

Peace protesters fly to Iraq

by Richard Hindes

You all know what all those peacenik types are like. A bunch of middle-class, white, lentil-eating, bleeding-heart liberals who occasionally go for marches in London and return having placated their conscience for the year, right? Wrong! There is a vibrant and growing section of the anti-war movement that takes its protests to the very heart of the matter.

With the belligerent rhetoric of the Bush Administration towards Iraq increasing seemingly every day a small number of activists, mainly from America, have made their way to the country. Their hope is to stand in solidarity with the Iraqi people and where possible to protect those facilities (such as water purification plants) vital to daily life for the population of the country. They also hope to convey the truth about what is happening in the country to people in the West, as Ramzi Kysia, a member of one of the teams explains, "We're here to tell the stories of the Iraqi people; to put our lives on the line to stop this war."

As Ramzi makes clear, their presence in the country has nothing to do with supporting Saddam Hussein or his regime: "Some accuse us of being 'fools' or 'apologists' for the Iraqi government. We don't often have the opportunity

to speak with officials here, but when we do we always raise concerns about prisons, extra judicial killings, and state-directed violence... if it strikes some as hypocritical for us to be here as pacifists, I can understand that. But it strikes me as much more hypocritical to speak out against a foreign government for killing innocents - while facilitating the killing of countless more by our own government through our silence and our tax dollars. We apologize for no one but ourselves."

The initiative has been set up by Voices in the Wilderness a group that is more than familiar with the effects of US/UK policy towards Iraq. Since March 1996 they have broken the sanctions regime, which according to UNICEF figures resulted in the death of half a million children between 1991 and 1998 (<http://www.casi.org.uk>), by delivering medicine and food to the Iraqi people. This is a violation of British and American law and the bulk of the organisations activists who come from those countries could be arrested for their action.

Similarly direct tactics have been used by activists opposed to the Israeli occupation of territories captured during the 1967 War. The International Solidarity Movement (ISM) is "a movement of Palestinian and International activists using non-violent direct actions to stand up to

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the Israeli occupation and help in the Palestinian struggle for freedom." They take part in a wide variety of action including protests, helping rebuild homes demolished by the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) and taking food and medicine to those in besieged Palestinian towns. Such actions often see them coming up against the IDF, though they maintain a commitment to non-violence.

These types of actions are in the great tradition of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, but are carried out not by great men and women, but by normal people who can no longer stand by and allow the governments of the world to wage war. Matt Barr, who was supposed to speak at a recent NSPM meeting, is a member of Voices in the Wilderness who has made several trips to Iraq delivering food and medicine, yet he is little older than most of the people at Nottingham University. Anybody could get involved with these movements: trade unionists, pacifists, anti-capitalists - even you!

Other News

Anti-war MPs fail to win Commons veto

Thirty two Labour MPs joined Liberal Democrats in voting for an unsuccessful motion that would have forced the Government to consult parliament before any British forces were deployed in Iraq.

America vaccinates for bioterrorism

President Bush has announced plans to vaccinate 500,000 health workers for smallpox in an attempt to protect against a possible terrorist attack.

Trident Ploughshares activists board nuclear sub

by Peter Nelson

Two anti-Trident activists are claiming that they managed to board a nuclear submarine whilst it was docked at the Devonport Royal Naval base in Plymouth. Officials at the base are denying that Petter Joelson (22) from Sweden and Elisa Silvennoinen (19) from Finland actually managed to board the submarine, however, the two did appear at Plymouth magistrates court on Monday 18th November charged with criminal damage to a fence valued at £250. The fence in question was not the perimeter fence of the Devonport Royal Naval base but a small fence protecting HMS Vanguard in its dock.

Petter said "I can't see the logic of a situation where Tony Blair is threatening Iraq with war if they don't grant access to weapons inspectors, when at the same time we were arrested for a peaceful inspection of Britain's illegal weapons of mass destruction." On the morning of the hearing, from 6:30am around 50 peace campaigners, including local supporters, blockaded Camel's Head gate and Albert gate at De-

vonport Royal Navy dockyard, disrupting work at the base. Seven women were arrested and charged with "obstruction of the highway". Five of them locked together by their wrists inside plastic tubing.

