Divided Loyalties

Whose side are the soldiers on? This is a pressing problem for military leaders in Arab states, where armies have been used to help repressive regimes maintain control. Consider two important facts: that they are mostly armed by the West; and that the troops are mostly conscripts with, as we saw in Egypt, different loyalties than their generals. So Egyptian soldiers driving their tanks into Tahrir Square pulled their headphones off so they couldn’t hear the orders; burst into tears as they realised they could not harm their brothers and sisters; put aside their rifles and jumped down to join the protests; and allowed protesters to climb all over the tanks.

The generals are now currently governing the country (as they have for many years), but if the generals don’t deliver on the citizens’ demands, what will happen if there are more protests and the army is ordered out against them? It is anybody’s guess how obedient the army will be.

Yet, having seen what happened in Tunisia and Egypt, the rulers of Libya, Bahrain and the Yemen have responded heavily and violently to protests, using soldiers and security forces to kill and wound men, women and children, many of them processing in funerals for those killed the day before. It seems that the old guard, refusing to learn, are now fighting to retain their power. And as I write, in Libya at least some of the military are refusing to fire upon the citizens amongst whom, of course, are their families. Just how far will this tide of revolution, sweeping from country to country, spread, and when we look back on this time will we shudder, thinking this was when things became much worse? Or will we remember it as the time when armies realised that they are people first and soldiers second?

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All MAW members, please note! Unless you are a life member or joined after March this year, your membership subscription is due in November. And if you are not a member, why not join us?

Movement for the Abolition of War
11 Venetia Road London N4 1EJ Tel 01908 511948 www.abolishwar.org.uk
Editorial

What interesting times we live in. First there was the future created by the release of the diplomatic cables by WikiLeaks. And now we have a tide of revolution sweeping across the Middle East, and for watchers of world news, in other parts of the world too. The two are not unconnected.

With diplomats suffering maximum embarrassment as their manipulations, machinations and hypocrisy became public, efforts were made to shut down the WikiLeaks website and remove its sources of funding. Within days computer whiz kids had created hundreds of ‘mirror sites’, keeping the released cables on line. Instead of WikiLeaks disappearing, PayPal and MasterCard websites crashed as the ‘hacktivists’ got busy. Like the Hydra, chop one head off and a hundred will take its place.

With diplomats suffering maximum embarrassment as their manipulations, machinations and hypocrisy became public, efforts were made to shut down the WikiLeaks website and remove its sources of funding. Within days computer whiz kids had created hundreds of ‘mirror sites’, keeping the released cables on line. Instead of WikiLeaks disappearing, PayPal and MasterCard websites crashed as the ‘hacktivists’ got busy. Like the Hydra, chop one head off and a hundred will take its place.

The protests want ‘democracy’. But in Cairo’s Tahrir Square they showed very clearly that they already know what democracy really is, and it doesn’t need elections. They had no ‘leaders’, they mostly ignored people like ex-UN weapons inspector El Baradei returning ‘home’ from Vienna, yet the occupation of the Square was a model of fair organisation and governance. If something needed doing, people simply did it. They set up security barriers, shelters, toilet areas and clinics. They shared out food and water. They cleared up rubbish daily, and when the main body of protesters went home after celebrating Mubarak’s departure, many stayed behind to clean the Square. One wonders what kind of government they would create if given the chance. Whether the elderly generals who were the major part of Mubarak’s government will keep their promises and hand over power remains to be seen.

What is clear is that in North Africa and the Middle East, people are rising up against those leaders the West has supported and kept in power for years, selling them our weapons and our riot control equipment, and making use of their willingness to use torture while ignoring the repression of people, the poverty and inequality that dirty trade produced.

We keep being told that the West wants to bring democracy to the region, but Western leaders were all too slow in condemning these repressive regimes and when they did speak, made hypocritical statements about restoring the internet (as if they hadn’t tried shutting down WikiLeaks), and displaying a collective amnesia about their complicity in the repression. They should beware. The young have a better knowledge of how to use modern communications than do their elders. And in many cases they have looked at our form of democracy and found it wanting. A revolution that used to be confined to one country now has the ability to go global. But if it produces the kind of cooperative sharing of support and resources that hundreds of thousands of people (untainted by power and leadership) created in Cairo, then in the long term the world will benefit, because that kind of revolution will be unlikely to lead to war. And it will certainly not waste its money on weapons.

Contact the Editor: 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
Chair’s Report

Chair’s Report

People who say that war can and should be abolished are often accused of naïveté, as if the only alternative to militarism was a feeble sort of idealism which is ineffectual in the real world. There are several ways to counter this, of course, and I hope that MAW’s newsletters and website help to equip us to do so. One is to point out that injustice can be opposed without warfare. We can draw encouragement from the tremendous effect of the popular uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt: people in huge numbers have asserted their demand for an end to tyranny, but without resorting to war. The situation is complex, and there have been casualties, but one notable feature in Egypt has been the conduct of the army, in which soldiers have behaved with restraint, refusing to crush one notable feature in Egypt has been the conduct of the army, in which soldiers have behaved with restraint, refusing to crush demonstrations, but rather policing them. Soldiers can use their courage to avert wars as well as to fight them.

