



Nuke Kids On The Bloc

“US nuclear strategy is driven by a paranoid fear about the country’s vulnerability to weapons of mass destruction (WMD); pressure from the military-industrial complex for raising defence spending and creating new uses for nuclear weapons and the United States’ aspiration to remain the world’s sole superpower with an unparalleled nuclear might.” - Praful Bidwai, co-founder of the Movement in India for Nuclear Disarmament

Last weekend was the 60th anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki - and what better way for the world to commemorate than by ignoring global treaties and building more weapons of mass destruction.

A “total war strategy” in the name of global domination with any peaceful alternatives ignored. Sound familiar? The American - Japanese war (1941-1945) witnessed the slaughter of 100,000s of people and many of these deaths were perfectly avoidable, especially those at Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Gung-ho US politicians and military types were just as concerned with Soviet expansion as they were by any threat posed by Japan. The White House knew it needed to act to curb Soviet ambitions in Europe, and war would provide an ideal opportunity to block in Russia from East and West. Trouble was, 80% of the US population was against getting involved. In November 1940 the President told his subjects that none of “America’s sons” would fight in a foreign war, “unless attacked”. One year later the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and the US was at war.

US military commanders had had a pretty good idea of what Japanese forces were up to, as by October 1940 American spies had cracked many of the codes used by the Japanese fleet. Japan had attacked China and was seeking access to oil in Southeast Asia, but was still willing to negotiate a way forward with the US that didn’t involve war. The White House was not interested. It refused to meet Japanese Ambassadors and instead handed them an ultimatum designed to humiliate them and force the Japanese to abide by US foreign policy requirements. The agreement was meant to “kick things over” as Secretary of State Cordell Hull admitted later. “We had no serious thought that Japan would accept.” Renowned American political commentator, essayist and novelist Gore Vidal says, “Received Opinion has it that the US was taken by surprise. Roosevelt was not - but apparently the unaware military commanders at Pearl Harbor were, and 3,000 men were killed in a single strike.”

Throughout 1945 Japanese envoys were making overtures across Europe: they would surrender if they could keep their Emperor.

On July 18th 1945, the Emperor himself wrote a letter to the new President, Harry Truman, which was, in Truman’s words “looking for peace.” But again the White House wasn’t interested. They wanted to intimidate Stalin, show the world that they had a new all powerful weapon and use Hiroshima and Nagasaki as a testing ground.

Walter Brown, special assistant to Secretary of State James Byrnes at the time of the bombings wrote in his diary in August 1945, “Truman wanted to drop the bomb, but why? To frighten Stalin, a suitable enemy for the US as it was about to metamorphose into a national security state at ‘perpetual war’ ‘for perpetual peace’”. The Japanese had been surrendering since the destruction of Tokyo by US bombers in May 1945. “If we’d been told that the war could have been concluded by then,” argues Gore Vidal, “I would have gone to work for the impeachment of a President who had wasted so many lives and destroyed so many cities in his power game with the Soviet Union, which led to half a century of unnecessary Cold War.” Some argue that killing 100,000s of Japanese civilians was necessary to end a world war, but instead it started a cold war - a world gripped with the fear that if the superpower leaders would be mad enough to drop the nukes once they could be mad enough to do it again.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Fast forward 60 years and the US and UK governments are still at it. UK Plc is spending hundreds of millions of pounds at Aldermaston on a refit of the production line for nuclear warheads. A £12bn replacement of the Trident nuclear missile system has already been agreed. Washington is also planning to modify existing bomb designs to make ‘bunker-busters’ and is pushing ahead with Star Wars (see SchNEWS 494). But why do we need nukes? The justification for both countries’ nuclear defence systems was the threat of the Soviet Union - that’s gone, so who’s going to nuke us now? Fear not! “The War on Terror” will provide all the justification necessary.

