

regime, to allow the implementation of the government's programs. But this tactic has borne no success whatsoever. If any progress is made it has been due to irresistible pressure of millions of people. Any essential step towards the realization of civic society is also possible only if the same force is relied upon and has been utilized consciously. Expecting an agreement on realization of civic society with the forces responsible for horrific crimes against Iranian people and progressive forces is nothing but an illusion. In the last 20 years, these have not only contributed to the numerous crimes of the regime but they have also acquired huge windfalls by misappropriating their powers. They have said clearly that they will tolerate the government of Mr. Khatami just up to the point that the basis of system of dictatorship is left untouched.

Nevertheless, in past two years the

progressive movement for democracy in Iran has learned important lessons. Practical unity of progressive and democratic forces, integration and organization, and efforts to establish an anti-dictatorship united front to fight the united reactionary front are now the only ways forward.

Of course the clashes within and around the ruling circles regarding the future trend of political and economic development of Iran, inside and around the government, should not be ignored. On the contrary, the forces fighting for liberty, political development and social justice should be extended as far as possible.

In the final analysis, Iranian people will determine the future. Given the existing situation, the most urgent tasks facing Iranian democratic forces are: to intensify the struggle against those defending dictatorship, exposing their ugly and anti-people nature,

and at the same time mobilization and organization of the masses to carry on and expand their own independent struggle.

To this end international solidarity is of utmost importance. International pressure is an important weapon to force Iranian clerical regime to respect internationally accepted norms and conventions. Mr Cook should be reminded that his ethical foreign policy means nothing if the UK normalizes its trade and diplomatic relations with the regime in Tehran without any clear undertaking by the regime in Tehran to fundamentally changes its treatment of those advocating meaningful change and reform in Iran.

By Navid Shomali
Committee for Defense of the Iranian
People's Rights- (CODIR)
B.M. CODIR, London, WC1N 3XX.

TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS UNION SUPPORTS TUCND IN THE STRUGGLE FOR PEACE AND FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Bill Morris, General Secretary
Transport House
Palace St
London SW1E 5JD

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TUCND NEWS

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MAJOR MOVES AGAINST PEACE BY THE US GOVERNMENT

Two United States has done two things recently which represent a big step backwards for peace in the world. They have begun moves to develop a sophisticated Anti-Ballistic Missile system, which breaks treaties drawn up with the former Soviet Union and the Senate have refused to ratify the vitally important Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Partly in response to such moves and the increasingly belligerent nature of the US, the Russian Parliament has refused to ratify the second Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START II), which committed the then two superpowers to reducing the numbers of nuclear weapons they held.

In the US the congress is dominated by the Democratic Party and the President is a Democrat. The Senate however, is dominated by the Republican party who are becoming increasingly marginalised within US politics. Some analysts believe they are becoming as irrelevant to US politics and the conservative Party have become in Britain. Desperate to regain some form of political initiative they have pressed a number of far right measures, the CTBT issue being one of them.

The US and the Soviet Union agreed only to develop an extremely limited form of ABM system in order to slow down the nuclear arms race and reduce the risk of deteriorating into a nuclear war. One of the

factors associated with this was the huge costs involved in developing such systems.

The US are, however, now developing the technology to shoot down missiles before they reach the US but deploying a system would require either considerable modification of the existing treaty or throwing it out altogether. There are also treaties which limit the type of military equipment which can be put into space, which will also be broken. Any effective ABM system would require the use of Satellites to track incoming missiles.

The argument used to push this measure through is that there is now a threat from missile attack by North Korea. However, the proposals are to initially deploy something like 20 missiles in Alaska, which would give them the theoretical ability to shoot down five incoming missiles. This only really makes sense if the US is to go on to develop a much larger and more sophisticated system in the long term future. So the programme they propose involves doing away with the treaty altogether in the long term, a huge expenditure and a substantial escalation of the use of space for military purposes. This is an extremely dangerous escalation.

It is also unlikely to produce a credible method of screening the US from what they see as a possible attack, since the system could protect them from a limited attack from

a particular type of attack. To overcome it would mean developing a different type of missile. This move looks very much more like it has been developed for domestic political considerations rather than as any serious attempt to over a hypothetical attack.

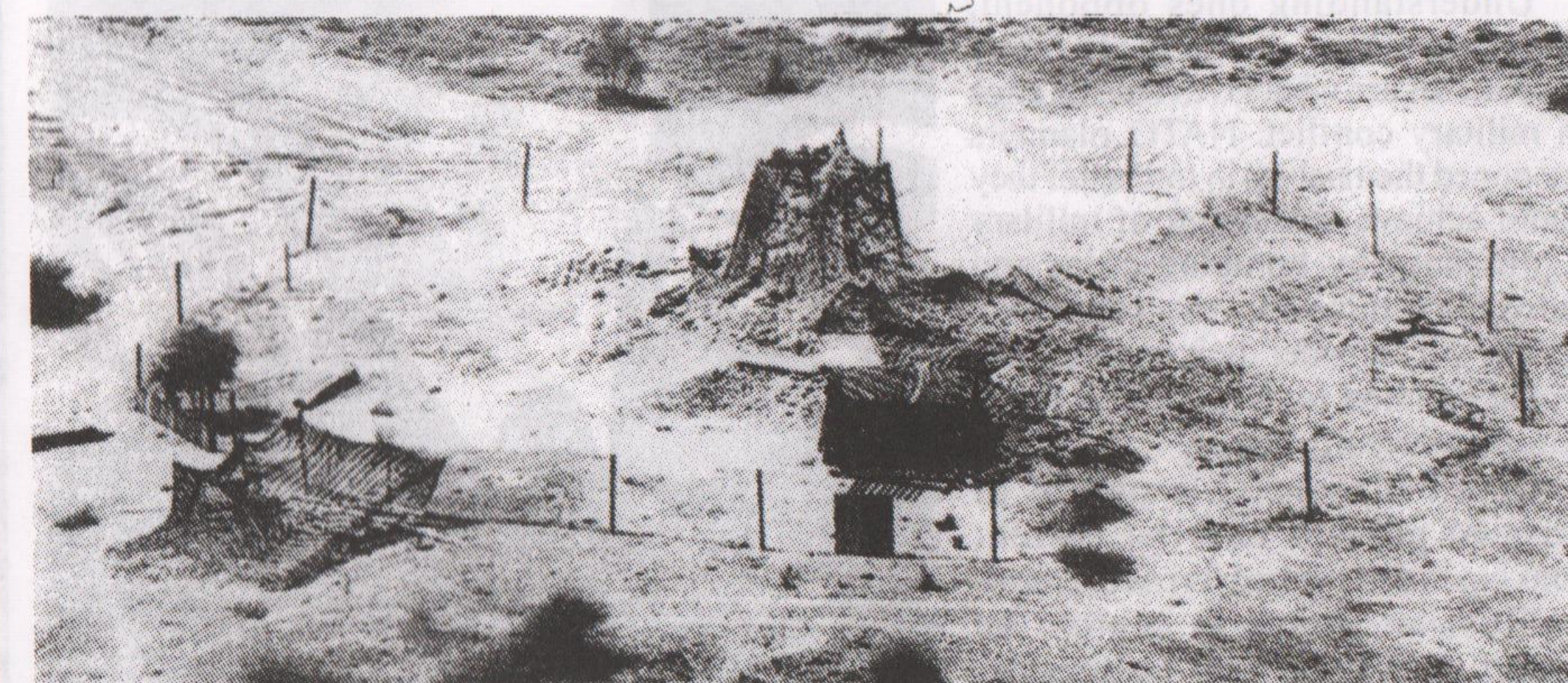
The cost of developing and maintaining such a system would be many times the Gross Domestic product of North Korea.

The failure to ratify the CTBT is a much more serious move. So serious in fact that prior to this vote Tony Blair, Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schroder all wrote to the US government urging them to vote then other way.

The CTBT requires governments not to detonate nuclear explosions to test nuclear warheads. The treaty was part of attempts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to other states. The lack of enthusiasm for the treaty by the former governments in France and in Britain considerably weakened its strength and was the reason why India refused to sign it. They said this specifically. Undermining this treaty also, therefore undermines the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) which could mean we see a large number of states drawn into developing nuclear weapons.

An important factor which these moves have also introduced is that the US is now no longer trusted. There is now a general and growing feeling that a treaty with the US government now means as little as the treaties drawn up in the 19th century between the US government and the native American Indian populations. There was, for instance a firm pledge from the US prior to the unification of Germany, that NATO would not be expanded, which was subsequently ignored and a further commitment prior to Kosovo that NATO would be used only in a defensive role, which has been reneged upon.

The US has tested more bombs than much of the rest of the world put together and therefore have the largest pool of data. Not ratifying the CTBT indicates that they want information for new types of nuclear warheads. This is clearly what some of these Republican politicians have in mind and it is



India's test site after last years nuclear explosions. They said a major reason for making nuclear weapons was the failure of the west to take disarmament seriously

Campaigning for Peace and for Nuclear Disarmament

very very dangerous.
There are a number of things which can be done by Britain to hinder this deterioration. These could include a

significant initiative on nuclear disarmament, steps to insure that NATO was not used as a vehicle for military aggression and a further one would be to promote nuclear

disarmament in a meaningful and constructive way instead of systematically obstructing the process, as has been traditionally the case for British governments.

NATO'S FAILURE IN KOSOVO

(The author wished to remain anonymous)

**He's not such a bad chap
muttered Harry to Jack
as they logged up to Arras
with Rifle and Pack
But he did for them both with his plan
of attack**

This section of a poem, called The General, by the WWI poet Siegfried Sassoon 'summed up the bumbling incompetence of much of the military planners who afflicted the British army in that war. On the whole, things are different now with Britain having some of the brightest military planners amongst its ranks. But these weren't the ones responsible for the war in Kosovo. Instead we had the swaggering arrogance so reminiscent of those WWI butchers.