The story of Julian Assange, and of the use made of the secret documents he received, still continues. There is a case to be made for confidentiality in political negotiations, and there are hotly-contested claims that lives have been endangered by the leaks. The exposure of war crimes, however, must be justified; and as for the deliberate fomenting of aggression against Iran, if that does not endanger lives, then what does? Nor must we forget Bradley Manning, accused of being the source of the leaks, imprisoned as if he were the worst kind of traitor to his country, when his action was prompted by the discovery that his country was betraying its own experienced, and the subsequent mental turmoil that drove him to alcoholism and homelessness. This made a powerful counterpart to the other works showing conflict from a woman’s point of view.

The film is designed to be used in schools as a basis for discussion about how global warming will affect the lives of people in the British Isles, leading to possible conflict. Associated educational material will also be provided on the web to assist teachers and class discussions. It is being directed by Colin Steven of Theatrix who has considerable experience in working with young people.

Set in 2035 when the effects of climate change are affecting people’s lives and attitudes, the film will look at how they cope with flooding and displacement from homes, food and fuel rationing, uncertain employment, rioting in urban areas and worries about the influx of refugees. Because of concerns regarding security and the need to maintain resource supplies from overseas, the Government has become more controlling, causing social tensions.

The story is built around a breakfast television programme which is typically ‘fluffy’ but also includes serious items dealing with the way violent conflicts are beginning to emerge locally, regionally and nationally and how these are related to the global scene and possibly international wars.

In addition, there are two film sets: (1) inside the home of a privileged family living in a protected community away from any of the problems created by climate change; and (2) inside the home of a typical working class family who are experiencing the problems. The film shows the two families commenting on what is being said in the TV programme.

The script has been written by a group of students from Southampton University with a special interest in the effects of climate change, under the guidance of Dr Mark Levene, an expert on the likely effects of climate change.

MAW is now seeking people, professionals or amateurs, to act in the film under the guidance of Dr Mark Levene, an expert on the likely effects of climate change.

5th MAW members and friends from other peace groups gathered in north London for a Strategy Day (see pages 6 & 7). It was a chance to look afresh at our chief purpose and how we take forward.

It also debunks war’s honourable status in many people’s minds if we see exposed some of the machinations of those in power who provoke and make it. Some of the recent Wikileaks revelations have done this.

The story of Julian Assange, and of the use made of the secret documents he received, still continues. There is a case to be made for confidentiality in political negotiations, and there are hotly-contested claims that lives have been endangered by the leaks. The exposure of war crimes, however, must be justified; and as for the deliberate fomenting of aggression against Iran, if that does not endanger lives, then what does? Nor must we forget Bradley Manning, accused of being the source of the leaks, imprisoned as if he were the worst kind of traitor to his country, when his action was prompted by the discovery that his country was betraying its own experiences, and the subsequent mental turmoil that drove him to alcoholism and homelessness. This made a powerful counterpart to the other works showing conflict from a woman’s point of view.

November’s Remembrance Day lecture by Philippe Sands gave a clear-eyed and detailed view of how the law was subverted in order to make the Iraq war possible. Every new discovery about the circumstances of this war makes it look more culpable; and even if the Chilcot Inquiry’s eventual findings disappoint many of us, at least many more will be vigilant to spot and oppose any future attempts to steer Parliament and people towards war.

On February 5th MAW members and friends from other peace groups gathered in north London for a Strategy Day (see pages 6 & 7). It was a chance to look afresh at our chief purpose and how we can move towards achieving it, and I hope all who read the report on the day will think about how its ideas can be developed. As always, we could do much more with more gifts of time, talents and money, and hope these will be forthcoming as we see in the day’s suggestions something that we could pick up and take forward.

Sue Gilmurray

MAW FILM ON GLOBAL WARMING AND CONFLICT – CAN YOU HELP?

The film shows the two families commenting on what is being said in the TV programme.

The script has been written by a group of students from Southampton University with a special interest in the effects of climate change, under the guidance of Dr Mark Levene, an expert on the likely effects of climate change.

MAW is now seeking people, professionals or amateurs, to act in the film and groups of young people to take part as extras. We are also seeking extra funding to ensure that the resulting film has maximum impact.

We would like to hear from people who feel they can contribute in any way to the project, such as giving practical advice on the acting, assisting with the sets and costumes or writing the associated educational material.

If you are interested please contact Tony Kempster (ajkempster@aol.com or 01908 511948).
The Art of War – WWII to Iraq

Channel 4’s series *The Genius of British Art* ended with *The Art of War*, in which former war reporter Jon Snow looked at how artists have responded to war over the last century. While the WWI artists (which we featured in Issue 17 of *Abolish War*) were concerned with showing the horrors of trench warfare, the WWII artists, encouraged by the Director of the National Gallery Kenneth Clark, gave us images of how the British persevered at home. There was no combat or killing here, and Clark was later accused by those who knew of ‘sanitising’ war.

