Around Europe
Quaker Council for European Affairs
No. 286 October 2006

Hans Blix on Iran, North Korea and a new nuclear arms race

On 14 September, the European Policy Centre held a policy briefing titled 'Iran, North Korea and WMD: can we make the world a safer place?' The speaker was Hans Blix. *Around Europe* readers may know that Dr Blix led the United Nations Special Commission on Weapons of Mass Destruction. He was chief weapons inspector in Iraq prior to the war of 2003. Dr Blix was an outspoken critic of US and UK policy and practice in the run up to, during and after the invasion.

QCEA and Friends worldwide have long had an interest in nuclear disarmament, and regular *Around Europe* readers will have seen a number of previous updates on the ongoing standoff with Iran, which appears to be heading inexorably towards some form of conflict.

Dr Blix highlighted a number of problems with the current western strategy with regard to engaging Iran and North Korea. The emphasis and rhetoric of the West has arguably been on targeting Iran, yet North Korea, a self- declared nuclear power with an expanding ballistic missile programme, poses a far greater threat in Dr Blix's view. Indeed, on 9 October the Stalinist regime appeared to have conducted a successful underground nuclear test.

Iran insists its drive for nuclear technology is a purely civilian orientated project, North Korea does not. No-one wants a nuclear Iran, yet the regional domino effect of the testing of a North Korean nuclear device may well be far more destabilizing than an Iranian one. Japan may follow, increasing tensions with China. The US and Japan will push ahead with missile defence programmes, further stoking a technological race akin to that at the height of the Cold War. A potential regional flashpoint already exists over the Taiwan Strait.

The EU has been unsuccessfully negotiating with Iran, with the aim of halting its potential proliferation. Yet in Dr Blix's view the US has been 'backseat driving' the European approach for a long time already. Both the EU and the US have consistently stated that Iran must halt all uranium enrichment activities before any talks begin. According to Dr Blix, this would be 'like a player in a game giving up their trump card before play' and is 'entirely unreasonable'. The Europeans have attempted to 'seek to remove the incentives behind the construction of an Iranian nuclear arsenal'. This makes more sense than solely waving a cumbersome stick, yet unlike with North Korea, security guarantees for Iran are not even being considered.

Iran is literally encircled by US military positions, in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Gulf States. The US Fifth Fleet patrols its southern and western flanks through the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea. Only the US can address understandable Iranian security concerns. It is at least clear that if a mutually satisfactory agreement is to be reached, it will have to include US security guarantees.

Iran's intentions remain unclear. As Dr Blix pointed out, relying solely on national intelligence agencies, as the US and the UK did in the run up to the Iraq war, is clearly unwise. According to Dr Blix, any dialogue with Iran should and would help in assessing the country's intentions, which, in his view, remain unclear. It is true that Iran hid its nuclear programme from the UN in the past, yet this may be due to fears of Israeli or US air strikes on its facilities, such as that which occurred on the Iraqi Osirak reactor in 1981.

Numerous commentators have attempted to inject a sense of urgency into halting what is seen by many as an Iranian push for a nuclear

(See page 2)

In this Issue:

Say no to new nuclear weapons Page 2
Report on a European security hearing Page 3
No case for all EU institutions in Brussels Page 4

(continued from page 1)

weapons capability. Yet according to Dr Blix, 'we still have a number of years; enough time to talk'. Any inexorable slide into an Anglo-American led form of limited warfare against Iran is strategically impossible, diplomatically unsound and morally reprehensible.

With regards to the North Korean test, QCEA would stress that punitive measures, including blockades in all but name, are dangerous. North Koreans are uniquely impoverished, and halting aid to civilians may contribute to starvation and increase a 'rally round the regime' effect. A tightening of the noose may also contribute to the hastening of North Korea's ballistic missile programme. Military options are not viable; a balance must be struck. Channels for dialogue must remain open, and mutual security guarantees must be on the table.

Dr Blix highlighted a worrying contradiction in our wider modern world. In terms of great power relations we appear to be in a period of post- cold war détente. Yet overall, far more disarmament progress occurred during the framework of the Cold War. The US is pressing ahead with a national missile defence project. In less than a decade three more States have gone nuclear. The US is also working on space-based weaponry. At the recent conference on disarmament in Geneva, both the US and the UK mooted a multinational proposal to bring the weaponisation of space onto the discussion agenda.

