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operating organisation of Landmine
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Next Council meeting 1 December

Reyaad Khan was over the moon when he met shadow chancellor Ed Balls, he wanted to be Britain's first Asian prime minister. Now he is dead, blown to pieces in Syria by the authority of the current prime minister. We do not know the steps on the journey that took Reyaad from wanting to be a prime minister to urging British Muslims to join insurgents in Syria. But we can speculate. He could, and this is probably the dominant view, have been 'radicalised' – a term popular with media commentators and politicians though quite what it means and how it operates is not clear. It is a key word in the terror lexicon signifying everything and explaining nothing. Equally he could just have been a normal young man awash with hormones. In a social and political climate where violence, especially when allied with a 'cause', is acceptable and often commended, his action should not come as a total surprise. Think Remembrance Sunday. Think the Spanish Civil War. Seeing fellow Muslims under attack can seem to offer a more or less rational reason to join a romantic and exciting fight for 'justice'. Perhaps Reyaad's wish to be prime minister was not that far from where he ended up.

To be sure there are problems posed by young men and now a few women going to take some part in war zones but it is hard not to suspect that these are being exaggerated and misinterpreted for less than honourable reasons. The back story to the announcement of Reyaad's assassination, never mind the assassination itself, is surely evidence of this, if any is needed. tinyurl.com/ofyzvss.

'In an act of self-defence, said David Cameron, 'and after meticulous planning Reyaad Khan was killed in a precision airstrike carried out on 21 August by an RAF remotely piloted aircraft while he was travelling in a vehicle in the area of Raqqah in Syria.' Parliamentary prohibition against military UK action in Syria seems to be no barrier to 'secret' military action in Syria. Nor, it appears, is there any interdiction to, let's call it politely, extra judicial assassination which is surprising. Just a few weeks ago, whilst visiting Bangladesh, the International Development

join us on

Remembrance Sunday
Sunday 8 November

Noon
to lay a wreath of white
poppies

with Joanna Bourke
**Fear, Defiance, and Hope:
A History of Resistance**
see page 15

assassination inc uk

Jan Melichar



New leaflet from the PPU

You can download copies here:
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Minister Desmond Swayne said 'Extrajudicial killings cannot be tolerated in a democratic country like Bangladesh', stressing that all incidents regarding recent extrajudicial killings there 'should be investigated and the perpetrators should be brought to justice'. Is Bangladesh being held to a higher standard than Britain? Should David Cameron be worried and did his former Foreign Secretary William Hague not warn him that '...We don't approve of extra-judicial

killing'. Or are these the weasel words of politicians the world over?: they may not approve but hell, if they can they will.

Binyamin Netanyahu's recent flying visit to London to fix some deals, particularly on cyber security cooperation (surveillance to the rest of us), must have been a mixed blessing. Shaking hands with a man whose state pioneered technological assassination and for whom there are calls for his arrest for war crimes should give pause for thought. It's tough at the top.

A few miles south of Lincoln, whose cathedral is home to one of a growing number of memorials to Bomber Command, is RAF Waddington. Motto 'For Faith and Freedom'. The base is so proud of its heritage that it has a visitors' heritage centre to show it off but its website is silent on its role as home for Her Majesty's official assassins, for it is from RAF Waddington that the Reaper drone was piloted and fired its missile at two British citizens in Syria. It was previously the home of Britain's hugely expensive and totally useless Vulcan bombers.

Believe it or not

The Vulcan bomber whose replacement front wheel cost £70,000 has been on a farewell tour around the country. Perhaps you caught all the excitement in the media. In the case of one event apparently the police were so concerned about crowd numbers that they threatened to cancel it. Horror! All very interesting. The cost of keeping this useless bomber flying has become prohibit, so no more entertainment by a billion pound doomsday machine.

The Vulcan was part of Britain's nuclear MAD force (Mutual Assured Destruction for younger readers) and only managed to fly in 'anger' in its declining years to the Falklands causing little inconvenience to the Argentinians. Its extraordinarily long flight (record at the time) undertaken is suspected more as a last desperate bid for more cash by the RAF than an expectation of any meaningful impact on the war in the Falklands.

