed and the staff had little reliable information on Iraq. The purpose of the reconstruction according to the report was to build trust and to demonstrate good faith by the US occupiers. But for the policy makers that was not a big issue because the occupiers would stay for a short time period. The *Hard Lesson* report also talks about Japan and Germany, which the Bush administration frequently quoted as terrific examples of successful reconstruction efforts. But SIGIR states, in contrast to Iraq, both Japan and Germany were already highly developed with an established bureaucracy and with homogenous population.

SIGIR's report cites numerous failures by the Bush administration in their preparations and rebuilding efforts. There were factors such as the failure to prevent looting which had terrible consequences, added billions of dollars to the cost, slowed down the transition and provided weapons and ammunition for people to attack US soldiers. In planning for the invasion there were competing groups not coordinating their efforts like the Central Command and the Office of Reconstruction. Another failure by the occupiers is also evident in SIGIR's report; the output of electricity which during pre-invasion



was 4,075 megawatts – the post-invasion level was 711 megawatts. Oil production went from 2.58 million barrels per day to 0.3 million barrels per day.

Several examples of the catastrophic preparations not included in the report are documented in the book *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Baghdad's Green Zone* by Rajiv Chandrasekaran - for example, when the US met their German counterparts to discuss their experience with privatization of old factories in former East Germany. In Germany they had 8000 people working on the project; when the Americans told them they only had 3 people they were told "don't bother starting".¹ The book and the SIGIR report also highlight the big contracts for companies like Halliburton. As a rule, the selection of those involved in the reconstruction and preparation for post-war Iraq was not based on their competence or ability but on loyalty to the Republican party. For example, they appointed somebody for opening the Iraqi stock exchange without any financial background (Chandrasekaran, 2008, p.18).

The catastrophic rebuilding of Iraq can be summarized very well in the report with a quote from one of the architects of the war, former Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld who responds to a comment on the estimated amount of rebuilding Iraq by the director for the reconstruction Jay Garner. Rumsfeld replied "My Friend, if you think we're going to spend a billion dollars of our money over there you are sadly mistaken." (*Hard Lesson*, 2008, p. 59). It is amazing that for once Donald Rumsfeld was correct with that statement; instead the US has spent more than £50 billion for the relief and reconstruction in Iraq. If the report is a Hard Lesson in Iraq what about Afghanistan – a project that slowly starts to unravel into a failure and where little progress is being made.

Robert Lastman

A pdf file of *Hard Lesson: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience* is available from the *New York Times* website
Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Baghdad's Green Zone p 131, Rajiv Chandrasekaran, Bloomsbury Publishing 2008

Christmas Day at Tyneham

For those who know Dorset, the Purbeck coast is a magical place, full of hidden valleys, high cliffs and coves. In one such valley on the edge of the Lulworth Ranges is, or was, the village of Tyneham. In 1943 Tyneham was compulsorily evacuated and the Army took over. The departing villagers left a note pinned to the church door, asking that the Army took good care of their village until the war was over, and they could return. They never did, of course, because the Government broke its promise, and Tyneham with its manor house and village are derelict and still part of the Army ranges. Some people fought to return – and failed. And some fought to simply gain access – and succeeded. The public can now visit Tyneham whenever the ranges are closed, although where you can walk is limited.



Tyneham - Post Office Row and the telephone kiosk.

The Elizabethan manor house was demolished by the Army, and although the medieval part of the house apparently still stands, it is inaccessible. The church and the schoolhouse are intact and act as museums. The cottages fell into ruin and are now sad shells of the homes they once were. In most cases only the

ground floor walls remain. The telephone kiosk still stands outside Post Office Row with a 'Closed' sign hanging inside the door. The large copper in Laundry Cottages is still there, though it is many years since the fire was lit and the water heated to do the washing for the 'big house'. Even on Christmas Day, with cheerful visitors walking around, the place is full of ghosts and a feeling of loss – an ancient community destroyed for the sake of war.

