

# Catholic Peace Action

A journal of nonviolent resistance at  
the Ministry of 'Defence'  
(and other places)

May 1995

7 Putney Bridge Road  
London SW18 1HX

Dear Friends,

We invite you to join us at Bow street court, Saturday, 10 June, 1pm for a few prayers before Ray and Dan face the magistrate again.

Having been found guilty of 'criminal damage' on 30 March they were ordered to pay £239 and £339, respectively. A report on the trial will be in the next mailing. Because neither have paid the money the hearing on 10 June will decide whether to send them to prison, or send in the bailiffs.

Thank you for your support; in peace and solidarity,

Catholic Peace Action

Ray Towey, Dan and Carmel Martin, Pat Gaffney, Sarah Hipperson

## Reflections On The Ash Wednesday Act Of Witness And Repentance, 1995

by Richard Solly

Ash Wednesday was cold and blustery. I felt physically uncomfortable in Embankment Gardens and along by the Ministry of Defence. I felt conspicuous as well, especially when some of the Ministry's younger employees jeered at us by singing Christmas carols and yelling "Repent! Repent!".

But I thought back to other Ash Wednesdays which I had spent elsewhere, in cosy churches where repentance seemed easier and shallower. One year, the parish priest told us that this life is all about preparing for the next. And I thought: No! This life (this earth, this blue sky, this green grass, these spring flowers, this birdsong, this human laughter, these amorous embraces) is not a celestial service area through which we are supposed to hurry doggedly on our way to somewhere else. It is the raw material of the paradise that once was and that

could be still if we would let it be. I felt so disgusted, I nearly walked out. Now, some years later, I was standing again at a place where work is being done to send us all more swiftly to the next world, and our purpose was to affirm the value of the one we've got, and I was glad to be there, and our repentance seemed more real and meaningful.

Repentance can seem cheap in our society because we have trivialised and individualised sin. The ancient Hebrews went in for collective acts of repentance because they had keen sense of collective sin. We are members of a people which, as a people, has broken its relationship with God.

I think that there are many ways in which we, as contemporary society, break our relationship with God. For me, the ones that stand out in

starkest relief are the ones that relate most closely to the work that I do with refugees, indigenous peoples and the planet's health. We imprison people seeking political asylum; we construct legal walls around our country to keep out migrants; we tolerate increasing numbers of racist attacks on our streets. We build more and more roads, raping our sacred mother earth and fouling the air with car exhaust fumes; we do nothing to reduce our criminal consumption of energy, wasting the planet and bankrupting the next generation.

The epicentres of any of these evils -- the Home Office, the Ministry of Transport, the M11 extension building site, the Immigration Service Enforcement Office -- would all be appropriate sites for an Ash Wednesday service of repentance and resistance.

But there can scarcely be a more appropriate place for such acts than the Ministry of "Defence". This links right in with all my work. The uranium mining industry, the foundation of the global nuclear deterrent, lays waste the earth (the half-life of some of a uranium mine's radioactive wastes is 245,000 years) and violates indigenous people's land rights. The British air force practices low-level flying on Innu indigenous territory in Nitassinan [in Canada]. The arms trade, sustained by

corporate welfare handouts from the British tax-payer, creates many of the situations from which refugees are forced to flee. And now that the Cold War is over, the "enemy" against whom our missiles are directed is surely the two-thirds world poor.

I am a coward. I watched as others carried out their acts of prophetic symbolism, marking the Ministry's walls with charcoal, surprised that the security men were caught off guard (are they not used to this by now?). I felt disturbed by the readings from the Book of the Apocalypse, because I dislike that book intensely, rendered immune to its charms by North American Fundamentalists who beat people round the head with it. I don't want an apocalypse and I don't want a god who plans one for us. Let that god take his apocalypse elsewhere and leave us with our bluebells and hawthorn blossom. But that's not the point: the apocalypse we face is one of our own making, not of God's, and the purpose of our Ash Wednesday act of witness and repentance was to help prevent it.

Oh! May life and sanity prevail at last, so that there will be no further need for these prophetic gatherings, and we can all go walking in the woods or by the seaside in a peaceful world where no one is afraid!

This life is the raw material of  
the paradise that once was and  
that could be still if we would let  
it be.



