



WASTE OF SPACE

“Just as by the year 1500 it was clear that the European experience of power would be it’s domination of the global seas, it does not take much to see that the American experience of power will rest on the domination of space” - The Future of War: Power, Technology and World Dominance in the 21st Century by George and Meredith Friedman.

On Saturday NASA- the American space agency- provided the people of Texas with a spectacular firework display, as the space shuttle Columbia burst into flames and disintegrated on re-entering the atmosphere. All 7 astronauts on board were killed and America became a grief struck nation. SchNEWS hopes they show the same remorse when thousands of Iraqis are killed by American bombs.

The space shuttle Columbia is one of the shuttles that are used like taxis by the Kennedy Space Centre to ferry equipment and people out to the International Space Station, but on their way the astronauts on board also carry out their own ‘scientific research’. Columbia’s last crew included Israeli Air Force pilot Ilan Ramon, whose mission was to test a multi-spectral camera that probes the effect of sandstorms on climate change. The all-weather camera is also key technology for military spy satellites and unmanned drones searching for targets obscured by dust, smoke and clouds - sounds like that could come in useful in the looming Iraqi war! The other international astronaut onboard was Kalpana Chawla, an Indian born civilian engineer. It is probably a bit more than a coincidence that both Israel and India are trying to establish their own space programmes, which will concentrate on, you guessed it - military purposes. It’s no wonder that Columbia’s ultimate mission was interpreted as a threat across parts of the Middle East and South Asia.

In recent years space shuttles have been used for everything from repairing the Hubble Telescope to studying the effects of weightlessness on tiny insects to deploying global positioning satellites that provide signals for most of today’s precision-guided “smart” bombs. In recent years Congress has cut NASA’s funding and they’ve had to rely on the Pentagon for funding. With the arrival of Bush and Dick-face Cheney at the Whitehouse this has meant many Shuttle missions have military objectives, thinly disguised as ‘scientific research’. Many people believe that through a combination of financial cuts and mismanagement (the space shuttles have now been 92% privatised and are now run by aerospace giants Boeing and Lockheed Martin) the Colum-

bia disaster was an accident waiting to happen. Over the summer a retired 36-year veteran of NASA called on President Bush to enact a temporary moratorium on all space shuttle flights, but his pleas were ignored and now 7 astronauts are dead.

Start Wars

Not content with being the world’s only superpower, the USA wants to extend its military might to achieve what it so bashfully calls “Full Spectrum Dominance”, which will mean backing up it’s dominance on earth by building up it’s weapons in space. The US is currently working on technology which is of course only for ‘defensive purposes’ but which still makes a ridiculous farce of their hunt for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

Without the help of Darth Vader they’re developing the so-called “Star Wars” programme - a series of lasers that will form a protective shield, to shoot missiles out of the sky before they ever reach American soil.

This is accompanied by development of a “Nuclear Space Initiative”, which would see rockets powered by nuclear generators - this is necessary to power long distance exploration into deepest space and more significantly to provide the enormous power needed to keep their mega laser battle stations orbiting above the Earth. For America the Columbia shuttle disaster has come at a bad time just when it was looking to greatly broaden its program to use nuclear power in space on rockets launched from Kennedy Space station which has a 10% failure rate. There’s already been two nuclear rocket explosions over the US and after being showered with plutonium residents of Florida were warned to stay away from the rocket’s debris which should have been easy to spot cos’ it glowed in the dark! If the much larger Columbia had been carrying plutonium Bush might well have lost himself a few thousand of his Texas voters.