Who are Trident Ploughshares ?

Trident Ploughshares is part of the wider Ploughshares movement which seeks to actively disarm weapons of war through direct action. The Ploughshares movement received its widest coverage in the UK when Joanna Wilson, Lotta Kronlid and Andrea Needham caused £1.5m worth of damage to a Hawk jet set to be sent to Indonesia. The action was carried out in the name of East Timor Ploughshares, or 'Seeds of Hope'.

Trident Ploughshares came to the attention of the media on 1st February 1999 when Rosie James and Rachel Wenham swam to and boarded the Trident nuclear weapon submarine HMS Vengeance, then docked at Barrow-in-Furness. They draped banners, painted slogans and damaged testing equipment on the conning

tower. Numerous actions like this have been carried out in an attempt to disarm the Trident nuclear weapons system, the stated aim of the Trident Ploughshares movement.

Trident Ploughshares is also involved in regular blockades of Faslane Naval Base in Scotland, in protest against the presence of the Trident nuclear weapons there. The next such blockade will be held on 22nd of April 2003 and students from Nottingham University are planning to be among those who attend.

Nottingham Students Peace Movement

Interested in campaigning for peace?

For details of how to get involved with all future events, including the upcoming blockade of Faslane, get in touch:

student_peace@hotmail.com

FOCUS ON AFGHANISTAN: Has war brought peace?

by Andy Robinson

The so-called "liberation" of Kabul was ailed at the time as bringing peace and delivering a "normal life" to Afghans. Behind this view lies the claim that it is possible for war to bring peace – that an occupying power can impose peace on hostile subjects. This absurd view, falsified so dramatically in Vietnam, Somalia, the West Bank, and Afghanistan in the 1980s, is once again being starkly exposed by events in Afghanistan.

A recent report in Time magazine suggested that Afghanistan may be "slipping out of America's control" (18-11-02). Taliban supporters and disaffected locals continue to wage a guerrilla war against American forces. American forward bases come under mortar fire about three times a week. Roads are mined and helicopters attacked. The Taliban have re-established councils in some regions of Afghanistan, relying on locals to report U.S. troop movements, to hide weapons and smuggle supplies. Taliban attackers disappear into the local terrain and are rarely caught. With America now on the defensive, officials are giving up on the illusion that they can "pacify" the country and leave quickly. American troops lack con-

trol outside Kabul.

Eastern Afghanistan remains a war-zone. American planes regularly carry out aerial bombardments and other attacks, some of them apparently directed against civilians. There are a number of cases of planes bombing villages in Taliban-controlled areas, long after the capture of Kabul. 5000 civilians have been killed and many more forced into refugee camps in operations against Taliban and al-Qaeda forces. In addition, American troops often stage intrusive raids and harass villagers. Suspected Taliban are at risk of deportation to Camp X-Ray. Also, evidence is emerging of American complicity in war crimes. A recent documentary revealed evidence of the presence of U.S. troops when an Afghan warlord's army murdered thousands of prisoners-of-war. The prisoners were transported in packed crates, and the few survivors were shot on arrival. There may be other atrocities occurring which have not yet been exposed. During the Vietnam War, America committed massive atrocities but these were only uncovered later.

The brutality of American policy is pushing Afghans into the arms of America's enemies. "No one ever forgets that American soldiers

came into their house and trawled through their women's clothing", comments pro-Taliban moderate Mullah Mohammed Khaksar. "Nor do they forgive. Doesn't the U.S. realise that with every one of these operations, their enemy is not decreasing, but increasing with fresh, embittered new recruits?". Some of America's Afghan allies have turned against America, selling weapons to the Taliban or even shelling American bases. Many warlords are brutal fundamentalists almost as draconian as the Taliban. In most areas of Afghanistan, women are still required to cover their faces. Also, in Pakistan, fundamentalists made enormous headway in recent elections, mainly in areas near Afghanistan. BBC TV reports suggested that this was due to the unpopularity of the "war on terrorism" rather than because voters want an Islamic state. There is also growing evidence that al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders are running the Afghan war from Karachi in Pakistan, presumably with local support. Weapons and supplies are smuggled across the border into Afghanistan. CIA reports confirm that the danger of al-Qaeda attacks has increased, not declined, since the invasion of Afghanistan and that al-Qaeda's networks are mainly intact.

