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Power through energy

'Energy security' specifically 'security of supply' has risen to the top of the international agenda over the last six months. The energy dispute between Gazprom and the Ukraine in early 2006 served to highlight the extent of European dependence on fossil fuel imports. 80% of the EU's oil is currently imported, primarily from Saudi Arabia and the Middle East. This could increase to nearly 90% by 2020. EU gas demand is set to increase faster even than that for oil. By 2020, if current trends continue, 75% of this greater demand will be met by imports. EU Member States are particularly dependent on Russia, which holds 30% of global gas and almost 15% of global oil reserves.

The Ukraine - Gazprom spat raised fears that producer states, Russia in particular, may use their hydrocarbon reserves as weapons to blackmail energy dependent EU Member States. Many view this scenario as a central national security threat. Other factors impact on European supply security fears. These include:

- Middle Eastern and African volatility and hostility;
- Depleting European oil and gas deposits - production has recently fallen sharply;
- Nearly all overland gas pipelines to the EU originate in, or pass through, Russian territory;
- Iran's ability to disrupt oil tankers passing through the straits of Hormuz.

In this volatile international context, the EU is attempting to strengthen the European negotiating position. As with trade, many believe a unified EU voice will have more international weight than that of individual Member States.

To create this pan-EU approach to energy issues, the Union is currently conducting a strategic energy review. This may form a blueprint for the EU energy policy. The Commission should adopt the policy recommendations set out in the review in December 2006. It will be submitted for Council discussion in March 2007. The Commission has already produced a green paper on EU energy issues, to which QCEA has responded critically. As part of the strategic review the Commission held a conference entitled 'Power through energy' on 14 July. 'Power through energy' has two meanings: the first being international political power through control of vital energy resources, the second being electrical power through fossil fuels, upon which our societies depend. Global solidarity on energy supplies was not on the agenda.

The conference was a grandiose affair. It included speakers from the Russian delegation to the EU, the Indian-EU chamber of commerce, the US delegation to the EU and the European institutions. More details can be viewed at: http://www.powerthroughenergy.eu/

Participants and panellists raised points surrounding carbon emissions and environmental degradation. Some argued that the recent British energy review marked a positive step, in that it demonstrated a new willingness to take environmental sustainability seriously. Discussion also focused on the apparent benefits that lie in liberalising and further integrating EU energy markets.

The value of renewable energy sources, such as wind, solar and biofuels was also detailed. Benefits would include greater self-sufficiency and the avoidance of potential geo-strategic rivalry and disputes over access to deposits. It seems all the more surprising therefore that a European Parliament decision to ring fence two thirds of the EU's energy research budget for renewables

(See page 2)

QCEA Study tour Page 2
Estonia visit for Women in Prison Page 3
New human security challenges
Nuclear weapons in Europe Page 4

(continued from page 1)

has been dropped by the Commission in the amended text to be discussed by EU ministers at the Competitiveness Council on 24 July.

Jean Arnold Vinois, Head of Unit for Energy policy and security of supply within the Directorate General Energy and Transport in the Commission, is in charge of the EU energy policy project. He spoke of the benefits of multilateralism and foresaw a number of potential international energy-related agreements that could benefit the EU. These included a new Kyoto treaty on environmental sustainability, new WTO rules on energy markets, and agreements and regulations that would promote energy efficiency, such as the banning of standby buttons on televisions and other appliances.

The conference highlighted European energy related thinking and that of other major energy consumers and producers. A greater emphasis on the potential for conflict arising from competition for energy supplies would have been welcome.

Now is the time to make your voices heard on this key international issue.

Matthew Taylor

QCEA Study Tour 22-30 April 2006 Brussels and Luxembourg

In order to prepare for a Monthly Meeting study day on Quaker work in Europe, I gleaned information from the excellent QCEA website, from my own notes as a member of QCEA British Committee and from *Around Europe*; I also bombarded the staff in Brussels with queries but still I was not sure I would be able to answer questions because, in truth, I was not absolutely clear in my own mind how or where or by whom EU decisions are made. Clearly a study tour was indicated.

The sixteen of us who had gathered in Brussels from Germany, Latvia, Palestine, Sweden and the UK were given a presentation on the work of QCEA and an introduction to the European institutions before being escorted, usually on foot, to the various buildings, eg the European Commission and the Council of the European Union, for a closer look at the work which is done there. At the European Parliament we were permitted to sit in the chamber during the Foreign Affairs Committee debate on small arms and light weapons – a preparation for the 2006 UN review conference in New York. We then met with Simon Coveney from Cork. An MEP since 2004, he is a member of three committees and the author of the European Parliament's annual report on human rights in 2005.

We had illuminating sessions on Israel/Palestine, on NGOs and advocacy work in the EU and on comitology (how things get done). Before visiting the NATO headquarters (with passport and without large bag or camera) we had a workshop on NATO and EU militarisation with Martina Weitsch, QCEA Joint Representative, and Philippe Bartholmé, policy officer of the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO).

The European Investment Bank in Luxembourg was extremely hospitable: not only did they give us lunch and a presentation of their work in international development, they also hosted our meeting with representatives from the European Court of Justice (the Court being closed to outsiders because of the Microsoft case), and the talks on language services and the Eurostat Data and Statistics service, both of which were given by Luxembourg Friends.