Locked

So just why is the US so hell-bent on developing a Star Wars programme? Perhaps it has something to do with the people behind the unelected Muppet. People like Bruce Jackson, vice president of Lockheed Martin, the largest weapons manufacturer and a major contractor in US space military work who claimed “I wrote the Republican Party’s foreign policy platform.” No doubt Lockheed Martin are doing very well out of the threat of war on Iraq. He claims he hasn’t pressed for development of Star Wars “That would be an implicit conflict of interest with

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For skinny dipping! A Mapuche woman delegate of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre bathed nude in a river to cool off from the warm temperatures of the Brazilian summertime, only to find herself arrested under charges of ‘obscene acts’. Her arrest then sparked a non-violent naked protest by 400 activists. Police attacked the protesters arresting and injuring an unknown number of them and then turned on fully clothed journalists and bystanders. www.indymedia.org.uk

my day job.” So who did advocate it? Stephen Hadley, a military adviser to Bush Snr, and is a lawyer who represents, er Lockheed Martin. He claims that “Space is going to be important. It has a great feature in the military.” And no doubt important for swelling Lockheed Martin’s bank balance and those associated with it, like Lynn Cheney, the wife of US vice-President Dick Cheney, who is a board member of... Lockheed Martin.

The rest of the world is not too impressed with America’s war mongering. Last November 160 Nations passed a United Nations resolution called “Prevention Of An Arms Race In Outer Space”, with only the US, Israel and Micronesia abstaining. This re-affirmed the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, international law that sets aside outer space for peaceful uses. Canada is pressing for all weapons in outer space to be outlawed (currently only weapons of mass destruction are banned) –because they fear another arms race will start. “If one state actively pursues the weaponization of space we can be sure others will follow” commented Marc Vidricaire, Canadian representative to the UN.

The USA is to start that arms race with the development of a space air force. The US Air Force Space Command in its Almanac 2000 stated “The future of the Air Force is space... Globally dominant – The future Air Force will be better able to monitor and shape world events...” Scary stuff. It might not be too long before space terrorism becomes a reality.

*In typical Tony Blair style Britain is doing it’s bit to help America retain it’s world dominance by allowing two of our military bases- Menwith Hill and Fylingdales- to be used to aid their Star Wars programme. There are ongoing protests at both of these bases. Info Yorkshire CND 01274 730795 www.cndyorks.gn.apc.org.

*Foil the Base - Mass action against war and Star Wars at Menwith Hill - 22 March. Info foilthebase@yahoo.co.uk

*More information on the nuclear space race at www.space4peace.org

Shannon you Crazy Diamond

Last week Mary Kelly, was arrested for breaking into a hangar and trashing a US military plane with a hatchet, causing 300,000 Euros worth of damage. And this week five members of the Catholic Worker Movement were arrested for cutting through fences at Shannon airport to pour human blood onto the runway and building a shrine dedicated to Iraqi children killed by twelve years of US and British military action.

Contrary to the Irish Constitution and international law, the Irish Government continues to allow Shannon Airport to be used by US forces on their way to US bases in Kuwait and Qatar. The Shannon Peace Camp has temporarily been disbanded "as the camp was more of a news story than the war on Iraq and the use of Shannon Airport." Mary Kelly is being held at Limerick prison and is due to appear in court this Wednesday 5th Feb. The other five are at Shannon and Ennis police stations. And just so there can be no misunderstanding as to where his sympathies lie, Bertie Ahern, the Irish Taoiseach, has now ordered 150 armed troops to provide '24-hour security' at the airport. www.shannonpeacecamp.org