Compare Stanley Spencer’s *Resurrection of the Soldiers* at the Sandham Memorial Chapel, full of the pain and anger from his medical orderly experience in WWI, with his images of the Clydesdale shipbuilders at work, worthy men doing hard and vital work. The latter did provide a lighter view of the war artist at work – a film clip of Spencer sketching the workers on toilet paper, and then he and the workers solemnly unrolling the toilet roll to view his drawings. They don’t make loo paper like that any more! Then there was Henry Moore and his images of people stoically sleeping in the Underground. All worthy and sad stuff, but this simply reinforces our belief in our survivability, not a disgust in war itself.

What, asked Snow, is left for the modern artist to say? Jeremy Deller’s installation of a rusting mangled car, now on display in the Imperial War Museum, may provoke us to begin to think about war, but beyond that…? Deller said, “They will never show the bodies,” and there lies the crux of the matter. A flattened heap of rusting metal is just that. Being told that it is the result of a street bomb in Baghdad’s oldest book market, killing and injuring scores of people, doesn’t get the message home, except perhaps to those who knew and loved the book market. To do that you need to add the screams, the fear and the smell of blood.

Steve McQueen’s work *Queen and Country* consists of sheets of stamps showing the faces of soldiers killed in Iraq (stamps refused by the Royal Mail). McQueen says of them, “They are giving their lives for their country and their queen.” To lose their lives is, we are told, is the sacrifice they are prepared to make, but do those who send us to war ever confront the death and injury perpetrated by those making that sacrifice on those who are simply sacrificed to our god of war?

Snow summed up with this: “From Nevinson to McQueen, British artists have sought to bring home to us the true cost of war.” But the programme distanced itself from the ‘true cost’ - the *killing* of war. WWI art was produced by artists who had experienced the worst of war, but none of the works used to illustrate this programme has either that legitimacy or immediacy. There was no real recognition of the true cost of modern warfare – the nine innocent civilians killed for every soldier that dies. Mainstream media will not show those images, and governments don’t want us to see them because we will turn against war. It is for us to use one of the most powerful tools we have if we want to change the culture of war.

Editor
Philippe Sands QC gives the 2010 Remembrance Day lecture

This was probably the best attended lecture that MAW has hosted at the Imperial War Museum. But who wouldn’t make an effort to hear one of our top international lawyers speak on the thorny issue of the ‘legality’ of the Iraq invasion? Professor Sands started with a brief look at international law regarding war, from the Kellogg-Briand pact, which condemned war as a means of solving international problems, to the UN which was established to prevent the use of force, not authorise it. There are two exceptions which allow the use of force: a member state may act in self defence if attacked by another state; and the UN Security Council can authorise the use of military action in certain circumstances, such as humanitarian intervention.

He then moved on to the legal case that Blair attempted to make for invading Iraq. We know the 2003 invasion of Iraq was illegal, but here was an expert leading us step by step towards March 18th 2003, when Parliament was told the Attorney General Lord Goldsmith regarded military action legal, and the House voted for war.

Professor Sands stressed that however little we expect from the Chilcot Inquiry, it has been useful in ensuring the release of previously classified papers. Professor Sands made the most of them. Having given us a summary of the legal situation as presented to the public by Tony Blair, backed up, so Blair said, by Lord Goldsmith, it was riveting to find out what Goldsmith really thought. The most damning part of the lecture came when Sands listed, one by one, the letters, drafts and memos from Goldsmith stating the invasion would be illegal, from July 2002 to early March 2003.

We know now that on at least one occasion Blair’s statement to Parliament said the opposite of what Goldsmith had advised him the day before. Sands asked, ‘What could have made Goldsmith change his mind at the last minute, given that there had been no changes in the circumstances?’ The only reason to provide Blair with the legal advice he was so desperate for had to be political pressure, which no Attorney General should be party to.

But in January this year Chilcot released correspondence between Goldsmith’s office and Matthew Rycroft at No 10. Just 4 days before Parliament voted for the invasion, Goldsmith, knowing that ‘strong evidence’ was needed that Saddam had breached resolution 1441, sought reassurance from the Prime Minister that this was the case. No real evidence was forthcoming, only Blair’s ‘equivocal view’ that it was so. And for that view we went to war.

The Museum Cinema was full, and the audience utterly engaged in what Professor Sands had to say. Many of them will not have heard of MAW before. The next day the Guardian newspaper reported on the lecture**, so even more people will be aware that there is an organisation dedicated to abolishing war. ‘Thank you, Professor Sands!’

Nuclear Weapons: a war crime and a crime against humanity

We are asking citizens to sign personal Affirmations declaring that they would never support any use of nuclear weapons by anyone at any time. Here’s why.

Nuclear weapons are fundamentally immoral. They are not just a means of mass destruction; they are engines of extermination. They are indiscriminate because no one could forecast the direction of the wind at the moment of launch. The effects would be so unpredictable that accurate targeting would be irrelevant.

At the Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) at the United Nations in 2010, 189 countries unanimously stressed the ‘catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons’ and demanded that all states ‘at all times’ comply with ‘applicable international law, including international humanitarian law.’

