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peace matters

MAGAZINE OF THE PEACE PLEDGE UNION



Troops on the streets? **Ministers threaten to deploy the** **army amidst Brexit chaos**

Also in this issue:

Stansted 15's Melanie Strickland on nonviolent direct action

Armed forces - no friends of trans rights

Welsh activists mobilise against RAF training Saudi pilots

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**“War is a crime against
humanity. I renounce
war, and am therefore
determined not to
support any kind of
war. I am also
determined to work for
the removal of all
causes of war.”**

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The Peace Pledge Union is the oldest
secular pacifist organisation in Britain.
Through War Resisters' International it
is linked with similar groups around the
world.

**For information, visit
www.ppu.org.uk
or call 020 7424 9444.**

Send in the troops!

Symon Hill, Editor

There are some people who think that any problem can be solved by sending in uniformed men with guns. Unfortunately, these people appear to include the minister responsible for the UK's defence policy.

Gavin Williamson, the euphemistically named "Defence" Secretary, has spent the last few months giving a series of bizarre media interviews offering to send in troops to "help" with difficult situations.

Varied as these situations are, they have one thing in common: that the presence of troops would only make things worse.

In December, Williamson offered the Royal Navy to deal with the "crisis" caused by a handful of desperate refugees crossing the English Channel on dinghies. He also said that he has 3,500 troops on standby to deal with "contingencies" in the event of a No-Deal Brexit.

Just before Christmas, Williamson threatened to send more troops to Ukraine. On New Year's Eve, he announced plans for new UK military bases in the Caribbean and



south-east Asia.

In February, Williamson boasted of increasing the "lethality" of UK armed forces and said they had an important role in challenging regimes that "flout international law" - at the same time as he sells weapons to Saudi Arabia and Israel.

These statements are not remotely surprising. After a decade in which cadet forces have more than doubled and Armed Forces Day has been introduced in the UK, the idea of putting troops on the streets to deal with Brexit no longer seems abnormal.

You can read news of these issues on the following pages, along with reports of peace activism around the UK.

On the centre pages, we have an inspiring article on nonviolent direct action by Melanie Strickland of the Stansted 15. Trans activist Zenab Ahmed responds to the armed forces' attempts to present themselves as pro-trans. A hundred years after mass protests in Glasgow, Henry Bell writes about how troops were sent to Glasgow's streets to suppress them.

Other articles include our thanks and best wishes to Annie Bebington and Sophie Morrison, who have left the PPU staff, in Annie's case after more than 30 years.

You can also find the details of our annual conference on 1st June. See you there!

MPs back PPU campaign over 'troops on the streets'

The UK's Ministry of "Defence" has failed to rule out using troops for social control in the event of chaos resulting from a no-deal Brexit.

Speculation about the possibility grew after the *Sunday Times* quoted anonymous Whitehall sources stating that civil servants had discussed the possibility of introducing martial law.

MPs from several parties have backed the Peace Pledge Union (PPU) in calling on the government to make their plans clear regarding the use of troops after Brexit.

In December, "Defence" Secretary Gavin Williamson told the Commons that he had 3,500 troops on standby to deal with "contingencies" in the event of a no-deal Brexit. The next month his deputy, Mark Lancaster, quietly put the order in place to enable the calling up of reserves for up to a year to "mitigate the potential immediate impacts" of leaving the EU.

The PPU, whose members include both Leave and Remain voters, said this marked another step in the normalisation of

The UK's Ministry of "Defence" has failed to rule out using troops for social control in the event of chaos resulting from a no-deal Brexit. military interference in civilian life in the UK. It follows a rise in cadet forces, the founding of Armed Forces Day and similar developments in the last 10 to 15 years.

After discussion with the PPU, Jonathan Edwards, the Plaid Cymru MP for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr (pictured), tabled a motion in Parliament urging Williamson and his colleagues to rule out using troops for police functions or social control.

MPs from several parties have backed the motion. Some did so after being contacted by PPU members in their constituencies. Lloyd Russell-Moyle, Labour MP for Brighton Kemptown, said, "I do not want to see troops on our streets and Gavin Williamson should rule it out completely".

