

## Where wars begin

*Tony Simpson*

*In its current exhibition, London's Imperial War Museum charts a century of opposing war and building peace. We take its cue to broaden the narrative.*

'The problem's us,' says Vanessa Redgrave, speaking to camera for the *People Power* exhibition currently running at London's Imperial War Museum. 'We use the weapons.' This thought echoes UNESCO's founding constitution: 'since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defence of peace must be constructed'.

Constructing or building peace is a permanent endeavour, enhanced by creative impulses. Nottingham Peacebuilders recently occupied spaces around the city for music, dance, theatre and meditation. A flash mob playing 'Ode to Joy' at Nottingham Station, beginning with one young solo violinist and ending with full orchestra, made the British Transport Police Officer's day. East Midlands Trains posted a film on their website. On a Saturday evening, while one or two young men squared up to each other nearby, a candle-lit procession from Old Market Square to High Pavement ended in the courtyard of the National Museum of Justice, swinging to Shell's Belles jazz band in this place of execution. *This Evil Thing*, Michael Mears' one-man play about conscription during the First World War, filled Nottingham Playhouse Studio and brought to mind the heroic resistance to war of Harry Wheatcroft, conscientious objector and rose grower extraordinary, who later introduced the fragrant Peace Rose from France to fertile soils of the Trent Valley. During the First World War, 69 men died as a result of hardship during incarceration for their conscientious objection. That COs were treated better during the Second World War, as one contributor to the post-performance

discussion remarked, was the fullest tribute to the struggles of those who refused to fight and kill during the aptly named ‘Great War’.

‘People Power’ features the steady South Yorkshire voice of Bert Brocklesby (the young conscientious objector at the heart of Michael Mears’ play) in its extensive coverage of the First World War and the founding of the No-Conscription Fellowship, which it takes as its starting point. The Imperial War Museum’s sound archive has preserved such clear voices for us all to hear.

Catherine Marshall’s nurturing of the No-Conscription Fellowship receives full tribute in Lyn Smith’s beautifully illustrated and wide-ranging book of the exhibition (reviewed on page 112 by Bruce Kent). Peace historian Jo Vellacott sorted Catherine’s archive after it was discovered in the outbuildings of the family home in the Lake District and taken to the Cumbria Records Office (see *Spokesman* 128). *Labour Leader*, organ of the Independent Labour Party, which opposed the war, described Catherine Marshall as ‘the most able organiser in the land’.

Building peace, more than ‘fighting’, narrates *The Glorious Art of Peace*, as John Gittings titled his unique and empowering survey ‘from the Iliad to Iraq’ (Oxford University Press, 2012). People have a deep and personal interest in keeping the peace, and power of public opinion carries democratic weight, even against those who would ignore it. Peggy Duff, CND’s first general secretary, understood this and acted on it until her dying day. We reprint some of her reflections on the Committee of 100, which figures in ‘People Power’, as well as tributes to Peggy published in the *END Bulletin* in 1981. European Nuclear Disarmament (END) appears centrally on the exhibition poster, held aloft by a young child. Its message resonates anew in dangerous times.

*‘People Power: Fighting for Peace’ continues at the Imperial War Museum, London, until 28 August 2017. Admission charges apply.*

The march against the Iraq War in 2003 was a deeply felt protest by people from all backgrounds, but there was still room for humour, as revealed in the banners. I particularly liked: ‘Notts County supporters say make love not war (and a home win against Bristol would be nice).’

*Sheila Hancock, Foreword, People Power*

**UNESCO**  
**Constitution of the United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organization**

*Adopted in London on 16 November 1945 and came into force a year later*

The Governments of the States Parties to this Constitution on behalf of their peoples declare: That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed;

That ignorance of each other's ways and lives has been a common cause, throughout the history of mankind, of that suspicion and mistrust between the peoples of the world through which their differences have all too often broken into war;

That the great and terrible war which has now ended was a war made possible by the denial of the democratic principles of the dignity, equality and mutual respect of men, and by the propagation, in their place, through ignorance and prejudice, of the doctrine of the inequality of men and races;

That the wide diffusion of culture, and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace are indispensable to the dignity of man and constitute a sacred duty which all the nations must fulfil in a spirit of mutual assistance and concern;

That a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and that the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.

For these reasons, the States Parties to this Constitution, believing in full and equal opportunities for education for all, in the unrestricted pursuit of objective truth, and in the free exchange of ideas and knowledge, are agreed and determined to develop and to increase the means of communication between their peoples and to employ these means for the purposes of mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other's lives;

In consequence whereof they do hereby create the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for the purpose of advancing, through the educational and scientific and cultural relations of the peoples of the world, the objectives of international peace and of the common welfare of mankind for which the United Nations Organization was established and which its Charter proclaims.