The parading of military machinery for public entertainment is the 'innocent' part of militarisation though in the case funding the ancient Vulcan it was an expense too far for the government who stopped paying for its upkeep some years ago

At £3 billion an aircraft the 150 V bombers were the money obliettes of its day as Trident is today. The Trident missiles are made by Lockheed Martin who are generous contributors to the British

Legions poppy fundraising which would surely be redundant once the missiles do their business.

Sinister forces at work

David Cameron's long held wish to enlarge the Cadet Forces is finally taking shape. In his summer austerity budget George Osborn pledged £50 million to create cadet forces in 500 state schools. Most would be in 'less affluent areas'. This is a vast increase over the present 275 cadet units most of which are in private schools and already receive £26 million per year. Too few seem to ask why this expansion, in time of 'austerity' or indeed any time, is needed. It cannot simply be because the prime minister is a former cadet?

A key reason is revealed by an MoD spokesperson: 'Cadet units are beneficial to both society and



for recruitment into the Armed Forces, that is why we want to increase the number of them.'

The Combined Cadet Force website expands on the reason for such expansion: 'The Cadet

Expansion Programme is part of the Government's aim of promoting military ethos in schools; to instil values in young people that will help them get the most out of their lives, and to contribute to their communities and country'.

Lord Nash, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools, is also enthusiastic about cadet forces 'Teenage girls from single-parent families who had "never experienced the love of a man" could be deterred from forming "unsuitable relationships" if they enrolled in a cadet unit'. The power of cadet forces seem limitless.

The WW1 anniversary is a boon for military recruiters and military ethos promoters. On the army's website alongside an offer of some not very interesting stuff about WW1 is an 'option to request a soldier to support teaching activities within the classroom'

Touting for military recruits in schools may be bad enough and indeed the MoD faced mild criticism when it was revealed that it requested access to sensitive data in the National Pupils database so that it could "target its messaging" in relation to military careers, but 'inculcating the military ethos' is wholly unacceptable. This is the sinister part of the government's



Youth Engagement Review: Final Report
by Brigadier James Plastow CBE

militarisation project. While some fulminate about Trojan Horses, the silence around this multi million pound, multi agency indoctrination program is profound and we need to change this wherever we come across it.

.. and some heartening news

The Tunisian national dialogue quartet was awarded the Nobel peace prize, beating an array of high-powered nominees including Angela Merkel, the pope, the US secretary of state, John Kerry, and his Iranian counterpart, Mohammad Javad Zarif.

This prize, unlike many other peace prizes, comes close to Nobel's will: **to the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses.** Meanwhile the Nobel committee is being taken to court for misappropriating the fund by giving peace prizes to people such as Henry Kissinger, Barack Obama, Mother Teresa etc.

keir hardie centenary

Ben Copsey

One of the centenaries that threatens to pass by without a murmur in these years of remembering war is one of the most important in this country. On the 26th of September 2015, we passed by the 100th anniversary of the death of Keir Hardie, now no closer to his life than his was to Waterloo.

When great figures fade into myth, they leave behind them a legacy used by any politician who cares to remember their lives. "The Party of Keir Hardie", "the Movement of Keir Hardie", even "What would Keir Hardie Do?" have become familiar refrains as the many movements scrabbling to pick up the pieces of his legacy jockey for position, safe in the knowledge that the man himself can never contradict their policies.

The Peace Pledge Union, the Peace Movement as a whole, is one of those groups. We have our own vision of Keir, and that's who we will remember. "Our" Keir was a politician and a reformer, a tireless campaigner for suffrage and the unions. Our Keir was a pacifist and an internationalist.

As we work on our First World War projects, we can perhaps be forgiven for identifying most strongly with those who stood up before the forces of war and militarism long be-

fore 1914 was made a year to remember. It was Hardie, then, who united a disparate movement made up of radicals and moderates, idealists and pragmatists, internationalists and protectionists, turning it into the first modern Peace movement.