Blair and Bush must have been too busy on the moral high ground to notice that by increasing stocks of nukes we are breaking international obligations, notably the commitment to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

The NPT works like this: the bulk of the world’s states promise not to develop nuclear weapons and accept a regime of physical inspections preventing military use of nuclear materials. In return, the five existing nuclear weapon states will initiate negotiations to eliminate them, and in the meantime, **(Continued over.)**

CRAPARREST OF THE WEEK

For Being Friends....

As told to SchNEWS: “I went up to the G8 protests with three friends....we were trying to find a quiet spot as far away from the Stirling site as possible. We found a lovely derelict farm, belonging to a friend of a friend of a friend. We put our tents up and twenty minutes later 11 van loads of Met police arrived, 7 of them Armed Response Units....They asked us if we knew each other and when we said “yes” they hauled us out of our cars, handcuffed us, threw us into a cell for 30 hours and finally charged us the next day.

“When I’d finally been to court and released on bail (conditions to leave Scotland directly with an escort and not to deviate from a set route etc.) and the police returned my possessions to me, my car keys were missing. It turned out that the Met had stolen all of our cars and sent them to a scrap yard, which wouldn’t release them without a £200 payment. The cars had been legally parked and even the Scottish police were shocked that the Met had stolen them illegally. Anyway, long story short, I was in breach of bail ‘cos I couldn’t leave Scotland as ordered without my car, as all my keys and my boss’s house, business and safe keys were on the keyring...and it all went downhill from there!!”

* For more about G8 arrests see: www.g8legalsupport.info

GAOL OF THE MONTH

Global Solutions Limited (GSL - the artists formerly known as Group 4) have recently been fined half a million dollars for abusing immigration detainees in Australia. Back in the UK, “The Use of Unlawful Force Against Immigration Detainees” report found that in the 35 cases it documented the police decided to take no further action in 65% of the allegations reported to them, including one case in which the detention centre operator has agreed to pay compensation to the victim. This year GSL have agreed to compensate a number of (ex) detainees for ill-treatment yet none of the assault cases resulted in any arrests let alone criminal prosecutions. A BBC “Asylum Undercover” programme captured GSL guards abusing inmates with GSL guards boasting of assaulting detainees and saying how much they enjoyed it.

Tim Hall, a spokesman for the company, says GSL apologises unreservedly for the way detainees under its care were treated. Well that’s OK then - let’s get back to the privatised justice business as usual...

IT'S D' A-BOMB

(Continued from front) transfer no nuclear material/technology to non-nuclear weapon states. But at the NPT Review Conference in May, the US, led by John Bolton – under-secretary for arms control (someone had a good laugh over that one) – refused to even allow the other nations to draw up an agenda for discussion beforehand, which meant that 15 of the conference's 20 working days were spent in wrangling over procedural points, principally the drafting of an agenda! (and you thought anarchists could never agree anything in meetings!) Two weeks ago, George Bush and the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh signed a new nuclear treaty. India is one of three states which possess nuclear weapons and refuses to sign the NPT. The treaty says it should be denied access to civil nuclear materials. But on July 18th, Bush announced that “as a responsible state with advanced nuclear technology, India should acquire the same benefits and advantages as other such states.” Four months before the meeting, the US lifted its South Asian arms embargo by selling Pakistan a fleet of F-16 aircraft, capable of a carrying a wide range of missiles, creating a need across the border in India for an anti-missile system – which US companies were only too happy to provide. This nuclear hypocrisy has not been lost on Iran, who the US is threatening because of their alleged plans to build a bomb. Meanwhile, the US opens diplomatic relationships with North Korea, another member of the “Axis of Evil”. Why the difference in approach? As journalist George Monbiot points out “If you have oil, but aren't developing a bomb (Iraq), you get invaded. If you have oil but are developing a bomb (Iran) you get threatened with invasion, but it probably won't happen. If you don't have oil, but do have the bomb, the US representative will fly to your country and open negotiations (North Korea).” Achin Vanaik, professor of political science at Delhi University argues that the US thinks it's exceptional, “It can do no wrong. American nuclear weapons are good nukes, they will be used to good ends; others' nukes are bad.”

