



conscience update

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newsletter of **conscience** THE PEACE TAX CAMPAIGN

Gorbachev chimes with **conscience**



photo | Pamela Meidel

Mikhail Gorbachev addresses the press prior to his lecture, flanked by Carol Naughton of the WMD Awareness Programme and his translator.

Former President of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, visited London in September to launch Come Clean the Weapons of Mass Destruction Awareness Programme. In his wide-ranging speech he covered many topics which will be familiar to **conscience** members as he renewed his call for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

His main message was the importance of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference in New York next May and the need for the existing nuclear powers to abide by existing commitments to reduce and ultimately eliminate their arsenals. He stressed the dangers of “threshold states” which are supplied with nuclear power technology under the current NPT and the shift in US and Russian military doctrines which

envisage the first use of nuclear weapons and undo his agreement with Ronald Reagan that a nuclear war could never be won and should never be fought. He emphasized the responsibility of the US and Russia to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the folly of trying to use force to prevent North Korea and Iran from developing their own nuclear weapons.

Having been introduced by fellow Nobel Peace Prize winner and the inspiration behind the Come Clean programme, Sir Joseph Rotblat, the former President set out the context in which nuclear disarmament must take place. He feels that an opportunity was missed at the end of the cold war, but the need for a new world order is still here. He identified three over-arching
continued on page 2

conscience

campaigns for the legal right for those who have a conscientious objection to war to have the military part of their taxes spent on peacebuilding initiatives

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the **conscience** website is now live at
www.conscienceonline.org.uk

Gorbachev (from page 1) website

problems of poverty, security and environment.

The uncontrolled and ungovernable process of globalisation, linked to the diminishing role of the UN Security Council and the repeated violation of international law present a huge challenge which we can only deal with together. A move away from unilateral action to defend national security and towards common actions for global security must take place alongside measures identified at the Rio Earth Summit, in the Kyoto Treaty and the UN Millennium goals for development. Only by addressing the root causes of conflict and terrorism can we build genuine global security.

Few of Gorbachev's ideas are new, but coming from the mouth of the man who effectively ended the Cold War and is still a hugely influential world figure, they gain a certain weight. Sad though it is that these ideas are not more widely accepted by those currently with their hands on the levers of international power, Gorbachev's inspiration and firm belief that a united Europe can be the locomotive which drives this new world order, one based on co-operation not domination, gives us hope.

In this edition of **conscience** update we focus on a number of books which look at how we can move beyond opposition to individual wars, or refusal to pay for war and start to promote a positive, alternative vision. As the slogan of the European Social Forum has it, "Another World is Possible!"

- You can read more about former President Gorbachev and the WMD Awareness Programme on the Come Clean website: www.comeclean.org.uk

At long last, the **conscience** website has been launched at www.conscienceonline.org.uk

Much of the information from the old campaigns pack has been updated and is now on the website. You can also find electronic versions of our guide to those considering withholding the military portion of their taxes, and download the latest Peace Tax Return. You can find out if your representative at Westminster, in the European Parliament or in the devolved assemblies support **conscience** and you can find hints and tips on lobbying.

As with all websites, this is a work in progress and we need your comments to help us make it more useful to you as members, campaigners, lobbyists and war tax resisters.

- Send your comments on the website to Oliver
e lobby@conscienceonline.org.uk

lobbying

What is likely to be the last parliamentary session before the General Election starts with the Queen's Speech on 23 November. We are planning various parliamentary activities, but the focus will depend on the timing of any court case for the Peace Tax Seven - when they are in court we will be working with supportive MPs to raise the issue in Parliament.

If you are not already a **conscience** lobbyist, please consider joining our lobbyists list. We will contact you a few times each year with the information you need to write a letter to your MP or visit their surgery.

- Contact Oliver (see page 3) if you want to become a lobbyist.

Peace Tax Seven update

The Peace Tax Seven have received a response to their 'letter before action', the formal start of the Judicial Review process. The Treasury claim that the letter is not a "real" letter before action but the Peace Tax Seven consider that Treasury lawyers have not answered the specific questions raised and have avoided the points made about a previous case in the European Court.

However, this failure to respond to the issues gives hope that a judge will require a court hearing and the Peace Tax Seven's lawyers are preparing papers for the next stage of the process.

- You can follow developments in the case at:
www.peacetaxseven.com

members' news

membership questionnaire

Thank you to all those members who completed the membership questionnaire which was sent out in the summer with the annual review.

It is pleasing to report that over 90% of members who responded accept the accounts, the appointment of the Executive Committee and the plans for the year.