Keir's pacifism spoke of men and women around the world uniting against the vested interests that make war both possible and profitable. On the 29th of July 1914, he met with his comrades from around Europe - Jaures, Luxemburg, Axelrod, Balabanov and others, in a last great attempt to stop the oncoming horror. Their hope was that war could be delayed until a Europe-wide General Strike would send the message that no nation could force its people into the terror of war.

He returned undaunted, organising the largest anti-war demonstration yet seen in Britain (one only paralleled nearly 90 years later in 2003), which met in the last faithful days before the war, on the 2nd of August 1914. His argument was that war creates poverty for many and wealth for a few, that workers around the world were brothers and sisters, divided only by the arrangement of political relations for profit and, most damningly, that war always creates more problems than it solves.

It's these moments that matter

most to the Peace Movement, and these that we remember now. Keir's famous speech to the assembled crowds at Trafalgar Square forms a part not just of our collective memory, but a part of our offices, standing as it does as a mural welcoming visitors to the PPU. We draw a direct comparison between Keir's stand against the First World War and our work today - It was No then, and it's No now. He stands as he did on August 2nd, looking out over Trafalgar square not just through space, but through to us today and all those hundreds of thousands who have assembled in that place to protest the

beginning of many pointless and destructive wars.

Keir's reasons for campaigning against the looming war in 1914 are as applicable to any conflict today as they were then. One hundred years after his death, broken in body and spirit by the slaughter of men and women across Europe, his words and actions live on. A reformer, a politician, a member of parties and a founder of parties - but most of all a good man - and a pacifist.

Visit us to see the mural or get the postcards at www.ppu.org.uk/ppushop



Painting the Hardie mural.

It is important that the PPU engages with schools to provide an alternative perspective

Writing for Peace

Peter Glasgow

In this time of centenary commemoration of World War One, the Peace Pledge Union is providing a different way of looking at the conflict by introducing a Writing for Peace competition for schools in the UK.

We hope that teachers and their pupils will be interested in the Peace Pledge Union's 2015 Writing for Peace Competition.

Entries may be by individual pupils only and the winning school will receive a prize of £500; a prize of £250 will go to the runners up and £150 to the third place. In addition the three winning submissions will take pride of place, within a collection of other commendable submitted works, on the PPU web-site.

Pupils are being asked, in no more than 500 words of prose or

poetry to express how a Conscientious Objector who refuses to kill or a man or woman opposed to the war may have felt during the First World War as they strove to make words of peace as resounding as those that were championing war.

The character could be a wife, a mother, a sister, a suffragette, an anti-war activist, a disillusioned

munitions worker, a socialist, an anarchist, a soldier, a conscientious objector, a father, a brother, a priest or a trade unionist. In other words there is a great choice.

We are reminding schools that the Peace Pledge Union publication, Refusing to Kill, provides a comprehensive history of Conscientious Objection in World War 1 which includes the

stories of men who in the First World War refused to take part in the killing of strangers – of men like themselves. The latest publication has been updated with a chapter on the Women's Peace Movement in World War One.

Judges will be looking for imaginative approaches, that demonstrate empathy for an anti-war stance, engage the audience whilst showing some understanding of the context of the First World War.

They will also expect budding authors and poets to write clearly, effectively and imaginatively using persuasive phrases and words that are accurately spelt and grammatically correct that develop lucid and meaningful compositions. Expectations that in effect mirror Ofqual guidance for creative writing.

I am currently undertaking the task of trying to directly contact, by name, Heads of Department of English in schools across the country. This entails going onto each School website, identifying the appropriate contact and then e-mailing the schools with relevant information and an applica-

tion form.

The deadline for entries is Friday 29 January 2016 with email entries being headed Writing for Peace and sent to Peace Education Officer The Peace Pledge Union 1 Peace Passage London N7 0BT.

Thus far I have contacted over 1300 schools in England and bearing in mind the deadline date I reckon I still have some time to tackle Wales and Scotland!