There are many senses in which the way wars are fought is a reflection of the politics and mindset of those responsible for generating them. Military power reflects the society which creates it. It is also the way in which wars are lost and it is the way massive tensions are created which guarantee future wars. The way WW2 was derivative of peace concluded after WW1 is the best know of such cases.

Wesley Clarke and Michael Jackson strutted about in front of cameras, demonstrating arrogance before the populations of the countries who sponsored this aggression, in ways which were clearly intended to humiliate the Yugoslav regime. Milosovich is not a nice person. He kills people when they get in the way of this political ambitions - but so too have the governments of the NATO countries.

Having failed, as is now very clear indeed, to make any serious impact on the Yugoslav military NATO bombed civilians in Yugoslav cities. Some of those who stood trial after WW2 were also accused of this.

Wesley Clarke and Jackson also clearly misjudged both scale of and the impact they were having upon, the forces ranged against them. NATO estimates, for instance, of the troops and equipment they faced in Kosovo came to roughly 60% of what they noted as the withdrawal took place. Which means NATO would have also underestimated the force they needed to defeat them. General McCarthur made the same mistake in Korea and brought his army to the very brink of defeat as a result, and many thousands of young men died as a result. Montgomery didn't, which was why he was successful. Generals have a responsibility to use their men wisely and so a miscalculation of this sort, and on this scale, in warfare is simply unforgivable.

They did this because, like many a bad general in the past, they became bedazzled by their own apparent superiority in equipment. They believed they knew because their technology told them so and they didn't cross check through serious intelligence gathering on the ground. They didn't pause to "think that in the bowls of Christ, they might be wrong" and this too is unforgivable.

They demanded, partly in order to humiliate them, a rapid withdrawal of Yugoslav troops and instructed them which routes they would have to take. By doing that they, in practice, told the opposition which routes they would themselves be taking. By insisting on a rapid withdrawal they committed themselves to using roads to move the bulk of their troops and equipment to enter because they too would have to move quickly, which left them vulnerable to attack and serious disruption. It would have been possible, under these circumstances, for the Yugoslav military to trap the incoming army, strung out along the main roads, and cut it to pieces. And they could have done this with relatively small numbers.

During WW2 there were a number of occasions on the Eastern Front when Germany dominated the air. The strategy developed by the Russians for fighting under these conditions depended largely on getting very close to the enemy, making it difficult for them to use this air superiority. They referred to this as hanging on the enemy's belt. It is likely that not so many of the troops who made up the NATO forces would have had the stomach for this type of warfare and clear that public opinion in the US and many of the other European countries would have rebelled against it. The reaction of the public in the US when three of their soldiers were taken prisoner at the beginning of the hostilities clearly demonstrates what would have happened.

The Yugoslav's in contrast, studied what faced them and worked out ways to cope with it. They calculated how long between using their own artillery and NATO planes appearing to bomb them, and so made sure they moved their equipment out of the way well before the bombers showed up. They painted tanks on the road so NATO scored numerous direct hits on bits of painted road and claimed thousands of tanks destroyed. The Yugoslav's took unexploded bombs and missiles to pieces, worked out how they worked and worked-out ways of deflecting them. So piles of tyres were put beside some of the sites they wanted to protect which meant a number of multi-million pound missiles blew up piles of old burning tyres.

Understanding ones opponent, studying his blindspots and weaknesses are what gives one the edge in military conflict. NATO planners cucooned themselves in the belief they could achieve something of military significance by bombing cities and failed to do this while the Yugoslav's clearly did consider their enemy. That would counted for a great deal had a ground war really begun.

Given the unstable nature of Russian politics and the current thinking in their armed forces the move by Russian troops to snatch the airport in Pristina was predictable. NATO planners deliberately upped the bombing of Belgrade while the

Russian negotiators were there, humiliating them in the eyes of the Russian public. Under such circumstances it is entirely understandable the Russian military would retaliate to make fools out of messieurs Wesley-Clarke and Jackson. That they didn't predict this as a possibility, and then made themselves look foolish in dealing with the situation, demonstrates that it would probably have been best not to allow either of them off the parade ground, where strutting and shouting is sometimes seen as appropriate.

Apparently, Wesley-Clarke was want to send troops to attack these Russians. To describe this as absolutely astonishing would be an understatement. Also astonishing is that he was, apparently, overruled in this by his subordinate, Jackson, probably because it would more than likely have been British troops he would be sending in to do it. Did he actually believe the Yugoslav troops in the area would have stood idly by and watched? So Wesley-Clarke fails to predict the Russian move, then grossly overreacts and risks changing the whole nature of the conflict in the process, into a politically uncontrollable bloodbath.

What drove NATO military planning in that conflict were political considerations, not military ones, principally in Downing Street and in the US. War may well be "an extension of politics by other means" but this was bad, vicious and poorly defined politics and that is why Britain bombed civilians when they failed militarily.

These considerations had little or nothing to do with Milosovich. There was a desire within NATO to have a war, so that it could be moved from a defensive structure to an aggressive military force. To some extent it was also seen as a way of drawing some aspects of the European political structures together, bonding foreign and defense policies across Europe.

This means they will do it again and it means sooner or latter NATO will drag itself into a war in which it will fail. Disregarding the humanitarian disaster this created, it is clear NATO is not capable of conducting the type of aggressive military war which it now



Gen Wesley-Clarke - strutting, arrogant, inept

ISRAEL'S NUCLEAR WHISTLEBLOWER STILL IN PRISON

Mordachia Vanunu had worked in the secret Dimona nuclear plant in Israel, which was set up to provide material for Israel's nuclear weapons programme. In 1987, some time after leaving the work, he released information to the press in Britain detailing the extent of Israel's nuclear weapons programme.

There had been rumours for some considerable time that Israel had a nuclear weapons programme but the scale of it and the extent to which it had progressed shocked a number of observers. The Dimona plant doesn't look that large from the surface, but what Mr Vanunu revealed was that it comprises a very large underground complex with large scale plant and large numbers of workers.

Israel also cooperated with a number of other rightwing regimes, such as the Apartheid regime in South Africa in their nuclear programme. South Africa are known to have concentrated a great deal of energy in developing radiation enhanced devices, otherwise known as Neutron Bombs. The idea behind these is that they kill everything within range, but don't destroy property. With these the affected area can then be re-inhabited in a relatively short period of time. South Africa and Israel are known to have shared information from underground nuclear tests.

Since the United States subsidises the Israeli regime to the tune of billions of dollars a year, and they made no move to restrict

Israel's programme following the revelations, it must be assumed they both knew about and supported Israel's efforts. It is probably they also directly supplied information and data to support the programme. The US have, for instance, cooperated in their programme to develop a long range missile which would be capable of carrying a nuclear warhead.

Britain, during the Thatcher years, also gave South Africa direct support in their efforts to develop a bomb. South Africa built a 'civilian' nuclear power station, which was used to provide the handling facilities, the scientific know how and the nuclear material for the development of their bomb. From the information he gave to the press it has been possible to estimate that Israel has manufactured about 150 nuclear warheads, or at least has had the capacity to produce the nuclear material for that number and has a handling facility capable of dealing with that volume of material.

The Israeli security forces, Mosad, then kidnapped Mr Vanunu. He was persuaded by a female Mosad agent to leave Britain and go to Italy where he was abducted back to Israel. There is much to suggest that the British authorities colluded in this. The fact he was persuaded to go to Italy suggests the British authorities didn't want the embarrassment of having him kidnapped here.

Israel put him on trial for Treason and, despite a vigorous campaign to free him, gave him 18 years in prison. This was done, not

because they wanted to prevent information getting out about the programme and not because they felt he had any technical information which could be used by another state. They did this as a warning to others within their system who, like Vanunu, may be appalled at what they are doing. Mr Vanunu has now spent over eleven and a half years in solitary confinement. The Israeli state argued that he was a security threat. He was released in the general prison population last year, but not before he began suffering psychologically.

Israel's nuclear weapons programme represents a serious threat to peace in the Middle East. Mr Vanunu not only seriously embarrassed Israel, he has also embarrassed the USA and others who have colluded in this programme. In doing so he has done a great deal to help the disarmament process and deserves our support because of this.

Please contact the
Free Vanunu Campaign
185 Old Kent Rd
London
SE1 4AG
0171 378 9324

And you can write to the Israeli Minister of Justice urging him to consider releasing Mr Vanunu. His address is: -

Yossi Beillin
29 Salah
A(c)Din Street
Jerusalem 91010
Fax no 00972 2628 8618

ANGOLA - A HUMANITARIAN DISASTER IGNORED

War has been an ever present feature of Angola ever since the fall of the Portuguese colony in 1973. Initially sponsored by the "West" to undermine a Marxist Government they didn't like, Jonas Savimbi's group UNITA has been sporadically waging a guerilla war against the elected government ever since. In a peace deal brokered by the UN in 1994 Savimbi's forces, and those of the government were to be merged into a single army and a large proportion disarmed and demobilized. Artillery and other heavy weapons were to be handed into the UN at collection points. An election took place where the parties of both sides competed for places in a new government. These were judged to be free and fair by the UN and Savimbi lost heavily. Despite repeated provocation's Savimbi's forces, still covertly supported by the west, the government tried hard to keep as close as possible to the letter of the agreement. Savimbi didn't. He refused to accept the election result and restarted his war against the government.

There followed a series of attempts by the UN to persuade him to adhere to the peace deal. He ignored some of the points he had signed up to. Some he changed his mind over. Others he signed up to and then simply reneged on them. He consistently lied about,

undermined or reneged on every single aspect of every single agreement he has signed up to. And yet the UN has consistently demanded of the Angolan Government that they involve him in the government and demanded they continue to negotiate with him. The UN has made this a condition of UN support for the government and for not obstructing the running of its finances.