Looked at realistically, this means that Britain and the other nuclear-armed states are deploying weapons which it could never be legal to use. We are asking citizens to back this up by affirming their personal belief that any use of nuclear weapons would be a War Crime and a Crime Against Humanity.

The Swiss Head of Mission at the NPT said that ‘The continued existence of defence policies based on nuclear weapons only serves to prolong this irresponsible gamble with the future of humanity’. The Swiss Government has commissioned a study. It says that the security of all people everywhere, and not the alleged security of states, should be at the centre of the drive towards a world free of nuclear weapons. International law is the way to achieve this. The use of nuclear weapons must become unthinkable and confirmed to be a crime against humanity and a war crime.

This can be achieved by like-minded states, such as Switzerland, working with experts and concerned citizens. It is how good progress has been made with outlawing land mines and cluster munitions. This coalition can thrash out an agreement that nuclear weapons must never be used in their name and that they would view any use as criminal. The nuclear-armed states do not need to be involved at first. They can be brought in later when the global drive towards a convention banning nuclear weapons becomes irresistible.

Please - sign the enclosed Affirmation and post it to 67 Summerleath Rd, Hailsham BN27 3DR or go to our online link on http://www.nuclearweapons-warcrimes.org/

And forward this link to your own contacts.

George Farbrother World Court Project UK
(part of INLAP, the Institute for Law Accountability and Peace)

Richard Cobden Last summer we told our readers about the statute of the C19th peace activist, Richard Cobden. Bruce Kent says that there are now plans to put up a memorial to those who suffered in Japanese POW camps during WW2. No one is opposed to such a memorial, and a good place would be in one of the gardens to the south of Euston Station, where it would be seen by thousands. But it is proposed to put this war memorial next to Cobden’s statue – surely not the most appropriate placing?

* The Attorney General seeks reassurance on illegal invasion, Lesley Docksey, 18 January 2011
** Chilcot inquiry’s credibility ‘on edge of an abyss’, Guardian, 15/11/10

The text of Philippe Sands’ lecture is available on our website.
A Plan To Abolish War - MAW's Open Strategy Day

About 35 people met in a church hall in North London to decide on a plan for how to abolish war. That does sound unlikely, but the Movement for Abolition of War is dedicated to just that - abolition. Can the grand but precise objective be embodied in a coherent strategy, a realistic vision of how humanity will overcome one of its most persistent maladies? Could this be done in a one-day conference? We came away from this Strategy Day with what we expected to achieve - the start of a process to specify and plan for the necessary institutional and cultural remedies, and renewed ideas and insights for immediate action.

There is of course a tension between these short and long term perspectives, and between the bottom-up peace movement culture and the need for top-down thinking. However, by dividing the day between the two priorities and applying the techniques of uninhibited group discussion to both, this conference achieved some steps forward in formulation of ideas in a highly participatory atmosphere.

Starting with the two basic insights of MAW, that war must and can be abolished, Martin Birdseye set the scene for the strategy discussion by appealing to dedicated peace campaigners (engrossed as they are in the hard slog of day-to-day writing and real-time direct action) to occasionally raise their eyes to the horizon, to see where they are going and make a real plan of how to get there. This kind of thinking is not just for academics - the people who are also active peace.

Brynk Heale was determined to be more specific. We are, after all, talking about attempting something on a scale never achieved in human history. He looked forward to a written strategy, taking as a practical example the planning documents produced by the two basic insights of MAW, that war must and can be abolished, Martin Birdseye set the scene for the strategy discussion by appealing to dedicated peace campaigners (engrossed as they are in the hard slog of day-to-day writing and real-time direct action) to occasionally raise their eyes to the horizon, to see where they are going and make a real plan of how to get there. This kind of thinking is not just for academics - the people who are also active peace.

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Mayors for Peace. History shows that abolition movements may fail if they do not engage with a broad range of civil society. Therefore we have to move forward together, making small but very broad steps. Broad because we should make them together with many other organisations, be they working for peace, environment, social justice, children's or pensioners' groups, trade unions, sports organisations and so on. MAW might attempt to get groups working together; to take a wide step forward by establishing a written common basic ethos among the groups, on which to base action.

For a preliminary conference of this nature there had been no call for papers but we were greatly encouraged by two papers submitted in advance. Milan Rai (Peace News) provided a closely argued proposition that the human propensity for violence has almost nothing to do with war and that, on the contrary, wars are made and prepared for by cool institutional minds who rely on the unthinking compliance of morally disconnected individuals. And in a short but wide ranging review of the prospects for abolishing war, Peter Nichols (Abolition 2000 UK) also cited human nature and social structures along with prevailing culture and economic factors. Recent history reminds us that in law, if not in practice, the job of abolition is almost done by the UN charter - the UK and USA had to ignore it to go to war in Iraq.

These and various themes also emerged from discussion. Most inputs were not specific at this stage but were basic approaches - simply, how to put in place the necessary things to abolish war. Some people look to remove the causes of war, some to remove the necessary conditions for war (even just one of them), while others would wish to provide the conditions for peace.