# Homily, Ash Wednesday, 1995

Sarah Hipperson

*'How does it help, my brothers when someone who has never done a single good act claims to have faith? Will that faith bring salvation? If one of the brothers and sisters is in need of clothes and has not enough food to live on, and one of you says to them, I wish you well; keep yourself warm and eat plenty,' without giving them these bare necessities of life, then what good is that? In the same way faith, if good deeds do not go with it, is quite dead.*  
James 2:14-17, 26.

The clear message indicated in James 2:14-26 appears to be saying that in any given situation requiring a declaration of faith it is necessary to

submarine, roaming the ocean armed with 16 missiles each having the explosive power of 80 Hiroshima bombs that can wipe out a whole continent and kill 200 million people, and dangerously powered by a nuclear reactor.

This Trident submarine with all its demonic, genocidal, technology designed to be used against human beings, has been fully operational for months in the ocean, practising its full range of destructive killing skill, without any collective outcry or outrage.

I am reminded of the silence that prevailed when the genocidal policy of extermination became a reality against the Jewish people in

## Trident unchallenged is a triumph of evil.

affirm and support it with action.

Each time I come to the Ministry of Defence I am aware of the immense power generated by the sheer size of the building, the sense of authority it gives off and most importantly, the undisguised challenge it makes to God and His Kingdom, by the insistence on having the right to own nuclear weapons of mass destruction and to a defence policy that threatens to use them.

A great number of people have difficulty acknowledging this as a truth. Denial and the burying of this truth have allowed an insidious apathy to develop and undermine a previously committed peace movement to lose its voice of protest.

We appear to have slipped too easily from expressing our objection to cruise missiles -- now removed -- to an acceptance of a Trident

Europe during World War 2. This failure to respond to genocidal policies that end in crimes against God and humanity brings shame on us all.

If we are prepared to take the message contained in James 2 and apply it to the sinful condition of Her Majesty's Government's behaviour, in owning these weapons, we are compelled to make ourselves aware of the full implication of our defence policy and the challenge that it makes to the power of God, our creator, the designer and maker of the earth, and to His beloved son Jesus, who bequeathed to us all the vision of a non-violent world as an alternative way of living, by his life, his teaching and his death.

We must do more than denounce. We must make a choice. Will we accept the destructive evil power that the Ministry of Defence relies on or will we affirm our faith with action and

create God's non-violent Kingdom on this earth in this nuclear age?

I believe that each generation is called upon to resist the abuse of power and not to be encompassed by it. Trident unchallenged is a triumph of evil. We are called upon, as Christians, to declare through our faith and action that God is Lord of all, including those who plan genocide and those who design the weapons.

In 1983 I read in Jim Douglass's book *Lightning East to West* that we were the first generation to live in the 'End Time'; that the

first nuclear explosion furnished humanity with the means of destroying the planet and all means of sustaining life. I keep that thought with me daily.

While at the same time I believe that we continue to live by faith, by living wholesome lives; having babies, digging gardens and resisting.

*I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore, choose life that you and your descendants may live.*  
(Duet. 30:19-29)

---

(On 14 May, Sarah and four other women cut and removed a portion of fence around Aldermaston, where the warhead components for Trident are produced. They were held for six hours and charged with criminal damage.)



# Six Months for Chris Cole

On 7 April 1995, Chris Cole was summonsed to the High Court for contempt of court. He was charged with violating his injunction of last July which forbade Chris from trespassing or inciting others to trespass on British Aerospace (BAe) property. The Court heard how Chris had done exactly that on at least three occasions. Chris did not deny his activity but in his statement (below) informed the Court of his motivations.

The Judge ordered a custodial sentence of six months for each violation of the injunction to run concurrently. After the Judge pronounced sentence Chris turned round to his supporters, waved, and said, 'You know what you have to do.' [i.e. continue the Campaign]

Chris is to serve half that time. His prison address: Chris Cole, (PB 0538), HMP Pentonville, Caledonian Road, London N7 8TT. He is allowed visits every day but Sunday. To arrange a visit you must ring first 0151-546 1688 (Joanna and Andrew Wilson). Ring Stephen Hancock, 01865-793 820, for further details about the case. Even after his time is served, the injunction remains in effect 'forever'.

