

Defending the Earth

Under the title '*Defending the Earth*' the old R.S.F. website contained some interesting articles from some contributors to the SAOIRSE newspaper down the years. It is all very informative and factual reading leaning towards a humanitarian angle which is common among anti-imperialists the world over.

This PDF Document carries a small few of those articles from years back...

How the Raj was run – India under British rule

The Indian subcontinent is isolated from the rest of Asia by the Himalayas, the world's highest mountain range, flanked at one end by a vast desert and at the other by impenetrable jungles. Only a very aggressive, or very desperate, race of people would invade India by land.

Yet, from time immemorial waves of invaders have swept into India, only to find that India is a cul-de-sac: it tapers to a point and all the useful land is already occupied. Hence, what invaders have tended to do is to impose themselves on the existing population as a ruling elite. Then gradually they settle down and lose their warlike and predatory ways, only to be swept under by the next wave of invaders.

Invaders could either forbid intermarriage with the existing population or else encourage it. If they took the latter course they were usually assimilated within a couple of generations (as were, for example, Alexander's Greeks): while if they took the former course they became another layer in India's social hierarchy, which already in ancient times evolved into the caste system. Each invasion produced another wave of downward social displacement, with the earliest inhabitants at the bottom of the heap as the despised Harijans: the 'untouchables'.

Yet India was and is a very rich country, with fertile soil and a multitude of resources, and it has always attracted invaders. Alexander the Great attempted a conquest but had to abandon it after initial successes because his troops threatened mutiny. He introduced coinage to India. But India has neither gold or silver so that all bullion had to be imported. It proved impossible to keep gold in circulation because people either hoarded it or else converted it into jewellery. Silver coinage continued to be used. India's greed for gold became an important feature of classical economics.

The Roman Empire during its long decline lusted after the luxuries India could provide: the pearls and precious stones, the ivory and peacocks, the silk and spices, and despite the long distance an extensive trade developed. But all India wanted in exchange was bullion, and so the wealth of Rome inexorably went East, never to return.

THE MUGHALS

The Asiatic peoples who destroyed the Roman Empire and who continued to raid into Europe for a thousand years thereafter also attacked India: the Huns, the Khazars, the Arabs and the Turks all fought their way into India. The last such group were the Mughals. This nomadic race, originating in Mongolia, invaded India by way of Afghanistan and quickly conquered most of it.

The Mughals horrified the Indians with their habitual heavy drinking, their high taxes and their homicidal tantrums, but they created in India one of the world's great civilizations, whose achievements in art and architecture and civil engineering are still a marvel. The Mughals were

nominal Muslims but their rulers (with one exception) practiced religious toleration and, for example, employed Jesuits as advisers on political and scientific matters.

THE EUROPEANS ARE COMING!

The Portuguese found a sea-route from Europe to India around the Cape of Good Hope in 1498 and were thus able to trade directly with India, cutting out the Arab and Turkish middle-men. But they found that technically India was well in advance of Europe and that the Portuguese had nothing that India wanted apart from gold and silver, and they hadn't much of either. What they did have was superb ships, and they opened a trade route between India and China and prospered greatly as a result.

Other European countries tried to take a share of this trade and the Dutch in particular began to displace the Portuguese from many of the trade routes they had established. As England began to develop as a naval power, interest in trade with India also awakened and in 1600 the Honourable East India Company (which came to be known unofficially as the John Company, for reasons now uncertain) was formed in London as a trading conglomerate to try to get a part of India's valuable trade.

At first the John Company had very little success. It seems the Jesuits told the Mughals that the English were basically just pirates. However the emperor Shah Jehan (he who built the Taj Mahal) had a falling out with the Portuguese and expelled them from a trading station they had at a little village called Calcutta and assigned it instead to the John Company. Later, in 1661, the Portuguese made an alliance with England against the Dutch and as part of the treaty handed over to England their base at Bombay.

Thus England gained two toe-holds on India. A hundred years later the English were the real rulers of India and the Mughals had been reduced to apathetic puppets. Why the ferocious and energetic Mughals should have been reduced to such a state of indolence and lethargy is one of the great mysteries of history. Some scholars have suggested that they developed an addiction to opium and that this sapped their energy.

THE UPRISING

By the 19th century the John Company was itself running out of steam, and was heavily in debt to the London government.

In May 1857 an uprising against British rule broke out in the north of India. It was spontaneous and unplanned but it spread rapidly. The insurgents had no real aims, they seem to have just hoped to get rid of the hated European overlords and restart the Mughal Empire.

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The British withdrew into fortifications with their families and held off the rebels until troops from the garrison arrived to beat them back. The uprising, which the British always thereafter called 'The Indian Mutiny', collapsed in a few months, but the fright it gave to the British was devastating. Horror stories of the sufferings of wives and children cooped up in besieged forts were to be part of the education of English children for a century afterwards, and there were allegations of massacres of white settlers by the rebels.

Ruthless reprisals began at once. Anybody suspected of having taken part in any way in the uprising was killed. A favourite method of execution was to tie the suspect to the muzzle of a cannon, which was then fired.

FOUNDATION OF THE RAJ

A year after the uprising the London government decided to wind up the John Company and take over direct control of India. This was formalised in the Government of India Act of 1858.

India would be ruled by a viceroy with the help of a large centralised bureaucracy. One important consideration was that India should be run at a profit. All the cost of administering India had to be met out of the revenues of India, as had the cost of the British military garrison stationed in India.

On top of this India had to pay the 'Imperial Contribution': a portion of the British domestic budget, usually about 15 per cent, supposedly to cover the cost of shared facilities like the diplomatic service. Finally there was a 10 per cent import duty on all goods imported into India and paid directly to London, as compensation for alleged losses in the 1857 uprising.

The budget had to be balanced: there was to be no Indian equivalent of the National Debt. The two main sources of revenue were a tax on land inherited from the Mughals and the John Company's opium monopoly.

The last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah, was deported to Rangoon and placed under house arrest there, but was never formally deposed. After he died Victoria assumed the title Empress of India.

THE INDIAN CIVIL SERVICE

During the 90 years of the Raj, the period of direct British rule over India, the running of India was in the hands of the Indian Civil Service (ICS). All former employees of the John Company were taken on automatically, with continuity of service and retrospective pension rights. Thus the ICS inherited all the subaltern personnel and all the attitudes and psychology of its predecessor.

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Recruitment into the ICS was by interview, held in London. Rules of recruitment made sure that only persons educated in England's posh boarding schools were eligible. The ICS came to be seen as something of a last chance career option for those who failed to get into either university or military college. It also had a certain appeal to persons of the school bully type, for in India an Englishman's word was LAW.

For nearly a century these administrators, with their white sun helmets and boyscout shorts, ruled India, scowling and snapping out orders left and right; each of them never without a little cane for pointing and prodding. It was drummed into them that they must never admit to having made a mistake, as this would lower their esteem in the eyes of the 'natives'.

Retirement age was 55, because it was felt that Indians should see Englishmen only in the prime of life. England soon became full of retired ICS officials living out their pensions: they became the backbone of the English political right and their experiences in India, where they had been Lords of all Mankind, made them very protective of the class system.

The task of the ICS was to run India at a profit. The local administrator in an area was magistrate, chief of police, press censor and everything else but his official title was Collector and his primary task was to ensure that revenue came in on time and in full.

Enthusiasts for Empire have always held up the ICS as a shining example of dedication, honesty and paternal concern for the 'natives'. Closer examination reveals a different picture. The John Company had paid no pensions: instead employees were supposed to provide for their retirement themselves by engaging in 'Commerce' in their spare time. A better method of encouraging corruption would have been hard to devise. The ICS paid very generous pensions, but it had inherited the personnel and practices of the John Company. Young men arriving in India direct from boarding schools in England were expected to adopt an ostentatious lifestyle, with servants, polo ponies and the rest, and could hardly avoid getting into debt. Brought up to believe that 'natives' are all inherently dishonest, and lodged in a bureaucracy without control mechanisms where arrogance and bluster served to cover one's tracks and where permits were needed for everything, it was all too easy to start what was politely called 'shaking the pagoda tree'.

Nor was India governed particularly well. Under the Mughals it had been an exporter of food, under the Raj there were frequent famines. India was starved of capital and was kept backward. The development of industries was discouraged as this would have provided competition for British factories. In agriculture the policy was to divert land from food production to the growing of exportable commodities such as indigo, hemp, cotton, tea, coffee and opium. Public works were mainly for the military: trunk roads for easy movement of troops, strategic railways, fortifications

and naval bases. The only major public works undertaking was an irrigation scheme on the Indus River: to grow tobacco and cotton for export.

THE BEGINNINGS OF NATIONALISM

India has about 200 language groups, making inter-regional alliance difficult. Hinduism is the major religion, but Muslims had been the dominant group from about 1100 AD until the arrival of the Europeans. In the Indus Plain and in Bengal the majority of the population were Muslims and elsewhere Muslims were to be found as a minority.

A third important religious group was the Sikhs, found mainly in Punjab. Between the religious communities there was neither much hostility nor much communication: for the most part they just ignored each other.

During the later part of the 19th century a new national leadership began to emerge in India, made up mostly of persons who had been educated in Europe and had absorbed progressive ideas there and were determined to rise above caste and sectarian interests. In December 1885 the Indian Congress Party was founded in Calcutta, with the aim of campaigning for 'Home Rule' on the model of the Irish Party at Westminster.

The major difficulty they faced in India was that there were no elections, and therefore no means of creating an electoral power base. Also any mention of self-government to the authorities brought an immediate response that Indians were uncivilized and unfit to run a country, followed by a long harangue about the 'bestial atrocities' of the

1857 UPRISING

In 1913 the Congress leader Jawaharlal Nehru actually visited Ireland and found that the younger nationalists had mostly decided that 'Home Rule' was a will o' the wisp and that to pursue it any further was a waste of time and whining at the English had never got them anywhere.