In response, Williamson said that the government have "no plans" to use troops for police functions - but he conspicuously failed to rule out the possibility of them doing so.



Has your MP signed Early Day Motion 2075?

An Early Day Motion is effectively a petition of MPs. This one calls on the government to rule out "troops on the streets". Ask your MP to sign it!

You can find your MP's contact details at parliament.uk, or you can write to them at the House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

If you get a response, please let us know by emailing mail@ppu.org.uk or calling 020 7424 9444.

White poppy sales at all-time high

White poppy sales in 2018 were higher than in any year since they were founded, in 1933.

The Peace Pledge Union (PPU) said more people are promoting values that white poppies represent: remembrance for all victims of war of all nationalities, a commitment to peace and a rejection of militarism.

By Remembrance Sunday, the PPU had sold 122,385 white poppies.

Sales of the White Poppies for Schools pack - produced jointly by the PPU and Forces Watch - more than doubled since the previous year. For the first time, a White Poppies for Churches pack was produced jointly by the PPU and the Fellowship of Reconciliation (while the Fellowship is a Christian pacifist group, the PPU includes members of sev-

eral religions as well as non-religious people).

"We are very pleased to have distributed so many white poppies, but it is the meaning behind the symbol that matters," said Sophie Morrison of the PPU.

She added, "If everyone who wears a white poppy takes action against militarism and war, and works for peace and active nonviolence, that would be a fitting memorial to the millions

whose lives have been wasted in war."

Particular thanks are due to people who have helped to distribute and promote white poppies: by selling them in local communities, packing them in the PPU's offices or delivering them to shops and other outlets.

There were Remembrance ceremonies involving white poppies in at least 15 British towns and cities. The national ceremony in London was organised by the First World War Peace Forum, whose members include the PPU.

The Lord Mayors of Sheffield and Bristol wore white poppies while carrying out their duties.



Above: White poppy sellers in Hackney. Left: Wreaths in Tavistock Square, London

RAF trains Saudi pilots in Wales

Welsh peace campaigners have been protesting at an air force base in North Wales after the revelation that Saudi pilots are being trained there.

Saudi forces have killed thousands of people in Yemen, mostly civilians, according to the United Nations.

While the RAF have been training Saudi pilots for some time, it was revealed in October that they are doing so on British soil - at RAF Valley on Anglesey/ Ynys Môn

Steve Heaney, an RAF veteran in North Wales, is protesting at the base against military support for the Saudi regime "as it continues to inflict suffering on the Yemeni people".

He said the situation undermines claims that the armed forces exist for "protecting us and keeping us safe".

PPU member Jane Harries, secretary of Cymdeithas y Cymod (the Fellowship of Reconciliation in Wales), urged the Welsh government to speak out against the training of Saudi pilots in Wales.



But Welsh ministers point out that "defence" policy is not devolved so is the responsibility of the UK government - and then claim that they should not comment on it.

Several members of the Welsh Assembly disagree. Rhun ap Iorwerth, who represents Anglesey/ Ynys Môn in the Assembly, called for "an intervention here from the Welsh government in order to raise a voice in the name of justice".

Welsh activists protesting at the base have been backed by people from other parts of the UK and elsewhere. Peace Pledge Union (PPU) members have been part of the protests, which have been organised by groups including Cymdeithas y

Cymod, CND Cymru and Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg (the Welsh Language Society), along with regional peace groups and local faith groups.

The people of North Wales have a history of resisting militarism. In 1936, three Welsh pacifists burnt down the RAF bombing school near Pwllheli. The bombing school was still being built, so it was possible to destroy it while there was nobody about, ensuring that no-one was hurt.

It's a reminder that pacifism is not passive, and an inspiration to people challenging the activities of RAF Valley today.

**(Above) The effects of Saudi bombing at Sana'a, Yemen.
Photo credit: Ibrahem Qasim**

Regional round-up: PPU members take action

Peace campaigners in **Birmingham** are celebrating after chasing an arms fair out of their city. The DPRTE fair was moved to the arms industry's own facilities in Farnborough with less than two months to go. Organisers cited "logistics", apparently a euphemism for fears of protests and nonviolent direct action, which had already led them to give up previous venues in Bristol and Cardiff in recent years.

