

PEACELINKS



News from the Fellowship of Reconciliation, England

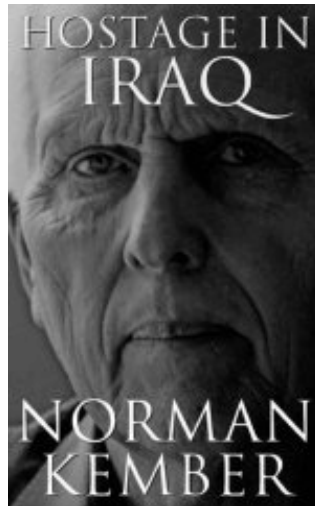
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APRIL - MAY 2007

25p

As *Peacelinks* went to print we had just received a copy of Norman Kember's book about his kidnapping in Iraq.

Published on 23rd March, it's a well written, detailed and frank account of his four months in captivity that reveals a great deal about the man himself and his fellow captives. Norman Kember writes as well about his motivation for the journey and why he and his wife Pat, are Christian pacifists and members of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. He makes it clear



that the experience of kidnap and subsequent release by the military has not changed his views

that a commitment to nonviolence is part of the call to be a Christian.

In the book there are some striking details that did not make it into the vast press coverage of the kidnapping. For example Tom Fox only took part in the fatal visit to the Sunni Mosque where they were kidnapped at the very last minute in order to give the CPT person who accompanied them around Baghdad, a break.

Norman speculates that if it had been a Canadian Greg Rollins rather than the American Tom Fox kidnapped he would have been the only representative of the occupying coalition and the outcome for him may have been very different.

Norman writes honestly about the difficulty of being kept chained together day and night but it is also surprisingly humorous. Throughout the book he makes it clear that he has little time for 'touchy feely' sharing of emotions yet despite his professed 'stiff upper lip' the book is very moving. After Norman, James and Harmeet are released they are told the Tom Fox has been murdered. As the remaining hostages say their farewells and depart for the homes they sing together a song Tom taught them in captivity.

'Hostage in Iraq' is a highly recommended read from probably the best known pacifist in the country today. **CC**

Published by Darton Longman and Todd
Price: £14.95 ISBN: 52699 0 Pages: 224

International FoR President Jan Schakke to speak at Annual Council Saturday 28th April

St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace
78 Bishopsgate, London, EC2N 4AG

FoR England's Annual Council takes place this year at St Ethelburga's Centre in central London on Saturday 28th April. The venue is about 5 minutes walk from Bank or Liverpool Street stations.

Our guest speaker will be the newly elected IFoR President, Jan Schakke from the Netherlands who will be talking about the international work of the Fellowship. The day will also include the AGM of the Fellowship as well as reports from the Chair, Treasurer and the staff. During the day we will also have an opportunity to hear about the work of St Ethelburga's Centre. Lunch will be provided for a donation on the day. It would be very helpful if you could let us know in advance that you will be attending by contacting the office on 01865 748796 or office@for.org.uk or by post.

We look forward to seeing new and old members alike!



**HOW
MANY
PEOPLE
WISHED
THEY
COULD
BE
THERE?**

answer
page 5

Building Bridges-Breaking Boundaries Youth Conference

FoR and Action Reconciliation Service for Peace (ARSP) are holding a joint weekend seminar for young people (18-30ish) from 18th to 20th May 2007 to look at the boundaries we face and the bridges we build within our peace work. Offering an opportunity to join an international community of young peacemakers, the seminar will explore the different ways we can learn about, understand and help build relationships between different cultures and communities. Sessions on interfaith dialogue, mediation skills, and creative workshops are planned.

The seminar will be held at Yardley Hastings, Northampton.

The cost of the weekend is £40 and a limited number of travel bursaries and subsidised places are available. You can get more info about the event from our website - www.for.org.uk - or contact Martha Beale on martha@for.org.uk or 01865 748 796

DIRECTOR'S DIARY

Walk the Line

Regular *Peacelinks* readers will know that I have been pursued by the courts since I undertook (in a personal capacity) nonviolent direct action against the war in Iraq on Holy Innocents Day, December 2004. Having first been convicted, we then had our family car seized and sold by bailiffs and the latest news is that I was called back to court in mid-January and sentenced to 28 days imprisonment.