CURRENCY PROBLEMS

Coinage was introduced to India by Alexander the Great and imitation Greek coins continued to be minted by Indian rulers ever afterwards. The country had no resources in either gold or silver so that bullion for minting coins had to be imported. It proved impossible to keep gold coins in circulation; any amount of them disappeared into private hoards. In 1527 the Mughals introduced a single standard silver coin, the rupee (rupiya), with minor coins of copper or brass. The British continued to use the rupee, which was fixed at fifteen to the pound sterling.

The value of the rupee depended on the value of the silver it contained while the value of the pound sterling depended on the amount of gold in the sovereign. In the late 19th century, thanks to the discovery of vast deposits in Nevada, there was a world glut of silver and the value of the rupee began to fall.

But India had to pay out huge amounts of money each year assessed in sterling: the 'Imperial Contribution', the pensions of retired ICS people, the cost of the British garrison and so on. The fall in value of the rupee relative to sterling meant that more revenue had to be raised to meet the same expenditure.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR

In August 1914 England declared war on Germany. Officials of the Raj gleefully asserted that by Christmas the Union Jack would be flying over Berlin, but within a few weeks the proud British Expeditionary Force had been routed at the Battle of Mons and was in full flight across the Marne, and they were obliged to change their tune.

They approached the leaders of Congress and offered a deal: support the war effort and afterwards we promise rapid progress towards Home Rule. Taking them at their word the nationalists, including the pacifist Gandhi, publicly appealed to Indians to enlist: even though Germany was a country with which India had no quarrel.

Over a million Indians joined the British Army, and of these about 36,000 were killed and ten times as many wounded. But Indians had to endure the racist contempt of the British they fought alongside.

The highest rank an Indian could reach was Subahdar-major (Sergeant-Major) and this did not rate even as high as a corporal in an English regiment. An old officer's mess toast ran: "To Tommy Atkins our pride and joy / He can call the Subahdar-Major BOY!"

During the war two new troubles arose. In the Sikh community there was much resentment because a party of several hundred Sikhs that had travelled to Canada on the assumption that, being technically citizens of the British Empire, they were entitled to settle there, were on arrival in Vancouver thrown into prison and held there until deported back to India. Among Muslims there was unrest when England declared war on Turkey, a Muslim country.

THE POST-WAR LUNATIC PHASE

During the war India had been required to pay the entire cost of Indian troops serving overseas and also had to raise over half a billion pounds to pay for war supplies requisitioned in India.

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After the war the British in India appear to have gone through a phase of madness. This was probably due to the influence of war propaganda, combined with survivor-guilt following very heavy war losses: particularly among the English social classes from which the garrison was largely drawn.

First of all, the viceroy announced that India would make a gift to England of one billion pounds as a contribution to the cost of the war. Secondly it was decided to build a new capital city in white marble in the desert near Delhi, the old Mughal capital.

Then an attempt was made to issue a gold coinage. Many millions of gold sovereigns were minted and put into circulation. (British 1918 sovereigns bearing the Calcutta mint-mark are today collector's curios). At the same time a new Indian gold coin, the mohur, valued at fifteen rupees and struck from the same blanks as the sovereigns, was also issued. No sooner was this done than it was decided to revalue the rupee from fifteen to the pound to ten to the pound. This meant that there were now two coins in circulation containing the same amount of gold, but one was worth 50 per cent more than the other!

There was a coup in Afghanistan and this inspired the British to launch an invasion of that country. They found — like the Russians half a century later — that Afghanistan is covered in very high mountains, there's nothing to eat and the inhabitants are all crack shots. In less than a year they had to withdraw in disorder.

There was unrest and sporadic rioting in many areas. In April of 1919 a demonstration in Amritsar was broken up by troops. It was alleged that two Englishwomen had been assaulted by rioters and in reprisal Indians were made lie down in the streets and crawl along on their stomachs.

A few days later large crowds flocked into Amritsar — actually to attend a religious festival — but the authorities surmised a riot was planned and ordered troops to open fire. Over 400 people were killed. The officer who gave the order to fire, General Dyer, was relieved of his command and sent back to England, where he was hailed by the Tory press as 'The Lion of the Punjab' and treated as a national hero.

At the same time an influenza epidemic swept India and several million people died. On top of this the two main revenue earners for the Raj, the opium and indigo markets, both collapsed.

There was a budget deficit in 1921 and again in 1922. The British sought a remedy by introducing a tax on salt.

Of all the things they ever did, nothing created more support for the nationalists than the salt tax. A massacre in Amritsar might not mean much to a coppersmith in Madras, but a tax on salt affected everybody.

ENTER, AND EXIT, THE PRINCES

As pressure for governmental reform grew, the British began to look around for ways of obstructing progress in that direction, and they turned to the 'Princes' for support.

The 'Indian Native States' made up nearly half the area of India. There were about 600 of them: mostly very small though the half-dozen largest were bigger than Ireland. The rulers of these petty states had been under the domination of the Mughals in a kind of feudal arrangement and had managed to patch up various deals with the British allowing them to maintain some of their wealth and power.

Each ruler had to pay an annual levy to the Raj 'towards the defence of India' — defence against whom was a question they were not permitted to ask — and were otherwise mostly left to their own devices. However each of them had assigned a 'British Resident' whose advice was expected to be taken. Misbehaving maharajahs could find themselves deported to the Seychelles Islands; there to live out their years playing whist with the likes of the queen of Uganda, the sultan of Johore or the archbishop of Cyprus.

These 'princes' had no real social function: they were really only glorified landlords and tended to degenerate into playboys. But it was to them that the British turned, knowing that there was a mutual interest in preventing political change in India.

A 'Council of Princes' was set up, intended to become eventually an Indian version of the London House of Lords. In 1926 the viceroy announced: "The relationship between the Paramount Power and the Princes should not be transferred to any new legislature without their permission". So, the princes were to have a veto, but there was also a reminder as to Who was Boss: "The supremacy of the crown is not derived from treaties or engagements but exists independently." In 1935 the British brought in formal legislation to the effect that there could be no change in the way India was governed until half the 'native states' agreed.

The British promoted the princes as the representatives of India: consulting them and buttering them up in various ways. Now and then a visiting 'royal' would tog up in turban and jodhpurs and hold a 'darbar' (garden party) for them before going off to the hill country to try and shoot some large animals. But the princes proved to be of little use. Most of them never even bothered to

attend the council or take part in its deliberations: being more at home at the roulette table than the conference table, and before long the British wrote them off.

MOTHER INDIA

In 1927 the British had an unexpected stroke of luck. An American writer, Katherine Mayo, published a book called Mother India on the subject of child marriage in India and on sex among the Hindus generally. Indian leaders admitted that child marriage was indeed a problem in some remote areas but they claimed that the book was exaggerated and misleading, and an Indian professor published a scholarly refutation.

But Mother India became a best seller: not least because the author, who was a tabloid journalist, did not spare the reader the grisly details. The British promoted the book world wide, as did certain missionary organizations, and it was to do a great deal of harm to the nationalist cause. All over the world, readers taking the book at face value tended to accept the British argument that the Indians were savages and not fit to govern themselves.

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

Whatever the British did, the nationalists gradually increased in numbers and influence.

In some areas there were now regular disturbances. The British found it impossible to understand how their rule could be resented: for surely everybody knew that the British Empire was the envy of the world? They concluded that all the trouble was due to a 'tiny minority' who were 'in the pay' of England's enemies and that the solution was to impose all sorts of inconveniences on the population: curfews, searches, travel restrictions, collective fines and so on and that the people would blame the 'terrorists' and 'drive them out'.

This policy was at the heart of British colonial rule everywhere, and the fact that it manifestly does not work has never caused it to be abandoned.

Originally the Muslim and Sikh communities had given the British the most trouble, but the British now turned to these communities for support against the growing power of Congress. They were told by the British that while they were nowhere near the level of their white masters they were far superior to the Hindu majority. In the army and police Muslims and Sikhs were paid more and were given preference in promotion.

Nationalist attitudes also began to harden. The previous demand for Home Rule was replaced by a 'Brits Out' policy: Quit India. A well-organised campaign of passive resistance and civil disobedience was effective in convincing the British that they had better at least appear to be doing something.

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They went for delaying tactics: there were endless Royal Committees, Inquiries, White Papers, Parliamentary Commissions and the like.

Eventually they began discussions with Congress. They suggested setting up a Consultative Assembly to 'advise' the government: one third made up of elected representatives and the other two-thirds to be 'moderates' nominated by the viceroy. Though unimpressed, Congress tried to negotiate, and the British then began throwing all sorts of obstacles in their path: for example they suddenly came up with a demand that the 'depressed classes' (the Harijans or 'Untouchables') should have separate representation.

A leading Muslim member of Congress, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, broke away and formed his own rival Islamic organization, the Muslim League. Thereafter the British insisted that Jinnah be included in all negotiations and given parity with Congress. The process that led to the partition of India had begun.

The world economic crisis known as the Depression had a severe impact on India because most of India's exports were in the category of luxury goods, or at least goods that people could at a pinch do without.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

When England declared war on Germany in 1939 the viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, did the same on behalf of India. The British insisted that the German economy was on the brink of collapse and the war would be over in a few weeks. However, things had changed a lot since 1914: public opinion in India now had to be taken into consideration. An unofficial agreement was put together, the main points being:

India would make a once-only contribution of ten million rupees to the war effort.

War material bought in India would be paid for by India, but an equivalent sum would be lodged in a bank in London and paid to India after the war.

India would meet the cost of defending India.