PPU members in **Hampshire** were among those resisting the arms fair at its new venue in **Farnborough** on 28 March.

Meanwhile, LGBT Pride in Surrey are under pressure after accepting multinational arms firm BAE Systems as the lead sponsor of their Pride march in **Woking** on 10 August.

Tim Rosson, a local gay PPU member, said that BAE "clearly does not regard women and LGBTQ+ people as important in countries it does business with". Tim has begun a petition urging Pride in Surrey to ditch the death-dealers (you can sign via links on the PPU website).



BAE is also a target for PPU-supporting students in **Manchester** (pictured above), who are urging Manchester University to break links with the arms industry.

The group, called Demilitarise Education, has organised several actions at the university and will be doing some joint work with the PPU in May.

Further south, **London** Students for Yemen is a new group challenging BAE and the UK government for providing weapons and military training to the Saudi regime. They have held vigils and protests opposite Downing Street, with recent speakers including the PPU's Amy Clark-Bryan and members of other peace groups.

In **Dover**, the group Kent Christian Peace Activists - which includes PPU members - have held vigils for refugee rights, drawing links between war, refugees and climate change.

PPU members in **Edinburgh** are part of an initiative that is making progress with raising funds for a memorial to conscientious objectors. International Conscientious Objectors' Day is on 15 May.

This is just a snapshot of what PPU members and supporters are doing around the UK.

Are you taking action locally? Or do you want to? Let us know! Email mail@ppu.org.uk or call 020 7424 9444.

Militant nonviolence: the Stansted 15



Melanie Strickland of the Stansted 15 (pictured at the right end of the front row) writes about what led her to join in nonviolent direct action - and why it is an effective form of resistance.

"In some cases, nonviolence requires more militancy than violence." So said Cesar Chavez, the trade unionist and civil rights leader.

This is how it has been for us. On 28 March 2017, I was part of a group that successfully stopped a private deportation flight at Stansted airport, through peaceful means. The action was successful: 11 of the 60 people scheduled to be deported that night remain in the UK. Some of them now have leave to remain and all are in the community and not in detention, able to be with their families and loved ones in the UK.

The 'Stansted 15' are deeply concerned about secret, private (charter) flights that take place in the middle of the night from a remote part of Stansted airport. On these flights, people are deported en masse to countries where commercial flights don't often go. In our case, the destinations were Nigeria and Ghana. The charter airline used is Titan Airways. Titan markets its services to the military, but it also flies families to Lapland to see Santa at Christmas - a shocking contrast.

We knew of the stories of some of the people through the blog *Detained Voices*. They included a young man

whose family had been killed in Nigeria, who said that he would not be able to survive because of “fighting over the land” – a possible reference to the Boko Haram conflict. The stories all spoke of horrific conditions in detention.

Later we found out by Freedom of Information requests that included among the 11 who remain are trafficking survivors, parents of dependent children, and almost exclusively people who have claimed asylum.

In taking action, our goal was to assist people in danger by ensuring that flight didn't take off, so that detained people would have more time to lodge legal papers challenging their deportation. It was also a whistleblowing action - we were committed to exposing the brutal nature of the deportation process, especially charter flights. We knew that this would be a long-term struggle and all of us took action committed to this.

We were successful in our goals but that success came with huge consequences. Initially we were

charged with aggravated trespass, but four months later the charge was ramped up to endangering safety at airports, a terror-related charge. The Attorney General refused to give reasons. Following a ten-week trial and an overtly partial summing-up by the judge, we were convicted of the terror charge on International Human Rights day, 10 December 2018.

It is ironic that the Stansted 15 are now convicted “terrorists” when we are a peaceful group, who took action to prevent state terrorism. The public, in general, are appalled by this juxtaposition, and therein lies our strength. The detained people scheduled to be on the flight all expressed a fear for their lives.