To bring all these things together will be the next stage of the strategy discussion; but again and again what emerged was the theme of changing the popular perception, of reversing the mindset that thinks of war as an inevitable part of life. Lesley Docksey took this up with a tale of how two warring communities came to realise that they could live together, that the river that divided them was what united them. Introducing the second part of the day - on what we can do now for active peace building - she went on to identify two kinds of peace - passive and active. Passive peace, which seems very attractive while we are not the ones actually suffering from war, is actually false if it does not aim for peace for everyone, not just ourselves. So we have to get up, get involved, take risks, and, build peace, active peace.

Clearly, most of the delegates were already in this frame of mind. A wealth of ideas was recorded and presented and for some it represented a new opportunity to get involved. This kind of empowerment should be part of the role of MAW for its membership. Meanwhile we have to put together a framework of media and personal communication in which the long term strategy can develop. We need more thoughtful contributions.
from individuals and some sort of tessellation of the various peace organisations such that on this particular aspect there is productive communication and progress together on a strategy to abolish war itself.

Martin Birdseye

Mil Rai’s paper Abolishing War: Getting Our Focus Right is on www.abolishwar.org.uk under Views. Photos by Mil Rai.

Ideas for the Future - A Summary of the Results

Breaking people into small intensive discussion groups always seems to produce an explosion of ideas. As each group discussed, wrote ideas onto flip-chart sheets and reported its findings to the conference, it became clear that some themes were common to all, while each group also displayed original, even audacious thinking. In the long term, what needs to be got rid of and what needs to be put in its place, if we are to achieve a world without war? The capacity to wage war – the military/arms/industrial complex needs to be eliminated, as do the institutions that encourage, indeed teach blind obedience. And they all saw the need to change the culture and perceptions of people, to educate for peace, to change our use of language and to replace pro-war institutions with pro-peace ones. For example, one group boldly suggested getting rid of NATO and other military alliances, and replacing them with peace teams.

There was much of value here that we can refine and add to in our aim of producing a clear strategy for abolishing war. But what can we do now? Again the groups produced a wealth of suggestions for action, many that would apply to all ‘peace’ groups, and many that would specifically fit MAW’s aims, actions that MAW members can take now.

Top of these were using important days such as Remembrance Sunday, International Conscientious Objectors Day and the UN World Peace Day to highlight the peaceful alternative to war. Reaching out to young people is essential, as is networking with other organisations (e.g. tackling the conflict that will come with climate change by working with ‘green’ groups). In education taking debates into schools would help, as would campaigns against the military having free access to schools. Better use of the media was proposed, using our talents for writing, for drama, for imaginative direct action. Hopefully, as we start to build our plans for the future, we will be able to use our website to provide people with ideas and tips for action, and with the inspiration to get active. Because, valuable as this conversation was and will be, sooner or later we have to replace talking with acting.

Lesley Docksey

And here is the first MAW request to its members:

MEMBERS – TAKE ACTION!

International Conscientious Objectors Day May 15

What will you do to mark this day? Why not find out from the Peace Pledge Union Tel: 020 7424 9444, your library or local Quakers who the COs in your area are/were. Invite a CO to speak. Hold a vigil at a CO’s grave. Set up a public debate. Show a film. Pax Christi (Tel: 020 8203 4884), has a remarkable film of the Austrian CO Franz Jagerstatter. Concord Films (Tel: 01473 726012, www.concordmedia.org.uk) may have others.

Whatever you decide, do something. The bravery and principles of those who stand against war are worth celebrating. Help make MAW’s aims visible - make it clear that war solves nothing.

And – whatever you do, we want to hear that you’ve done it! Send a report or photos to the Editor, and it will be in the next Abolish War

Pioneers & Prophets: the 5th Peace History Conference

Friday 13 & Saturday 14 May

Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, LONDON SE1

Programme – Friday

Welcome by Dianne Lees Director General IWM
Introduction by Martin Bell MAW Vice-President
Terry Charman IWM – Beverly Nichols and Pacifism in Britain
Lynda Morris Norwich University College of the Arts – The Battle for Picasso’s Mind
WW2 Conscientious Objectors in conversation with Highgate Wood School students
Stone Tales – a play about women peacemakers by Alexandra Carey

Exhibition – Women’s Peace banners from Greenham Common
Conference organised by Movement for the Abolition of War in association with the Imperial War Museum and the International Peace Bureau

For further information and to book your place, please visit www.abolishwar.org.uk/events or phone 01908 511948

Programme – Saturday

Peter Van Den Dungen University of Bradford – The London Peace Society
Film: John Bright and the Angel of Death, introduced by the director Nicholas Wilding
Colin Archer International Peace Bureau – The Olympics, War & Peace
Film: Carry Greenham Home directed by Beebon Kidron

MAW • Spring • 11
Unmanned Drones and International Law

The use of unmanned drones in warfare looks like being the next big challenge for anti-war campaigners. Militarily powerful states are resorting to them more often, rather than committing troops on the ground. First used for surveillance, they now come fully armed with missiles. The US first used them as weapons in Afghanistan in 2001. Israel has used them in Gaza. They are becoming the weapon of choice for the future – no risk to the operators who are based many miles away, 'precision' targeting (although relatives of hundreds of the dead would dispute that), and of course, much cheaper than shipping in and supplying boots on the ground. A clean war, provided you're sitting the right side of the computer screen.