The third item seemed a bit of an afterthought, since there was little chance the Germans would get as far as India, but by 1942 the Japanese had actually crossed the eastern frontiers of India and the war against them was eventually to cost India ten billion rupees.

Congress opposed participation in the war, and Gandhi publicly campaigned against recruitment. (Nehru, who more or less supported the war, was in prison.)

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With the fall of Singapore about 60,000 Indian troops were taken prisoner by the Japanese. An Indian nationalist who had been living in Japan, Subhas Chander Bose, organised an Indian National Army to fight with the Japanese and recruited about half the POWs. But the Japanese turned out to be just as racist as the British: they were contemptuous of soldiers who had given up so easily and suspected they might do so again given the opportunity. Bose himself complained that the INA was employed mending roads, unloading trains and in similar activities. It should be added that the INA was very short of officers.

Some Indians were led to believe that after the war Britain would give India self-government but in 1942 Churchill reassured his back-benchers that this would not be so. The Indians soon found out: even in wartime it proved impossible any longer to preach one line in London and another in Delhi.

In 1943 there was a major famine in Bengal, costing somewhere between three and six million lives. When the local naval commander (Admiral Mountbatten) organised shipments of food into the area he was personally reprimanded by Churchill, who told him to ignore the famine and concentrate on fighting the Japanese.

THE END OF THE RAJ

When the war ended the British assumed their Indian empire was safe and destined to last long into the future. The ICS continued to recruit young men, offering them life careers. But things had changed in the world.

Subhas Chander Bose was killed in a plane crash towards the end of the war, but his INA volunteers were now in prison camps in Burma and Malaya waiting for the British to decide what to do with them. The viceroy, General Wavell, regarded them as traitors and wanted to send them all back to their native villages and publicly hang them. But Indians who had fought for the British advised against it and suggested that a general amnesty would be the right solution.

The issue dragged on and on and caused much resentment in India and eventually led to unrest even in the Indian regiments in the army. When a few INA men were arraigned before court-martials staffed by Indian officers they were let off with verbal reprimands. Eventually the British released the lot.

Meanwhile the British withdrew all the silver rupees in circulation, replacing them with ones made of nickel. The silver was needed to pay Britain's war-debts. The war fund deposited in London was used to pay off various debts accumulated by the Raj over the years.

Britain began to lose control in India. In 1947 Lord Mountbatten was sent out as the last viceroy, with orders to pull out in as dignified a manner as possible. Six months later British troops lowered the Union Jack at the viceroy's residence for the last time, and then cut down the flagpole.

INDIA AND IRELAND

When the policies of the London government in Ireland and in India are compared similarities soon emerge. The 1798 uprising in Ireland was followed by the Act of Union, the abolition of the local puppet government, direct rule and the imposition of a top-down bureaucracy. The 1857 uprising in India was followed by the abolition of the puppet Mughal Empire, the arrival of a viceroy and direct rule. Both uprisings were put down with great cruelty. Both Ireland and India were systematically looted of their wealth, for despite their protestations the British were in both countries not to give but to take; and both experienced famines under direct rule.

In both countries the inhabitants were despised and treated with contempt. Even today London politicians at Stormont addressing the Irish on television tend to behave as if they are talking to spoilt nine-year-olds.

Divide-and-conquer by exploiting sectarian differences was a feature of British rule in both countries, and in both cases ultimately lead to partition. (This also happened elsewhere, examples are Palestine and Cyprus).

During the Second World War the British ambassador in Dublin, the bullying Sir John Maffey, was not a professional diplomat but a former colonial administrator who had spent most of his life in India bossing maharajahs around. In Dublin he acted as if he were still the British Resident in some obscure Indian Native State and de Valera was a slippery local ruler trying to get out of doing his duty to the Empire.

There was never much contact between Irish and Indian separatists: the Indians tended rather to look to the the Irish Party at Westminster as models of how to behave. It is known that after the Civil War a few Republicans offered their services to the Indians to help organize and train a rebel army, but Gandhi turned them down: he had concluded that if India rose in rebellion the British would massacre millions of people and that India should rely rather on its huge population uniting to make the Raj unworkable and that way force the British to withdraw.

The Basque Country

“In order to understand this feeling, it can be compared with that of an individual who has a place in a political scheme of things which recognises individuals but not people. If someone were to be asked whether he would like to enjoy the same health as another person, to be as beautiful, as youthful, or as well-off, he would doubtless reply in the affirmative. But if he were to be asked whether he would like to become that other person, he would reply that he would certainly not. Each individual wishes to have the advantages enjoyed by others, but without becoming them, without renouncing his own self. This feeling of identity is well understood at the individual level but not at the collective, or so it would seem; it is, however, a simple, elementary and potent feeling.”

— Luis Nunez Astrain. The Basques. Their struggle for independence.

Provinces of Euskal Herria, Euskadi

Spanish

Alava

(Araba

in

Guipuzcoa

Vizcaya

Navarra

French

Basse

Labourd

Soule (Zuberoa)

jurisdiction

Basque)

(Gipuzkoa)

(Biskaia)

(Nafarroa)

jurisdiction

(BeNafarroa)

(Lapurdi)

Pamplona, the capital of Navarra, is also the former Basque capital.

Saint-Jean-de-Port is the capital of Bassa Navarre, which is under French jurisdiction.



Basque Country covers an area of 20,000 square kilometres.

Population 2,873, 512

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254,194 live in the northern part under French jurisdiction (Census 15 March 1990) 2,623,318 live in the southern part (Census 1 March 1991)

Centres of population Bilbao (Bilbo) with nearly 500,000, Pamplona (Irunea), San Sebastian (Donostia) and Vitoria (Gazteiz) have about 170,000 inhabitants. Bayonne, in the French area has about 50,000 inhabitants.

The provinces in the French area Labourd, Soule and Basse Navarre are administered by the French departement of Pyrenees-Atlantiques along with the Bearn. The prefecture is situated in Pau, the capital of the Bearn.

The three western provinces, in the Spanish area, Alava, Guipuzcoa and Vizcaya are designated as one of the 17 Autonomous Regions of the Spanish State and are known as the Comunidad Autonoma Vasco (CAV): The Autonomous Basque Community). Its capital is the town of Vitoria.

Navarra south of the Pyrenees is another Autonomous Region and is known as the Comunidad Foral Navarra (The Foral Community of Navarra)

The CAV comprises three provincial mini-parliaments called Juntas Generales, each composed of 51 members. Their main function is to formulate and control the Diputacion of Executive Committee of each province. There is also, for all three provinces, the Autonomous Parliament of Vitoria (with 75 members), a legislative body, on which the so-called Government of the Basque Country depends.

The Foral Community of Navarra has a single legislative body, the Parliament of Navarra with 50 members, on which the government of Navarra relies.

“The only official recognition of the totality of the southern Basque Country [in the Spanish area] is a police project, known since 1983 as the Plan Zen (Zona Especial Norte) . . . it unites all four provinces in the fight against ETA.” (The Basques. Their struggle for independence).

The Basque language is Euskara, the oldest language in Europe. It is the only pre-Indo-European language spoken in Europe today. It was already in existence during the Bronze Age. Euskara has no known linguistic relations and is considered to be unique.

The provinces of Guipuzcoa, Labourd, Basse Navarre and Soule are the bulk of the Basque-speaking area. It is not spoken in parts of Alava, Navarra and Vizcaya.

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In 1717, Philip V addressed a secret decree to the corregidores of Catalonia which included the sentence: “The corregidor will take the greatest care to introduce the Castilian language, using the most moderate and sidcreet methods, so that only the result will be noticeable and not the means”.

During the first decades of the twentieth century there was a practice whereby at the beginning of a school day, a ring was given to a pupil who was required to pass it on to any other child caught speaking Basque. The pupil with the ring at the end of the afternoon was beaten.

The civil registration of children with Basque names such as ‘Inaki, Kepa, Koldobika and all others which flagrantly smack of separatism’, as a Spanish decree of 1938 put it, was banned.

The proportion of Basques speaking Basque in 1868 was 54% (estimated by Ldislao de Velasco). By 1991 it had been reduced to 23.7%.

NUMBERS AND PERCENTAGES OF BASQUE-SPEAKERS (1991)

Area	Pop	Speakers	%
Alava	272,447	25,300	9.3
Basse Navarre	29,298	18,897	64.5
Guipuzcoa	676,448	310,100	45.8
Labourd	204,598	53,195	26
Navarra	519,277	52,023	10
Vizcaya	1,155,106	212,600	18.4
Soule	16,298	8,915	54.7
Total	2,873,512	681,030	23.7

(Source: *Euskadi 1993* published by *Egin*)

THE FLAG



Sabino Arana Goiri, a native of Vizcaya, who founded the Partido Nacionalista Vasco (The Basque Nationalist Party) in 1895, devised the Basque flag. The flag consists of a red ground symbolising the people, the green diagonals of the cross of St Andrew, representing the traditional Basque laws, and a white cross, the symbol of Christianity. From about 1900 Sabino Arana began referring to the Basque Country as Euzkadi, a neologism composed of the root 'euzko', meaning Basque, and the suffix 'di', which implies the whole or the collectivity. The name Euzkadi (now spelled Euskadi) refers to the totality of the seven Basque provinces. A second nationalist party, Accion Nacionalista Vasca (Basque Nationalist Action) was formed in the 1930s while another group, based around the magazine 'Yagi Yagi' also existed.

Since 1932 the Basques have celebrated their national day, known as Aberri Egana.

The first Aberri Egana was held in Bilbao, the birthplace of Sabino Arana.

ETA



Another nationalist group emerged in 1952 known as Ekin (action). In December 1958 Ekin changed its name to Euzkadi Ta Askatasuna (The Basque Country and Liberty) or ETA for short. ETA carried out its first explosions in 1959 in the towns of Bilbao, Vitoria and Santander.