The state has blatantly gone too far in prosecuting this charge. People can see it's sinister, with consequences for nonviolent protest of any kind. The political discourse around detention and deportations is changing, but this has not yet led to a change in government

policy.

Harnessing public outrage and channelling it into useful activism is important work. It requires education, skill shares and cultivating strong relationships with affected people. Any serious revolutionary must be committed to this type of long-term work.

We have public support because the action was nonviolent. It could not have succeeded were it any other way. I have only ever participated in nonviolent actions (although intellectually I am closer to Mandela's view on this topic rather than Ghandi's). Nonviolent actions also allow for broader participation.

The Stansted 15 have a long road ahead with an appeal which will not be heard for many months. We will continue the nonviolent struggle until we clear our names and until charter flights are no more.

Ultimately we want to see an end to all deportations and the total dismantling of the hostile environment.

Armed forces - supporting trans rights?

The UK armed forces are going out of their way to claim that they welcome trans recruits. Trans activist Zenab Ahmed writes about the realities behind the claims.

Zenab Ahmed is an activist and scholar who writes on gender and military issues. She can be found on Twitter at @pakistanarchy.



In 1988, George R. Brown of the US air force wrote a study noting a large number of closeted trans women in his care: "During the past three years I have evaluated 11 biologic males with severe gender dysphoria, all of whom meet DSM-III criteria for a diagnosis of transsexualism."

Brown's study reads poorly by today's standards. It is now offensive to use a term like "biologic males," and describing transition as a linear journey between two binary genders is seen as old-fashioned.

Yet parts of the study remain true. It continues to be the case that trans women join the military to shield themselves from femininity through "hypermasculinity", even when they are able to transition openly. You will likely find overlaps with experiences of bisexual, queer, and cis gay men, though the pressure of adopting a different gender is unique to trans and non-binary people.

Brown defines hyper-masculinity by referring to traits of "foolhardiness, over-competitiveness, bellicosity, fragile hardiness, and equations of 'violence as manly'". He argues that

trans women join the military as a result of denial, and aim to go completely in the other direction, crushing feminine impulses by "being a real man".

One patient said, "I tried to do things to make me feel more masculine... In uniform, my masculinity would not be questioned."

The uniform enables recruits to evade gender anxiety by redefining themselves through the excesses of military manhood, which demands loyalty, duty, sacrifice, physical endurance and emotional distance from killing and dying. It effectively silences others' doubts. Military service, through medals and ranking, rewards behaviour that in other contexts would be seen as risky or dangerous. As long as it doesn't endanger allied troops and is directed towards strategic objectives, motivations like these will be encouraged (though there is a point when a "death wish" becomes a tactical liability).

Brown describes one patient who was choosing the path of greatest danger. She left her job to train as a combat pilot in the Vietnam War, fully aware of the extremely high risk of death. While in

other settings, this behaviour would clearly be recognised as self-destructive, this patient was able to exploit (and was in turn exploited by) the air force to reframe her internal chaos as bravery and patriotism. Usually, risky and dangerous behaviour like this is meant to resolve the pain and anxiety of transitioning and is far more likely to happen in a media climate that rewards hypermasculine figures at the same time that it dismisses weakness.

It should be noted that military officials are not consciously recruiting closeted trans women, though they do try to recruit soldiers at vulnerable and insecure moments of their lives. Trans women who enter a hypermasculine phase tend to do so in their late teens and early adulthood, which overlaps with the recruitment age for soldiers. Often, they enlist as the path of least resistance, since joining the military is seen very differently to activities like violent sports, misogynistic relationships, committing crimes, or joining groups like Islamic State. Brown had discovered an

LGBTQ peace activists in York protest against military recruitment at the city's Pride Festival



unexpected side effect of wider oppression.

Shortly after Trump's election, *The Atlantic* published an anonymously-written article called, *Coming Out as Transgender Made Me a More Effective CIA Officer*. Tellingly, after a series of personal anecdotes that never stray away from the gender binary, the author makes a point of saying, "I relish the idea that I'm ISIS's nightmare: trans, gay, Jewish, CIA, and worst of all, female."