War Briefs

Minister of War Geoff Hoon was trapped inside the Connah's Quay Labour Hall for 40 minutes this week by peace protesters who had a warrant for a citizen's arrest of Hoon for his possession and threat to use weapons of mass destruction. Hoon was on the North Wales leg of his UK 'war tour' that aims to reassure grassroots Labour activists about a military attack on Iraq. ** On Tuesday fourteen **Greenpeace** volunteers handcuffed themselves to Gulf-bound tanks and jeeps at Southampton's Marchwood Military Port and decorated them with anti-war slogans. www.greenpeace.org.uk ** Anti-war demos last weekend included 1,800 in Swansea, 1,500 in Cambridge and 40 in sleepy Sussex town Haywards Heath. ** Meanwhile six protesters closed nearby **RAF Lakenheath** for an hour last week while other 'weapons inspectors' entered the base, and searched for American-controlled weapons of mass destruction. ** **Stop the War** have organised loads of anti-war **Valentine** events the day before what promises to be the UK's biggest ever anti war demo Full listing 020 053 2153 www.stopwar.org.uk ** **In Brighton** - **Make Love Not War**, Valentine's Day, 5.00pm Churchill Square. Bring flowers, candles and pink fluffy stuff. ** **Make Bass Not War** - get partyin for peace with djs, stalls and stuff, 13th at Concorde 2, Brighton www.safp.org.uk ** **Legal observers and stewards are urgently needed** for the mass nonviolent sitdown protest to take place after the anti war march on February 15th. Contact 0845 458 2564 www.j-n-v.org ** There's a **Students Against War National Meeting** this Saturday (8) from 12 noon, New College, Oxford. osstw@lautre.net ** Check out our spanking new direct action against the war section on our website www.schnews.com/stopwar

Positive SchNEWS

Pedal power puts polluters through their paces at the unpredictable 7th Pedal Power Convention. - DIY pedal and wind generators, pedal powered music and other contraptions to make the mind boggle, there is also a free junk pile of motors, meters, and other useful contraption-making stuff to be taken from or added to. Come along to learn about low-impact living in a comfortable atmosphere. Its on Sunday 16th Feb and starts at 12 noon till 6pm at RISC centre 35-39 London St, Reading, RG1 4PS. Please book if you're bringing stuff to display on 01344 482266 www.c-realevents.co.uk

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ELECTRICKERY

Thousands of poor people getting evicted from their homes. Water and electricity supplies cut-off. Live ammunition fired at the protesting poor. Welcome to the new South Africa! Thousands of poor people in ghettos all over the country are getting a brutal taste of neo-liberalism as the ANC government continues to open up its economy to 'market forces'. This has seen public services being handed over to western multinationals that cut jobs and raise water prices. One multinational Suez Lyonnaise is now the owner of South Africa's water utilities - it hiked water rates for the urban poor. The ANC government once promised cheap water, electricity, housing, health care and education. But they have broken their promises and sold off their country to western multinationals who are upping prices and laying off workers.

But South Africa's poor have erupted like a burst water pipe. Organisations such as the Anti-Privatisation Forum and the Anti-Evictions Campaign have sprung up in defence of the basic human right to water, warmth and shelter. In April last year 87 people from Soweto, including pensioners and children, were arrested on charges of public violence, malicious damage and assault, they had gone to the ANC Mayor of Johannesburg's house to show what it was like to have your water and electricity cut off. His bodyguard didn't reckon it was funny and shot at them with live bullets. The activists reacted, as one does when shot at, and they got nicked.

The trial of the 'Kensington 87' was delayed, following international protests, till 22 January where the mayor's bodyguard was unable to explain how two protestors were wounded by his bullets if he only fired warning shots into the air. The verdict is expected in March.

In Cape Town hundreds of residents, led by the Mandela Park Anti-Eviction Campaign, recently marched to the local ANC councillor to put forward their demands that promises of free electricity become a reality. They reckon 20 units is far too little electricity to last a month - the unemployed, pensioners, disabled people cannot afford to buy electricity beyond what's provided so they have to go without light and energy for cooking and heating. Pissed off residents are demanding that electricity cut-offs be abolished. But the AEC isn't just pleading with fat politicians- it's fighting for free education for poor students and it has led a good deal of direct action demonstrations against evictions and cut-offs. The AEC protects families from being evicted by staging sit-ins and demonstrations to turn away the armed guards who come to evict families. If the 'orrible guards are determined to take the property away then AEC activists often decide make the house 'unlivable' - they smash it up so no-one else can live there! See southafrica.indymedia.org, antieviction.org.za

Worldwide protests against the war next Saturday (15). Three meet up points 12 noon @ Embankment, 12.30pm Gower St, 12 noon under Waterloo Bridge for cyclists. Sit down protest after the demo at Piccadilly Circus, meet 5pm Green Park. Transport from around the country 020 7053 2153 www.stopwar.org.uk

Tickets for Brighton coaches available from Community Base, Queens Road.