The first conference of ETA was held in 1962. Among the first things that ETA did were to denounce racism and replace it, as a priority, with an active defence of the Basque language. It also opposed the Christian Democratic ideology of the PNV with a radical secularism and a commitment to the cause of the working class.

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In 1962 a general strike was called in the provinces of Vizcaya and Guipuzcoa, and also in Asturias and eventually throughout the peninsula, causing the first state of emergency since Franco had seized power. The first measures by the French authorities against ETA took the form of house arrests.

In 1963 a group known as Enbata ('the strong wind from the sea which blows before a storm') was founded in the area under French jurisdiction. The group published a magazine of the same name.

ETA's fifth conference, held in two parts between 1966 and 1967, worked out the organisations basic principles, which remained in place up to the death of Franco in 1975. It brought together the theories of national and social liberation, adopting the term 'the Basque working people' and creating four wings to be responsible for its activities in the cultural, political, working class and military fields. The first part of the conference dealt with the expulsion of those who were seeking to convert ETA into a workers' party with a Spanish dimension.

In June 1968 the leader of the fifth conference, Txabi Etxebarrieta, a native of Bilbao, killed a policeman at a road-block. This was the first killing by ETA. A few hours later the police shot Etxebarrieta who became the first member of ETA to die in action.

ETA carried out its second killing the following August when a police torturer, Meliton Manzana was shot dead at his home in Irun. Following this the Franco regime declared a state of emergency in the province of Guipuzcoa.

In 1969 the police arrested almost the entire directorate of ETA. On Aberri Eguna in 1969 two young members of the PNV died when a bomb they were carrying exploded prematurely.

In December 1970 the military trial of 16 ETA members took place at Burgos. Six of them, accused of causing the death of the policeman Manzana were condemned to death. This sentence sparked off a wave of protests leading to a general strike and the kidnapping by ETA of the German Consul at San Sebastian. A new state of emergency was declared in the province of Guipuzcoa following the death sentences being handed down. The uproar at the verdict was such that Franco was obliged to publicly grant the accused a reprieve.

In 1973 ETA killed Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco, General Franco's second-in-command and President of the Spanish Government. The killing was carried out by means of a car-bomb. Towards the end of 1973 there was a split in ETA between the so-called 'political-military' and the 'military' wings.

In 1976 the 'political-military' wing decided to launch a legal political party which called itself Partido para la Revolcion Vasxa (Party of the Basque Revolution) known by its Basque initials of ETA.

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The 'political-military' wing was wound up in the 1980s, so the present ETA draws its roots from the 'military' wing in the split. In an interview broadcast by the German television station West-3 on April 12, 1994 ETA made the following statement: "Our struggle has always been and continues to be selective. If we use a booby-trapped car, it is to strike against our enemies, those who oppress our people, and no-one else. On the other hand, while we are aware that there have been mistakes in recent years, the victims werenot deliberately chosen. The way we operate does not and will not allow that. There have been blunders and errors and we have given much thought to preventing them from happening again. We try to use methods that will not result in the death of innocent people, for our sole targets are those who oppress the Basque people".

"Gora Euskadi Askatuta"

(Long live a free Basque Country)

Defending Iraq – destroying an entire society

(Reprinted from SAOIRSE – Irish Freedom, August 1999)

After being bombarded for months with war news, suddenly there's silence and the public are expected to forget it ever happened. However, urgent actions from Amnesty International show that Iraq is still being bombed.

More terrible than death by US bombs are the slow painful deaths from the US sanctions against Iraq. The world watches, while children (it's estimated up to 4,000) die every month from lack of clean water, food and basic medicines.

Three activists from Voices in the Wilderness, a group who break sanctions by taking medicines to Iraq, recently visited three hospitals and saw endless wards of children slowly dying of starvation and easily curable diseases.

Andrea Needham, who risked five years in prison for taking medical supplies without an export licence, reported that one hospital admits 130 children a day. There's little basic equipment and a limited choice of antibiotics. Due to the appalling sanitation and lack of clean water, the main illnesses are from infectious diseases like typhoid, dysentery and leishmaniasis, a disease caused by sandflies, now rampant because of the sanctions ban on insecticides.

The hospitals often run on one generator alone. She saw doctors in despair knowing they could cure, but struggling with little or no medicines. All of this in overwhelming heat with no air-conditioning. They are using industrial oxygen because the medical oxygen factory was bombed and the sanctions don't allow oxygen to be imported in case it is being used for "making bombs".

An added catastrophe is the current drought in Iraq which prevented 90% of the wheat and barley seed from germinating. Andrea said that seeing and hearing the terrible grief of mothers who had to watch their children dying from simple diseases, brought home the cruel and punishing impact of the sanctions. But despite the awful tragedies and deprivation caused by the policies of the British and US governments, she said that she and her friends were shown overwhelming hospitality and friendship from even the poorest families who offered to share their food with them.

Andrea Needham was one of four women imprisoned for destroying a Hawk aircraft and causing up to two million pounds worth of damage in 1997. Her report is available from Voices in the Wilderness at 12 Trinity Road, London, N2 8JJ and they would be delighted to be invited as guest speakers to any event.

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From August 6-9 Voices will be holding a fast and vigil outside 10 Downing Street, calling for an end to sanctions. It is exactly the ninth anniversary of the imposition of sanctions and also Hiroshima Day. Cork Youth CND will be doing a vigil and protest to link up with Voices, venue, Cork Airport, 4pm, August 6.

Denis Halliday, a Cork man, and UN humanitarian co-ordinator, who refused to assist the genocide in Iraq, said in his resignation statement, "we are in the process of destroying an entire society. It is as simple and terrifying as that."

The oil-for-food and oil-for-medicines deals are totally inadequate. One has to cynically remember that the West is interested in oil not people. Similarly in the Balkans, it was Kosova's mines worth billions which were the real reason so much weaponry was available to help the "humanitarian crisis".

It takes time for simple facts to filter through the barrage of media misinformation. Defending Britain's position, the Foreign Office diplomat Derek Fatchett claims: "Last year the government of Iraq precipitated a series of crises. The international community showed great patience and made intensive efforts to persuade Saddam to co-operate."

The Financial Times reports the reality that "Saddam's decision to cripple UNSCOM was triggered by the US refusal explicitly to commit itself to lifting the oil embargo if Iraq complied with disarmament requirements". It was Britain and the US who flagrantly provoked the final break-down of co-operation between Iraq and UNSCOM officials.

DEPLETED URANIUM

Bad enough that sanctions are, a country can become extraordinarily resourceful, self-sufficient, independent and pioneering, as Cuba has proved. But on top of that the US dropped 300 tonnes of depleted uranium (DU) on Iraq, which will effect the environment and generations for aeons to come. This uranium, misleadingly and benignly called depleted, is a by-product of the nuclear industry. Britain has excessive stockpiles of it.

DU-coated bullets have the "advantage" of being able to penetrate tanks and armoured cars, releasing a spray of radioactive material into the surrounding area. The dust is transported by wind and water, and enters the body through the lungs and stomach and open wounds, causing (amongst what little is known of its effect) cancer, liver and kidney and lung damage, and horrifically deformed babies.

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Grazing animals ingest the DU-coated vegetation and the contamination goes on and on . . . Leukaemia in children is reported to be spreading “like a weed”. One doctor admitted that doing his training in 1984 he didn’t see one case. Now there’s at least one child per week admitted to his hospital.

Depleted Uranium (DU) was used as “ballast” in the jet that crashed into a block of flats in Amsterdam’ six years ago, killing 43 people. It was reported (Irish Times, January 9) that over 850 people living in the area have since been treated for toxic illnesses connected to the radioactive fall-out from the DU in that crash.

In Castle Douglas, Scotland (where DU was first tested) statistics show the area to have the highest rate of childhood cancer. The results of Gulf War veterans who have been tested for radioactivity levels are still not publicised by the MoD.

Last February 1999, near Wolverhampton, there occurred what may have been Britain’s most serious radiation accident. A fire broke out in a metal plant involving DU and burned for hours out of control. Emergency services from three counties were needed to put the fire out. The local population and inmates of the nearby prison were not alerted that the prevailing winds were carrying Depleted Uranium fire dust all over the West Midlands. Despite assurances that “no radiation was detected”, fire officials were whisked off to British Nuclear Fuels to be tested for traces of DU.

Ramsay Clarke, former US Attorney-General and international human rights lawyer has called for a banning of testing, manufacturing and transporting of DU and immediate isolation of all DU weapons and waste with a massive clean-up operation with full medical care for those who have been exposed to it.

The Campaign Against DU (CADU) are linking with other campaigns to get the Geneva Convention’s ruling on DU upheld. Contact: CADU, One World Centre, 6 Mount Street, Manchester M2 5NS, England.

The UN resolution against DU was passed in 1996. Fifteen countries voted Yes, one (the US) voted No. Members of the 26-County parliament and Irish members of the European parliament should stand up and be counted about the above issues. Their silence is saying Yes.

“We will have to repent in this generation, not merely for the hateful words and action of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people.” — Martin Luther King.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOOD

All over the world, we are being faced with an all-out war over our right to eat uncontaminated food. Monsanto, not content with trying to control the world's seed supply are now attempting to buy India and Mexico's water supply! Monsanto call it the consolidation of the entire food chain. They would own the weather if they could! It is now known that the Allied Irish Banks (AIB) have invested 15 billion in Monsanto. Michael Smurfit donated to the Genetic Research Unit of Trinity College. Makes you wonder who else is financing Frankenstein's experiment.