## Chris's Statement to the Court

I have been summonsed here today to answer why I should not be imprisoned for breaching the injunction imposed on me last July. I do not deny being on BAe property on November 12th last year or on January 24th [1995]. Nor do I deny writing the article entitled 'Call to Action' which is also the subject of this hearing. I would, however, like to attempt to explain my conduct.

As Mr. Boyd [the plaintiff's barrister] has outlined, my concern about British Aerospace goes back several years, to 1988 in fact when I first discovered BAe and its horrendous work. I won't try your patience by going into details of specific weapons systems or specific corruption allegations or specific statistics detailing deaths and destruction. Suffice to say

perhaps that BAe is Europe's largest arms dealer, supplying genocidal regimes like Indonesia and human rights abusers like Saudi Arabia with the means to carry out their crimes.

So I, along with many others, have tried to call BAe to account for its criminal activity. I don't use that word - criminal - lightly. I believe very strongly that BAe are engaged in great crimes, assisting others to commit murder purely for profit. So I try both to prevent that activity and to draw attention to what is going on.

I have undertaken many different methods to try to achieve this aim. Writing to the company, meeting with directors, talking to and leafleting the workers, researching their work in great depth, praying, fasting, civil disobedience, informing people through talks and writing, etc. etc.

And because of this work I'd like to emphasise how much responsibility I feel about what happens at BAe sites.

Once I became involved, once I knew about what was going on, I couldn't simply walk away because that would make me part of the problem. Once you know something wrong is happening you cannot simply walk away and forget. As someone once said, 'For evil to triumph all that is needed is that good people do nothing.'

Obviously, the imposition of an injunction gave me great pause for thought. It upped the ante, if you like. The consequences of acting were now much more serious, for example the possibility of imprisonment for relatively minor protests. But of course, the seriousness of the other side did not decrease. BAe continues to fuel and profit from wars, continues with manufacturing deadly equipment, continues to be involved in dirty dealings and corruption. And so the two sides have to be weighed up, and considered seriously, which I did.

The seriousness and the consequences of breaking the injunction must be weighed



against the seriousness and the consequences of not breaking the injunction, of allowing things to remain as they are, and choices made. As a Christian I am given very clear instructions about choices to be made. 'Choose life,' say the scriptures, 'So that you and your children may live.' So I opt for life and against death.

This weekend sees the fiftieth anniversary of the execution by the Nazis of the German priest and theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, for his resistance to the war. Bonhoeffer wrote that it is our task as Christians to 'not only bind up the victims beneath the wheel, but also to put a spoke in that wheel.' I honestly cannot see how I can put a spoke in the wheel that is BAe, which grinds over the poor in the third world to put profits in the pockets of shareholders in Britain, by staying outside their fence -- and within the law.

And so I decided to act accordingly by going to

accompanied the demonstration. We try very hard to ensure that no one is hurt or injured on these demonstrations by training and briefing people...

In January, I along with three other defendants were found 'not guilty' at Preston Crown Court (though you might not think so from the Plaintiffs description). The following day we went back to BAe Warton to place ourselves on the runway, again to interrupt BAe's murderous work. We were there for about 10 or 15 minutes, or 20 -25 minutes as the plaintiffs' witnesses testified to, and then left when asked. Again a symbolic action.

And so that brings me here. I think it should be noted that the injunction was asked for by the plaintiffs in response to disarmament actions for which I was convicted of criminal damage. These breaches are not of that order. I ask you also to note the unwarranted delay of the

Bonhoeffer wrote that it is our task as Christians to 'not only bind up the victims beneath the wheel, but also to put a spoke in that wheel.'

BAe with around fifty others on November 12th, the third anniversary of the massacre of more than 250 East Timorese by the Indonesian military. The very same people to who BAe are supplying more weapons. I broke the injunction symbolically by going onto a car park and burning a small piece of paper which had the name of Abel Araujo on it. It is Timorese custom to remember the dead in that way. I also wrote the article entitled, 'Call to Action', which was in the briefing which

plaintiffs in bringing this action -- five months since the November demonstration and two-and-half months since the most recent.

I hope that I have communicated to you the reasons why I and many others feel that we must interrupt BAe's work. It's not for personal gain in any way. We act nonviolently on behalf of BAe's victims, perhaps clumsily, but certainly honestly and sincerely.

Thank you