The military is targeting schools via Community Engagement Teams that as well as promoting recruitment to the armed services also offer a very one sided and positive view of military life and war very much at odds with a reality. It also omits to include any references to the devastating impact on civilians who are on the receiving end of British military force. In the words of Ben Griffin, founder of Veterans for Peace UK "the aim is to build unquestioning support for the military among the general population, especially the young". For more information about Veterans for Peace UK go to www.veteransforpeace.org.uk

It is therefore important that the PPU continues to try and engage with schools to help provide an alternative perspective. Within the information that is currently being sent out to the schools is a downloadable flyer that is located within the Education section of the PPU website; a section that is

currently being updated and which introduces some new teaching and learning materials including those related to school assemblies. I have suggested in my e-mail to Heads of Departments and teachers that this flyer entitled Are Your Pupils Getting a Balanced Educational Diet could be pinned up on their staffroom notice boards. So it may be that even if pupils don't participate in the Writing for Peace Competition then teachers may be alerted to the fact that if they don't think the balance is right then the PPU is in a position to offer, support,

advice and teaching material on a variety topics.

Please pass on information about our Writing for Peace Competition to anybody you feel may be interested and If you have any ideas about how the PPU could further its work in engaging schools in peace education or wish to participate in such activity don't hesitate to contact me.

peaceeducation@ppu.org.uk

For teaching and related resources visit www.ppu.org.uk/learn

women making peace

Lucy Beck

When the PPU began to write biographies for its website of the Men who Refused to Kill, the conscientious objectors of WW1, I knew this needed to be balanced with accounts of the women who supported them and worked for peace (as women were not conscripted in WW1). This led me on a journey of discovery researching the lives of some amazing and formidable women. I have been privileged to know a few in the PPU - such as Sybil Morrison, Myrtle Solomon and Hilda Morris - but I was ignorant about their predecessors. I now know a lot more about the struggle for women's suffrage, and the way in which the

peace movement benefitted in WW1 from many women who had learnt their political and campaigning skills struggling for the right to vote. There were the women who devoted themselves to the No Conscription Fellowship, those who helped arrange the Women's conference in the Hague in 1915 which led to the foundation of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (now celebrating its centenary), and remarkable individuals like Emily Hobhouse and Sylvia Pankhurst: some of their inspiring stories can be found on the PPU website including my favourite Unknown Grandmother.

In September WILPF UK and Pax Christi (supported by the First World War Peace Forum and Ekklesia) arranged a joint conference on 'Women & Peacemaking - Personal & Political - finding energy today, following the women of 1915'. The title reflected their aim of linking the work of WILPF in WW1 with women campaigning today on issues of war and peace. I think only a conference arranged by women would have asked the speakers to relate their own personal experiences to their current peacemaking, which brought a lot of powerful issues to light. The most moving speaker was Marie-Lyse

Numuhoza, a survivor of the genocide in Rwanda and a refugee who had eventually finished her long escape by reaching the UK. She works over here with fellow Rwandans - and here both Tutsi and Hutu Rwandans work together for peace. She told us of Victoire Ingabire Umuhoya, serving a 15 year prison sentence for working for democracy in Rwanda, and Mama Khadiga Hussein from the Sudanese Mothers for Peace, working here and in Sudan, who has also served prison sentences in the past there and has collected 2 million signatures on a women's peace petition. WILPF are reach-

ing out to similar voices from Africa by relating to different African communities here who campaign for peace in their own country.

We also heard from Mia Tamarin, an Israeli woman CO who had also spoken at the First World War Peace Forum ceremony on International COs Day this year. She had served prison sentences for her peace witness. Mary Dobbing spoke in particular about her work with the Afghan Peace Volunteers, an amazingly

brave small group of men and women pursuing non-violence in the midst of the war and chaos of their country. They have recently started the campaign hashtag Enough! - writing this on their hands and posters. Conference participants joined in with a group photograph saying #Enough! They are using social media to reach

out around the world, taking part in Global Days of Listening, where groups (including schools) can link up on

Skype. (Anyone communicating with them is asked to refrain from

using religious references or language.) They are actively supported by the Voices for Creative Nonviolence. Finally Virginia Moffatt spoke of her years of work campaigning on peace issues in this country such as drones and how to fit this in with bringing up her family - social media providing a tool for action from home.