During the cold war, because Angola had a Marxist government, the United States supplied Savimbi with weapons and support. The South African Apartheid regime actually invaded in support of Savimbi and made a concerted attempt to annex a section of the country. At that point the Angolan government appealed for help from Cuba who responded by sending planes and troops to support them. The South Africans were defeated and beaten back but countries such as Britain and the United States began a process of putting immense pressure on Angola, through the UN and through financial institutions. There are many within the US who will never forgive Angola for seeking help from Cuba or for beating off the South Africans.

Despite the end of the Cold War and despite sanctions imposed by the United Nations, Savimbi continues to be allowed to

buy weapons in the west and receive covert help from the western governments. The British Government have given tacit support despite its public pronouncements. His operation is massive. He has destroyed the country's the country's agricultural base with the systematic use of anti-personnel mines and he still has access to large scale supplies of artillery ammunition. This requires vast sums of money, but this doesn't appear to be a problem to Mr. Savimbi. Prior to the 1994 agreement the war was described by the UN as the worst in the world. With something like 1,000 people dying a week and the current phase appear to be on a par with this period. Nearly 2 million people have been displaced and are now living as refugees while others live in constant fear of being bombed, mined or attacked by troops.

Savimbi used the 1994 agreement and the cessation of hostilities to build up reserves of equipment and escalated the conflict in April 1998 to a full blown war. This has been the case ever since. Huge areas of land have been mined. Villages have been raided and the populations butchered regardless of age or gender. The population in the countryside flow into the cities as refugees and are then besieged by Savimbi's artillery. He has managed to retain large numbers of

South African built G5 and G6 155mm howitzers, which have a very long range. He also has a range of 88mm howitzers and a number of smaller guns. Shells for the 155mm guns cost in excess of 1,000 each but he appear to have a steady and substantial supply of them. Poor rural populations are particularly vulnerable to mines because of their dependence on draft animals.

A new recent development has been that Savimbi has been able to get hold of new sophisticated weapons, including Ukrainian built tanks and fighter-bombers. The tanks cost in the region of 1 million a piece.

The UN has banned the sale of weapons to Savimbi, has banned the trade in gem stones mined by Savimbi or illegally logged hardwoods and has banned banks from holding accounts on his behalf. None of this has been effectively implemented. For instance up to relatively recently UNITA had an office in London to aid the sale of gems and to organize weapons sales. It was only after persistent protests, including pickets outside the office, that the government asked them to move, but there is no indication if they are still trading in Britain.

The Angolan Government initially underestimated the strength of the forces at Savimbi's disposal and lost a considerable amount of ground as a result. In Huambo, a town in the central region of Angola 120,000 refugees flooded in in the early part of 1999. In the country as a whole 780,000 people fled UNITA in this period. And on top of this the country has 1.5 million refugees still displaced from the previous years fighting. Angola now has the highest per-capita proportion of people with one or more limbs blown off by mines laid as part of the terror campaign to encourage refugees and so wreck the economy.

Savimbi could have been stopped long ago, if countries such as our own took the implementation of the UN resolutions seriously. An indication of how effective the monitoring and intelligence gathering structures of western governments can be seen from the way Turkey managed to kidnap the leader of the Kurdish separatists in Kenya. The US has been reasonably successful in tracing the money laundered by drug producers. Oil distribution from Iraq has been monitored and seriously restricted. During the miners strike information on where the NUM had placed its funds was clearly made available to lawyers acting on behalf of the coal industry. If all this is available then it is clear that large scale arms deals can be tracked and prevented. But no such restrictions appear to impede Savimbi. His reps are regular attenders at international arms fairs while his principal source of income is the sale of diamonds for which Britain is the international center.

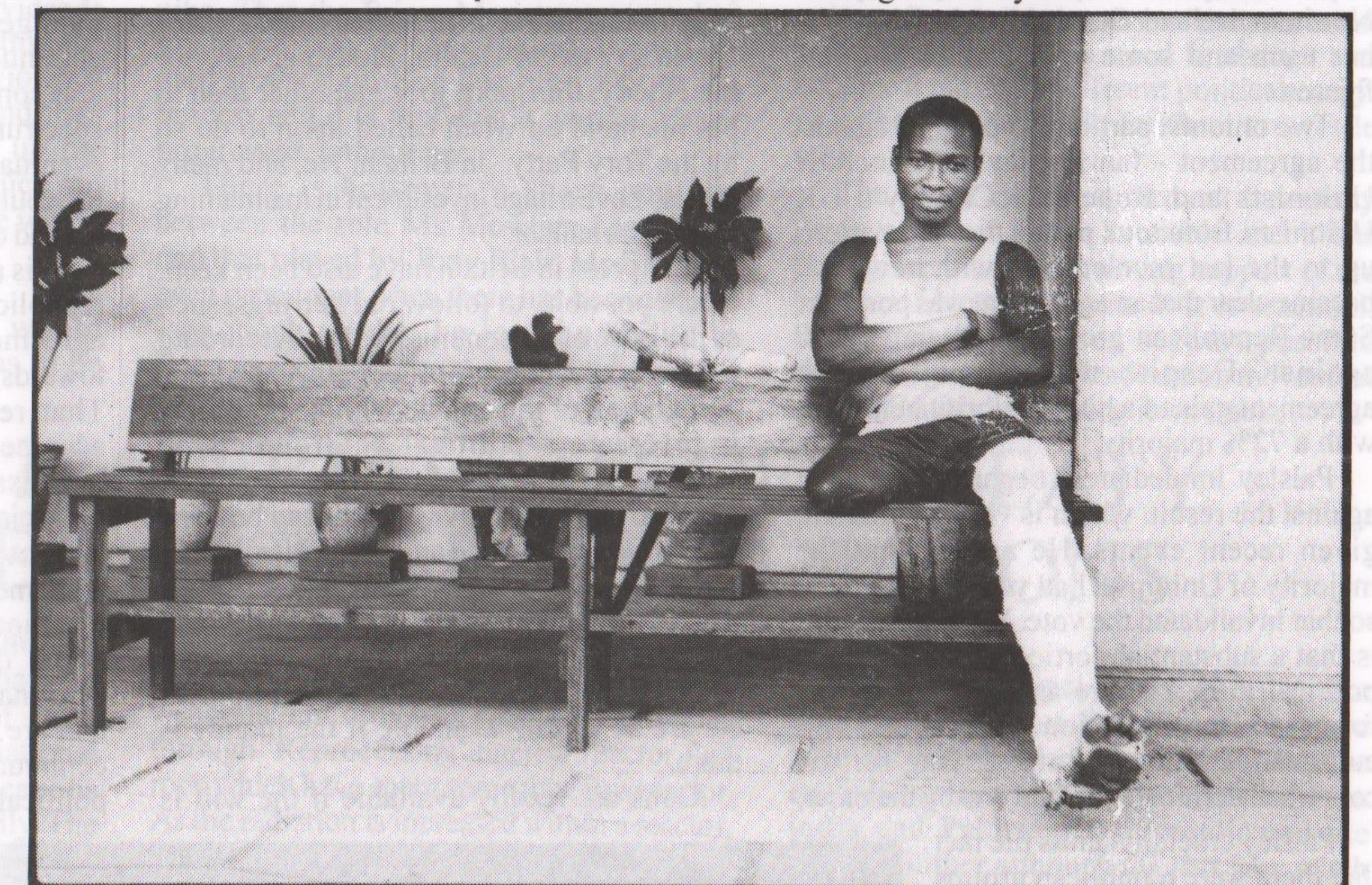
The fact that there has been little or no effort on behalf of the British Government to curtail UNITA in practice means our

government have given him tacit support. His base has been in London, which means that the British Government will have had detailed information on how UNITA were raising the funds to buy arms, on where they are getting them from and how they are shipping them to their base. The government could do that without anyone leaving their offices in GCHQ in Cheltenham.

The fact that the Foreign Office asked the Home Office to have UNITA's office in London closed down, but the Home Office initially refused to do so underlines the depth of this British Government support.

Its clear Britain could cripple Savimbi's war fighting capacity and are in a position to offer far more support to the Angolan Government. It is also clear they will only do so when pressure is put on them to do so by the labour movement.

In November 199 the government appeared to be on the road to winning this war, but at a terrible cost and with terrible sacrifice. This was unnecessary, had they had the support they deserved and which was agreed to by our Government.



WEST LAUNCHES PHONY PEACE MOVEMENT FOR ANGOLA

Last summer the British media gave extensive coverage to the apparent emergence of a 'peace movement' in Angola. But a bit of poking about revealed it as a phony.

More prime time and space was given this than had previously been given to the whole of the war in Angola. Within this a great deal of emphasis was placed on allegations that the Angolan government is itself fundamentally corrupt and inefficient. The conclusion this contained was that both sides in the war are equally to blame for the conflict and that they are equally guilty of atrocities. This line has been pushed for some time by the US government and a number of others.

The logical consequence has been to suggest that nothing can be done about the situation in Britain and, since they are all corrupt, neither side deserves our support. This is very wrong.

There is corruption in Angola and it is a problem. There was corruption in Britain in the second world war. This is what the shortages and stress which comes from war do to a society. That doesn't mean the government has no legitimacy or that it itself is corrupt.

Some of the names associated with this group appear to be false and there is a strong indication that some are people with links to UNITA. Since the 90s there is money behind the group, a number of those associated are what one would term opportunists. One name prominent in their group, for instance, is Raphael Maques, who has spent little of his adult life in Angola and has more of a reputation for self promotion than ethical conviction.