From Tyneham one walks down to the sea and the tiny fishing settlement at Worbarrow, once mainly inhabited by members of the Miller family. Very little is left. The display board has drawings of the cottages as they had been and details of who had lived in them. One caught my eye. The cottage was known as Fern Hollow and in it lived Charlie and Harriet Miller. They were, according to the board, delighted with the comfortable home they had been moved to, and particularly pleased with having electricity, something unknown to them at Worbarrow. I read on, and the truth became clear. Charlie Miller died just two weeks after being forced from his home. He was 92.

Lesley Docksey

Events Diary (from Network for Peace)

20–21 February LONDON *War Crimes – Retrospectives and Prospects*. ‘Identifying war crimes and the perpetrators is a key part of post-conflict resolution’. Details will be available on the SOLON, IALS, and CCBH websites. Venue: Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, University of London.

25 February LONDON Ash Wednesday. Annual liturgy of Repentance and Resistance to Nuclear War.
Pax Christi 0208 203 4884 www.paxchristi.org.uk.

28 February

LYMINGTON *Building better Human Rights*. Lymington UNA. Info: Patricia at patricia@radioactive.org.uk.

OXFORD *Building Alliance for Joint Action Against War*. Conference organised by Network of Oxford Women (NOW) for Justice and Peace. 11am – 4.30pm, North Oxford Community Centre, Oxford OX2 7DP. www.nowpeace.org.uk.

7 March WINCHESTER *Working for world free of nuclear weapons – what can civil society do?* Winchester – Southern Region
CND AGM – 2pm to 5pm. Contact Michael Waugh 0123 8032 8335.

8 March WORLDWIDE United Nations Day for Women’s Rights and International Peace (International Women’s Day) .

9 March LANCASTER *The Responsibility to Protect Concept - can it prevent wars, genocides and crimes against humanity?*
5.30 - 7.30 pm. Info: luckyabey@talktalk.net or 015395 32961.

21 March LONDON *A New Cold War in Europe?* World Disarmament Campaign AGM 2009 at Wesley’s Chapel, 49 City Road, London EC1Y 1AU. Contact editor.worlddisarm@ntlworld.com.

2–4 April STRASBOURG International demonstration and counter summit at the NATO 60th anniversary meeting in Strasbourg. Contact CNDUK.

18 April LONDON Musicians Against Nuclear Arms (MANA) Concert for Peace with Tony Lamb (clarinet), Pal Banda (cello) and Julian Jacobson (piano). Rosslyn Hill Chapel, NW3. Contact MANA 020 8455 1030.

20–24 April LONDON Another Israel - an exhibition documenting how 30 Israeli peace groups work for Palestinian Human Rights, mutual respect, genuine dialogue and an end to the Israeli Occupation. St Ethelburga’s Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, 78 Bishopsgate, London, EC2N 4AG.

24–25 April LONDON MAW Peace History Conference. Imperial War Museum. See page 8.

25 April FARINGDON Public meeting on the erosion of civil liberties. 2.00 pm Corn Exchange, Faringdon. Info: Jennie - 01367 710308.

26 April WORLDWIDE Chernobyl Day.

4–20 May NEW YORK Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Preparatory Committee.

15 May EVERYWHERE International Conscientious Objector’s Day.

24 May WORLDWIDE International Women’s Day for Disarmament.

REGULAR EVENTS

St Ethelburga’s Centre, Bishopsgate, London. See www.stethelburgas.org.

Walk in Peace, London 1st Sunday of every month. See www.walkinpeace.co.uk.

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Did You Know?

The most highly decorated NCO of the First World War was Lance Corporal William Harold Coltman, who came out of the conflict with a Victoria Cross, two Distinguished Conduct medals, two military medals and a fistful of mentions in dispatches. What is more remarkable is that he was a conscientious objector. Coltman survived both World Wars, living to the age of eighty-two, having proved that the only thing more heroic than bearing arms into battle is not bearing them. (From *Charge!* See page 4.)