Thanks also to all those who have joined the lobbyist list and offered their time and skills to **conscience** as volunteers.

end the occupation

To conclude the European Social Forum, there will be a demonstration against the continued occupation of Iraq by British and American troops.

The march assembles in Russell Square at 1pm on Sunday 17 October before marching to Trafalgar Square for a rally at 3:30pm, with music from Asian Dub Foundation at 5pm.

- For more details see www.stopwar.org.uk or call 020 7278 6694
- If you are going to the European Social Forum and would like to help spread the **conscience** message over the weekend or to march with us on Sunday, please contact Oliver in the office.

diary

14-17 October

European Social Forum, London

A giant gathering for everyone opposed to war, racism and corporate power, everyone who wants to see global justice, workers' rights and a sustainable society.
t 020 8809 5347
w www.fse-esf.org

15 October

Arms Reduction Coalition Book & CD Launch

Exmouth arms, Starcross Street, London, NW1.
8-11pm, entry £5
w www.arcuk.org
t 07903 967 355

30 October

Concert for Peace

7.30pm at St James's Church, 197 Piccadilly, London W1. Organised by Musicians Against Nuclear Arms. The MANA Chamber Orchestra, lead by Nona Liddell and conducted by Sir Charles Mackerras play Mendelssohn, Bartok, Britten, Dvorak and Schubert. Speaker - Chris Nineham, European Social Forum. Tickets £7-12
t 020 8455 1030
more diary dates at networkforpeace.org.uk

special offer

If you set up a standing order to **conscience** of £3 per month or more, or increase an existing standing order by £2 per month or more, we will send you a free copy of *Refusenik! Israel's soldiers of conscience* (reviewed last issue).

You can use the form on page 7 to set up a new standing order or to replace an existing instruction to your bank – they will cancel your current payments and use the new amount you specify.

contacting the office

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e info@conscienceonline.org.uk

campaigns enquiries

t as left - ask for Oliver
e lobby@conscienceonline.org.uk

membership enquiries

t as left - ask for Jon
e develop@conscienceonline.org.uk

“What would you have done about Hitler?”

asks Simon Heywood, **conscience**'s new Outreach Officer.

Glasgow Caledonian University hosts a website with several pages devoted to war slogans. “War has NEVER solved anything,” runs one robust example from a placard in Iowa, USA, “... except for the end of fascism, slavery, communism, and the Holocaust.”¹

And there, succinctly put, is the only plausible justification for war: that it might be the only way to prevent something worse. Many have considered the idea of “just war:” legitimate, limited, and undertaken as a last resort. This idea expresses an assumption, widespread for centuries in the west, that war is a natural, possibly even a good part of life. People remember (or think they remember) the social cohesion of wartime, as if a few European cities were a fair sacrifice to end petty crime in England. Warlike thinking pervades even our most peaceful moments. Without war as a subject, European art, literature, cinema, and even children’s play would be very different. The language of commerce revolves around “strategies,” “recruitment” and “targets.” Those who make snide remarks are said to be “sniping.” A successful popular song is a “hit.” Even **conscience** calls itself a campaign – the battlefield of the Norman French warrior-kings. If we see all of life as being like a war, it would be unsurprising if we tended to see war as the real answer to all of life’s problems, when reality was otherwise.

As every peace activist knows, the argument for war is often put in the form of questions:

“What would you have done about Hitler?” or “What would you have done about Saddam Hussein?” or, as the sloganer from Iowa would ask, “What would you have done about

slavery? About Stalinism? About the Holocaust?”

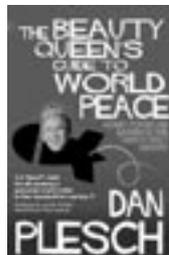
Dan Plesch, Diana Francis, Robert Hinde and Joseph Rotblat are all qualified to give authoritative answers to such questions. Dan founded the British-American Security Information Council (BASIC), and has worked as an academic, writer and media commentator on US foreign and military policy. In his new book, *The Beauty Queen’s Guide to World Peace*, he describes two revolutions in modern military affairs. Firstly, there is the suicide of industrial warfare, which, uniquely, destroys its winners along with its losers, from the trenches to nuclear holocaust. Secondly, there is global guerilla warfare between insurgents (“terrorists”) and their enemies. He regards the first problem as a bigger (and less appreciated) threat than the second, but the west’s dependency on oil and nuclear power makes it vulnerable as well as dangerous. Add global environmental meltdown to the volatile mix, and the total danger is so great that world peace is not merely a moral imperative; it is a precondition of human survival.