A point made repeatedly by this group has been that Angolan problems should be solved by Angolans. There is a bit of a

contradiction here in that the group hasn't made any effort to develop inside Angola but has tried to develop a profile in the media in Italy, the Netherlands and in Britain. Not unsurprisingly those countries are key to the covert supply of materials to UNITA.

While it would be possible to establish a base for the group in the Government held towns in Angola - other groups ardently opposed to the Government have done so, this group hasn't tried. On the other hand anyone trying to voice opposition to Savimbi in UNITA held areas is killed, immediately.

A further point which indicates that this group is an MI6/CIA creation is that what it asks for is wholly unrealistic. Savimbi hasn't kept to a single peace deal or a single promise he has made to the international community.

Its no accident that this group appears just as UNITA begin a major military offensive.

PEACE IN NORTHERN IRELAND REMAINS UNDER THREAT

A major struggle is underway between those who want a peaceful future in Northern Ireland and those who have a vested interest in maintaining instability and conflict. The population there desperately want peace. However, many of the political institutions and political figures have a deeply engrained reliance on sectarianism and violence.

The Good Friday agreement, signed in 1998, was the culmination of 2 years negotiations between all the political parties under the chairmanship of the US Senator, George Mitchell. It was a compromise. As with all compromise every single party to the agreement was dissatisfied with one element or another.

Some were deeply antagonistic, but couldn't be seen to oppose it directly. Keeping the thing on track has been an impressive piece of political skill by the Northern Ireland Secretary, Mo Mowlam, her team and some of the other political figures.

Two unionist parties campaigned against the agreement - Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionists and Robert McCartney's UK Unionists. Both took part in the negotiations up to the last moment but withdrew as it became clear that an agreement was possible. Some Republican groups also campaigned against. Despite this opposition the agreement gained a huge majority in favour, with a 72% majority.

Paisley immediately began a campaign against the result, which is very significant, given recent events. He argued that the majority of Unionists had voted against and so that invalidated the vote. What this shows is that a substantial portion of the Unionist political infrastructure are opposed to any form of accommodation between the two cultural identities and are striving for the continued domination of the one by the other.

Paisley crucially omits the fact that there were republican groups campaigning against the agreement, claiming that all votes against were cast by Unionists in order to avoid accepting that a majority of Unionists voted for. A very important factor in this agreement, given Northern Ireland's politics, was the fact that those campaigning in favour of the agreement included the bulk of Northern Ireland's political parties and transcended the sectarian divide. This means the election was the first not to be split down that sectarian divide. Also crucially the parties which represented the political views of the major paramilitary organizations, the UDA, the UVF and the IRA campaigned for the same agreement.

What brought them to the negotiating table was the mounting public opposition to the continuing murder campaigns. This was represented in major peace demonstrations. The Trade Union movement in Northern Ireland

were key players in this developing public opposition and were significant in organizing the demonstrations in the early 1990's. Another factor was the way in which some of the paramilitaries were drawn into the political dialogue, particularly with the discussions between Hume and Adams. Yet another was the internationalization of the pressure to find a settlement with the election of Clinton to the US Presidency. All this lead to pressure on the paramilitaries to involve themselves in the process, to cease fires and negotiations - and eventually to the agreement.

By and large those who carried out the violence were in favour of the settlement, as one can see by the very substantial support it gained from paramilitary prisoners in Northern Ireland. But large parts of the political structure have grounded their support in sectarianism. There is little Paisley has to say about Health, Housing, care for the elderly, transport, jobs etc, other than to put his hand up when called upon to do so by the Tory Party in Britain. He, and many others, have a huge investment in maintaining that sectarianism.

The press in Britain have also been keen, where possible, to follow red herrings, such as the issue of de-commissioning. According to the trade unionists we discussed the preparation of this article with, the problem is to create a political environment in Northern Ireland where the gun isn't necessary and the only way that can be done is to overcome sectarianism politically. It's possible now to buy a Klashnikov assault rifle for as little as \$7 in some countries and a grenade for \$2. Heavy infantry weapons - mortars, machine guns, anti-tank equipment etc are as readily available if the money is there.

Guns are readily available if the will is

there for organizations to get them. The only thing which is going to stop their import or their use is if guns are decommissioned from peoples minds - when the political process begins to respond to ordinary peoples aspirations based on mutual respect for cultural, political and constitutional differences.

Trimble's posturing over decommissioning isn't, therefore, about removing a role for guns in Northern Ireland. It's about keeping the media focused on a negative image of the IRA, and in so doing is perpetuating sectarianism. Decommissioning guns from peoples minds is what is important not cutting up bits of metal, which are eminently replaceable.

That environment doesn't exist yet, thanks to a range of factors and a little help from Paisley and his like. Issues such as the changes in the nature of the policing, continued pressure from the public for peace and continued dialogue across the political spectrum will force Trimble back on track eventually. Had he more guts and integrity he would be moving there of his own volition instead of being dragged by political necessity.

It is also very important to make sure the republican community do not allow the anti-agreement forces within it to contribute towards the destabilization of the agreement. That requires a flexibility and political adeptness on the part of those steering the process to make sure the Republican politicians are pressed to making sure they reflect their communities desire the agreement should work. Those who argue that 'not one bullet' should be given up have to be drawn back into the process or marginalised. The only people who can do that are those who represent the republican community and they will do it only if the political process is managed intelligently by

the secretary of state.

It was almost inevitable David Trimble and the Ulster Unionist Party would revert to type as the unity of his party took primacy over the implementation of the agreement. As one journalist put it, giving David Trimble the Nobel Peace Prize is like a man winning the lottery without buying a ticket. He has failed to argue for the agreement because the politics of his party are facing serious difficulties. His party, together with a number of other Unionists parties, are built upon blaming the problems they face on Republican violence. In a period where the Republican paramilitaries are not attacking the authorities there is a great big hole in his party's rationale for existence. The peace process challenges the whole ideology his party is based upon. The reason why the peace process apparently stalled in October 1999 was because Unionist politicians had great difficulty managing the fact that peace has brought to an end their previous rationale for existence.

This experience should have a positive effect upon Republican politicians. A peaceful strategy can clearly bring dividends and it has brought about a crisis within the ranks of their traditional foes. The violence guaranteed their communities a second class status and while the peace opens up the possibility for a political struggle which can make differences for ordinary people within their communities.

The IRA argue that if they decommissioned the Unionists would continue to argue for more weapons to be

handed over or/and find other things to demand of them. A recent censuses in Trimble's party, showed a large minority wouldn't go into power with decommissioning regardless of how many guns the IRA handed in. With Paisley and others clearly arguing the only legitimate voice is that of the Unionist community, for a political system which excludes the Republican community, decommissioning has to be a red herring.

Towards the end of August 99 the media were aiding the traditional view of the situation by concentrating on breaches in the cease fire by the IRA. When the IRA threatened to kill people if they didn't leave Ireland and killed some they accused of being informers, the press made much of it. But, at the same time they ignored the pipe bomb campaign being carried out by one of the Unionist paramilitaries and the equivalent levels of punishment beatings these groups were involved in and yet nothing was said in the press about this.

Unionists were, at the end of August, calling for Margery Mowlem's head on a pike. That the Prime Minister appeared to go some way to appeasing them is a dangerous sign. She has been key to the process and it is probable it wouldn't have progressed without her.

There is however, a sharp contrast between the role Ms Mowlem has played and that played by Tony Blair. Mr Blair has been prominent when there has been success - so much so that he lost the ability to intervene effectively at a time when there

was crisis. There has also been a string of political misjudgments from his office which has cast serious doubt on his political judgement.

"Margery Mowlem is the best Secretary of State we've had for a long time. She's the most courage and the most imagination of them all," is the way trade union officer described her to us. There is now a clear role the Trade Union movement in Britain can play in this process, which is to ensure there is as much support given to the Good Friday agreement as possible and that the process it represents is not derailed.

The press in Britain represented the process as being stalled. This was not the case. There were only two options, continue struggling to develop politics peacefully or revert to violence. Unionists were in crisis because there is no popular support for a return to violence yet sectarianism is the ground base of their politics. As the process progressed they would have to change fundamentally or become marginalised.

Swapping the Secretary of State was an attempt to placate the Unionists, which isn't going to be possible because of their sectarian groundbase. That they need to change and become a radically different political entity, or wither, is something for them to wrestle with.

The Good Friday agreement has many flaws within it, but it is viable and it has been given the overwhelming support of the people of Northern Ireland. It is essential, therefore, that all then support possible should be given by the trade union movement within British to keeping it on track.

FISSILE MATERIAL CUT OFF TREATY STALLED AT THE UNITED NATIONS

Progress towards disarmament through the United Nations has ground to a halt. So many obstacles are placed in front of it and there are so many delays that international politics while developments in weapons technology are moving far more rapidly. The principle countries placing the obstacles and causing the delays are the nuclear weapons states, principally the three western ones, Britain, France and the United States. These are also the three largest exporters of conventional weapons in the world, followed closely by China and by Russia.

The United Nations Charter includes a section committing UN countries to nuclear disarmament and to a process for reducing the manufacture of weapons of mass destruction. The structure which was established to deal with this is the Conference on Disarmament (CD) which is scheduled to take place three times a year. Things were looking up at the beginning of the year when some agreement was reached on what the conference should discuss. This year after two of its three sessions the conference has still failed to agree on what it should debate or how it should do that.

A major initiative which is generally recognized as being very important indeed to the future reduction of nuclear weapons and the prevention of further states acquiring them is referred to the Fissile Material Cut Off Treaty (FMCT). This is an attempt to stop the production of material key to the manufacture of nuclear weapons, such as

Plutonium. There is very little demand indeed for Plutonium, other than to make nuclear weapons. The only way it can be acquired is through 'Reprocessing' nuclear reactor fuel rods which have spent some time in a reactor. As the radiation is increased within a reactor, the Uranium fuel rod changes to become a mixture of Plutonium and Uranium. Reprocessing dissolves the rod in acid, separates the two elements and then removes the acid leaving the metal. Its a very expensive process and produces large amounts of extra low, medium and high level nuclear waste.