Dr Patrick Reilly, head of Monsanto Ireland says, "the benefits of GM food would be food with added vitamins and minerals, and fruit and vegetables which last longer". On the environmental side [he said] "we could expect 40% reduction in herbicide use, which has to be good for farmer and consumer alike. We will see new strains of crops producing higher yields adaptable to unkind soil conditions, resistant to yet uncontrolled pests and diseases."

The plant kingdom, our major food source, is under serious threat from Monsanto. Fortunately many people are speaking out and demanding GM-free food.

Unilever, one of the world's largest food companies is going GM-free. Superquinn of Ireland is not using GM food in its own products, and with successful campaigning, it is hoped that their shops and others will insist on total GM-free food. Even the lowest of the low, McDonalds are unsure about using GM food. It is heartening to see a worldwide network of resistance growing.

A group of activist artists, FABRAGE (fabulous resistance against GE) disrupted a genetic engineering conference in California. The activists, mostly fashion models, ripped off their clothes and said they'd rather go naked than wear gene-spliced cotton. The apoplectic Monsanto reps had to watch, enraged, while the naked demonstrators distributed leaflets referring to "the revolving door between the FDA (Food and Drug Administration in the US), the Clinton government and Monsanto. FABRAGE's website is: <http://artactivist.com/artists>.

Scientists are coming out of the laboratories to warn of the flawed science driving the attempted take-over of our food supply. Professor Pusztí's findings caused him to be suspended for two years from his profession for daring to prove that GM potatoes drastically affect the body's immense system.

Molecular biologist Angela Ryan of the Open University cites important evidence from a report commissioned by the Norwegian government into the risks of GMO's which says that genetic engineering uses "Vectors" which ferry the spliced new gene into the host organism. These vectors are constructed from genetic parasites and viruses which are designed to cross species boundaries and ecological barriers. These can be inserted into the DNA of any plant, animal or human.

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Monsanto claim that the viruses in GM food are no more dangerous than the viruses we normally encounter in our food. This is a dangerous lie.

Natural viruses have a 'protein coat' wrapped around the DNA, making it difficult for the virus to jump barriers because the host organism recognises the invader with the coat on. Genetic engineers strip the coat off enabling the new gene to sneak in. These artificial vectors are designed to overcome the defence mechanism of the DNA. In the human body, this could reactivate dormant viruses, generate new ones and cause cancer and epidemics of food allergies. (Source: Gene-free magazine, July 1999.)

Dr Mae-Wan Ho, geneticist and biophysicist warns of the destruction of the body's immune system, which she believes is causing increased outbreaks of new diseases. She says that no one is monitoring for the effects of GM food on the guinea pigs, ie the people. At a recent cancer convention in London, it was proposed that cancer is an environmental disease, and the good news is that there's plenty we can do about it.

Creating a stink about the toxic substances in our food, air and water, and putting the onus on family doctors to lead campaigns locally for a cleaner environment and better health for everyone. It should also be their responsibility to help expose the terrible scandal about fluoride, which is still in our water supply and is another radioactive product that was sold to the unsuspecting public by the Yanks in the pretence that it prevents tooth decay. It is known to cause cancer, genetic damage, brain poisoning and is a component of the nerve gas Sarin, and also found in tranquillisers. It's been said that it's no coincidence that Maggie Thatcher, with her background in chemistry, initiated the very expensive fluoridation programmes in the north of Ireland and especially Long Kesh prison (source: Kindred Spirit, 1998).

The recent excellent news that three billion of EU money allocated to the 26 Counties will be withdrawn is a step in the right direction. That State has been violating environmental laws on toxic emission for years and failing to protect animal habitat and wild birds.

It is good that some EU Commissioners, Wulf-Mathies of Germany and Rigt Bjerregaard of Denmark are monitoring what's going on here and hopefully will not be fooled by the protestations of Heritage minister Síle de Valera who insists that everything is "being addressed" (source: Irish Independent, July 9, 1999).

If GM food was a drug, none of the "testing" would be allowed outside strict laboratory conditions. When the same manufacturers (Monsanto) made the "wonderful new defoliant" Agent Orange, they

insisted that there was “absolutely no risk”, and showed pictures of US soldiers pouring it on their bodies to prove it was harmless.

When later it was proved to cause cancer and birth defects they said “Anyone can make mistakes.” There are the same people who have their very dangerous technology in 90% of food at your local shop.

GROWING RESISTANCE

In Brazil, government officials have banned the GM company AGREVO from growing GM rice. In India the “Cremate Monsanto” movement of farmers and consumers are burning down fields of GM crops. In France the second biggest farmers’ union are ploughing up GM crops, as did Lord Peter Melchett, head of British Greenpeace. He was later released on bail, having destroyed three crop sites. For further information on British GM crop trial sites, check: <http://www.gn.apc.org/pmhp/dc/genetics/>

Monsanto has sought to get injunctions against anyone in possession of the Genetix snowball Handbook for Action which gives information to people who want to pull up plants at trial sites. Recipients of this book include Tony Blair, Bill Clinton and the Pope. The downloadable version of the book is available on: <http://www.gn.apc.org/pmhp/dc/backlash/>.

Even if Monsanto succeeds in closing down these British-hosted websites, mirror sites have been set up in Australia, Canada and Switzerland.

In Ireland the four “trial sites” of GM sugar beet are at Arthurstown, New Ross, Co Wexford; Shanagarry, Midleton, Co Cork; Teagasc, Oak Park, Co Cavan; and Tankardstown, Navan, Co Meath. (Thanks to the Environmental Protection Agency [EPA] for the information.)

Anyone who would like to harvest these sites would be doing future generations and us all a great service. Deep in our guts we know that we are all connected and co-dependent on all life. Only a totally GM-free situation should be acceptable. “Ironically, while the poor go hungry, it is the hunger of the poor which is used to justify the agricultural strategies which deepen their hunger.” — Vandana Shiva.

MEDICINE UNDER THREAT

The Irish Medical Board (IMB) have drafted legislation to control/eliminate the sale of herbal medicines which have been freely used for thousands of years. The IMB propose to clamp down on products “masquerading” as medicines, which promise to cure, alleviate or prevent disease.

Dr Frank Hallinan of the IMB said that any goods which even remotely imply a claim to cure or help illness will be under the spotlight. It is obvious that the huge multi-national Petrochem industries are

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behind all this. They thrive on people being ill. Natural medicines and homeopathic remedies and treatments are based on getting well and treating the root cause of illness. Orthodox medicine rarely does this. Even Comfrey (knitbone), once found growing outside every blacksmith's forge, garlic and St John's Wort, the natural anti-depressant will all come under Dr Hallinan's guillotine. It is a measure of the effectiveness of these simple and wonderful remedies that the medical board wants to outlaw them.

It would be good common sense if they put their laws on GM food instead, which is the real threat, or tackled all the dangerous and harmful drugs that have a licence, like non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDS). These are widely used drugs that mask pain and cause liver and kidney damage. It will be interesting to see how far they'll go in this witch hunt. Will barley water and cranberry juice, both known to have the ability to ward off urinary tract infections, be outlawed too? Urgent action is needed to put pressure on doctors, politicians etc to stop this happening.

Copies of this document can be had from: The IMB, Earlsfort Centre, Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2. Complaints can be written to Dr Hallinan at the same address.

For more information about this campaign contact: Consumers for Healthy Choice, PO Box 7122, Dublin 24.

— Mary Kelly, Atlantis Foundation Action Network (AFAN)

Sierra Leone, Britain and Mercenaries

The Dogs of War in the 1990s

(Reprinted from SAOIRSE – Irish Freedom, June 1999)

Britain's MI6 and the US Defence Intelligence Agency involvement with mercenary companies operating in Africa indicate that these private armies are being used for covert actions to continue to rob that continent's wealth.

In 1998, President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah of Sierra Leone returned from exile to Freetown and popular acclaim. He had been elected in 1996 with 59 per cent of the vote. He is a civilised man, who spent most of his career working for the UN Development Programme.

The soldiers who overthrew him in 1997 were, according to all accounts, a gang of brutal thugs. So, as British Prime Minister Tony Blair has remarked, "the good guys won", and that, he implied, should be the end of the matter. Well, not quite. There are aspects of Kabbah's restoration that are very worrying.

Sierra Leone is a small former British colony on the west coast of Africa. It originated in the late eighteenth century as a settlement of liberated slaves, whose descendants form the westernised elite of Freetown, the Krio or Creoles. At the time of the Scramble at the end of the last century a number of tribal societies in the hinterland, notably the Temne and Limba in the north and Mende in the south, were brought under British "protection" and administered from Freetown.

The country lived quietly under the colonial rule and obtained independence without much fuss in 1961, having been equipped with the usual set of representative institutions. Over the next decades the government became increasingly corrupt and authoritarian and by the early 1990s, when it was ranked 160th out of 160 on the UN index of development, the country was visibly crumbling.

There was anarchy in the diamond fields that were its main source of income; a messy civil war in neighbouring Liberia was spilling over the borders; and a guerrilla movement called the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) was making headway.

Up to this point the regime had remained nominally civilian, though since 1985 the President had been a former general; but in May 1992 a group of young officers led by Captain Valentine Strasser took over the government.

The Strasser regime was economically orthodox and was at first smiled on by the West, but before long it was in deep trouble. Though the army was greatly enlarged most of the recruits were hastily trained street kids, and it was unable to cope with the insurgents.

It was said that many were government soldiers by day and rebels by night. It has recently been remarked, in fact, that the root cause of all the trouble is “the appalling youth crisis in the country”, the presence of a “restless, vulnerable, alienated and impressionable stratum of the population” (West Africa, 6-26.7.98). This is of course a classic symptom of under-development, and it is not the whole of the story. Though poor in income Sierra Leone is rich in mineral resources, and the combination of a weak state and extricable wealth has made it a target for foreign commercial and political intrigues, with devastating effects.