The recent report by the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission stated that we must all take responsibility and action to ensure the world does not sleepwalk into another WMD arms race.

For more information on the WMD Commission go to: http://www.wmdcommission.org/

Matthew Taylor

Say no to new nuclear weapons – and get your MEP to do so too!

An audacious civil resistance initiative to apply critical public pressure for the disarmament of Britain's nuclear weapons began on 1 October. The importance of this has not escaped the authorities. In the first days of the campaign, one protester, a grandmother aged 73, was arrested and held in custody for 30 hours in conditions which made it impossible for her to sleep. The authorities are clamping down hard at the beginning of the campaign to try to break the campaign early.

So what is it all about? The Faslane 365 campaign aims to blockade the Trident nuclear base at Faslane every day from 1 October 2006 for 365 days. That is a tall order. But why?

The UK government is seriously considering the replacement of Trident with a new nuclear weapons system which could cost in the order of £40 billion (or •60 billion) and would maintain a nuclear presence in Scotland until 2055. At a time when issues ranging from human rights to climate change should dominate the political agenda and have spending priority , more than 60 years after the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki demonstrated once and for all that nuclear weapons could not be used by any government claiming any kind of morality, one of the Member States of the EU is proposing to continue the nuclear arms race.

Why should this concern all Europeans? Because nuclear weapons threaten all people everywhere, and Scotland is in the backyard of every European. So here is another opportunity to talk about something really important with your MEP. And it's not just relevant to UK MEPs. **All** MEPs are encouraged to take part. Why start on 1 October 2006? Because it's the anniversary of the Judgment of the Nuremberg Tribunal. The date was chosen to also say something about individual responsibility.

The blockade of the base is intended to bear witness to people's wish that their government should not engage in such a dangerous policy nor waste so much money, money that needs to be spent urgently elsewhere. The idea is that organizations or groups of people will take on the job of maintaining the blockade for a 48 hour period. To do so, any group will have to have a significant number of supporters there.

8 January 2007 is the day when European parliamentarians will take on the challenge. There are already a number of MEPs who will participate; but to swell the number, contact your MEP, explain what the campaign is about, explain why you think it's important for them to participate, and ask for their support.

To find out more about the campaign, to read the declaration in support of it which people are asked to sign and to get the answers to a wide range of questions about how and why this will work, please look at the website of the campaign at: http://www.faslane365.org/

Martina Weitsch

Report on a European Security Hearing

The hearing was held at the European Parliament on 12 September 2006. It was hosted by the Intergroup for Peace Initiatives.

What was being discussed?

Ben Hayes from Statewatch and Herbert von Bose, Head of Unit of the Preparatory Action for Security Research discussed issues arising from the fact that the recently approved Framework Programme 7 (FP7) includes funding of research into civil security. The Framework Programmes (FPs) have been the main financial tools through which the European Union supports research and development activities. There seems to be an increasingly fine line between research into civil security and military research and it has appeared to some that the EU is now perhaps on the wrong side of this line.

Why is this of interest to Quakers?

The FP7 proposes certain civil security related research programmes but the concern is that some of the research areas seem to have more of a military than a civil flavour. In a recent Statewatch report 'Arming Big Brother' several such examples are listed: biometric passports, the Galileo project whereby peoples' movements can be monitored from space and another project named 'Probant' concerning the tracking of people inside buildings. Herbert von Bose from the Commission was keen to remind his audience that the EU does not have a military budget, it cannot have one; matters relating to defence and security are still handled intergovernmentally. Whether or not the budget amounted to something military, even if perhaps not in name, was to be discussed at the hearing.

What were the main objections?

Ben Hayes was concerned that not all of the research proposed in FP7 would be what he would deem to be 'genuine research' of products but rather development of products. He questioned why overtly military private companies were being paid money to develop defence technologies for the very weapons they themselves were producing and expressed concern about the possible influence of these companies in a so-called civil security plan. He further flagged up that five of the 'civil' research projects listed were surveillance projects. He argued that these projects were less about research into civil applications and more about shaping future EU policy.

Ben Hayes was also worried about the apparent lack of consultation on FP7. With regard to civil society, the Eurobarometer questions used to gauge public opinion were far too general to show support for these specific aspects of security research. With regard to the EU institutions, Ben Hayes commented that there was no meaningful discussion in the Council and no consultation of the European Parliament, and that policy-making was all but delegated to an unaccountable group of advisors.