The theory behind the FMCT is that if the production of Plutonium can be stopped, then so can the production of nuclear weapons. However, vast resources have been put into creating the ability to make Plutonium in the THORP plant in Britain and, to a much lesser extent, in France. The German and Japanese Governments have large, costly orders for the 'reprocessing' of their nuclear waste. Both countries signed these contracts while they still believed it would be possible to build 'fast breeder' reactors which could have used Plutonium as fuel. However, after many failures and huge expenditures most have come to the conclusion they are not commercially viable and are dangerously unstable. No such reactors now operate and there are no plans to build any others. The stockpiles of unusable 'civilian' Plutonium in Japan and in Germany has itself become politically

sensitive.

The two principal states who produce Plutonium for export, Britain and France are adamant that 'civilian' Plutonium should be excluded from a FMCT. The crisis between India and Pakistan has complicated the process further although the just how much countries such as our own have done to encourage this conflict is unclear. A number of years ago, for instance, the United States blocked the sale of second hand tanks and warships to Pakistan because of their nuclear weapons programme. Britain stepped in and filled the orders, which included 600 Chieftain tanks. Britain has also been keen to sell arms to India. Had the sale of weapons been restricted because of the nuclear weapons programmes it may have been possible to dissuade India and Pakistan from developing them and to work towards a negotiated settlement of their differences. The UN Conference on Disarmament, despite all the hope and enthusiasm developed at the end of the cold war, has sunk into a morass. The FMCT will not re-emerge as a topic for discussion until at the very least, spring of next year.

Last year South Africa and a number of other states made a concerted effort to get the CD going and were demanding real moves towards nuclear disarmament, through this conference. The major obstacles in the way of moving this process forwards are the western permanent members of the Security Council - Britain, France and the US.

**Peace is
the
prize**



BRITAIN AND THE TRAGEDY OF EAST TIMOUR

The current British Government have a policy of not selling weapons to repressive regimes - but it systematically breaks this policy. In fact Britain sells to a number of countries which have such a poor record of abusing human rights that other suppliers won't deal with them.

When, in 1975 the small Portuguese colony of East Timor gained independence, there was a clear decision by the Western powers that they should not be allowed to remain independent. Britain's Labour Government of the time discussed the possibility of an invasion by Indonesia and gave the then Foreign Secretary, David Owen the go ahead for the invasion. Henry Kissinger was actually in Jakarta at the time and it is now clear, encouraged the Suharto regime to invade. They invaded the day Kissinger left.

It looks probable that Owen also encouraged the Australian government to support the invasion, but there little direct evidence that this happened. The CIA has since made it clear why they wanted this. They wanted to avoid the appearance of another small and troublesome, left wing government at the United Nations. Recently released CIA papers covering the period actually say this.

In order to try and retain control Indonesia instituted a system of brutal repression. Over a period of 20 years they killed in the region of 200,000 people, a staggering third of the

population. They 'encouraged' people to leave the island and move to parts of Indonesia. Indonesia also settled large numbers of Indonesians in East Timor in an effort to develop a significant support base on the island.

Throughout this process the west, and especially Britain, has done little or nothing to encourage the government to halt the killing or lift the repression and have done little or nothing to support the independence movement.

The vote on whether to become independent came about as a result of the horror large numbers of people throughout the world felt at what they saw of the killing and repression in East Timor. The move away from far right government in Australian and New Zealand also meant the Indonesians lost valuable allies in the region. Pressure built up within the UN and they eventually brokered an agreement by the Indonesians to hold a referendum.

However, having lost the vote, Indonesia has made sure its army would punish the population for voting against them and have gone on a killing spree, to discourage other peoples in other parts of Indonesia seeking independence. There are no figures about the numbers these people have killed in East Timor during this period.

Indonesia has, over the years, become an important market for British arms. A great deal of pressure was put on the incoming

Labour government in 1997 to withdraw an agreement to sell the Indonesian military Hawk aircraft. Systematic claims were made that these were trainers and did not enhance Indonesia's military capacity yet there is systematic evidence that Hawks were used as ground attack aircraft in East Timor. Britain has also sold vast quantities of other bits of military equipment, from armoured cars to ammunition.

In contrast to the bullish, aggressive demands laid on the Yugoslavian regime before the move against Kosovo, these western governments have done absolutely nothing to put pressure on the Indonesian regime. In the Kosovo debacle economic sanctions were imposed, a bombing campaign against the Yugoslav civilian population was carried out and a full scale invasion planned. Nothing of this order has been proposed in this case.

In fact, while the killing this year in Dilli was at its height, Indonesia was able to send delegates to the arms fair Britain hosts, so they could judge what other military equipment they could buy from Britain.

The people of East Timor will now need your help, if only to make sure they can counter the diplomatic moves to undermine their political standing internationally and their economy. You can offer it by sending donations to -

**TAPOL, 111 Northwood Rd
Thornton Heath, Surrey, CR4 8HW**

SELLING JETS TO INDONESIA - IMPLICATIONS FOR INDUSTRY

Britain sells military equipment to some of the most horrendous regimes in the world. Military sales are both a tool and an aim of this government's foreign policy, just as it was for the previous government. A tool in the sense that it keeps in place regimes who will be sympathetic to Britain's economic interests by giving them the weapons to prevent other regimes from replacing them. An aim in the sense that these sales are lucrative. This process has become so potent that the British economy has become badly distorted, leaving weapons as the only manufacturing product range where Britain has a balance of trade surplus.

This is a very serious situation which now desperately needs to be addressed, but simply saying weapons are bad, doesn't move us forward. The incoming Labour government promised an ethical foreign policy and the sale of the Hawk ground attack aircraft was its first test. It failed miserably to deliver. However, the idea that the export

of weapons is subsidised has now also become fashionable, but its worth having a good look at this because the idea is flawed and suggests a dangerously simplistic solution. The overall subsidy for those in the arms industry is ostensibly 11,000 pounds per worker. This is arrived at largely by taking the cost of the Defence Export Sales Office and dividing it up amongst the number of people employed in the arms industry. But there are a number of factors it doesn't take into account.

Remove a job from mainstream manufacturing and two to three others go too. So the additional cost, of keeping three families on the dole, would be between 17,000 to 25,000 pounds a year. Also the additional cost to the economy overall would be considerably more. The arms industry is very often now the only area within an industry equipped to deal with modern technologies, and processes. The skill base the industry represents is absolutely vital with a considerable impact on other areas of

industry. Losing these skills and these jobs would be devastating both for selected communities and the economy overall.

The figure also could be far more or it could be far less than the 11,000 per job. Shorts in Belfast, for instance, produced civilian as well as military equipment and they have, over the past ten years since Thatcher privatised it, had a government subsidy of about 1 Billion. This isn't included in the figures given as subsidies on arms industry jobs, but trying to attribute a figure from the breakdown of the DESO costs would leave one trying to figure out which of the fitters there was an arms worker or who in the drawing office was working on civilian projects.

The export of weapons allows production runs to be enlarged which reduces the price of each weapons system sold to the British government. For instance in the US the staff hours to make an F16 were roughly 1100 man-hours per aircraft for the first 100. By



With the same support other countries give their aircraft industries this is a viable alternative to building military aircraft

the time they were building their 1,000th aircraft this figure was down to 40,000. Also the proportion of the cost of each aircraft which was for designing the aircraft and of setting up the production facility would be ten times greater if 100 were produced than if 1,000 were produced. One could say we shouldn't be building any such aircraft, but that is a very different set of arguments to arguing that we shouldn't export them.

Another factor which should be taken into account is the fact that weapons deals often facilitate deals on other non military products and gains useful commercial influence.

ANTI TANK SHELLS LINKED TO SERIOUS ILLNESS

Depleted Uranium is now used by Britain and the United States in Armour Piercing shells. While the US Department of Defence and the British MOD have consistently maintained that no risks associated with the use of these shells to anyone but those in the armoured vehicle at the time its hit, there is now a building body of evidence to suggest this is far from the truth.

Experts formerly working for the DoD, associated with the handling of the material have publicised widely their deep concern over the use of this material. Canadian ex-service personnel who took part in the Gulf War have been tested for traces of this highly toxic material and dangerously large amounts have been found still in their bodies. There is also a growing body of thought that argues Gulf War Syndrome is in fact derivative of the large doses of this material which service personnel were exposed to. Several ex-service personnel are linking birth defects in children born of parents, one of whom was exposed to depleted uranium. There is also now large amounts of evidence from Iraq to show significant numbers of children are dying from cancers in the areas where this ammunition was used and that large numbers of very significant birth defects are occurring.

In the case of the Canadian service

personnel they register levels ten times what is regarded as a safe limit, and this is ten years after their exposure to DU. That implies that the dose they were exposed to, ten years ago, was massive.

Depleted Uranium is a hard and extremely dense material. Large amounts of it is produced by the MoD as a by product in the production of Nuclear Weapons. Although it would be horrifically expensive to produce from scratch it is in practice a waste product. Shells made from this material work by driving a rod of DU through the wall of the armour plate. When this happens a dust of DU is scraped off the surface of the shell and this ignites on the inside of the armoured vehicle, burning out the inside of the vehicle and killing everything in it. It is quite effective in doing this but it also leaves the inside of the burnt out vehicle radio active and it vents uranium oxide in the smoke which comes out of the vehicle.