THE COMING OF THE MERCENARIES

Strasser tried three ways out of his morass. First, he armed and organised tribal vigilantes called kamajors based on traditional Mende associations that combined violence with reputed supernatural powers.

Secondly, he sought help from the Economic Organisation of West African States (ECOWAS), whose mainly Nigerian forces were already trying to restore order in Liberia under the guise of a monitoring group (ECOMOG).

Thirdly, he recruited foreign mercenaries. The first arrivals were a contingent supplied by the Gurkha Security Group, registered in Guernsey, but when their “adviser”, a Canadian colonel, was killed by the rebels Strasser turned to the South African firm called Executive Outcomes (EO). This outfit was created in 1989 by Simon Mann, a British intelligence expert, and Eeben Barlow, an officer of the South African special forces, who recruited white and black veterans of the South African campaigns in Namibia and Angola and found new uses for their redundant skills (Financial Times, 15.5.97).

Though Barlow and his men had fought in support of the UNITA rebels, they were now hired by the Angola government, and are credited by some with turning the tide of battle against UNITA in 1994.

Thereafter their talents were highly marketable, not only in Africa but also in South Korea and Malaysia and, most notoriously, in Papua New Guinea. They have been described as “the advance guard for major business interests engaged in a latter-day scramble for the mineral wealth of Africa” (Observer, 19.1.97).

From 1993 onwards EO has been part of a web of concession-hunting companies and private armies. Mann is a key member of this complex but its controller appears to be a former officer of the British Special Boat Squadron who goes by the name of Tony Buckingham.

On the commercial side it includes the Vancouver-based Diamond Works Limited, its subsidiary Branch Energy (registered in the Isle of Man), another Canadian mining company Ranger Oil (which

introduced EO to Angola) and the originally British Heritage Oil and Gas. The network has very respectable connections. Buckingham's many interests include a stake in the leftish publishing group Fourth Estate; the chief executive of Heritage Oil is the 11th Viscount Torrington, and until 1997 its board included the chief executive of the lobbying firm GJW Government Relations and Lord (David) Steel.

Steel has denied any knowledge of the Executive Outcomes connection (Guardian, 22.3.98); yet he wrote to the Times on May 5 of last year to defend the "private military companies" that "filled the human rights vacuum".

On the military side, besides EO and its affiliate Lifeguard, there is Sandline International, headed since 1996 by Buckingham's nominee the former Scots Guards and SAS officer Colonel Tim Spicer.

The organisation supplies beleaguered governments with military training, logistic support, including Russian helicopters, and highly professional fighting men, partly for cash payments and partly in return for mineral exploitation rights.

It has extensive interests in Angola and Namibia as well as Sierra Leone.

DEMOCRACY AND PUTSCH

During 1995 Executive Outcomes recaptured the main diamond field, and the general military situation improved for the Strasser regime. By now, however, it was coming under increasing pressure from the US and the British to restore civilian rule, as it had promised to do. Strasser himself was deposed in January 1996 by his hard-line deputy Brigadier Bio, who was nevertheless unable to prevent elections (paid for by the UK government) from going ahead in March.

The victor, Ahmed Kabbah, signed a peace agreement with the RUF later in the year and there seemed to be a real chance of progress.

However, Kabbah relied on much the same ethnic coalition as Strasser had done: the Creolas of Freetown and the Mende of the south. The northern peoples, strongly represented in the rebel RUF, remained unhappy, and so did much of the Army. Little progress was made in implementing the accord and sporadic fighting continued in the interior.

On May 25, 1997, a small group of soldiers, proclaiming Major Paul Johnny Koroma (a Limba from the north) as their leader, took possession of Freetown in "the bloodiest coup yet" (Africa Confidential, 6.6.97).

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The Army commander joined them to form the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, (AFRC, usually called the junta), and common cause was made with the RUF.

Three hundred of the Nigerian garrison were taken prisoner — they were later extricated by the Red Cross. The Nigerians, however, retained control of their main barracks, some miles from the city and of the airport.

The new regime was treated as an international pariah, and the British government, with most others, insisted on the objective of Kabbah's restoration. There ensued some months of stand-off, while attempts were made to ease the Koroma junta out by negotiation, in which the British and Nigerian governments were heavily involved. The junta accepted the return of Kabbah as President, but tried to insist that he would be only a figurehead.

It's bottom line, however, was probably an amnesty. On October 23 the Nigerians signed a deal: in return for the lifting of their blockade the junta would stand down in April 1998.

THE FINANCIER, THE COLONEL AND THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

Kabbah was not happy about this, however, being convinced that Koroma would renege on the agreement; and on the same day (after discussions that had been going on since August) he signed agreements with Sandline and with Rakesh Saxena, a Vancouver-based Indian (or Thai) businessman with mining interests in Sierra Leone.

In return for the promise of mining concessions said to be worth \$150m, Saxena would put up \$10m, with which Sandline would provide "adequately equipped forces" to ensure the restoration, coordinating the efforts of ECOMOG and the Kamajor militias, who were loyal to Kabbah and were contesting the AFRC/RUF forces in parts of the interior. In fact Saxena was arrested in Vancouver on a Thai extradition warrant and only \$1.5 million was actually made available for Sandline's operation.

Most of this was spent on 35 tonnes of Bulgarian arms, which were intended for the Kamajors. The argument of the Legg Report turns in large part on the legality of this operation. On October 8 the UN had passed a resolution calling on "all States" to "prevent the supply to Sierra Leone by their nationals or from their territories of arms ..., whether or not originating in their territory."

This clearly banned arms supply to Kabbah as well as to the junta. The resolution had actually been drafted by the Foreign Office, yet the officials most concerned seemed to be unaware of its implications or prepared to ignore them.

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Legg is lenient on them, since denial of help to the legitimate government appeared contrary to common sense and justice. Yet the terms of the embargo were not just a technicality. They had deliberately been made comprehensive.

Since the President no longer had an army, any weapons supplied to him were likely to pass to the Kamajors, and it was feared by some officials that this would lead to an escalation of violence in the countryside (Legg report para 3.11).

Yet the High Commissioner, Peter Penfold, reporting the Sandline deal to the Foreign Office on December 30, welcomed a scheme that would “make Sierra Leoneans more directly involved in getting their legitimate government back” (ibid., para 5.28).

In his enthusiasm for the overthrow of the usurpers he thus approved the arming of irregular forces little less ferocious than those they were opposing. As things turned out, the Bulgarian arms played no part in the junta’s overthrow, being overtaken by events.

THE NIGERIAN INTERVENTION

The British government’s initial reaction to the coup of May 1997 was to “give all support to the peaceful restoration” of the Kabbah government. On January 4, 1998, however, the Director of the Africa Command in the Foreign Office defined its policy as being that “the Conakry peace accord [of October 23] should be implemented by ECOMOG, under cover of a UN resolution, monitored by UN observers, using limited necessary force to ensure compliance by the junta.”

On the next day, the Nigerian Army, without waiting to see whether the junta would honour its promise, without express UN authority and, it seems, without the consent of other members of ECOWAS, launched an all-out attack on Freetown, capturing it after a week’s fighting.

The Bulgarian arms, arriving after the fall of the city, were impounded by the Nigerians, who later gave out small quantities to the Kamajors.

Sandline, however, did play a part in the operation, though its exact contribution is difficult to assess. Between the port city of Freetown and the Nigerian bases a few miles away were the Lion Mountains that had given the country its Portuguese name. To assail the city the Nigerians needed to airlift troops and key equipment over this obstacle, and that is where private enterprise came in, Sandline’s helicopters being certainly an important and perhaps crucial aid.

It seems clear that a complicated game was being played. If Sandline had received the promised \$10m, it might have been able to mount an independent operation, which, in conjunction with the

Kamajors, would have played the decisive part in the restoration. This, as we have seen, would have pleased the High Commissioner, and it would probably have pleased the British government, which cannot have been happy that General Abacha of Nigeria should get the main credit for the restoration.

His Foreign Minister had boasted back in July that after such a signal service to democracy Nigeria would have to be welcomed back to the Commonwealth fold (Africa Confidential 18.7.97). In fact the Nigerian operation may have been brought forward in order to pre-empt a Sandline/Kamajor coup.

For the people of Sierra Leone the outcome has not been entirely happy. The return of the elected leader is certainly hopeful, but it is only a beginning, and it has been bought at a heavy price. According to Amnesty (UK) several hundred civilians died in Freetown during the Nigerian assault. While Freetown nevertheless rejoiced at the outcome, the remnants of the AFRI/RUF forces were causing havoc in the interior, and, as at least one British official had foreboded, the Kamajors were taking vengeance on their tribal enemies (Africa Confidential, 20.2.98).

At the end of June 1998 there was still mayhem in parts of the country (West Africa, 6-26.7.98). More than 400,000 citizens of Sierra Leone had taken refuge in Guinea and Liberia, and of these more than 100,000 had fled since the beginning of the year.

Security rests on the presence of the Nigerian Army and it remains to be seen whether the country can regain real independence.

THE NEW MERCENARIES AND THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT

The British report of the Sierra Leone Arms Investigation (commonly called the Legg Report though it was actually signed by Sir Thomas Legg and Sir Robin Ibbs) appeared on July 27, 1998. Its main conclusion was that the trouble, in so far as there was any, was to be ascribed to overworked officials and faulty office procedures.

Its brief comments on the mercenary dimension are remarkably complacent (para 11.9). "Private military companies . . . are on the scene and likely to stay on it . . . [They] are entitled to carry on their business within the law and, for that purpose, to have the access and support which Departments are there to provide to British citizens and companies."

But the activities of Sandline and others are "within the law" only because the British government has refused to sign or ratify the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing

and Training of Mercenaries, unanimously adopted by the General Assembly of the UN on December 4, 1989.