Court officials, prison officers and fellow inmates all urged me to pay the fine. "What's the point of going to prison for this?" they asked. And "What effect will this have on the war?" Two good questions which I find hard to answer. I could quote Thoreau who argued that the place for a just person in an unjust society is in prison. But that seems a little glib. Environmental activists say that activism is their rent for being on the planet and for me that would be nearer the mark for me. I have an exceptionally good life compared to the vast majority of people on the planet and on top of that our nation launches an unprovoked mass military assault upon ordinary men, women and children who are exactly like my family and I. How could I not act?

The idea that we can act as individuals, as a nation or as a global community to the detriment of others on the planet (or against the planet itself) and simply walk away is part of the problem itself. For Virginia and I, to pay the fine would have been

echoing the cultural instinct to buy our way back into the comfort zone where we don't really have to face up to the reality of what is going on in the world or in our lives. That is not to say that going to prison is the one true 'holy way' and all else is half-hearted – I have paid fines myself in the past – but that for us in the position we are in at the moment it was what we felt called to do.

Some people will say – perhaps rightly so – that going to prison eases my conscience but will have no real effect. And it is right to say that its hard to see any impact of my small witness on those who suffer the most. However Dan Berrigan says that 'the good is to be done because it is good, not because it goes anywhere' whilst Thomas Merton writes that one of the most insidious temptations is 'the fetish of immediate visible results'. However Merton also warns of the need to avoid "being self-satisfied with dramatic self-justifying gestures." A fine line to walk then indeed.

I can't fully articulate why I felt the need to continue the action that I took into prison except to say that after prayer and reflection it seemed the right to make a stand to say a clear and careful 'no' to this continuing war in Iraq. I spent 12 days in prison [prisoners on short sentences serve half their sentence in prison and the other half on license] and it wasn't an easy experience for any of the family. But we has lots of support and we knew that it would not be long before we were back home together. Something that many families in Iraq simply cannot say.

Chris Cole

Troops Out of Iraq: No to Trident



Many members and supporters of FoR attended the Stop the War/CND/BMI march from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square, where a rally was held, on February 24th calling for the withdrawal of troops from Iraq and for Trident not to be replaced.

The march was preceded by a **prayer service** at Hinde Street Methodist Church organised jointly by the Baptist, Methodist and URC public affairs group - www.jointpublicissues.org.uk - at which Chris Cole, FoR Director gave a reading.

Unite for Peace (UfP) - who are a small group of families and individuals within FoR who meet together twice a year – happened to be meeting that weekend and decided to attend the march as part of their weekend. Left are some of the photos from the march.



Top: FoR banner at Trident march
photo: Don Moxon

Left: younger members of FoR group at Trident march: photo Mark Ramsey

ANNIVERSARY VIGIL

A month later, on March 23rd, to mark the anniversary of the release of Norman Kember and his two fellow captives in Iraq, a vigil was held in Trafalgar Square outside the National Gallery, where similar vigils had been held in 2006.

DELEGATION TO IRAN

A delegation from the FoR USA is currently in Iran. The interfaith peacemaking delegation is seeking nonviolent resolution to the growing political conflict between the U.S. and Iran.

A few days before the delegation left, nine Iranian women Iranian scholars, researchers, journalists, and foreign ministry staff were denied U.S. visas to join thousands of other international women at the 51st U.N. Commission on the Status of Women conference in Manhattan. Leila Zand, said in her first report “We are very grateful that the Iranian government did not rescind our visas, despite this unfortunate decision by the U.S. government,” Zand said. “We have been warmly welcomed by both ordinary Iranians as well as governmental and non-governmental leaders.” *from FoR Email News*

Make Trident History a Northern Ireland perspective

The March edition of **Nonviolent News** carries the story that the Police Service of Northern Ireland [PSNI] is investigating the legality of Trident. Last November, members of Make Trident History visited Musgrave Street Belfast police station to report the UK’s illegal possession of nuclear weapons. The PSNI have written to say they are investigating: *As you are undoubtedly aware the issues you raise are complex and wide-ranging and it will take some time to ensure they are considered in a meaningful manner. With this in mind ... [the matter will be dealt with by] ... ACC [Assistant Chief Constable] Crime Operations who, as the PSNI’s senior Detective, is the most appropriate person to deal with the concerns you have highlighted ...*”

Nonviolent News is published monthly by INNATE (an Irish Network for Nonviolent Action Training and Education) 16 Ravensdene Park, Belfast BT6 0DA, cost: £10 per annum.
Make Trident History: email: make.trident.history@ntlworld.com

So shall the land have rest from war?