60 years after America dropped some of those ‘good nukes’ on two Japanese cities the world remains vulnerable to mass destruction from more than 30,000 nuclear weapons still in place, four thousand of them on hair-trigger alert. We can only guess the threats posed by climate change and environmental collapse, but we know from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the price paid for nuclear war.

* Find out more about why the US wanted war with Japan in Gore Vidal's, ‘Dreaming War’ Clairview 2003

* The Hiroshima/Nagasaki cover up www.alternet.org/story/23915

YEE HAW!

On August 1st sections of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act came into force (SchNEWS 497). This Act amends previous harassment and trespass legislation as well as banning all “unauthorized” protests within about half a mile around Parliament without advance permission from the police. The sections of the act which limit protest were specifically aimed at Brian Haw who has been protesting against British policy on Iraq since 2nd June 2001, but it seems that the government have well and truly cocked up. High Court judges agreed with Brian's lawyers that the law does not apply to Brian because police authorization is only necessary for demonstrations that ‘start’ after 1 August and since his protest started before then, he's exempt! So the law specifically designed to ‘deal’ with him does not apply!

People have been openly defying this law and on 1st August, the day the law came into force, 200 people demonstrated in Parliament Square and there were five arrests; then on 7th August, over 100 people protested, with another five arrests.

www.parliamentprotest.org.uk
www.parliament-square.org.uk

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GROCER & GROSSER

Poor cash-strapped family grocers Tesco are facing a wave of protests after trying to squeeze more work out of their staff. In 2004 Tesco scraped a mere £1.6bn in profits – just £4.4m a day. One in every eight pounds spent in Britain's shops is spent in one of their charming village stores, but they want the other seven. (See SchNEWS 493 for plenty more about Tesco). Clearly they need more money, so they are on a productivity-raising drive. The all-consuming out-of-town amoeba has demanded higher and higher work rates from staff, and especially casuals, in exchange for the same pay. And they can do that, they think, because “they're only temps – if we break one we can just get another.”

At a distribution warehouse in Greenhill, Dublin, the number of (heavy) boxes (of crap) that staff were ordered to move went from 750 up to 800, 900 and then a back-aching 1,000 a day. If casual agency staff fail to meet the bosses' skyrocketing expectations, they can be sacked.

Tesco have been using two agencies, Jobs and Grafton, to provide them with cheap, mostly Polish labour. Temps also get less money than the workers lucky enough to have a contract.

After speaking out two of the Polish agency workers, Zbyszek Bukala and Radek Sawicki, were effectively sacked. On 28th of July twelve pissed-off Poles with bad backs picketed the warehouse demanding the return of the fired workers, the end of the 1000-a-day targets, and contracts for anyone who worked longer than 3 months for Tesco. Other workers inside temporarily downed tools in solidarity.

They appealed for solidarity demos, and last

Thursday there were pickets outside Tesco in Liverpool, Nottingham, Glasgow, Leeds, Oxford and London. Leeds picketers reported some shoppers saying, ‘Thanks for doing this, I hate Tescos!’ and ‘I must find somewhere else to shop.’ One shopper joined the picket. Some of the picketers were Polish and had their own stories to tell about exploitative bosses and dodgy agencies.

The story bounced around the internet and came to Poland, where there was lots of interest. Similar disputes have happened in other European countries recently. Solidarity protests are planned around Poland.

It is estimated that there are over 50,000 Polish workers in Ireland. Many were hired through temping agencies to provide cheap labour after Poland joined the EU. Firms like Tesco know they can treat migrant labour worse than locals because they may not know their rights or even speak English. Tesco has expanded massively into former-Communist countries like Poland, putting many small farmers out of business and contributing to unemployment, already at around 40% in many rural areas – which then sends unemployed young people to countries like Ireland looking for work. Policy researcher Dominic Eagleton has commented that “the growth of supermarkets in developing countries is really undermining the fight against poverty.”