The military companies and their apologists claim that they are not mercenaries in the old sense of the term, since they serve only legitimate governments and in fact perform an essential service, bringing peace and order where there would be none. The UN special rapporteur, Enrique Ballesteros, carefully considered this claim in October 1997 and rejected it. "Mercenarism," he pronounced, "has become more sophisticated and is being channelled back through the facade of modern management, but it lives on."

"Why," he asked, "should poor countries affected by instability have to add to their sufferings a situation in which private companies, in exchange for vast earnings which have a negative impact on existing poverty, take over security and control, in practice the most important decisions of the State?"

In the particular case of Sierra Leone he argued that the use of Executive Outcomes by the Strasser and Kabbah governments made matters worse by creating "an illusion of governability" while leaving the real problems unresolved.

The Legg report implies that the relation of the companies to government is that of suppliant rather than instrument. It does, however, note that they could be useful sources of information, thus hinting at the most obscure aspect of this affair. There is, the Sunday Times noted (June 7, 1998), "a mystery over the involvement of MI6 and Defence Intelligence".

When the House of Commons Select Committee tried to raise this matter, it was blocked from pursuing it (Guardian, June 26, 1998). The evident embarrassment of the British Foreign Secretary and senior Foreign Office officials, in the view of the well-informed newsletter Africa Confidential (May 29, 1998), arises from the need to conceal it.

"Whitehall's links with Executive Outcomes and Sandline," it says, "go back a long way" — and so do Washington's: Barlow and Spicer were guests of honour at a Defense Intelligence Agency conference in October 1997. Most of the leading members of the Buckingham network were former special forces people with intelligence connections. The more important question, however, is whether their services to government went beyond covert intelligence to covert action.

Legg found no evidence that officials, apart from Peter Penfold, whose complicity is beyond dispute, did anything to encourage Sandline's activities in relation to Sierra Leone, though he concedes that Spicer may have gained the impression that they had been tacitly approved.

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To that extent the British Foreign Secretary was justified in claiming that there was “no ministerial conspiracy or connivance within Whitehall to create the arms embargo”. But the matter can hardly be left there. A key role in the discussion between Sandline, Kabbah and the Nigerian military was played by an ex-Foreign Office man (and friend of Penfold) called Rupert Bowen, now an executive of Branch Energy.

He and another of Buckingham’s people attended a Foreign Office conference in October on “Restoring Sierra Leone to Democracy”, at which “military intervention was whispered around the edges” (Independent, May 13, 1998).

One informed commentator suggests that “Sandline and its bedfellows, whether we like it or not, have become a tool with which her Majesty’s government can implement aspects of its policy that are best kept at arms’ length” (Defence Industry, June 1998). If there is any substance in that claim, a dangerous step will have been taken towards the privatisation of foreign policy and war.

The British government is now “examining a number of options for national domestic regulation of so-called private military companies” and is “looking at recent South African legislation”, which has imposed restraints on Executive Outcomes (House of Lords, June 30, 1998, col WA65).

The British-based Campaign against the Arms Trade has researched the question of mercenary companies in Britain and can be contacted at Tel. 0044171-2810297

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(Reprinted from SAOIRSE – Irish Freedom, February 1999)

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US and UK soldiers involved in this war are fathering children with radiation diseases. Despite all this the US and UK, the great defenders of democracy and injustice, went ahead and bombed Iraq again in December 1998. The media tried to brainwash us into believing Iraq deserved this treatment. They forgot to mention that 1/4 million people (mainly families) were killed in the 1991 Gulf War, and that 5,000 children die every month because of the "sanctions" imposed by the US. No medical aid, not even oxygen is allowed to Iraq, because it could be used for making bombs!

The fact that three submarines loaded with nuclear bombs are on constant alert for a first strike against Iraq is not very news worthy apparently, yet the Scottish Herald reported:

"A vanguard class missile submarine HMS Victorious from Easlane has been ordered to programme one of its American-made Trident2 D5 missiles for a retaliatory strike on key Iraqi installations. The missile was tipped with three two-kiloton battlefield warheads capable of being independently targeted over a wide area." (December 1998)

Anyone wanting to send aid to Iraq can contact 'Voices in the Wilderness' who refuse to recognise the sanctions and have taken medical aid to Iraq.

The unmentioned truth is that one Trident submarine is equivalent to 750 Hiroshima bombs. The Americans are the only nation to have used nuclear bombs — twice! For their 'experiment' they dropped a uranium bomb on Hiroshima, and a plutonium bomb on Nagasaki. To monitor the "effects" they chose cities that had not been already bombed. Over 320,000 people were killed and countless others died from radiation illnesses.

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The US did not take into account that Japan was ready to surrender. They wanted to show their might and are still the nuclear bullies of the world. They have never been held accountable for that unspeakable act. Now 44 years AB (after the bomb) they are still the biggest producers (45.8%) of the world's weapons.

Edward Teller designed the Manhattan project which produced these bombs. His protégés have continued his work and are responsible for the "space programme" installing nuclear bombs in space. This means that a large percentage of the space probes and satellites being launched are not (as we're told) exploring to see if "mars has water", but are trying to install space stations so that bombs can be aimed at "evil nations" from space!

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Menwith Hill in Yorkshire, England receives all communications from these satellites and this US base can spy on its own country as well as "monitoring" all communications in the Northern Hemisphere, on the pretext of watching out for "terrorism". This enables them to carry out 'Industrial Espionage', stealing business deals from Europe. The EU has expressed slight concern about this, but this gross invasion of our civil liberties goes largely unquestioned.

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Another sinister operation is the MAI, the Multinational Agreement on Investment. Members of the world's richest and most developed nations have been meeting secretly to forge an agreement with the world's most powerful multinationals. It will give them power to operate anywhere in the world without deferring to elected governments, the European Union (EU) or respecting environmental laws. The alarm was raised by some American NGOs and the MAI has been temporarily halted.

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The age-old gardeners routine of saving seeds for next year's crop will next be outlawed. "Terminator Technology" is the name they have given to the gene they have developed to stop seeds reproducing. An antibiotic gene activates this process.

The laws about patents were made hundreds of years ago in Italy, stating that a patent could not be granted where the subject matter is plant or animal. Monsanto broke all these rules. Claims that genetic food will solve the world's hunger and make way for great medical breakthroughs are lies and pink elephants. Frankenstein's food is being shoved down our throats.

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On a slightly smaller scale one has only to look at the history of the multinational companies operating in this country, to know they are all ruthless, and ruled by greed.

Witness the terrible environmental destruction they have caused, eg the famous case of all the farm animals dying at Askeaton — the once fertile Golden Vale area, due to poisons coming from the Aughinish Alumina plant. The 26-County EPA — Environmental Protection Agency — absolves this industry of any blame about the death of these animals and refuses to enforce strict licensing laws and toxic emission levels on these industries. The EPA are as effective as the Garda Complaints Board!

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The local community in Kerrykeel, Co Donegal, through their fierce opposition to the Esat telephone masts, exposed all the corruption back-handers going on between this company and the Government. Some of the protestors were beaten and hospitalised, due to the guards enforcing a very dubious law, the Anti-Mast campaign continues.

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Post Stormont Agreement Ireland is rushing into global arms race

(Reprinted from SAOIRSE – Irish Freedom, October 1998)

We are living in dangerous times. Having abused the environment mercilessly, despite all the information available on toxic emissions, global warming, ozone depletion and deforestation, the earth is fighting back.

Tidal waves, earthquakes, climate change, floods, drought and an increasing number of “new” diseases, are enough evidence to show that huge changes are taking place. Despite all the warnings, it seems the desire to destroy the planet is uppermost in the way we continue to live on earth.

It is now known, that in London, nuclear waste is being pumped into the drinking water. Over 20 gallons of water containing tritium and other radio-active substances have been released into the water supply since 1950. Recently declassified information from the Public Records Office, show that discharges from the Atomic Centre at Aldermaston, Harwell and Amersham began in secret in 1948. (Source: The Weekly Telegraph, London 16-22 July 1997).

A study from the UK Dept of Health has found plutonium in the teeth of adolescents in Scotland, Wales and Ireland. The source, not surprisingly has been traced to Sellafield, nee Windscale, plutonium processing plant controlled by British Nuclear Fuels. The results of this study were published in the science of the Total Environment Journal. Plutonium, which is highly carcinogenic, remains active for 10's of thousands of years if released into the environment.

On top of this alarming news, the arms trade is flourishing more than ever before. In England billions of tax payers money are being spent every year on arms.

Nuclear weapons are the order of the day.



Brit Nuclear Sub

At Faslane, Scotland, Trident nuclear submarines dock every three months accompanied by Hunter Killer submarines, and are loaded with nuclear warheads which are stored at nearby Coalport.

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These warheads are made at Aldermaston. Trident is an illegal weapon of mass destruction in violation of several laws and conventions including the Hague Convention, the Geneva Convention, the Nuremberg principles, the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty, the Non-proliferation Treaty, the Threshold Test Ban Treaty, the World Health Organisation Rulings and the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion.

Despite Britain's involvement in setting up some of these excellent courts of justice, it arrogantly sees itself as above the law, and answerable to no court as yet!

Over 50 leaks have been reported from the Base. It is not that surprising that MS is such a pervasive illness in Scotland.

A group of ordinary people have decided to take the power into their own hands, and uphold their citizens rights to disarm the Base of its lethal weapons. Having tried every method available to obtain an agreement from Tony Blair to disarm the base, they have undertaken to do the job themselves.

The group of activists are from all over the world, and include church ministers, eco-warriors, priests, poets, musicians, paramedics, nurses, public servants, environment and peace and justice campaigners. The average age is 50-60 and the oldest activist is 80. They call themselves "Trident Ploughshares 2000."