The United States used huge quantities in the Gulf War and fairly large amounts of it in Kosovo. Britain used some in the Gulf but says they didn't use any in Kosovo. What neither side have done is to clean up the material after the conflict or to do anything to warn the population living in these areas of the risks. While the US now

do give some warning to the service personnel handling the material. Britain still maintains there is no risk involved.

There are alternatives to using DU in shells. The problem with these is they are expensive, while both Britain and the US have vast stocks of DU from their nuclear weapons programme. The fact they have a ready supply has led the US to develop weapons which use it freely. Anti armour aircraft, for instance, carry a seven barrel cannon which fires more than 4,000 rounds of DU per minute. So an area is sprayed with these shells rather than being targeted precisely.

It is also rumoured the US uses DU as ballast in some of its cruise missiles. If this is the case the DU will be burned when the missiles strikes its target, distributing the radioactive oxide over a wide area. As the dangers associated with these weapons and as the damage to large tracts of land from their use becomes more and more apparent, there is growing pressure on both the US and on Great Britain to get rid of them. At the moment, however, the British Government continue to deny the hazards and is now even trying to export the ammunition.

TALIBAN'S SCORCHED EARTH

a Threat to Regional Peace

Heavy fighting since late July has brought large scale devastation and misery to northern provinces of Afghanistan which are still controlled by the opposition alliance. Taliban forces have used aerial and artillery bombardment of towns and villages still loyal to opposition forces and have launched a scorched earth campaign into the territory not controlled by Pakistan sponsored fundamentalist units.

The Taliban launched the attack on the northern province of Kunduz with thousands of troops, supported by heavy artillery shelling and air bombardment.

There have been reports that advancing Taliban militia has expelled more than 100,000 people from villages north of Kabul, burning homes and crops.

U.N. officials said they have received first-hand accounts that the Taliban's forces burned entire villages in the Shomali plain

and Panjshir valley. According to eye witnesses troops from the ruling Taliban militia swept through newly captured areas north of the capital of Kabul destroying irrigation canals, wells and orchards. United Nations condemned Taliban's scorched-earth campaign on 1st October.

Taliban officials confirmed that the troops destroyed prime agricultural land and its infrastructure on the Shomali plains to prevent opposition soldiers from using the area to fight the Taliban. They accused the opposition of using the canals as trenches to ambush their soldiers.

"We were forced to destroy irrigation systems and orchards in some places where our soldiers were being targeted and killed," Taliban Agricultural Minister Maulvi Abdul Latif Mansoor told The Associated Press.

The United Nations had criticized the Taliban, saying they were razing prime

agricultural lands on the Shomali plains, some 25 miles north of Kabul.

The United Nations estimates 40,000 people fled to Kabul this summer to escape the fighting on the Shomali Plains north of Kabul. Another 100,000 people fled to opposition territory in the Panjshir Valley, held by opposition forces led by Ahmed Shah Massoud. It is estimated that as many as 20,000 women and children were evicted from their homes last month after the Islamic militia swept across the Shomali plains north of the capital, Kabul. The fertile fields of the Shomali have changed hands many times since the Taliban captured Kabul in 1996, but this was the first time the villages were forcibly cleared of civilians.

Radhika Coomaraswamy, a special U.N. envoy investigating violence against women said recently: "there emerges a systematic pattern of men arrested, a few killed, and

women and children separated and put in buses."

Systematic Abuse of Women

The United Nations human rights investigator harshly criticized Taliban for the widespread, systematic and officially sanctioned abuse of women. Accusing the Taliban's Ministry of Vice and Virtue of deep discrimination against women, Radhika Coomaraswamy, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, called for international pressure to force its dissolution.

"The Ministry of Vice and Virtue is the most misogynist department in the whole world," Coomaraswamy told reporters at the end of a two-week investigation. The ministry has banned women from working and going to school. It forces them to wear the all-encompassing burqa outfit. It demands they travel outside their home only in the company of close male relatives. Women are even forbidden from wearing white socks.

While discrimination against women exists throughout the world, in Afghanistan it is official policy, Coomaraswamy said.

Taliban, A threat against Regional stability

As the Taliban launch a new offensive against opposition forces, the threat which this Islamic regime poses to regional stability has gone unnoticed.

Terrorists fighting the governments of virtually every Central Asian power find shelter with the Taliban. An equally dangerous by-product is the criminal economy supported by the Taliban, which spreads weapons and drugs throughout the region.

Desperate for manpower and moral support, the Taliban have welcomed Islamic militants of diverse nationalities to join them on the front lines. Bin Laden and his brigade may be the best-known since the United States accused him of masterminding the 1998 bombings of two U.S. embassies in Africa and offered \$5 million for his capture. But bin Laden is far from the only Taliban guest with a price on his head. The REVIEW has learned that armed insurgents accused of terrorist attacks in China, Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Pakistan have found sanctuary in a symbiotic relationship with the Taliban: They help the Taliban militarily; the Taliban let them set up bases on Afghan soil.

The resulting web of dangerous friendships threatens to export instability throughout the mineral-rich and commercially under-exploited hinterland of Central Asia.

The expatriate fighters who join up with the Taliban find not only a haven but a source of income—trafficking in Afghan heroin and smuggling consumer goods through Afghanistan. Drugs and smuggling—pillars of Afghanistan's war economy—now threaten to undermine legitimate economies throughout the region. Afghanistan's total production of raw opium for 1999 was estimated to be a record 4600 metric tons, according to the findings of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) Annual Opium Survey. This is more than double, the

estimated production of 2100 metric tons for 1998, revealed the survey. Once refined into heroin, the crop will find its way to markets in Western Europe and the United States unless countries bordering Afghanistan can intercept shipments.

The Taliban are also deeply frustrated by the refusal of the international community to accept their government—only Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have recognized the Taliban. Taliban leaders try to put a brave face. Taliban Information Minister Mullah Amir Khan Muttaqi claimed: "Our prestige is spreading across the region because we have truly implemented Islam and this makes the Americans and some neighbours very nervous."

Angry about a sudden change in the position of the US which previously supported the fundamentalist movement's reactionary policies, Taleban is refusing to distance itself from its main trademark, namely; wholesome terrorism. It rejects any suggestion to hand in terrorist Bin Laden. While opposing Washington's demonisation of Bin Laden, an officer of the Taliban intelligence service admits the existence of an extensive terrorist network in Afghanistan: "what will the Americans do even if they find bin Laden? There are hundreds of bin Ladens just up the road."

Many members of bin Laden's 055 Brigade fought individually with the Taliban for years. But it was only after the Saudi was introduced to the Taliban in 1996 that he pulled his fellow Arabs together to form a force with a much larger agenda: not just to put the Taliban in power in Afghanistan, but to support fundamentalist Islamic uprisings across the region. The 055 Brigade—which includes hundreds of wanted terrorists who have fled governments from Algeria to Egypt and Kenya—gained prominence last year when it helped the Taliban capture the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif from the Northern Alliance.

Bin Laden's brigade is the best financed and organized of all the expatriate militant groups in Afghanistan. But he is suspected of providing aid also to militants fighting Uzbekistan's authoritarian President Islam Karimov and to Uighurs fighting Beijing's rule in their homeland, the western Chinese region of Xinjiang.

Disputes between the Islamic regime in Iran and Taliban have already resulted in border clashes between the two countries.



Brutal and fascist Taliban forces

Even China has not been left untouched. Chinese officials said in February that they were concerned about the tide of heroin from Afghanistan into Xinjiang. But more is at stake: The heroin traffic is helping fund anti-Chinese Islamic and nationalist movements among the Uighurs and other minorities in Xinjiang. Uighur militants have trained and fought with fellow Islamic guerrillas in Afghanistan since 1986 and Chinese officials say the arms and explosives the Uighurs are using against Chinese security forces come from Afghanistan.

Who sponsors Taliban?

There are documented evidence that from 1994 to 1997 the Clinton administration quietly allowed Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to back the Taliban, seeing it as a convenient foil for Iranian influence in Central Asia.

Pakistan's relationship with the Taliban is complex. Mainstream Pakistani Islamic parties jostle for strategic alliances with the Taliban. Between 3,000 and 5,000 Pakistanis belonging to a dozen different Islamic fundamentalist parties are in Kabul with Islamabad's blessing for the Taliban summer offensive against the Northern Alliance.

Their leaders have set up receiving centres and offices in the central district of Kabul, which now resembles a Pakistani suburb. Their presence has worrying implications for India-Pakistan relations.

Also in Afghanistan are the leaders of the Pakistan SSP, extremist Sunni groups accused of killing hundreds of Pakistani Shias and attempting to assassinate Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. "I can't understand the logic that while the military supports the Taliban, our police in Punjab are trying to hunt down SSP leaders who are actually in Kabul," says a senior adviser to Punjab Chief Minister Shabaz Sharif.

Facing a situation in which a Taliban, an old ally, protects Bin Laden who sponsored terrorist bombing of US embassies, some quarters in Washington are embarrassed and now propose that the U.S. "should do more to weaken and transform the Taliban. The Taliban must stop hosting any terrorist groups and close terrorist training camps." These former sponsors of Taliban now suggest that the CIA—which helped arm the mujahideen—should arm Taliban moderates with the aim of overthrowing Mullah Omar.

The Group of Neighbours and Friends to Afghanistan had a meeting in New York on September 22. The meeting was attended by

the Pakistani, Turkmen and Uzbek foreign ministers, the Iranian deputy foreign minister and the U.S. deputy secretary of state, the director of the Russian Foreign Ministry's 3rd Asia Department, as well as Chinese and Tajik envoys to the United Nations. The participants at the meeting confirmed their commitment to the principles of the Tashkent declaration on the political settlement of the conflict in Afghanistan and noted the importance of the soonest termination of military actions and the resumption of a political dialogue. They also stressed the importance of stopping the interference into Afghanistan's internal affairs.