He argued further that the level of security for which governments are crying out is illusory. Perhaps instead Europe should be refocusing its attentions on tackling the causes of conflict rather than looking to aggressive defence technologies.

How did Herbert von Bose respond?

He was keen to explain that of course no-one, least of all he, would want a Big Brother Europe but he was also keen to defend the research programmes research. He agreed that some of this civil research will likely also yield beneficial results for military use but that is not to say that military use is its primary purpose. He also spoke out against comments that the EU is directly funding military companies. Firstly, he refused to concede that these companies are 'exclusively military'. Secondly, he argued that to employ other companies without such military experience would take much longer and cost taxpayers more.

Conclusions

It is fair to say that the speakers chose to disagree over spending allocations in FP7. Everyone agreed that civil security is important, it was over *how* this was to be achieved that there was discord. Herbert von Bose did concede that there should be more future research done into the root causes of conflicts but maintained that this would not come under the research budget in this particular area.

A more detailed report on this and other Intergroup events are available on QCEA's website.

Sarah Barnett

‘No case for all EU institutions in Brussels’

This is the French Ambassador to the EU, Pierre Sellal’s view, in response to the success of the ‘one seat’ campaign to collect 1 million signatures in support of stopping the monthly trek of the European Parliament from Brussels to Strasbourg and back at an estimated cost of • 200 million per year – not to speak of the environmental costs and the time lost in travel.

Around Europe reported on this campaign in our June edition – and we have just heard that the million signatures have been collected. Thank you to those of our readers who supported this effort.

Sadly, it doesn’t look as though this is going to have any impact any time soon. The European Parliament is not in a position to make decisions about where it meets. It has to defer to the Council of the European Union (i.e. the governments of the Member States) in this matter and there is no compromise in sight over this issue because the location of the European Parliament (at least in part) in Strasbourg is a matter of such importance to some Member States that it is virtually impossible to envisage a change.

To Ambassador Sellal, the historic value of Strasbourg as a symbol of peace and Franco-German reconciliation is still valid and has grown over time: “Experience in Europe, and also that of more recent times, shows us that peace and democracy are never guaranteed forever.”

Of course we can’t take peace or democracy for granted. But are we really suggesting that a permanent location of the European Parliament (and saving millions of •, tons of CO_2 emissions and hundreds and thousands of hours of time of elected politicians and their staff) would undermine Franco-German peace, or, indeed, European democracy? And is allowing the elected representatives of European citizens to decide for themselves where they meet more democratic rather than less?

Pressure needs to be brought to bear on national politicians everywhere in the European Union.

Martina Weitsch

Subscriptions, Associate and Supporting Membershlp

Renewal date: Please check month/year printed on address label.

Cost per year

- ***Around Europe***: post - £16/22 euros (25 euros outside Europe). e-mail - £10/15 euros (please ask for more details)
- ***Associate Membership*** (includes ***Around Europe***, Annual Report, other publications and invitations to conferences) : £32/40 euros (45 euros outside Europe).

- ***Supporting Membership***: £65/95 euros (primarily for groups and Meetings)

Payment *(receipts will only be issued if requested)*:
Europe (except Nederland and UK): in euros, to IBAN: BE68 0001 4998 4834, BIC: BPOTBEB1, or by credit card (quote number, name, expiry date, address; we acknowledge; you are billed in your home currency. Recommended method for those outside Europe.)

Nederland: via de Vereniging Vrienden v.d. Quakerraad voor Europese Aangelegenheden: Giro 2538685 VVQREA Helmond.

UK: by cheque payable to ‘QCEA British Committee’ sent to John Green, 3 C Hillcrest, Thornbury, Bristol BS35 2JA.

Rest of world: credit card (quote number, name, expiry date, address; we acknowledge; you are billed in your home currency.)

Association internationale sans but lucratif - Internationale vereniging zonder winstoogmerk *Moniteur Belge no.* 11 732/80
N° entreprise 0420.346.728

Around Europe

Quaker Council for European Affairs
Editeur responsable : Elizabeth Scurfield, Square Ambiorix 50, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium
Périodique mensuel. Bureau de dépôt : Bruxelles X
www.quaker.org/qcea info@qcea.org

Belgique-België
P.P.-P.B.
Bruxelles X
BC 8843