This kind of rhetoric may mark the emergence of a new attitude that allows armies to claim to be pro-trans while retaining elements of hypermasculinity to elevate

women who have transitioned in a particular kind of way and are willing to play into official narratives.

Regardless of how things continue to evolve, it is very likely that military service will continue to be an outlet for trans women who are trying to evade part of themselves. Decades have passed since Brown's study, and much has changed in the military, but many of his findings remain valid. Women who openly transition still have to surrender personal narratives by framing their employers as more civilised than the enemy, and trans women still have to repress different sides of themselves to advance in a newly accessible military hierarchy.

“Peace with revolution in it”: Glasgow 1919

100 years ago, troops were sent to Glasgow to suppress mass protests and a general strike. Henry Bell tells us more.

**Henry Bell's book
John Mclean: Hero
of Red Clydeside
was published by
Pluto Press in 2018.**



In January 1919 Glasgow was gripped by a general strike that paralysed the Clyde and spread unrest across the west of Scotland. One hundred army vehicles were deployed in Glasgow, along with 12,000 troops, to quell the unrest. Soldiers paraded outside the city while soldiers with family in Glasgow were confined to barracks as they could not be relied on to open fire in the city.

On 31 January, the Red Flag had been raised in the city centre and the Riot Act was read. What followed was the now mythic Battle of George Square, a police riot in which the leaders of the strike were arrested. The Sheriff of Lanarkshire requested military aid.

Images of tanks stationed in the east of the city, of machine gun nests at key intersections, and troops maintaining a curfew, show the extent to which both local and national politicians feared unrest.

Though it is the centenary of the military deployment in Glasgow that garners attention this year, the significance of the strike action went far beyond this. Earlier in January the Clyde

Workers Committee had met to discuss the problems of mass unemployment and demobilisation. They feared that the return of more than 150,000 servicemen to Glasgow would result in widespread destitution and a reversal of the gains made by unions. A government that had in part regulated industry, rents and wages during wartime would not now wish to honour the promises made to soldiers of homes for heroes.

The Clyde workers agreed that the solution was to enforce a 40-hour week, creating better conditions and more jobs; the working week at this time was 54 hours. This demand for a total re-absorption of returning soldiers was expressly political, facilitating the demobilisation of the army whilst preserving the high employment rate on the Clyde. A general strike was called across Clydeside for a 40-hour week, with workers in all industries asked to down tools from late January.

These demands came as anxiety over the outcome of the revolutions in Germany and Russia continued. In the two previous

years, the royal households of Russia, Austro-Hungary and Germany had all fallen, and workers' councils (soviets) had been established in Moscow, Berlin and Budapest.

Against this backdrop it is little wonder that the government in London looked on anxiously as Glasgow's strike grew.

On 23 January, the Glaswegian revolutionary John Maclean wrote that if capitalism lasted then another war was inevitable. He said throughout the war that "workers must demand peace, but a peace with revolution in it".

However, the organisers of the 40-hour strike in Glasgow had less ambitious aims – Willie Gallagher, chair of the Clyde Workers Committee, said "we were carrying on a strike when we ought to have been making a revolution".

The strike far surpassed the hopes of the organisers. By the third day, between 70,000 and 100,000 men had struck across Clydeside. In Lanarkshire, the headquarters of the Miners'



Union was occupied by workers demanding that it back the strike.

On 28 January, the Home Secretary's Report on "Revolutionary Organisations" stated that "the outlook during the past fortnight has become rather dark. Strikes have taken place all over the country... the revolutionary movement is certainly gaining ground."

With hindsight, the government's fear of a revolutionary movement seems far-fetched. While the strike action was unprecedented it was also isolated, and driven entirely from below. Left-wing political parties and trade union leaders were

slow to back it. It was young engineers, miners and ex-servicemen who forced the issue. The crisis was a generational one, centred on broken promises and a need for secure work and housing.

Emotive images of military occupation are less significant than the striking workers who were able to mobilise with returning ex-servicemen and show that they controlled Glasgow, as their fellow workers did in Belfast. The war had delivered a seismic shock to how Europe was organised socially and economically, and the Battle of George Square was only one instance of that conflict coming home.