They also expressed serious concern about the use of Afghanistan's territory for committing terrorist acts, the growing of drugs production and trafficking, and the grave violation of human rights.

Position of Pakistan, as the main sponsor of the Taleban, is instrumental in the future development of the regional stability. Despite clear indication of the Pakistani government encouragement of Taliban, the U.S. is ambivalent when it comes to Pakistan's destructive policies regarding Afghanistan. But the fact is that the U.S. herself was involved in the creation of many of the extremists among the Afghan Jihadi groups as well as indirectly those among the Taliban. This seems to be one reason among others why the U.S. does not or cannot exert the necessary, clear cut moral influence in shaping and assisting the democratic processes in Afghanistan.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan in an unusually critical report in October said that some countries working with the United Nations to end the conflict in Afghanistan are actually contributing to the fighting. Without naming Pakistan, Annan questioned the usefulness of the so-called "Six-Plus-Two" group and recommended a review by the end of the year.

Regional Pipeline Plans

Afghanistan's significance from an energy standpoint stems from its geographical position as a potential transit route for oil and natural gas exports from Central Asia to the Arabian Sea. A multinational consortium led by U.S.-based Unocal has proposed building multi-billion dollar oil and gas export pipelines through Afghanistan, although these plans have now been thrown into serious question. In February 1998, the Taliban announced plans to revive the Afghan National Oil Company. The company is expected to play an important role in the resumption of oil and gas exploration in Afghanistan.

In January 1998, the Taliban signed an agreement that would allow a proposed 890-mile, \$2-billion, 2-billion-cubic-feet-per-day natural gas pipeline project led by Unocal to proceed. Unocal subsequently estimated that construction on the line, which would transport gas from Turkmenistan's Dauletabad gas field to Pakistan, would begin in late 1998. The proposed \$2-billion pipeline tentatively would run from Dauletabad south to the Afghan border and through Herat and Qandahar in Afghanistan, to Quetta, Pakistan. The line would then link with Pakistan's gas grid at Sui. Gas shipments had been projected to start at 700 Mmcf/d in 1999 and to rise to 1.4 Bcf/d or higher by 2002. In March 1998, however, Unocal announced a delay in finalising project details

due to Afghanistan's continuing civil war. In June 1998, Gazprom announced that it was relinquishing its 10% stake in the gas pipeline project consortium (known as the Central Asian Gas Pipeline Ltd., or Centgas), which was formed in August 1996. As of June 1998, Unocal and Saudi Arabia's Delta Oil held a combined 85% stake in Centgas, while Turkmenrusgas owned 5%. Other participants in the proposed project include Hyundai Engineering & Construction Company of South Korea, Itochu Corporation of Japan, and Indonesia Petroleum Ltd. As of December 1998, no construction had begun on the Centgas line.

On December 8, 1998, Unocal announced that it was withdrawing from the Centgas consortium, citing low oil prices and turmoil in Afghanistan as making the pipeline project uneconomical and too risky. Unocal had previously stressed that the Centgas pipeline project would not proceed until an internationally recognised government was in place in Afghanistan. To date, however, only three countries — Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates — have recognised the Taliban government.

Besides the gas pipeline, Unocal also has considered building a 1,000-mile, 1-million barrel-per-day capacity oil pipeline that would link Chardzou, Turkmenistan to Pakistan's Arabian Sea Coast via Afghanistan. Since the Chardzou refinery is already linked to Russia's Western Siberian oil fields, this line could provide a possible alternative export route for regional oil production from the Caspian Sea. The \$2.5 billion pipeline is known as the Central Asian Oil Pipeline Project. For a variety of reasons, including high political risk and security

concerns, however, financing for this project remains highly questionable.

It is estimated that Afghanistan has proven and probable natural gas reserves at up to 5 trillion cubic feet. Afghan gas production reached 275 million cubic feet per day (Mmcf/d) in the mid-1970s. However, due to declining reserves from producing fields, output gradually fell to about 220 Mmcf/d by 1980. At that time, the Djarquduq field was brought online and was expected to boost Afghan gas output to 385 Mmcf/d by the early 1980s. However, sabotage of infrastructure by the mujaheddin fighters limited the country's total production to 290 Mmcf/d, an output level which was held fairly steady until the Soviet withdrawal in 1989. After the Soviet pullout and subsequent Afghan civil war, roughly 31 producing wells at Shibrigan area fields were shut in pending the restart of gas sales to the former Soviet Union.

In the early 1990s, Afghanistan discussed possible gas supply arrangements with Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and several Western European countries, but these talks never progressed further. In 1996, Afghan gas production was around 19 Mmcf/d, all of which was used domestically.

The estimates place Afghanistan's proven and probable oil and condensate reserves at 95 million barrels. Despite plans to start commercial oil production in Afghanistan, all oil exploration and development work as well as plans to build a 10,000 barrel per day refinery were shelved at the start of the destructive war against the central government in Afghanistan in 1979.

UNISON

SUPPORTS TUCND IN THE STRUGGLE FOR PEACE AND FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Rodney Bickerstaff, General Secretary
1 Mabledon Place
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ETHIOPIA - AFRICA'S NEGLECTED WAR

Unbeknown to the majority of the British people a bloody war the world has not seen in recent times has been raging between Ethiopia and its former province, the newly independent State of Eritrea.

The 16 months old conflict has claimed the lives of tens of thousands who died in a trench warfare reminiscent of World War I. Over 500,000 civilians have been displaced. Thousands of subsistence farmers have lost their farm lands to battlefields and land mines. Cities and villages have been air bombed. In one Eritrean air attack on Makalle, a northern town of Ethiopia, a primary school was targeted killing children and parents who rushed to the school to collect their children. Each country has deported thousands of people. Thousands of Ethiopians are reported to be held hostage in Eritrea unable to obtain permission to leave. Many have left Eritrea as a result of the climate of fear the authorities created.

All this is on top of the estimated \$500 Million spent on weapons and munition by both countries which are currently ranked among the world's poorest nations. Although Ethiopia liberated Badme in February 1999, the war is far from over. 250,000 to 300,000 troops are deployed along the common border. In some areas the hostile troops are separated by less than 100 yards from each other.

The damages caused during the first 9 months of Eritrean occupation of Ethiopia's northwestern territory, Badme, amounted to \$125 million. In addition, close to a quarter of a million trees were cut by the occupying forces for the construction and reinforcement of trenches and fortifications built along the 100-kilometre long and 80-kilometre wide Badme front. According to private news agencies, more infrastructure and property worth millions of birr (\$1.00=11 birr) have also been destroyed and looted. This pattern is repeating in the areas under Eritrean occupation.

Unlike the Gulf War, Bosnia and Kosovo, this high intensity war which is claiming so many lives and disrupting highly promising economic development in both countries, has largely been ignored by the mainstream media here. The few who said anything about it did nothing to increase our knowledge of its real causes as they dwelled on the usual contemptuous reopportunity on issues concerning African.

The causes, even to those who are closely related with the people at war, are hard to fathom given the facts that Eritrea's independence was achieved with the blessing and support of the present Ethiopian regime and that Ethiopia has provided a source of food, raw materials and employment to a large number of Eritreans both in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The immediate cause, according to the Eritrean government and as it was persistently reported by the world media, is a dispute over ownership of a 250-square-mile triangle of land which remained under Ethiopian administration at the time of Eritrean independence in 1993. After a series of squabbles and public disagreements by

both sides regarding trade, currency and the use of the ports of Assab and Massawa. Ethiopia's former gateways to the sea. Eritrean troops entered the Ethiopian territories of Badme in May 1998, and Zalambessa, Irob, and Igela in June 1998 claiming they were rightfully theirs.

The real problem is much more sinister than it is made to look. Eritreans and Ethiopians share the same ethnicity. The Christians and the Muslims of both countries have always lived in harmony despite the efforts of some Arab countries to cause unrest. The inhabitants of the territories over which so much life and resources are being wasted share the same language, religion and other cultural traits just like the rest of the people who live in both countries. Why the two countries are engaged in such intense warfare has been baffling both peoples.

The two governments were working together to define their boundaries. The Eritrean invasion came as a shocking surprise not only to the peoples of the two countries but also to the whole Ethiopian government. A high level Eritrean delegation that was having one of its scheduled meetings with its counterpart in the Ethiopian capital had to abort the meeting and return home after the news of the conflict broke out.

Seen against this background border dispute as the major cause of the conflict becomes highly unlikely. To find the root causes of the conflict one needs to look into the objectives the two countries set for themselves since 1991, the history of foreign interest in the Horn and more importantly, the source of finance that has enabled Eritrea, one of the smallest and poorest countries in the world to deploy hundreds of thousands of troops and engage a much larger and resilient Ethiopia for 16 months.

Divergent socioeconomic objectives

Although the leaders of the two countries were regarded as close allies it was clear from the outset that the two countries were following different directions which in turn strained their relations to the point where Eritrea's political independence and its economic dependence on Ethiopia became unsustainable.

After the fall of the military regime of Mengistu Hailemariam in 1991, Ethiopia granted Eritrea its independence, thereby eliminating a potential source of civil war. It reduced the size of its army drastically in order to shift resources to economic development. It made good use of the financial and technical support given by the international community to lay the groundwork for eradicating poverty and achieve some degree of food sufficiency. Apart from a brief diplomatic crisis with Sudan as a direct result of the attempted assassination of President Huseini Mubarak of Egypt while visiting Ethiopia, Ethiopia had been at peace with all its neighbours and was seen as a major stabilising force in the region. For the first time in its long history its government established a liberal political system which saw the mushrooming of

opposition political parties and independent private press. It is now preparing for its second general election in May 2000.