The Ploughshares Movement had its root in the US over 50 years ago. This group of peace activists used a quotation from the bible "Swords shall be turned into ploughshares" to engage in confrontational, non-violent resistance to war and the arms race. The reasoning was, if people were expected to risk their lives for their country in war, then they should be willing to risk something to achieve peace.

Their actions typically involved using hammers and tool-shed implements. For example in 1980, a group of activists entered the General Electric Engineering Plant in Pennsylvania and using hammers rendered useless two nose-cones intended for nuclear warheads.

On August 12, 1998, over 100 gathered at the north gate of Faslane Submarine Base for the opening ceremony of two weeks planned action by activists. Several people had walked to Scotland in a peace march from Belgium. A letter was read out asking the base commander one last time, to disarm.

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Over 135 arrests were made in the following two week. The fence was breached many times by activists, and on two occasions, two women and a man swam the loch and came within two metres of a submarine in the loading dock. All this, despite constant patrolling of police launches, dinghies, patrolling military police vans, dog handlers, helicopters and infra-red surveillance.

Over £1.5 million was spent on extra security by the MOD (Ministry of Defence) in preparation for the onslaught of a group of unarmed non-violent activists!

All ploughshares undertake a non-violent pledge, and do their actions openly and accountably. eg, when gaining entry into the base each person would explain their action. Some wanted to uphold their rights to carry out a war crimes inspection, or simply to assert their rights as a citizen to disarm the illegal base.

Despite all damage caused to fences and property all the activists except seven were released. The authorities do not want public attention on this issue. Fortunately there were several international film crews filming the actions, and the world now knows of this illegal base. As usual, the Irish and English media, with a couple of exceptions, played it down disgracefully.

At the court hearing in Helensburgh, Scotland on September 22 all seven protesters were found guilty of all charges and “admonished”. No coverage was given in the national press. Thankfully it was well reported in Japan, Australia, Holland, Finland and Belgium as so many international activists were involved.

The globalisation of this issue will hopefully break the arrogance of the High Courts which refuse to allow any discussion on international law. The activists are contesting their guilt and appealing the decision in the European courts with the help of international lawyers.

Britain is the worlds second largest manufacturer of arms. The arms business is cosseted like no other, and without any opposition, licences are issued to enable companies to export to the best buyer. Their foreign policy is “there’s nothing wrong with exporting arms to friendly countries and decent societies”! The statement issued by the government about being “responsible” in the way they export arms in the diametric opposite of the truth.

Pinochet, the Chilean dictator, who was on a level with Hitler and Pol Pot in his thirst for blood, was courted by Margaret Thatcher. The UK “responsibly” sold arms to him as he was one of their best customers. They also sold to Saddam Hussein, and then to Iraq. In their awfully polite way, they said they did it “in good faith”.

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Indonesia has received most of its arms from Britain, as well as its fully equipped Institute of Surveillance. Mark Thatcher received £12 million for securing these deals, “batting for Britain” with help from his mother.

The stereotyped format of the news with sanctioned sound bites is seldom questioned, and we never hear the truth. The Largactilised public rarely probes to hear the truth and accepts what its told.

Tony Blair and the Labour Government, far from being the new hope, and failing to stick to their pre-election promise to carry out the “global elimination of weapons” has continued, and improved on, the British Arms Trade under the cover of the very convenient protection of the Official Secrets Act.

According to the British American Security Information Council there is an extraordinary rise in export licences for hand guns issued by the Dept of Trade. This information is “commercially confidential”. The licences were approved for sales to most of Europe, Sri Lanka, the Far East, Algeria and Colombia.

At the Annual Arms Fair, which used to be held at Farnborough, the UK government invites buyers from over 90 countries, including those on the Amnesty International torture list, Turkey, Saudi and Indonesia.

COPEX (Contingency and Operational Equipment Exhibition) was exposed as a trading ground for medieval torture equipment, such as leg irons, shackles, chains and modern day instruments such as batons that give an electric shock and leave no trace of injury.

CAAT (Campaign against the Arms Trade) mobilised a successful campaign and evicted COPEX from its venue for the last two years.

In 1994 the COPEX Arms Fair was infiltrated by Dispatches journalist Martyn Gregory. His film The Torture Trail showed how easy it is for a prospective buyer to procure torture equipment. Electric shock batons, made by ICL Technical Plastics in Glasgow, though banned in Britain were freely available to the journalist.

This year the fair was not a success for COPEX due to the consistent campaign of CAAT and the presence of protesters who were willing to get arrested to expose the shameful market going on inside Wembley, the number of impeccably-dressed buyers was less than usual.

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All the protesters wore ribbons bearing the names of victims still being tortured in several countries. A candle vigil was held throughout the three days and nights. COPEX have tried to sue CAAT and other individuals. But they have ended up paying out thousands, and have been ousted from two venues already.

This is a powerful example of how concerned individuals can cause change in a non-violent way. There was heartening news coverage on television which reported the arrest and then highlighted the appalling situation of the Kurds in Turkey. Turkey has been well supplied by COPEX in the past.

In Ireland we are not allowed freedom of expression and information, as is our right according to article 19 of the Human Rights Declaration. To put forward an opposing viewpoint is still not acceptable. Patricia McKenna, European MEP had to fight tooth and nail and won in the European court the right for an opposite position to be given media space when there was an issue to vote on. This "time wasting" procedure of informing the public of an alternative viewpoint was derided by several politicians. I refer to the disgraceful rushed cowboy scenario that landed the Amsterdam Treaty and the Stormont Agreement on the same day in the voters lap.

With all the technical and legal jargon, the bewildered public did not know what was going on. The treaty was rushed through, aligning the last shreds of Irish neutrality with a very armed nuclear Europe.

The embargo on free press reporting ensures that Ireland is kept in the illusion of the "purity of the Emerald Isle" by being forbidden access to information re the growing arms trade in Ireland. At the last count two years ago, there were 15 well established arms factories in the South, and 75 companies supplying to NATO. These factories make military components which have been exported to Malaysia, Saudi and Indonesia. Befab factory in the Shannon Industrial Estate, exports to the Colombian military, a country where neither Amnesty, nor any other human rights group are allowed to work.

The arms trade here in Ireland is cosseted also, by the Dept of Foreign Affairs and the Dept of Trade and Enterprise. There is no problem for these factories in attaining licences for their "dual purpose" goods

It is now public knowledge that the churches have substantial shares in the arms industry. It was long ago predicated in the excellent AFRI (Action from Ireland) report on "Ireland's links with the arms trade" that Ireland was being used by the US and that the "Peace Process" was a cover up for their real agenda. Their aim was/is to get a BIG US FOOT into the North, establish more arms factories, and have a gateway to the European market. The well established "Shorts" factory

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produces some of the most advanced air defence systems and sells their range of armoured cars to over 40 countries world-wide. It has a joint venture with French state military owned giant, Thompson CSF. Their starstreak laser guided air to air missile is reputed to be the most advanced, and is being sold to a number of NATO countries including the US.

Last June, a trade delegation, headed by Trade Secretary Bill Daley, came to the North, representing 17 multinationals, to strengthen links with Shorts and explore the feasibility of setting up more factories in the North and border counties. The media reported this in a positive way, exulting over the £9 million awarded to the North of Ireland, never disclosing the real intentions of this delegation. It does not convey an inspiring future for Ireland! To make and export arms to the US and UK. Is this the price for accepting US aid for the Peace Process?

Recently hundreds of thousands was spent on welcoming an international terrorist, Bill Clinton to this island. Now he is facing prosecution, not for bombing innocent victims in Sudan and Afghanistan, but for lying about his "inappropriate relationship". The same week a new security Bill was passed with lightening speed in hasty reaction to the Omagh bombing. It gives the Gardaí unprecedented new powers enabling more miscarriages of justice to happen.

Unfortunately it also grants similar powers to the RUC at a time when they were beginning to be investigated. This new Bill violates articles 5,6,7,8,9,10,11 and 12 of the Human Rights Declarations. In the light of this, its difficult to "celebrate" the 50th anniversary of these Universal Declarations.

The well known strategy by rich, faceless millionaires and the arms companies to keep conflict alive has taken a heavy toll in this country. Our land, once famous for its greenness and agriculture, is now poisoned and polluted by foreign factories who have no qualms about dumping toxic waste into the air, land and water. We need to look at what's happening right under our noses.

The government has proved itself incapable of reflecting the decency of the public they claim to represent. They have recently unleashed a new form of food terrorism. Permission was granted to Monsanto (a multinational with many sins, Agent Orange to name but one)to plant genetically treated sugar beet at several locations throughout the country. Apart from denaturing the soil, and causing untold disturbance to plant and insect life, the consequences to our health holds Frankenstein-like horrors. Now it is time to act, not when the deformed children are born!

Support is needed at the Four Courts, Dublin, on October 6, when Genetic Concern and Clare Watson will take on Monsanto and the so-called Environmental Protection Agency.

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The 26 County Department of Environment (DOE) has written a very technical document Genetically Modified Organisms and the Environment outlying their woolly position with this dangerous practise of interfering with genes. Its worth ordering a copy from them and submitting a protest.

Similarly The Agenda 21 document is available from the DOE and should be displayed in every Post Office and Community Hall. It lists the promises made by Ireland at the Rio summit in Brazil in 1992 re the environment, and contains the plans for sustainable practices on every level of life in Ireland. Local authorities should be pushed about implementing this immediately.

“The optimism of the action is better than the permission of the thought.”

— Mary Kelly, Colombia Radical Action Campaign.

Sources: Afri-Links report on the Arms Trade; Hidden Agendas by John Pilger; Quotation from Greenpeace book.