Dan argues that peace is possible. Firstly, the west must accept that “terrorism” feeds on real political, economic and social grievances, and redress these, through trade justice and debt relief, reversing the global trends towards poverty and inequality, and reducing the power of the corporations. (One of his most striking ideas is the abolition of limited liability, which shields limited companies from moral, legal and financial responsibility.) Also, there must be urgent attention to the environment, including shifts to renewable energy, partly because a healthy environment is a good thing for the world’s poor, and

1. www.lib.gcal.ac.uk/researchcollections/prowar.htm

partly because renewables offer fewer targets for guerilla attack than oil and nuclear industries. Thirdly, disillusioned electorates must be brought back into the political process, by extensions of electoral democracy, including direct election to global bodies such as the WTO, the EU, the UN and the IMF. Finally, Dan calls, not just for initiatives on proliferation or on small arms, which ignore rich countries' existing arsenals, but for real, 1980s-style, across-the-board disarmament in conventional weapons and WMD - which, rightly, he sees as always intrinsically aggressive, rather than "deterrent." Not all of these ideas are new or original in themselves, but Dan describes them in terms of good military strategy as well as intrinsic humanitarian good, citing an impressive range of generals, leaders and military thinkers in support. The sabre-rattling of today's US and UK governments suffers by comparison with Churchill and Eisenhower's 1941 Atlantic Charter: "Are we expected to believe," asks Dan, "that Osama Bin Laden, Saddam and Kim Jong Il of North Korea were and are such great threats that we must abandon the values used to beat Hitler?"

Perhaps a deeper "peace philosophy" is set out in *Rethinking War And Peace*: simply, that war "must cease to be an admissible human institution." Diana Francis is a lifelong activist, a campaigner and subsequently a conflict resolution facilitator in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. She rejects the theory of just war, which is rarely put into practice. In real war, justice is rarely seriously intended, and even more rarely achieved. Nonviolent alternatives are never exhaustively explored beforehand, and minimum force is never



The Beauty Queen's Guide to World Peace: Money, Power and Mayhem in the Twenty-first Century, Dan Plesch, Politico's Publishing, 2004, isbn 1842751107 320pp £8.99



Rethinking War and Peace, Diana Francis, Pluto Press, 2004 isbn 0-7453-2187-9 192pp £11.99



War No More: Eliminating Conflict in the Nuclear Age, Joseph Rotblat & Robert Hinde, Pluto Press, 2003, isbn 0-7453-2191-7 208pp £10.99

used. Overall, war itself is guaranteed to be worse than the evil it is intended to prevent.

She is equally dismissive of the commonplace that war is intrinsic to human nature, since, on the contrary, people instinctively recoil from violence. Warmakers are not born, but made, by exposure to cultural violence (machismo and similar violent habits of mind), structural violence (violence such as the murder of 10,000 in the Bhopal industrial explosion - caused by culpable neglect, and legally protected by limited liability), and institutionalisation. Supposed "causes" of war, such as intense aggression and ethnic hatred, are usually among its results. Ethnic identities need to be constantly reinforced to over-ride the enduring instinct to see oneself and others as simply human. In Yugoslavia, ethnic labels were adapted, if not created, during the war. If Dan Plesch looks forward to a large-scale politics of world peace, Diana Francis looks back, to a long, fertile tradition of effective grass-roots nonviolence, supported by international civil society, government, and diplomacy. The fruits of such work, ending apartheid, segregation, colonial rule, and dictatorship, compares favourably with the outcomes of past wars. In a striking example, she recounts the 1999 crisis which prompted the NATO bombing of Kosov@, "stopping the clock" every so often to describe, at each point, what nonviolent work could have been done instead. The book concludes with a list of 38 nonviolent methods of conflict resolution.

Robert Hinde is an academic and former fighter pilot, and Joseph Rotblat is a physicist whose experience of work continued on page 6

centrepeace continued

“What would you have done about Hitler?”

continued from page 5

on the first atom bomb turned him to a lifetime's anti-nuclear activism. *War No More: Eliminating Conflict in the Nuclear Age* was written “to convince you, the reader, that if our civilisation – indeed, the human species – is to survive ... war of all types will have to be abolished and peaceful means found to solve disputes.” They begin by rejecting nuclear weapons, with the authority of an author who saw at first hand how, from the first, the atom bomb had nothing to do with deterrence, or with the wars then raging against Germany and Japan. The atomic age has, from the first, been an age of aggression, deceit, error, and unthinkably dangerous miscalculation. Against this backdrop, Hinde and Rotblat set about a discussion of the causes of war, and the search for a cure. They emphasise the mere presence of weapons as increasing the likelihood of conflict. Also, they emphasise the importance of economic inequality and social injustice, the related effects of the democratic state, the capitalist economy, and colonial exploitation - preserved more or less intact into the present-day post-colonial global economy. They, too, describe war, not as a natural fact of life, but as a cultural institution. Indeed, they make clear, some cultures don't have it – although, predictably, few such have survived. Their suggested cure for war is wide-

ranging, involving locally appropriate forms of democracy, respect for cultural difference; poverty alleviation through international aid; real disarmament; deference to the UN, multilateral and intergovernmental organisations, and the rule of international law. They are if anything, more comprehensive, but less radical, than Dan Plesch, and political like him in contrast with Diana Francis' grass-roots approach.