* For detailed info on Tesco see profile by Corporate Watch at www.corporatewatch.org

* Follow the story and find out how to get involved by doing a search for the word ‘Tesco’ on Irish Indymedia: www.indymedia.ie or have a look at The Workers Initiative website: www.ip.hardcore.lt

Inside SchNEWS

Canada – not as bad as America, right? Well, just ask Hassan Almrei and Mohammad Mahjoub (and a number of others) what they think. Both have been held, without charge, for over four years in solitary confinement (just pause a moment to register that – *four years in solitary*).

They are Syrian refugees, held by the Canadian authorities under “secret” evidence, for what, nobody knows (even its own leaked internal documents acknowledge the government does not have enough scraps of so-called evidence to lay any criminal charges), and threatened with return to Syria and likely torture. Living in 9ft by 12ft cells for practically 24h a day with no human contact, recreation, exercise, education programmes, limited books and lack of basic comforts – such as heating or shoes...Nice.

Hassan has previously had to go on hunger strike to fight for some of these things – which the courts agreed to once he'd suffered long enough to actually get into court. Hassan began his current hunger strike over 40 days ago to demand an hour of fresh air and exercise in the concrete outdoor box which serves as the “yard” at Metro West Detention Centre. He is described by guards as a nonviolent person, a friendly individual who can be trusted. Hence, it should be no problem to let him out for an hour. But until his hunger strike, he usually got about five minutes of fresh air, if that. This has been increased to the standard 20 minutes since he has been on hunger strike (what can properly be read as the authorities attempting to cover their arses as Hassan prepares to go to court once again).

Mahjoub is also currently on hunger strike to protest as his similar conditions and the denial of visitor access to his two young children. Both Hassan and Mahjoub have a community of support on the outside, willing to vouch for, pay bail and even supervise them if necessary, but the Canadians seem to want them to be unnecessarily incarcerated and are dragging out any hope of bail hearings for as long as possible.

* For more on Canada's secret trials and details of how to write letters of support etc www.homesnotbombs.ca

SchNEWS in Brief

* A Freedom to Protest Conference to protest this law and other measures used to intimidate activists is happening on 23 October at The Resource Centre, 356 Holloway Road, London www.freedomtoprotest.org.uk

* Peace Camp to highlight Brighton bombers EDO (SchNEWS 492) 13-19th Wild Park, Brighton – following from the demo this Saturday Churchill Square 12 noon www.smashedo.org.uk

* International tour of 20 children from Balata Refugee Camp, Occupied Palestine performing traditional Palestinian dance (dabke) and creative dramatic drama. (16) Meadowside St. Pauls Church Hall, 114 Nettergate, Dundee 01382 908070 (19) Swansea YMCA, 1 The Kingsway 01792 361 005 (20) Exeter John Stocker School Buddle Lane, Dabke Workshop (21) Totnes Woodlands Leisure Park, near Totnes. (23) London St. George's Theatre; 49 Tufnel Park Road. For more info on the tour www.balatacamp.net

...and finally...

(from the *Yorkshire Post* 9th Aug)

It was the last thing you'd expect in a quiet Dales village on a Monday lunchtime. But three naked ramblers yesterday stocked up on some bare essentials at a shop in Gargrave. Two men and a woman walked into the Co-op's Late Shop wearing nothing more than rucksacks, socks and hiking boots and left with crisps, drinks and chocolate. Outside, police were waiting to arrest them and take them to Skipton nick, where last night they were still in custody. The cheeky trio are believed to be the so-called naked Rambler, ex-Royal Marine Stephen Gough, 46, from Hampshire; his girlfriend Melanie Roberts, 33; and an un-named male librarian. They set out in June intending to walk the 874-mile length of Britain to raise awareness and make nudity more acceptable to the public.

If you'd like to join the nudists' fun see www.nakedwalk.org

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers...to nuke on wood, and don't let mushrooms cloud your judgement Honest!