Why should you join MAW!

Our aim: to create a world where war is no longer seen as a way to solve a problem; where it has ceased to be an option; where conflict resolution means resolution, not more conflict. We have the tools, the skills and the laws that we need. We also need you. We work through education and dialogue, both nationally and in our own local communities; ordinary people taking action to realise our goal - **THE ABOLITION OF WAR.**

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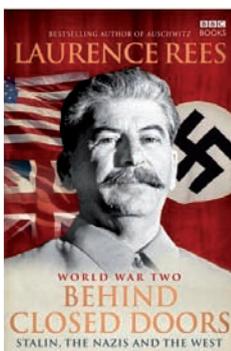
Movement for the Abolition of War, 11 Venetia Rd., LONDON N4 1EJ

Or join online: - www.abolishwar.org.uk

Reviews

World War II behind closed doors: Stalin, the Nazis and the West - Laurence Rees

From the dramatic and secret deals that helped make the war possible, to some of the most crucial decisions taken during the conflict, the book is a challenge to conventional views about World War II. Drawing on material only available since the opening of archives in the East, Laurence Rees re-examines the key choices made by Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt. As the truth about Stalin's earlier friendly relations with the Nazis is laid bare, a devastating picture of the Soviet leader emerges.



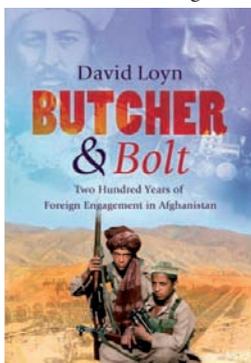
The emotional core of the book is the new testimony obtained by nearly a hundred separate witnesses from the period. So the narrative is a mix of international politics and the dramatic personal experiences of those on the ground who bore the consequences of their decisions. But it is the larger and graver issues that are most significant. Rees discusses the monumental cynicism of the Nazi-Soviet Pact in August 1939, which precipitated war. He deals at length with Britain's dealings with Russia over Poland, noting that the government was much less robust than is sometimes thought about Polish territorial integrity. It was willing to redefine its borders in Russia's favour to discourage Stalin from seeking a separate peace with Hitler. He also rehearses the shocking saga of Stalin's 1939-40 massacres of the Polish elite and the attitude of other governments to this.

The book's principal message is that the allied cause was inescapably and deeply compromised by association with the bloodstained Soviets, morally indistinguishable from the Nazis. The West had no alternative save to make common cause with Stalin. The Soviets paid the blood price necessary to defeat Hitler's legions. Had they not done so, British and American soldiers might have filled cemeteries as large as those of the World War I. The relationship between Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill makes an ugly story, and Rees tells it well.

BBC Books, £20 (£10.25 amazon)

Butcher and bolt: two hundred years of foreign engagement in Afghanistan - David Loyn

What are we doing in Afghanistan with so much disregard for the lessons of history? This new history shows how since the 1840s, the British, the Russians and now the Americans have all tried to bring stability and order to the country through force – and have been defeated by its implacable resistance.



David Loyn a BBC foreign affairs reporter argues that history shows that the current war is a very bad idea. It now presents the same horrible quandary, as for previous involvements, about how to end it. This time because withdrawal will almost certainly return the Taliban to power with al-Qaeda not far behind.

He asks if there is a solution and answers, probably not. Absolutist Islam lacks the means but not the will to defeat the West; the West has the means but not the will to defeat absolutist Islam, least of all inside Afghanistan. However, it might help if we dumped well-intentioned fantasy. Loyn makes the point, again and again, that first British, then Soviet and now the US policy on Afghanistan has been formed by tellers of fairy tales in London, Moscow and Washington and not by the complicated and difficult reality on the ground.

But above all, the book challenges rigidity of thinking. Loyn rubbishes the American's supernatural belief in technology, and points out that the Taliban have one and a half million recruits in Pakistan's madrasas, just over the border.