Overall, the case is pretty compelling. Perhaps, ironically, the very success of nonviolent methods keeps them out of the limelight. Most people are aware that South Africa did not descend into anarchy following the end of apartheid in 2001. Fewer will realise that nuclear apocalypse was considered during the Korean war, or that there was nearly a regional war in the Baltic in 1993. In these cases, disaster did not simply fail to materialise; it was actively averted, and, almost as a result, largely forgotten. The Second World War, on the other hand, is remembered as a success, because, having tolerated and in some ways supported Nazism in the 1930s, the Allies then overthrew it, in a war which Churchill described as “unnecessary,” at a cost of 85 million casualties, including 40 - 55 million fatalities, of which over 30 million were civilian. So I have now decided what I would have done about Hitler. Why not read these books - and decide yourself?



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review



from p8/ movement in large parts of the country. Furthermore, large US companies have dominated reconstruction contracts (often outside the normal bidding process) and, as Dr Rogers points out, have limited Iraqi participation. The lack of progress feeds popular discontent as unemployment levels remain very high and civilian casualties continue to mount, now estimated at more than 12,000 since May 2003 (www.iraqbodycount.net).

Revelations since mid-2003 – the absence of WMD stockpiles, prisoner abuse, and heavy-handed treatment of the civilian population – have undermined US claims to be acting out of humanitarian motives and promoting democracy and human rights.

US regional policy fuels a widely held view in the Middle East that the US occupation of Iraq is an oil-led conspiracy. Dr Rogers notes that this view is reinforced by US support for the current hard-line Israeli government, and cites reports of Israeli involvement in northern Iraq with Kurdish groups as adding to this impression.

The reports track the shifting US explanation of al-Qaida's role in Iraq – first avoiding any admission that they had a role in the insurgency, and more recently using the presence of 'foreign fighters' to justify actions in Iraq as part of 'the war on terror'.

The book concludes with two options for Iraq's future. The first is to establish a timetable for withdrawal of US troops, to involve the UN to assist in a democratic transition and to invite states, mainly from the region, to support an international security assistance force to foster internal security. This option

he argues would have a chance of achieving a degree of peace and security in the region.

The second option, which Dr Rogers considers more likely, is for the US to continue to sustain a client state in Iraq, maintaining strong influence over Iraq's oil reserves and dominance in the region. This would be combined with ongoing support for hard-line Israeli policies in the occupied territories. Dr Rogers predicts that if US policy does not change, we could be looking at a period of conflict lasting for 30 years.

Dr Rogers' recent reports can be found at: www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/paulrogers.htm

Iraq and the War on Terror, Paul Rogers, Oxford Research Group, 2004
isbn 0951136178
86pp £7.99

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REVIEW

Sarah Graham Brown reviews **Iraq and the War on Terror** by Paul Rogers

Iraq and the War on Terror is part of an ongoing series of monthly reports on international security written by Paul Rogers, Professor of Peace Studies at Bradford University. This short book, following on from his earlier publication *A War on Terror*, comprises reports from May 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, to April 2004. Inevitably, since Bush was proved to be incorrect, the reports and the overview provided at the end of the book focus primarily on the ongoing conflict in Iraq.

Dr Rogers' overall message is that not only were the reasons given for going to war not those which actually drove US policy but, as importantly for Iraqis, that the Bush administration did not anticipate the consequences of bringing about regime change by means of external military force.

Although some of the details in these monthly accounts have become

outdated, taken as a whole, the book provides a vivid account of how the US operation has failed to provide either peace or security for Iraq's people.

The expectation was that the rapid fall of the Saddam Hussein regime would lead to 'a welcome for coalition troops as liberators, the rapid reconstruction of a privatised Iraqi economy financed largely by oil revenues and the rapid withdrawal of occupying forces'. In fact, the monthly reports track the developing insurgency which has grown in sophistication despite the capture of Saddam Hussein and the killing of his sons. The 'extraordinary' decision to disband the Iraqi regular army now means that the army has to be rebuilt from scratch, but this is being undermined by insurgent attacks.

Reconstruction and economic revival have been hampered by the general insecurity, with looting, sabotage and restricted /to p7

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