Many years ago I joined a WILPF delegation to Belfast and Dublin. It was a very powerful few days learning about the Northern Ireland conflict, and being brought face to face with those at the sharp end of conflict. I met some wonderful campaigners for peace and valued that experience of reaching out to those working on the ground, trying to listen and learn before taking positive action, which I think is the success of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom 100 years after they began. I am grateful for the chance to hear from some brave campaigners of today.



Migration, climate and security: the choice

PAUL ROGERS

The forces driving people's movement into Europe were already apparent in a near forgotten incident of 1991.

In August 1991, with the world's media dominated by the chronic instability in Russia and the aftermath of the violent eviction of the Iraqi army from Kuwait earlier that year, a sequence of events in the Adriatic Sea provides an uncanny foretaste of the current surge of desperate people across the Mediterranean from north Africa, as well as overland from Syria through Turkey, Greece and beyond.

One consequence of the collapse of the Soviet bloc was the disintegration of the already weakened Albanian economy in the winter of 1990-91. The long-time leader Enver Hoxha, who died in 1985, had bequeathed a stagnant and unstable economy which, by the end of the decade, was ensuring increasing poverty in an already poor country. In the early months of 1991, many young Albanians were attempting to get across the Adriatic to a better life in Italy. They had little success.

Then, in August, the situation had become so desperate that merchant ships were hijacked by thousands of young people, especially in the port of Durrës, and the crews forced to set sail for Italy. At least 10,000 of them were on the 8,000-tonne merchant ship *Vlora* – some reports said twice that number – when it made the 200-kilometre crossing to the southern Italian port of Bari. Caught by surprise, the police there tried and failed to stop the refugees coming ashore; some even jumped overboard to swim towards land. The incident made news across Europe, at least for a couple of days, but then the media moved on.

Faced with this huge number of sudden arrivals, the police rounded them up and detained them in the only place in the city that could handle such a number securely, namely the local football stadium. There, they started the process of enforced repatriation to Albania. A few were allowed to stay; most were forced home. But the Italians did at least provide substantial financial aid to the faltering government in Tirana, and even arranged for Ital-



ian army units to distribute food within the country.

Within a few months, Albania began to make a slow and tortuous recovery. All that was left of the experience were images of desperate people jumping off a ship and trying to get ashore. Today, however, the resonance with people clambering ashore from flimsy dinghies onto Greek islands – or facing police in the centre of Budapest – is all too apparent.

The long-term view

Over the years since it began in 2001 prescient comments were made in 1974 by the economic geographer Edwin Brooks. He warned of a dystopic world that had to be avoided: 'a crowded glowering planet of massive inequalities of wealth buttressed by stark force yet endlessly threatened by desperate people in the global ghettos'.

This is a forewarning of the experience of recent months: namely, desperate people fleeing the war-zones of Syria,

On 7 August 1991, the Albanian ship *Vlora* docked at the Port of Durrës, twenty miles west of Tirana, with a cargo of Cuban sugar. Thousands of people, desperate to leave Albania in the first throes of its 'transition' from communism, boarded the ship and prevailed on the captain to take them to Italy. The *Vlora* arrived in Bari the next day. According to a Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe report from January 1992:

After several hours of waiting in the port of Bari, the Italian authorities allowed the Albanians to disembark for humani-

tarian reasons and led them to La Vittoria Sports Stadium. As the Italian authorities started forced repatriation using military transport planes and ferries, clashes broke out between policemen and Albanians. The Albanians barricaded themselves in the stadium refusing to return to their country; some 300 succeeded in escaping.

The Italian authorities offered the Albanians 50 000 lire (40 US dollars) each and new clothes if they would return home. As this offer did not attract the Albanians, forced repatriation continued.

Photographs of the Vlora's passengers disembarking in Bari have been circulating on the internet this month: first with claims that they show migrants from Libya or Syria heading to Europe now; then, a few days later, with the facts, setting the historical record straight. Falsification can turn out to be a useful reminder of the past, once you've identified it. But even if the pictures had been taken in Tripoli yesterday, and the crowds of people were coming from the Middle East, how would that alter the obligations of countries like Italy under the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees?