Help give out SchNEWS on the day. Pick up bundles on Friday afternoon at the Cowley Club, London Road, or if you see us struggling under thousands of bits of paper please give us a hand.

* Scottish Coalition for Justice not War will visit the Labour Party Conference in Glasgow. 15th Feb, 10am at Glasgow Green to surround the SECC for a 'Jericho Rumpus' at 1.30pm followed by a rally at 2.30pm info, transport and maps from www.banthebomb.org.uk

HOMEBOYS

"The day after the election we will physically take over the Blair's empty flats regardless of the legal situation. We don't intend to waste time on legal niceties when families with young kids have nowhere to live." - Sid Street, Bristolian Election Campaign Manager.

In a town where most folks have been pushed to the outskirts thanks to rocketing house prices, the Blairs decided to buy two luxury flats last November. Empty since then, the flats are fingers up to anyone in housing need. The Blairs now have three homes, Downing Street, Chequers for the weekends, and a house in County Durham - they really NEED all of them. Honest.

John Prescott told the House of Commons this week that councils should be able to take control of empty properties by force if they've been empty for too long. So watch out you Blairs! Sadly it's unlikely the council will ever get their acts together enough to enforce it. At the moment there are 2,348 houses in Brighton and Hove and a staggering 70,000 properties in London and the south east which have been empty for at least six months (most have been empty for years). Prescott also announced that he'd cut the discount for buying an ex-council property from £38,000 to £16,000 in March. So there'll probably be a rush to buy up the remaining houses before the sale ends, er, nice one. Hurry now! Sale ends soon! Everything must go! In the last 20 years £13 billion has been re-directed from council housing into central government coffers. Neo-Labour have done this by cutting funding to most local councils all over the country, preventing councils from buying or building new houses and from repairing and improving existing ones.

Those of you familiar with Brighton will know about the (in)Sainsbury's development near Brighton station. The hugely unpopular superstore was finally given the nod this week despite opposition from local residents and small businesses, campaign group BUDD and the popular community squat at Harvest Forestry. Instead of building hundreds of affordable new homes, the council chose to suck Sainsbury's proverbial cock and grant them permission to build a spanking new superstore, even though they've already got one ten minutes' walk down the road. Pissed off with all this sort of nonsense, UNISON and Brighton and Hove tenants joined people from all over the country the other week in a national Defend Council Housing rally of Westminster. Steve Foster from UNISON told SchNEWS, "The right to housing is fundamental. Our objective is to stop the unnecessary and expensive sell-off of the Council's remaining stock, and restore some of the public investment in Council Housing that has been lost in recent years." Defend Council Housing: 020 7987 9989 www.defendcouncilhousing.org

...and finally...

Over the past few years many cycle lanes have sprung up making life easier for cyclists. Except that many of these cycle lanes are poorly thought out, go nowhere or are just plain stupid and a waste of money. And Brighton is no exception, one cyclist fed up with the Council's poor record has set up his own website, featuring the shortest cycle lane at less than the length of a bike! The website has a host of weird and downright dangerous cycle lanes. "Scary Cycle Lanes of Brighton" shows some life threatening lanes, like those that run down the middle of the road between two lanes of traffic travelling in opposite directions. There are also lanes with metals posts, bollards or trees right in the middle of them and a sign telling cyclists to dismount at a cycle crossing. Check out weirdcycyclelanes.co.uk/

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all Aliens Lost in Space you must be completely warped to Klingon to the idea there's any intelligent life on Earth. Honest.