## 'Don't Mourn – Organise!'

PEGGY DUFF, veteran nuclear disarmament campaigner and a founder member of END's Coordinating Committee, died in University College Hospital, London on 17 April after a long fight against cancer.

The tributes paid to her at a Memorial Meeting held on 7 June in London illustrate the affection as well as the respect with which she is remembered. We reproduce some extracts from that meeting here and ask Bulletin readers to remember Jo Hill's epitaph quoted by Sidney Lens of the United States: "Don't Mourn – Organise".



MICHAEL FOOT brought greetings from the Labour Party, of which Peggy was, as he said, "intermittently an enthusiastic supporter." He spoke of his association with her in 'Save Europe Now' when he first met her and went on to describe her days as Business Manager of Tribune.

"I recall many happy tumultuous years with her on Tribune. She was the Business Manager, and I don't think I would be revealing any secrets if I said her methods were somewhat unorthodox. If I can use a reference I once dared use to her face and therefore I don't mind using again. Peggy, in my opinion, used to run a system of creative chaos. She didn't believe that figures should be tabulated in books. She believed that all figures about Tribune's finances, if they weren't actually kept in the Tribune van, should be kept in her own head. And as I was very eager, as several of us were, that our actual truthful

state of our finances should not be revealed to our advertisers, I always thought that it was a pretty good system."

He went on to speak of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament as the greatest of all her achievements, and how she "put her own special stamp" on CND.

"Of course CND didn't achieve what it set out to achieve, but it had many remarkable accomplishments to its credit. It led the way to the tentative though, as we all acknowledge, quite insufficient international agreements that were reached. If you read the reports of the accounts of what Macmillan said to Eisenhower when he went to try and get the anti-proliferation agreement in the early 1960s, how the ferment of opinion that CND had produced not merely here in Britain but throughout the world, that that in itself played its part.

"It is sad that she will not be here to see

the whole great resurgence of CND which is taking place in this country and indeed in many other countries and it is the greatest development of the peace movement that the world has ever known and it comes at the moment of supreme crisis for the whole of humanity. It is conceivable that we can turn back the whole nuclear arms race and instill some sanity into mankind. I believe the forces that are mustering to that effect have the chance of success, and when we succeed, and we will have to succeed in these coming few years, there will be nobody who will have contributed more to that triumph of the human races in all places than Peggy Duff."

SUSAN KOCHALSKI, Peggy's daughter, recalled some of the memories of her childhood.

"Just before the end of the war our father was killed in action so Mum had three children to bring up alone. We all have vivid memories of her campaigning days, having to push the Tribune van to get it going before we went to school, and steering my school friends hurriedly across the road after catching sight of my mother standing on a soap box outside Kentish Town.

"She was an unconventional grandmother as well. Although she was very fond of all her grandchildren when they were babies, the bond grew much closer when they could play cards.

"I remember especially her last trip to Washington. Kath saw her off with her walking stick and one plastic carrier bag. I collected her at Gatwick on her return. She finally shot through the customs door travelling in style on top of a luggage jeep looking horribly like Queen Victoria and very pleased with herself as she now had two plastic carrier bags – one containing a skateboard for my son.

I would like to thank Dr Suhami of University College Hospital, who when a frail old lady announced that she wanted to go to Vietnam or Frankfurt or America took it without a blink and never discouraged her."

ROY SHAW, an ex Camden Council colleague of Peggy's, recalled her total lack of false sentimentality. Not having seen Peggy for the past ten or twelve years he went into a restaurant in the Finchley Road about three years ago and looked into the gloom seeking a vacant table.

Suddenly, Peggy's voice rang out from nearby: "Shaw, shut that bloody door, you're making a draught."

CARMEL BUDIARDJO of Tapol, the campaign for the release of political prisoners in Indonesia.

"If I can share with you just a few impressions of the last days of her life, I would like to do that. Hearing that she was in hospital, hearing that she was quite seriously ill again, I thought I'd go and see her. I also wanted to ask her a bit about her book, 'Left, Left, Left' because I was interested in the way she had written it, how she researched it and all

that kind of thing. But it turned out that I was too late. I went to the hospital to see her and one of her daughters, Susan, was there and it was quite obvious that she was dying. And I thought, in fact I made a vague attempt to ask her about this book, but obviously she was not able to say anything, or, "I'll tell you later" she said. And in between snippets of conversation she sort of dozed off and there were embarrassing moments of not quite knowing what to do. When you're sitting with an ill person should you speak or should you not speak. And so I sat beside her bed saying nothing and not quite knowing what to do and then suddenly, hardly looking at me, she barked "Why are you sitting there saying nothing?" I said, "Well, what do you want me to say?" "Say anything. Read to me from the newspaper if you can't think of anything." Fortunately, there was a copy of *The Guardian*, so I started reading. And I read her quite a few items. She heard all these things and made her very biting, terse comments. I was absolutely amazed because she looked as though she was sleeping all the time, but obviously she was still very 'with it'. I mean, this was 24 hours before she died. And actually it was at that moment when I asked her: "Peggy, weren't you thinking of going to this conference in Holland?" "No," she said, sitting up sharply, "too many Generals!"