Hutchinson £18.99 (£13.29 amazon)

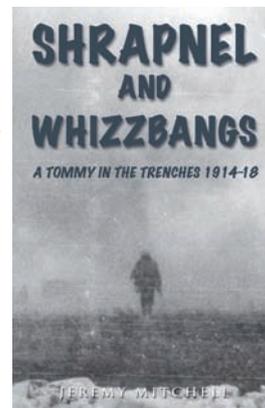
ABOLISH WAR

Newsletter No. 13

Winter 2009

Sbrapnel And Whizzbangs - Jeremy Mitchell

We hear much about the damage suffered by our soldiers in World War I, particularly of those poor men whose lives were ruined by being gassed. Most of us will be familiar with the photo of the line of soldiers, eyes blinded and bandaged, and each with his hand on the shoulder of the man in front, making their painful way out of the front line. This book tells the other side of the story. Much of it is based on the diary kept by George Oliver Mitchell (G.O.M.), Jeremy's father, who fought in the war from 1915 onwards.

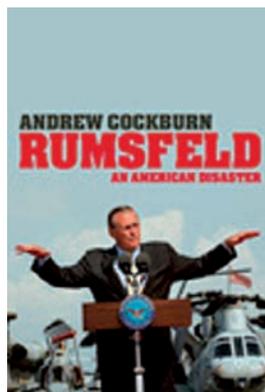


The book is full of interesting vignettes; Jeremy's uncle Rupert, angry at the loss of so many men, having General Haig in his rifle sight and so very nearly pulling the trigger before losing his nerve; G.O.M. and his comrades wearing Belgian helmets to conceal the British presence when placing the equipment for launching a gas attack; King George V and the Prince of Wales visiting the British gas base at Helfaut, though at the time they were said to be 'visiting the troops'. And this is where the book is so informative. After the initial gas attack by the Germans, Britain's response was to produce their own gas. G.O.M. was one of the first members of the Royal Engineers Special Companies which were responsible for setting up the equipment and releasing the gas. He describes how often it went wrong – faulty equipment or changing weather conditions, and it would be the Allied troops falling victim to the dreaded yellow clouds. Hard to accept, the fact that a soldier was as likely to be gassed by his own side as the other, but that of course is war and friendly fire comes in many forms.

The Memoir Club £12.95 ISBN: 978-1-84104-192-6

Rumsfeld: An American Disaster - Andrew Cockburn

That many politicians play callous power games to further their ambitions has long been observed, but this book is an eye-opener. Rumsfeld, along with like-minded pals such as Perle, Wolfowitz and Cheney take the biscuit. Author Andrew Cockburn has done a magnificent job tracking and revealing the tortuous paths Rumsfeld forged. Cockburn interviewed many high level people who worked for, with, and sometimes against Rumsfeld - a real insight into Rumsfeld's thinking and behaviour, which are sometimes psychopathic. The consequences, particularly from Rumsfeld's stint as Defense Secretary in the Bush administration, were devastating.



Not only was Rumsfeld obsessed with personal ambitions of power, prestige and excessive wealth, he was obsessed with Iraq. He would ignore and suppress credible data that didn't fit his agenda. He would side-step issues, have selective memory about his own decisions and shift blame onto others. Never does he admit to wrongdoing. The tragedy is the deaths of the many still uncounted non-combatants in Iraq and Afghanistan. They were just pawns in Rumsfeld's bigger game. But it was not a game to the victims - it was life or death. Yet Rumsfeld goes free as a bird; and Justice flew out of the door with him.

Verso £17.99 (£11.87 amazon)

**MAW news
please!**

You want to read about events that are not all London-based. **We** want to hear from members around the country, and we want your actions to inspire others. So if you have organised events/actions, or are planning some, and would like to have them reported in the newsletter, then send your news to the editor (see page 2 for contact details)