So if you don't know your Commission from your Council or wish you knew more about EU policy decisions, check the QCEA website for the date of the next study tour, or ring… or write to… Meanwhile why not persuade your PM to subscribe to *Around Europe*, the QCEA newsletter?

P.S. Yes, there was plenty of time to get to know each other, to explore the local street cafés, to sample the chocolates and to admire the stunning buildings on the Grand Place. The accommodation was good, we were well looked after by the staff of QCEA and we were glad to be able to meet with Friends from Belgium and Luxembourg Meeting.

Patricia Cockrell

Muhammed Suleiman, a Study Tour participant from Palestine writes:

'The study tour was one of the most wonderful workshops I have ever attended. It was successful, enjoyable and interesting. It reflected the Brussels Quakers' dedication and determination to make this workshop a special and a well-organized one.'

Visit to Estonia for the Women in Prison project

I recently had a very productive week in Estonia where I attended a conference on 'International Prisoner Health' in Tallinn and visited three prisons which hold women.

At the conference, held on 19 and 20 June, there were presentations on issues such as medical ethics in prison, the spread and control of diseases in prison and problems surrounding substance misuse and mental health issues. Although there were several smaller sessions on the health needs of women prisoners, there was little focus on women in prison throughout the event. In order to broaden awareness I facilitated a round table discussion on 'Meeting the Particular Needs of Women Prisoners' which proved fruitful and provided an opportunity for meeting other people with an interest in this area.

Over the following days I visited three prisons. Two of these (Tartu and Tallinn) are closed prisons for men which also hold women on remand. Harku is a closed women-only prison which holds convicted adults and juveniles. Particularly shocking to me was the regime for the remand prisoners in which inmates are locked in their cells for 23 hours a day. For 1 hour a day they can go to an exercise box, measuring approximately 15 m^2. Another aspect, which is particularly a problem for female prisoners, is that remand prisoners are only allowed to have a shower once a week.

In all the prisons I was given the opportunity to sit and speak with several female prisoners. During these discussions it struck me that both the stereotypical woman prisoner and the problems facing these women whilst in prison, revealed by our research, are certainly borne out in real life. A prisoner at Harku spoke of a long history of abuse suffered at the hands of her father. In Tartu prison I spoke to a pregnant prisoner who had four children on the outside but was unable to receive visits from them because the prison was situated too far away from her home.

On a more positive note, there are plans to start an open prison department at Harku in the coming years and, overall, the Estonian authorities have expressed an intention of lessening the role of imprisonment. Reports of the prison visits will be available on our website soon.

Joanna Sprackett

New challenges to human security

On 14-18 June 2006 all three QCEA Programme Assistants attended an ISYP Workshop on 'New Challenges to Human Security' in Wageningen, the Netherlands. ISYP stands for International Student Young Pugwash (http://www.student-pugwash.org/). ISYP brings together students and young professionals committed to seeking alternative and viable solutions to critical global challenges at the intersection of science, technology and society. The conference brought together individuals from all over the world, including professionals from Iran, Russia, India, Palestine, the EU and the US.

Experts gave a number of excellent lectures on current and future challenges facing humanity. These included the threat of 'new' types of war, the problems with grievance and relative deprivation, the political economy of internal wars and security and development. Participants viewed video fragments examining conflicts in Liberia, Colombia, Afghanistan and Rwanda among other places.

On the second and third days all participants took part in a multi-track peacebuilding and diplomacy role play based on a simmering conflict in the South Caucasus region. Each participant was given a new identity, many of whom had controversial and unhelpful opinions and approaches. Amongst others we had Levon, an intransigent and arrogant Marxist historian – prone to polemical writing and verbal ranting, Irana, Vice-President of an Azeri political group and Narmina, a Russian educated student activist dead set on the ejection of certain opposing participants. Narmina's brother was tragically kidnapped during discussions, which led to reduced contact between the two sides. At one point this degenerated into shouting and threatening each other through intermediaries who carried harsh words between separate rooms. Thankfully bridges were rebuilt and a level of civility restored afterwards. The exercise illustrated the complexities of human emotions and the need for trust in effective peace-building exercises.

The group came to a number of conclusions on the threats that face humanity. These included: social exclusion, a lack of access to integrated education, a failure to look at different perspectives of democracy, ecological threats and the threat of the Global War on Terrorism and a culture of fear.

Matthew Taylor

Nuclear weapons in Europe - when will they go?

The US and the Member States of the EU have signed up to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). This Treaty represents the only binding commitment in a multilateral treaty to the goal of disarmament by the Nuclear Weapon States. Opened for signature in 1968, the Treaty entered into force in 1970. A total of 187 parties have joined the Treaty, including the five Nuclear Weapon States. More countries have ratified the NPT than any other arms limitation and disarmament agreement, a testament to the Treaty's significance.

Maintaining nuclear arsenals is therefore not in line with the letter or the spirit of this Treaty. Maintaining them on the territories of third countries which do not have nuclear arsenals of their own (and in opposition to the views of the public in those countries) seems particularly counter to this spirit.

The written declaration needs half the Members of the European Parliament to sign it in order for it to be the adopted position of the Parliament. If adopted, it will form a useful instrument in future lobbying on this issue, with the US, with the Member States on whose territories these weapons are based, with NATO and at the UN.

Please contact your MEP urgently and ask them to sign this written declaration. The deadline for signatures is 12 October 2006. There is no time to lose.

Martina Weitsch

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