In a debate on drones at Chatham House last October Professor Professor O'Connell made these important points:

- They are only legal when used as 'battlefield' weapons (hard to define a battlefield when most current wars don't involve armies against armies)
- Terrorist acts (IEDs, car bombs, suicide bombers etc.) are criminal offences, and therefore should be dealt with by law officers (the police), not reacted to by military force.

The USA is using them to target Al Qaeda and Taliban members. This inevitably means hitting domestic houses and compounds occupied by civilians, and many initial reports of '30 Taliban killed' end up being corrected to '2 Taliban leaders killed. 20 civilians, including women and children, also died.' The CIA is also heavily involved in their use – an intelligence agency making illegal use of military weaponry. In November 2002, a suspected 'lieutenant' in Al Qaeda was killed along with five other persons in a drone attack in Yemen, carried out by CIA personnel. In 2003, the UN special rapporteur concluded that the Yemen strike constituted a 'clear case of extrajudicial killing', or murder to you and I. Although Professor O'Connell concentrated on US use (in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia) it is thought another 40 states have acquired the technology, including Britain.

Opposing Professor O'Connell's view was Professor Michael Schmitt. Having served in the USAF for 20 years, he took a much more militaristic view to justify the use of drones. His legal case, where their use in Pakistan is concerned, falls down because many drone attacks are carried out without the permission of the Pakistani government. He also argues that the US has the right to target the Taliban as a matter of self defence. He can only argue self defence when the United States itself is attacked (as in 9/11). The Taliban attack NATO forces that they see as invaders in Afghanistan. They have never attacked the USA.

And – ‘Lastly, when assessing collateral damage for the purposes of proportionality, it is often forgotten that the assessment is based on what the planner, attacker, or commander reasonably believed at the time they planned, executed or approved a strike, and not on the degree of harm eventually caused or the military advantage achieved. It is inappropriate to condemn drone strikes as unlawful merely on the basis that they harmed civilians or failed to achieve their intended objective.’

‘Inappropriate? Consider the damage to civilians in Pakistan as a result of our presence in Afghanistan.

Almost all news reports (based on information from the military) give estimated deaths of militants. Other (civilian) deaths are simply listed as 'unknown’. Targets are listed as ‘assumed’. The military often have to correct their reports to include civilian casualties, but then excuse the killing of women and children by labelling them as ‘civilians with known links to militants’ – as though all militants will have no parents and grandparents, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, cousins, nephews and nieces, or indeed wives and children. Does that make them 'terrorists’?

Casualty estimates are based on reports (such as the figures given by Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative) from ‘reliable' media sources. But – as no independent investigators can easily access the FATA and Northwest Territories where the damage is occurring, the only real source that reliable media outlets have for drone casualties is the Pakistani or US military (the CIA doesn't comment, as it will not confirm that it directs many drone attacks). There is also the fact that 'reliability of intelligence may be undermined by cash payments offered by the CIA and other US operatives' (CIVIC report: Civilian Harm and Conflict in Northwest Pakistan).

‘We think that because we have the capacity to wage war, we have the right to wage war.’

Chris Hedges

‘The Pak Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS) report published on 10/01/10 makes clear that the carnage from the fighting between the Pakistani military and anti-government Islamist and tribal militants more than matches that taking place in neighbouring US-occupied Afghanistan. In 2009, the low-level civil war in Pakistan cost the lives of at least 12,632 people and wounded another 12,815, as compared to an estimated 6,500 deaths in Afghanistan.’ (AfPak war claimed over 12,500 lives in Pakistan during 2009, James Cogan). And CIVIC reports that in the same year there were more internally displaced refugees due to conflict in Pakistan than any other country. Drone attacks doubled in number in 2010, and the violence increased – could there be a connection? Interestingly, according to Professor O’Connell, there are now reports that drone operators, using computer screens to target individual humans many miles away, are showing signs of mental disturbance.

The UK too is going down the route of waging war at a distance. The British government has acknowledged that the British military was training in Israel on drone use. The news caused outrage in Amnesty, which has been recording the use of drone attacks on Gaza, which they regard as a breach of humanitarian law (Israel trains British Army to operate drones; Amnesty International objects, World Tribune, 17/01/11). The horror of these weapons is that they are used by the powerful against defenceless people who have no way of responding. How many more innocents have to die before we call ‘Enough!’

Lesley Docksey
WAR ON CHRISTMAS DAY

On Christmas Day 1914 there was a spontaneous truce in the trenches. British and German soldiers fraternised (1), played football (2), hunted hares (3) and sang *Silent Night*. The commanders were not impressed and made sure it never happened again.

On Christmas Day 2010 in Afghanistan soldiers dressed up as Santa (4), got attacked by the Taliban and fired back (5), and had a jolly party (6).