Thank you and goodbye to valued PPU staff

The Peace Pledge Union would like to say a big thank you to Annie Bebington, who has retired from her job as PPU Administrator after more than 30 years.

We would also like to say thanks and goodbye to Sophie Morrison, who has moved on from her job as the PPU's Operations and Development Manager.

Annie joined the staff in 1987 having previously been a PPU volunteer. Over the years, she's become a familiar face to many PPU members and supporters. If you have ever phoned the PPU office, there's a good chance you have spoken with Annie. She oversaw the distribution of white poppies for many years and seemed to know the PPU membership database almost by heart.

After three decades of service, we owe Annie more than we can put into words, but we will be making an attempt in the next issue of *Peace Matters*.

If you would like to contribute memories of Annie's work with the PPU, please email mail@ppu.org.uk or write to us at 1 Peace Passage, London N7 0BT.



(Above) Annie Bebington at the centre of a group of PPU activists in 2001.

Meanwhile, Sophie Morrison has moved on after two years in which she overhauled office systems, bringing greater speed and efficiency to the white poppy project, and designed many of the PPU's new materials and projects around Remembrance. You may have run into Sophie at protests against the arms trade or staffing PPU stands.

So a big thank you to Sophie as well as best wishes to her as she begins a new job. But our "goodbye" is only partial: we're pleased to say that Sophie will remain a Peace Pledge Union member and volunteer.

We are now in the process of recruiting new staff so we should have news shortly about additions to the staff team.

(Below) Sophie Morrison at the Leamington Peace Festival in 2018.



Make a date for peace in 2019

Monday 15 - Wednesday 17 April **PPU at National Education Union**

The PPU will be at the annual conference of the NEU (formerly National Union of Teachers) in Liverpool, discussing military influence in schools and promoting our educational resources.

Saturday 27 - Sunday 28 April **Commemoration, Conflict and Conscience**

Bristol will host a national festival bringing together historians, activists, academics, performers and community groups to explore overlooked aspects of the First World War, including conscientious objection, mutinies, strikes and women's peace activism. The PPU is contributing to the programme of events.

Wednesday 15 May **Conscientious Objectors' Day**

Ceremonies, protests and arts events will be held around the world to celebrate conscientious objection and to champion the rights of conscientious objectors. Michael Lyons, a former member of the Royal Navy imprisoned in 2011 for developing a conscientious objection to war, will address the ceremony in London.

Saturday 1 June **Local to Global: Solidarity for Peace**

Join us for the PPU's annual conference: details on the back page!

Saturday 29 June **Resist Armed Forces Day**

Armed Forces Day is one of the more obvious examples of everyday militarism in Britain. There will be protests in many places, including at the national event in Salisbury.

Monday 2 - Friday 13 September **Stop the DSEI arms fair**

There will be protests and nonviolent direct action in east London ahead of one of the world's biggest arms fairs, as well as resistance during the week of the arms fair itself.

Sunday 10 November **Remembrance Sunday**

Thousands of people will wear white poppies to signify remembrance for all victims of war, a commitment to peace and a rejection of militarism.

Want more information on any of these events?
Visit ppu.org.uk/events
or call 020 7424 9444.



LOCAL TO GLOBAL: Solidarity for Peace

Join us for the Peace Pledge Union's annual conference.

Saturday 1st June 2019
Friends House, London (opposite Euston station)

How do we relate global issues to local concerns?
How do we offer solidarity across borders and communities?
How do we campaign effectively?

All around the world, people are taking action against war and militarism. In schools and universities, workplaces and high streets, grassroots campaigns are making a difference. This is a chance to hear their stories, share your ideas, learn new skills - and plan together for the Peace Pledge Union's campaigns.

From local groups challenging army stalls in the street to students resisting arms companies at freshers' fayres; from teachers questioning military visits to schools to LGBTQ campaigners tackling military pinkwashing; from longstanding activists to first-timers - meet them all at the PPU conference!

Details online: ppu.org.uk.

Or call 020 7424 9444.