LRB

Afghanistan and South Sudan and the repression of Eritrea; but also of the millions more who face relative poverty and marginalisation, not least across sub-Saharan Africa.

There has been some humanitarian reaction in Europe to these forces. But the more general response has been the "securitisation" of the issue, whereby migrants are seen as threats. One head of government, the UK's David Cameron, deliberately used the term "swarm" to describe the few thousand migrants who had got as far as Calais – though these actually form a tiny proportion of the hundreds of thousands of people desperate to get into Europe.

It may be that over the coming months, humanitarian concern will prevail and European states will find ways to cooperate more effectively. But the prognosis is not good. And in the longer term, an extension of the securitising approach will be even more damaging as it is applied not just to the movement of people but to the closely related area of climate change.

A recent article by Nick Buxton and Ben Hayes focuses on this issue. It points to the manner in which the future effects of climate change are being seen as threats to the wellbeing of comfortable peoples in the west, implying that what is needed is to put much more emphasis on maintaining security rather than preventing the excesses of climate disruption.

Where the two elements come together – current migration issues and future climate disruption – will actually be in Europe. Around the continent are large centres of population in the Middle East, south-west Asia, north Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, where climate change, if not prevented, will lead to marked decreases in rainfall with declining food production and consequent social and economic hardship. The asymmetric nature of climate change as it is now being understood means that these large regions surrounding one of the richest parts of the world will have the greatest difficulties. As a result, they are likely to become drivers of migration to a far larger extent, with numbers measured not in the hundreds of thousands but in millions.

In these circumstances, the consequences of securitising these issues will be huge, far greater than anything yet experienced. For this reason alone, it is essential that the current crisis is handled

primarily with humanitarian concern, rather than by trying to "close the castle gates" – which in any case is impossible in a globalised system. What happened to the Vlora nearly twenty-five years ago sharpens the choice over these possible futures. opendemocracy.org

Conscience on trial

Peter Glasgow

Bill Rowe, a conscientious objector and geordie from a harsh working class background, reviews his life and the decisions he has made whilst languishing in cell and prison infirmary in 1941. After months of incarceration and cruel treatment he is suffering from life threatening tuberculosis; ensuing flashbacks to an unhappy childhood on Tyneside, an awakening conscience and subsequent experiences at the hands of a brutal judicious system are ably related.

This first novel by Tom Wall, a journalist living in London, is an inspiring book. It succeeds in covering the complexities of the political landscape of the 1930s without losing the dynamism of a gripping read. It describes struggles of socialists (particularly those in the Independent Labour Party, ILP) in their opposition to the remorseless drift to war. A war that was championed by the establishment whose aims were some distance away from those that are now commonly lauded and distilled as a noble story of a fight for freedom against totalitarian oppression.

The myth of the People's War with an acquiescent, happy and

plucky cockney population is also punctured as descriptions of looting and violent anti-social behaviour in the East End are articulated when Bill attends a farcically unjust Tribunal in London.

There are resonances for today's austerity Britain.

Cogent arguments from an ILP activist about increasing welfare spending in order to help stimulate an ailing economy are contrasted with a perceived lack of solidarity from Labour politicians.

The following spoken by an ILP member in reference to Ernest Bevin's position 'Tell me what would happen if New York bankers again withheld loans until cuts are made' would require only a little judicious alteration to make it apposite to the current situation in Greece and/or the election of a Labour Party leader in 2015.

Bill's Dad (a man whose life has been shattered by his experiences during World War One and as a result has an abusive relationship with his family) expounds, 'I-I-I've been Labour all me life, son. But this shower. They've bankrupted the country. At least the Tories and Liberals know how to handle m-m-money'.

Bill's teacher, after she's found out that half the fathers in a class of 50 pupils are unemployed, says Marvellous children. All done. Let's hope our headmaster asks for sensible prudent measures when he writes to Mr Macdonald, because those of us in work cannot support any more wild spending sprees. That's what got us into this mess.