Meanwhile, in Pakistan on Christmas Eve US drones killed at least 25 people and Pakistani citizens protested (7). And somewhere, someone sang *Silent Night*. 
Out & About Peace Campaigning

The Human Cost of War Exhibition, the Tower Museum, Derry

It was a privilege to be at the opening of this exhibition of textile art (patchwork quilts and arpilleras) on November 4th, when I sang songs inspired by the works on show, and spoke to some of the women, Irish, Spanish and German, who made them. MAW commissioned both this exhibition and its London predecessor in 2009.

The events of the next few days included workshops where a mixture that included local people and visitors, experienced and inexperienced, teenagers and senior citizens, tried their hand at making new arpilleras on themes of wartime evacuation, and "make do and mend". Although I had a try myself with needle and thread at one of the workshops, at the other one all the places around the sewing-tables were full, so this 'chair' sat on the floor, watched what was going on around me, and wrote a new song. These activities are not direct anti-war protests. They are assertions of creativity in the face of conflict, which oppose violence by showing it up as not only horrifying but irrelevant to the real business of humanity. I hope Roberta Bacic's exhibitions continue to broadcast their quiet, compelling eloquence.

Sue Gilmurray

Tribute to Lord Noel-Baker

MAW works closely with the International Peace Bureau (Geneva) and is one of its member organisations. Tony Kempster, MAW project director and a vice-president of IPB attended the Peace and Sport International Forum in Monaco last December, where he presented a tribute to Lord Philip Noel-Baker at the opening dinner. This was attended by some 400 people including HRH Prince Albert II, members of the International Committee, Government representatives, well known athletes and sports NGOs. Noel-Baker remains the only person to win an Olympic medal (Antwerp, 1920) and to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (1959). He was also an IPB vice-president. The tribute was an excellent opportunity to link peacemaking and sportsmanship. IPB is drawing up plans for an exhibition and other events associated with the 2012 Olympics in London. If these go ahead, there will be opportunities for MAW to participate alongside other IPB member organisations in the UK.

(The text of Tony’s tribute is on the Views page of www.abolishwar.org.uk.)

Presentation of the Arthur Hewlett Peace Award 2010

The winners of the 2010 Arthur Hewlett Peace Award were the Faringdon Peace Group (Oxfordshire). The presentation, of £300 together with a year’s affiliation to MAW, was made by Lesley Docksey, on behalf of MAW.

The Faringdon Peace Group was formed 30 years ago in response to the threat of Cruise missiles being stationed at Upper Heyford Air Base. As well as holding regular monthly meetings with prominent speakers, when appropriate they also organise or take part in direct action events. And each summer they hold a Grand Peace Fete, which raises funds as well as awareness. This year’s Fete will be the thirtieth – yes, the thirtieth – a wonderful record of dedicated peace campaigning!

Eight members of the Group, led by Jennie and Phil Chesterton, came to the Imperial War Museum for the presentation at MAW’s AGM. Jennie received the award on their behalf and told us something of the Group’s past history and present activities. The day was also an opportunity for them to see something of the Museum, and hear Philippe Sands give the Remembrance Day lecture.

The 30th Grand Peace Fete will on Saturday 2 July at Clock House, Coleshill, near Faringdon. It was suggested that MAW has a presence at this year’s Fete so if you are in the area come and support this terrific group.

Details of their programme of events, and how to get to the Fete, are on their website: www.faringdonpeacegroup.org.uk.

MAW is now open for nominations for this year’s Peace Award. If there is a small peace group that you’d like to nominate, please contact us via the MAW website or write to the Editor.

Editor

And From Last Year’s Winners

It is 11th November at Bridgwater Kings Square Peace Memorial. A White Poppy Wreath has been laid in remembrance of all those killed or harmed in war. Some spoke, most sang, all shared silence. We heard that war is organised murder - words of Harry Patch who died last year - the last Tommy to serve in the trenches in WWI. Harry was silent about his war experience until he was 100. Having had some time to consider the subject, he said it was not worth even one life let alone millions. Harry’s funeral was celebrated as a military funeral - a bit like a red poppy event with hundreds of medal-wearing people filling the Cathedral. Back when white poppies were created the struggle to recall WWI as an unrepeatable and unforgivable failure was being lost, and Remembrance was becoming a long celebration of the Glorious Dead, an advertisement for young men to take up arms for their country and to die with honour. When will we ever learn?

Phil Parratt, Bridgwater Peace Group

Jennie & Phil Chesterton (front left) with Faringdon Peace Group members

Bridgwater 11 November 2010
£100

Two extra books for your peace library:

In the Event of… is written by Vida Henning, who in the 1980s was the co-ordinator of Havant CND. It tells the story of one group’s determined actions in challenging Britain’s nuclear ‘deterrence’ policy. The street stalls, petitions, meetings, the banging of one’s head against brick walls – all will be familiar to seasoned campaigners. But it is heARTening to read of the vision, determination and persistence of those who, thirty years later are still faithfully working for peace.