By contrast, Eritrea continued to build its army as if conflict making was the only way out of its poverty. Political opposition Parties are outlawed.

There is no free press to speak of. Even Eritreans who live outside the country are not free to express their thoughts for of reprisals against their families. To this day Eritrea is ruled by a small clique of individuals who have led the 30 year old Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front, the EPLF, which is the sole party.

In its short history as an independent state, since 1993, Eritrea has managed to pick fights with Sudan, Djibutti, Yemen and Ethiopia, earning it the name of the Regional Menace by many African Leaders. Its war with Sudan is still going on along their common border. As a result its ambitious economic programmes remained on paper. Its most costly project had become the war it ignited with Ethiopia. Analysts estimate Eritrea's military expenditure to be a staggering proportion of the country's gross national product, making it the poorest country in the world which spends higher proportion of its income on weaponry than any other country.

Hundreds of thousands of its young people have been sent to the front. With no opposition political parties to expose the wrong doings of the government, the Eritrean people are being made to pay the bill and supply the war with fresh blood. Nightly roundups and forced conscription of child soldiers and the elderly are regular occurrences in order to replace the tens of thousands killed or wounded in battle.

Despite Eritrea's violent history, its President, Issayas Afewerki, is regarded by Washington as one of the friends of the United States who can help in furthering US interests in the area. To this effect the Eritrean army has been training and financing armed opposition groups opposed to the Islamic government of Sudan, the latter being suspected by the US of harbouring international terrorists.

The Strategic Importance of the Horn

The main reason why a minor border conflict developed into a major war involving state of the art military weapons combined with trench warfare is because there are too many countries and conflicting national interests involved. The US, Israel, Egypt, Libya and other Middle Eastern countries are major players in the area each trying to exploit the conflict for its own ends. Various sources have implicated Libya and Egypt with financing and supplying arms to Eritrea and through Eritrea to militant opposition groups in Ethiopia who operate from Somalia. The US and Israel have both got military bases in the Red Sea now under Eritrean control. Both countries are also said to have helped in the initial building of the Eritrean Army.

Throughout its history Ethiopia has been viewed as a hostile Christian country amidst



This is how children should be allowed to grow up. Eritrea, however, conscripts boys this age into its army to fight on the front line.

the Arab world, a misconception, as Ethiopia is a secular country with a very large Muslim population. As a result it has had to deal with Arab hostilities of various forms.

After the defeat of Fascist Italy and the end of British mandatory rule in Eritrea, there were plans to bring Eritrea into the Arab world and make the Red Sea an Arab only sea. The chief architect of the plan was Egypt, a country which always felt the need to control the Red Sea area. That dream was foiled by the federation of Eritrea with Ethiopia in 1952. Since then Egypt and Middle Eastern and North African countries have been closely linked with the organisation and arming of Eritrean separatist movements.

Immediately after ordering his troops to invade Ethiopia, President Afewerki went on a Middle East tour to most capitals. He made several trips to Libya in contravention of the UN flight embargo, and soon after that more and more Arab countries began to be drawn to the war. Eritrea openly and some North African Arab countries clandestinely started pumping fresh weapons to militant opposition groups in Ethiopia and to Somali warlords with interest in Southeastern Ethiopia.

Egyptian hostility towards Ethiopia is based on the false assumption that a peaceful and developed Ethiopia would endanger the flow of the Nile water, a lifeline and indeed, the basis of the entire Egyptian civilisation. The Egyptian paranoia over the Nile waters is so great that they threaten Ethiopia with war if it plans to develop the Nile Basin. The last seven or eight years have seen Ethiopia making unprecedented progress in economic development. Such positive achievements have been seen as worrying signals by hostile forces in the region who would rather see a war torn and impoverished Ethiopia.

The unexpected Eritrean aggression against Ethiopia was seized by the hostile neighbours as a golden opportunity to arrest the promising economic development that was underway. These historical relations make Egypt and its allies beneficiaries of a prolonged conflict in the horn.

The international community and its peace proposals

The United States, as an ally of both countries had a clear picture of the situation. Together with the government of Rwanda it came up with a peace proposal known as the US-Rwanda Peace Plan. The peace deal told Eritrea to pull its troops out, and then let the U.N. decide on the border demarcation. This was rejected by the Eritrean Administration.

Shortly thereafter, the Organisation for African Unity (OAU) endorsed the US-Rwanda plan, and adopted its own 11 point peace plan known as the OAU Framework Agreement, which emphasised the need for Eritrean withdrawal and the restoration of the dismantled Ethiopian administration in the occupied areas before border demarcation could be started.

The OAU Framework Agreement was approved by the UN in Resolution 1226 adopted on 29 January 1999. The Security Council expressed its strong support for the OAU by saying the Agreement provided the best hope for peace between the two parties and must be implemented without delay. The European Union (EU) and individual countries of the EU including Britain declared that Eritrea must withdraw its forces from occupied territories of Ethiopia. Eritrea rejected all peace deal that asked her to withdraw her forces, demanding instead the occupation of the disputed territories by external forces.

In the face of Eritrean obstinacy encouraged by the support it enjoyed from powerful allies of the US, the US and the UN became increasingly reluctant to take the necessary next step of putting pressure on Eritrea to comply, a crucial step which could have avoided unnecessary loss of thousands of lives and avert yet another catastrophe in the Horn. Instead, they continued with their shuttle diplomacy the contribution of which was to further escalate the conflict and to

draw more countries to the Eritrean side.

As a direct result of the inaction of the international community the conflict deteriorated into an all out war in February 1999 which culminated in Ethiopia retaking Badme. This battle cost the lives of tens of thousands of combatants on both sides in a matter of 2-3 days. The loss of Badme had nearly brought the downfall of the Eritrean Administration forcing the authorities to declared Eritrea's acceptance of the very OAU document which they had for 9 months consistently refused to consider. The declaration was made not to the African regional body, the OAU, but over the telephone to president Clinton with a plea for the US to intervene to stop Ethiopia from causing further damages to the Eritrean Army.

A new Peace proposal

Eritrean defeat within 2-3 days of a major engagement sent shock waves among its supporters and financiers driving them to lobby the US to put pressure on Ethiopia to halt its attack on the occupation army. It was not to the national interest of the US and its allies in the region to end the war with the total defeat of the Eritrean Army.

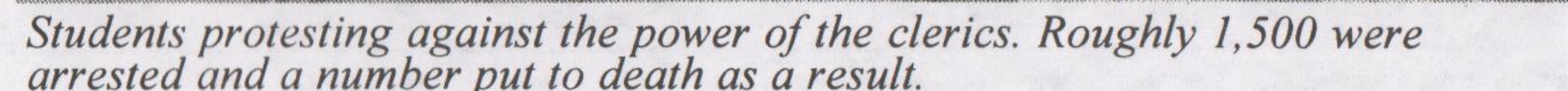
During the course of the conflict US policy had made a dramatic turn around from being an impartial arbiter between the two countries to a staunch supporter of the aggressor.

One obvious reason for America's change of heart is to do with Eritrean-Sudan relations. At the time the United States adopted the US-Rwanda peace plan both Eritrea and Ethiopia, for their respective reasons, were opposed to the Islamic regime of Sudan, making them both reliable allies of the US. As the war between the two countries lingered on, threatening to include other neighbouring states, Ethiopia normalised its relations with Sudan, a policy shift which didn't go down well in Washington. Eritrea and Sudan continue to train and arm each other's opposition groups.

Another influencing factor in changing US policy is the strong alliance that has developed between Egypt and Israel since the Gulf War. Fearful of the fragile relationship it has with Arab countries, the US has succumbed to the pressure put on it by its allies to abandon its call for Eritrea to withdraw its troops as a precondition for peace.

Following Eritrean forceful withdrawal from Badme, President Clinton called a meeting of the Security Council which adopted Resolution 1227 on February 10, 1999. This resolution, far from taking the next important step of putting pressure on Eritrea to implement the OAU agreement, treated the victim and the aggressor in the same way, condemning both countries for the escalation of the conflict. It demanded that both countries halt hostilities and strongly urged all countries to stop all sales of arms and munitions to Ethiopia and Eritrea immediately. To the uninitiated this sounds like a sensible and impartial action designed to stop the war. In effect it was a condemnation of Ethiopia for defending its territories from external aggression, a right of nations enshrined in the UN Charter.

Resolution 1227/99 reminded Ethiopians of a similar resolution passed by the League of Nations when Ethiopia appealed to the then world body to condemn the unlawful occupation of Ethiopia by Fascist Italy. In a



former president of the Islamic Republic and the ideological father of the "Executives of the Construction" Group, (a right wing writers and poets in November and December of last year, and more recently, of the pro-democracy students in Tehran University.

The theoretical grounds for such a dictatorship can be observed in the daily functioning of the regime and in the speeches given by "Valli-e Faghhih" (Absolute Leader, Mr. Khamenei) and by the dictatorship cohorts - the latter, being totally subservient to the former's guidance. For example, Mesbah Yazdi, a theoretician of the regime, opposing any form of democratization, accused the defenders of liberty as "those opposing Islam". He said, "Islam has authorized any Moslem to kill anybody whom he finds opposing Islam. This is a Moslem code of conduct and does require no court intervention. All Islamic scholars accept this ruling." (Ibid.) And we see, it is the same so-called "scholars" who condemned thousands of political prisoners to death in 1988 summer, now recognized as a national disaster. In the past two years, these people passed the "ertedad" law (blasphemy), that resulted in the assassinations of well known leaders of the opposition and some famous progressive

Today people are confronted by the same individuals and institutions that have shamelessly betrayed the ideals of the 1979 national democratic revolution (liberty,

The answer is quite clear. The main policy of Mr. Khattami's government in the last two years has been seeking a détente with the right wing reactionary forces of the