Stalwarts of the left and of the anti war movement such as Fenner Brockway and James Maxton make appearances whilst Mahatma Gandhi and George Orwell also get a brief mention. All relevant and appropriate but perhaps a more nuanced approach would be appreciated in this novel. Credulity is beginning to strain when Bill, on his first day of work as an apprentice, becomes involved in an industrial dispute and, perhaps a touch stereotypically, a union shop steward becomes the foreman and then knocks about with the brown shirts.

It is very clear though where the author stands on all the big issues and it's perhaps none the worse for that. In any case when addressing such momentous and clear issues of principle such as the adoption of an unpopular and personally damaging anti war stance, there is a strength in putting to one side positions of nuance and ambivalence. This is a powerful and heart-wrenching novel that reminds us of the importance of sticking to our principles and it is well worth the read.

The Coward. Tom Wall. 2015

Each of us possesses proclivities, skills and spheres of influence that enable us to make a difference

We can stop wounding the world

We are a peaceful people. Few of us actually enjoy hurting others; even enthusiastic sadists ensure their partners have a safe-word in case delight turns into distress. Most people recognize the look of pain on other people's faces, even if they are strangers. Many of us actively seek to reduce or eradicate other people's suffering. One of the ways we can do this is by resisting the militarisation of our society.

The first step is acknowledging that it doesn't have to be this way: we can decide not to remain helplessly enthralled to military ideologies, practices and symbols. One of the most debilitating myths for people seeking to forge more peaceful worlds is the assertion that armed conflict is inevitable. So many times when writing this book I have been told that wars have 'been part of the human condition since the struggle between Cain and Abel, and regrettably they are likely to remain so.' Pacifist pronouncements are often portrayed as hopelessly utopian, and one strand of the political left worry that they forestall the possibility of armed struggle from below, or by the oppressed.

Does this make me a naive romantic? No. I am optimistic for three reasons. The first is that the history of humanity has been one of cooperation more than competition. Armed conflict between

nations is not inevitable. It is helpful to remind ourselves that conventional wars today are creations of sovereign states. Equating international wars with spontaneous individual aggression is simply wrong. Wars serve instrumental purposes; they involve the investment of trillions of dollars, pounds, euros, roubles or yuan. They are a social activity. As such, they can be unmade as well as made.

But secondly, I don't think that pacifism is a dangerous fantasy that will hamper the struggle against tyrants. Armed struggle by the oppressed is no longer the way in which revolutions take place. There is no Bastille or Winter Palace to storm. In the twenty-first century, radical change of the social and economic order demands different approaches.

The final reason it is not a utopian dream is because disobedience and defiance are what it means to be human. As political philosopher Costas Douzinas reminds us, 'Humanity starts in disobedience. Adam and Eve defy God's command and leave the Garden of Eden. Prometheus steals fire from the Olympian Gods and gives it to men alongside writing, mathematics, agriculture, medicine, starting civilization . . . Humanity is born in acts of disobedience, defiance, and resistance.' Throughout human history, wherever there is

power there has been resistance.

If the first step requires acknowledging that we don't have to passively accept the inevitability of war and violence, subsequent steps are more difficult to identify. Personally, I don't have any patience for dogmatists. Activists who insist on laying out rigid blueprints for a better world fail to engage with the awe-inspiring, creative diversity of human existence. Their cardboard cut-out figures are easily squashed by the vast corporate interests involved in armament design, production and use. We don't all have to join a peace movement (although I believe it is a good idea) nor should we expect everyone to demonstrate vociferously in the street.

Each of us possesses proclivities, skills and spheres of influence that enable us to make a difference in our own local contexts. Wherever we are situated - as homemakers, academics, labourers, shopkeepers, secretaries, publishers, journalists, civil servants, teachers, entertainers, novelists, artists, lawyers, doctors, scientists, unemployed and so on - we can make a difference globally. The only crucial element is this: a refusal to outsource political engagement.

Wounding the World - how military violence and war-play invade our lives. Joanna Bouke. Vitrago 2015. Joanna will be speaking On remembrance Sunday in Tavistock Sq (see p3)