So shall the land have rest from war
and truth and peace prevail?
The time is past, when battle-strength
was judges some holy grail.

The time has gone when tribe on tribe
could claim a victor's prize,
with slaughtered flesh on poisoned lands
where every virtue dies.

The aching hearts and longing eyes
of nations everywhere,
of women, men, and boys and girls
want life, not death, to share.

Yet we who cry to God to help
or blame him for our woes
must search elsewhere, recall our votes,
trace where our money goes.

What have we written, said or sung?
What have we failed to do?
Where have we argued, marched, or
stood,
or dared to think anew?

The cause of half-demolished homes,
wrecked hospitals, bombed schools,
lies in ourselves; for bleeding fields
are made by bleeding fools.

So shall the land have rest from war:
some hope - light years away?
Not if, before we cry to God,
we hear God cry today.

Christopher Idle
July 2006

Peace-by-Peace Magazine

Thank you to everyone who contacted us about Peace by Peace magazine. We have had a lot of good feedback - almost all positive - which we will feed into our planning as we begin producing the next issue over the coming few months. The next issue of Peace by Peace will be published at the beginning of August. If you would like additional copies to pass on, please do contact the office.

CO project

School visits by military veterans became 'popular' some years ago and particularly around Remembrance Day; having heard what some of them had to say one suspect that students learned very little about the war (presumably the point of these visits) thought they might have picked up some conformist values. 'Why did you go to war,' asked a student of an elderly veteran. 'I was told to go so I went. You must do what you are told,' he said with what sounded like pride.

Those who were told to go but refused are much fewer in number and like those that went their numbers are shrinking. We are anxious to record the experiences of conscientious objectors, why they chose not to join up, what their family and friends thought about this, how did other people react, were there any consequence of their refusal after the war and so on.

We want to video record COs experiences so that they are available as a record for future generations. Many students, academics and authors use our archives and such recordings would form a valuable addition. But more than that we want to ensure the young people have better access to a very different view of war; a view in which war is seen as something to be resisted. To this end and as an alternative to the visiting military veterans we also want to produce a DVD based on these interviews for schools in which CO tell their 'war' stories and show their 'pride' at not having gone to kill strangers.

If you were a CO or know of someone who was and might be interested in participating in this project we would very much like to hear from you. The enclosed leaflet tell you more about the project but if you would like to know more visit www.coproject.co.uk or contact me at jan@ppu.org.uk

Jan Melichar

The CO Project is run by the Peace Pledge Union and the Peace Research and Education Trust.



10,000 People Say “Close DESO!”

The annual Defence Export Services Organisation (DESO) symposium was held March 7th in London. Naturally Fellowship of Reconciliation (FoR) members and Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) were outside, making our presence known and continuing our campaign, *Living by the Sword*, calling on the closure of DESO, the secret organisation at the heart of central government responsible for brokering UK arms deals around the world.

We had in October last year formed a human chain of over 250 people around the DESO offices declaring it a ‘global danger zone’. Although not as many in number our spirits were high as we held up our banners declaring ‘stop civil servants pushing arms’ and spoke with passers-by about the work of DESO. As our efforts highlighting DESO continue we are reaching more and more people, on the morning of the 7th many of us woke up to the full page article in The Telegraph outlining the work of DESO.

From outside the conference centre we made our way to the Treasury where alongside CAAT we handed over 10,000 signatures calling for the closure of DESO to the Chief Secretary to The Treasury, Stephen Timms MP. The future of DESO is being examined as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review.

The work of DESO causes devastating impacts upon

the lives of millions around the world; supplying arms to conflicts, undermining development and contributing to human rights abuses. With all this in mind I stood outside the symposium and thought of all the deals being made in the safety of their offices and I prayed for those living without safety, whose countries are awash with weapons. Last year through a freedom of information request it was discovered that priority markets for DESO included Libya and Iraq. How can we sit by and watch our government supply weapons to a conflict it alludes to resolve?