Imperialist war does not bring peace. It brings ongoing war, destruction and devastation. Those who want a permanently peaceful world should look away from the U.S. and its war-mongering allies and towards struggles against these powers and their agenda.

WHAT THE HELL IS IT ANYWAY?: The UN Security Council

by Richard Hindes

The recent US war drive and the Bush Administration's move to garner UN support for their assault on Iraq has seen the UN Security Council and its machinations become a regular fixture of the headlines and a critical issue for those concerned about current trends in international relations. However, how much do people actually know about what the Security Council is and how it works? Probably less than they realise. Hopefully the following will go some way to rectify that state of affairs.

The UN Security Council is a permanent organ of the United Nations established under the UN Charter, with "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security" and authority to "investigate any dispute, or any situation which might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute." Under Chapters Six and Seven (Articles 33-51) of the Charter the Council can order the use of a spectrum of actions to end a threat to peace which range from inquiry, mediation and conciliation to full or partial interruption of communications, economic sanctions (used against, among others, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Serbia and South Africa) and military action (as in the case of the 1991 Gulf War).

The Council consists of 15 members, 5 of which are permanent. The permanent positions are held by China, France, Russia, the UK and the US. Five of the non-permanent positions are rotated every year, with Colombia, Ireland, Mauritius, Norway and Singapore all being replaced on January 1st, 2003. Bulgaria, Cameroon, Guinea, Mexico and Syria fill the remaining positions. The presidency of the Council is rotated monthly, based on the alphabetical listing of members in English.

The Council is organised so that it can function continuously and a representative of each member must be present at all times at United Nations Headquarters, located in New York. Non-member states may participate in discussions with the Council if the Council considers that that country's interests are affected, though they cannot vote. When disputes are considered by the Council both members and non-members are invited to participate, but without a vote. The conditions for participation by a non-member state are set by the Council.

Votes on procedural matters require a majority of 9 members. However votes on substantive actions (including decisions on whether or not matters are procedural) require that the majority include all permanent members, this gives each a veto. Interestingly non-attendance or abstention during key votes by permanent members does not constitute a veto, thus allowing countries to disassociate themselves from Council action without obstructing it. This was the response of the USSR during a vote on the Korean War.

There is currently some pressure for the Council to be reformed. Such reform would not be without precedent: originally there were only 6 non-permanent members of the Council, though this number was later increased. Japan and Germany would like to become permanent members (a position which would reflect their economic power), but much of the developing world opposes this and would prefer to be represented within the permanent members. Quite where this debate and the various proposals put forward in response to it will lead is, for the time being at least, unclear.

Book Review

by Ian Childs

Iraq Under Siege - The deadly impact of Sanctions and War

edited by Anthony Arnove

Iraq Under Siege is a collection of articles detailing the effect that the sanctions regime imposed on Iraq has had on the people who live there. With contributors including Noam Chomsky, John Pilger and Voices in the Wilderness, Iraq under Siege acts as an indispensable tool for researching the arguments against the foreign policy which the US and its allies have pursued towards Iraq over the past 12 years.

Iraq under Siege is one of a growing number of books that are available through the Peace Library, which is comprised of books owned by Nottingham Students Peace Movement and its members. The Peace Library is simply a list of books, along with the name and contact details for the book's owner. To borrow a book from the Library all you have to do is contact the owner and try to persuade them to let you have it. The intention is to provide a useful resource for people looking to expand their knowledge of the issues surrounding war and conflict in general.

Further research

www.iraqpeaceteam.org - Iraq Peace Team
www.freepalestinecampaign.org - International Solidarity Movement
www.viwuk.freereserve.co.uk - Voices in the Wilderness
www.tridentploughshares.org - Trident Ploughshares
www.indymedia.org.uk - Indymedia UK
www.rawa.org - Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan
www.un.org - United Nations