Perchance to Dream is written by Vida’s husband Roy, and is a collection of his verse, written over the last 30 years. Some short and pithy; some sad, some funny, the poems are his commentary on many of the issues we have campaigned (and still campaign) on. Good to dip into when you need a break from the heavy stuff, or just a reminder of the way things were.

Vida and Roy Henning are leading lights of the South East Hants Peace Council.

In the Event of… £5.99, Perchance to Dream £4.99, both for £10 (inc. P&P). Available from Vida Henning, 22 Beaufort Road, Bedhampton, PO9 3HU.

And on the lighter side…

Security at US airports has gone over the top. Consider this story from Military Resistance. American troops going home from Afghanistan had all their weapons checked and ammunition removed before they went through Customs at Bagram Air Base. They all carried their assault rifles, and some had machine guns and pistols, all unloaded. They stopped at Indianapolis for some National Guard troops to disembark. The remaining 230 were flying on to a military base. They were all forced to get off the plane, kept in a secure holding area for two hours, then made to go through the security checks all over again before reboarding. One soldier had some nail clippers confiscated. The conversation went like this:

TSA Guy: You can’t take those on the plane.

Soldier: What? I’ve had them since we left the country.

TSA Guy: You’re not supposed to have them.

Soldier: Why?

TSA Guy: They can be used as a weapon.

Soldier: (touches butt stock of the rifle) But this actually is a weapon. And I’m allowed to take it on.

TSA Guy: Yeah but you can’t use it to take over the plane. You don’t have bullets.

Soldier: And I can take over the plane with nail clippers?

TSA Guy: (awkward silence)

According to the Daily Mail, the latest ‘morale booster’ for our soldiers fighting in Afghanistan is bombproof underwear, designed ‘to protect the parts other armour doesn’t reach’. First advertised last June, the Sun said they had become a must-have present from worried wives by Christmas. A case of saving Ryan’s privates, perhaps?

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.
Reviews

War Is Not Over When It’s Over: women speak out from the ruins of war
Ann Jones, Metropolitan Books, 2010

War breeds violence, and the victims of that violence are women and children. That is the lesson Ann Jones highlights as she travels to countries suffering the aftermath of war, speaking to women in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. A refugee camp in Thailand for those who had fled the violence in Burma was itself full of violence. ‘Why had the violence followed them?’ asked Jones of one woman. The sad reply was, ‘Women flee violence. Men carry it with them.’ It happens everywhere — when war breaks out, men learn violent behaviour. Rape and torture become weapons. With a return to civilian life the violence continues, and those men who did not fight in the war copy those who did. How the women endure, and how they sometimes come together to confront the violence makes an inspiring story. Consider the courage of a shy 12 year old girl from Sierra Leone standing before an audience and demanding that all teachers ‘should stop impregnating schoolgirls’ — a brutal and common reason why girls struggle to gain an education.

Ann Jones is an expert on violence against women, and she is a compassionate writer. Read this book. If you’re a man, it will make you get up and work to stop the violence that war breeds. If you’re a woman, you will weep for your sisters, wherever in the world they suffer.

Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism and How to Stop It
Robert Pape & James Feldman, University of Chicago Press, 2010

This book is both very useful and intensely irritating, written as it is for pro-war American readers. It is an exhaustive examination of the motives, targets and nationalities of suicide bombers. Prior to 1993 suicide bombers were a rare phenomenon, and horrifying because of their rarity. It was a symptom of a people in despair, with so little left that a few were driven to use the only weapon they had left — their bodies. The authors’ theory is that suicide bombers are reacting to the military occupation of their countries or those to which they have some affiliation. For many of us that would seem fairly obvious and reasonable. It is the language in which they couch this theory that jars. ‘Terrorists’ are always fighting against ‘democracies’. Democracies’ actions and reasons are always right. Having decided that military occupation is responsible for the vast increase in suicide terrorism, they do not suggest that the US should stop interfering with, invading or occupying other countries. No. The occupations should be ‘outsourced’. In future the US should attack a country from outside, whether from bases in neighbouring countries, from aircraft carriers, by using drones armed with Hellfire missiles, or by controlling puppet governments, who become the targets of the next generation of suicide bombers. Outsource, but don’t stop waging war.

Cost of Conflict in the Middle East
Strategic Foresight Group 2009

For anyone who wants to understand what conflict can do to a region, this comprehensive report by the Strategic Foresight Group is worth studying. Whether the costs are economic, environmental or social, the figures and graphs make it easy to see how conflict touches every area of life.

The chapter on Economic Loss demonstrates not just how various countries’ productivity has fallen or is struggling to improve during or after conflict, it also shows by how much they would have improved without the conflict. For instance — Iraq’s projected GDP for 2010 is $59 billion. Without the past conflict that could have been $297 billion.

Among the environmental costs — of the Iran/Iraq palm trees (20% of the world total) 80% have been lost to war and water loss. Among the damage to children — more than 10% of Palestinian children have witnessed the killing of a teacher in school. Israel lives in fear of terrorist attacks and has suffered economically and socially from the lack of a peace agreement.

The final sections of the study look at the benefits that peace could bring to a conflict-ridden area, and the result is a wonderful resource of facts for those campaigning for peace.

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)