If you are interested in finding out more about DESO please contact the office for a copy of *Living by the Sword*.

Maud Grainger

PEACE SCHOOL

For the second year running, FoR has made a grant to **Peace School** to enable it to develop its innovate work. Through Peace School’s year long programme people explore what it means to be a peacemaker in every area of life; local and global. It is designed for people to participate in alongside their everyday lives. The community of learning meets for an initial nine day **summer school** followed by three **residential weekends** throughout the year. The community of learning continues throughout the year through **web-based activities** and **individual exercises**. For more details see www.peaceschool.org.uk

PAPUA: AN ISLAND DIVIDED

This is the title of the second **Peacemaker Briefing** from the Fellowship. Launched in January, it is a handy 4-page A4 resource that follows up on the articles about West Papua in *Peacelinks* (Oct-Nov.06) and *Peace By Peace* magazine.



If you would like to know more about West Papua, please contact Maud Grainger at the FoR office, or visit our website www.for.org.uk or www.freewestpapua.org

Photo: members of the Free West Papua campaign



Fridays weekly: Prayer Vigil for Peace, 12 noon at Windsor Gardens, Seaton, Devon. Contact Arthur & Pat Wright, 40 Townsend Avenue, Seaton, Devon EX12 2BG.

PEACELINKS

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***“We are one in Christ
and can never be
at war.”***

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Director: Chris Cole

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If using e-mail, please include
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**April 9 -10: Mass non-violent
blockade of Atomic Weapons
Establishment Aldermaston.**
Meeting in Reading on Monday 9th
April, to arrive 1-2pm for non-vio-
lence training workshops, discus-
sions and briefings. Food and floor
space provided. Details:
[www.tridentploughshares.org/
aldermaston](http://www.tridentploughshares.org/aldermaston)

**April 10: Trial Of Peace Activ-
ists Maya Evans and Milan Rai,**
charged with organising and/or
participating in an “unauthorised”
demonstration within 1km of Par-
liament during last October’s “No
More Fallujahs” anti-occupation
camp in Parliament Square.
Horseferry Magistrates Court, 2pm.

**April 11 - 17: Birds Of War
Hawks, Doves and illegal Ea-
gles.** Exhibition of contemporary,
visual artwork to mark the fourth
anniversary of the Iraq invasion.
Candid Arts Trust, 3 Torrens St, Is-
lington, London EC1V 1NQ. Mon-
Fri 10am - 5pm. Sat-Sun 10am -
4pm. Admission Free.

**April 13-14: Peace History:
encouragement and warnings.** A
two-day non-residential conference
at the Imperial War Museum, Lon-
don SE1. Organised by the Inter-
national Peace Bureau and the
Movement for the Abolition of War
in association with the Imperial War
Museum. Details from MAW, 11
Venetia Road, London N4 1EJ.

April 26: Chernobyl Day.

**April 28: Annual Council of FoR
England:** *see front page*

**May 15: International Conscien-
tious Objector’s Day.**

**May 24: International Women’s
Day for Disarmament.**

**May 28 - 30: Building Bridges,
Breaking Boundaries** confer-
ence for young people, organised
by FoR and ARSP - *see page 2*

**June 2 - 10: Stop the Arms Trade
Week.** The theme this year is Saudi
Arabia, in the light of the govern-
ment’s decision to halt the Serious
Fraud Office investigation into BAE
System’s dealings with the regime.
Contact CAAT, 11 Goodwin Street,
London N4 3HQ, 020 7281 0297

**June 4: International Day for
Children as victims of war.**

**June 10: Stop the Arms Trade
Week Day of Prayer** organised by
CAAT Christian Network

**July 9: AGM of Methodist Peace
Fellowship,** Bispham Methodist
Church, Blackpool. Contact secretary
Maurice Wright 01743-873633

**July 20 - 22: Called to be Peace-
makers,** 29th Justice & Peace Con-
ference, Hayes Conference Centre,
Swanick. Various booking fees. Or-
ganised by National Justice and
Peace Network with Pax Christi and
FoR. Details from NJPN, 39
Eccleston Square, London SW1V
1BX, tel.020-7901-4864

**To: Fellowship of Reconciliation, St James Church Centre,
Beauchamp Lane, Oxford OX4 3LF** *(Tick boxes which apply)*

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Date

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