"I then had to take my leave and it was the next day that I heard of her death. I'd just like to share with you the very strong feeling of my experience with her during that last day; she was a person who I loved very dearly to work with and I have missed ever since she died and will go on missing."

#### IAN MIKARDO MP

"When I heard that Peggy was going to organise a mass march of tens of thousands of people over four days from Aldermaston to London I was absolutely horrified. I had known her in the days when she was business manager of *Tribune* and had seen her in that office in a permanent state of managerial and financial obfuscation.

"I thought that even with the help of good people, her organising such a march was an infallible recipe for unmitigated disaster. But how wrong I was. How well she measured up to the challenge. How well she proved to be, in my judgement, one of the best organising managers I have struck in my life, and her secret was that she picked people to do particular jobs, delegated to them totally, trusted them and left them to get on with the job. There are very very few people in organisation and administration that really have got the capacity to do that to the extent that Peggy had that capacity.



"Peggy organised the latrine squad, she organised the litter men, she organised the accommodation people, the loud speaker equipment, the baggage and all the rest of it and then she thought about the feeding of the five thousand or more and she looked through her lists of members of the campaign and found, at an address at Tunbridge Wells, the name of a cafe owner – a very nice chap called Harrington – and she called on him to provide the expertise and the equipment. He had then to get field kitchens, which of course we had to use, and she wanted someone to organise the logistics, find the stuff and keep the accounts and all that. She picked Jo Richardson to do that. And then she said to Harrington and Jo Richardson: "You need a third one in your team. What you want is a big fellow with broad shoulders with not much brains. You need somebody who can load up the catering van, drive it to the next stop, unload it, put out the trestle tables, put out the gear, and then hump the water to fill up the field kitchens, but don't get anyone with brains 'cos he'll start asking questions and start to grumble." And it was on the basis of these job specifications that I was appointed."

#### JAMES CAMERON

"She was a tremendous bully, a real bully. She drove us to do things we would otherwise have been too lazy or incompetent to do.

"She's up there, or wherever it is, My God, the angels won't be diligent enough for her – or if she is down there, as we say, she will make it very troublesome for the devil, he'll be very sorry."

#### MARY KALDOR

*on behalf of END*

"Peggy was such a marvellous person and we in European Nuclear Disarmament owe so very much to her – she put everything she had into our campaign. Because of her illness she was perhaps the least visible person in END but she may well have been the most important.

"Peggy really got things going, and it wasn't just through the memory of CND. During the intervening period she had built up an international network of peace movements which she really understood, and because of her we were able to organise our first two meetings of peace activists from

over Europe. The second meeting, in Frankfurt, took place during the last few weeks of her life when she organised the meeting in her usual indomitable style. She set up our office in London and she launched our appeal for funds only in January of this year.

"She bullied us and cajoled us in her usual way into an organisation, and she was still issuing us with instructions two hours before she died. Peggy is very nearly irreplaceable. She leaves a terrible gap which I think we haven't yet begun really to comprehend, and we owe such a debt to her for making sure she got the show on the road, and she got it all organised so that we could keep it all going without her, just before she died. And it was just an incredible achievement in the last few months before she died.

"She was very very weak in the last few weeks of her life and I think several of us felt quite strongly that we wished there was some way in which we could express to her our appreciation and how much we loved and valued her both as a friend and as a comrade. I think the best thing we can do now is to keep the show on the road, to turn up in our thousands in London, Brussels or wherever and keep on struggling in our own way. And I think the best way we can remember her, the best way she would like to be remembered, is to make END not only her last but also her most successful endeavour."

**THE PEGGY DUFF MEMORIAL FUND** was established to mount a major international disarmament initiative in New York during the 2nd Special Session of the UN on Disarmament next Spring.

An emergency conference will demand real disarmament measures and mount an urgent continuing campaign for, amongst other things, establishment and extension of nuclear weapon free areas.

ICDP must organise this now and urges Bulletin readers to contribute generously to this tribute to a great and selfless campaigner for disarmament.

Cheques payable please to Conflict Education Library Trust, 6 Endsleigh Street, London, WC1 marked PD Memorial Fund.