

## **Introduction – Angie Zelter**

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During the early part of 2005 I became increasingly concerned that the UK peace movement was not showing its strength nor exerting enough influence – it was not translating its concerns into action that would create the changes our society needed to make. I was horrified that nuclear weapons were proliferating once more, a new nuclear arms race was beginning, and that we had squandered the peace-dividend opportunities of the end of the Cold War. The powerful nations of the world were still locked into war-fighting over exploitative, resource conflicts. What could we as a peace movement do about it? I came up with what my friends and colleagues called a 'mad plan' for sustained, civil resistance against the UK's nuclear weapons. The plan, later to be called 'Fastlane 365', was conceived from within a personal perspective that is probably shared by many of us within our movement for just and equitable social change.

This perspective includes a belief that we human beings have caused massive global damage over the last few centuries – forest destruction, desertification, species extinction, the genocide of whole peoples, long-lasting and serious pollution, wars, refugees, torture, and gross human rights abuses. The wake-up call of climate change may have finally brought us a unique opportunity to make the links, understand and put right our destructive behaviours. It is now obvious that it is only by acting together in full mindfulness that we can save our planet earth and our own humanity.

Everything is linked and if we work deeply to cure one ill we will come into contact with the need to cure another. The key is for us to know ourselves as global citizens. We all belong to one fragile earth and we must carry this knowledge into every area of our life and politics.

At the root of it, is the necessity to have compassion for all people and all living things – to love. We must act as if we could be anyone, anywhere on this planet. We must have the imagination to feel and know what it is like to be an Iraqi or a Palestinian under military occupation, or an asylum seeker awaiting her fate in a detention centre, or an impoverished, hungry, dispossessed labourer working to produce cash crops for a trans-national corporation, or the last stand of ancient old-growth trees looking out over a devastated clear-cut, or a turkey in an intensive factory farm ..... Our policies and actions must be viewed from the perspective of all, and any, living being. To put ourselves in the place of another is a necessity not a luxury.

It is our ability to close off, to deny the implications of our actions on others, to rationalise rather than to be wise, that has led us to this critical turning point for life on earth. And nothing epitomises more this denial and lack of imagination in the UK today than our threat to use weapons of mass destruction. As McSorley once said, nuclear weapons are the tap-root of violence in our society. The fact that we can allow Trident nuclear weapons to exist and allow our neighbours and friends to work on maintaining and preparing for their use symbolises a corrupt and spiritually bankrupt society that has lost its way.

To plan for the replacement of Trident, in breach of Article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, whilst condemning other, less powerful nations, for trying to get their own nuclear weapons, is a hypocrisy that undermines international law, encourages the continuation of state terrorism, and is indicative of our cultural collapse.

Nuclear weapons do not exist in a vacuum, they exist in a web of lies, evasions, and power abuses, they exist to prop up an exploitative, narrow, selfish and ultimately destructive culture.

When looking at the foreign policy of the UK over the last 500 years, we can view it from the eyes of millions of victims all around the world as a sordid history of stealing scarce resources of gold, minerals, timber, oil and food. First, by war and conquest, then by slavery and colonialism. And now, by unfair and unethical 'trading' rules that ensure multi-national corporate power, long-lasting debt bondage and control over vast stretches of other people's lands and seas. These power abuses have caused millions of deaths, horrendous poverty, and vast ecological destruction. Africa, one of the richest continents on earth, is just one example of where Britain has abused economic and military power to exploit natural resources and leave a wave of destruction behind.

Military power is **not** often about self-defence – the lie that lies behind our society's acceptance of it. It is about forcing other people to do what we – in our infinite ignorance – think we want. Thus, our foreign policy has consistently led us not only to war and occupation but also to backing repressive regimes, selling arms and torture equipment to human rights abusers and to turning a blind eye to the subjugation of vast numbers of people all over the world.

Behaviour like this not only affects others in distant far off places but destroys and distorts our own culture. It is one of the reasons for the cultural disintegration that you can see in the despairing, confused and angry, eyes of people around.

Any campaigning against nuclear weapons must thus, also, work for the open transformation of British foreign policy, from control of other people's resources to regional self-sufficiency, global co-operation and fair trade. People have a right to grow their own food and save their own seeds, to use their own water resources before being forced to trade in luxury items like tea, coffee, and out of season fruit and vegetables, and to have clean, safe rivers and lands rather than the contamination caused by gold, oil and other mineral extraction. This is not just an issue of foreign policy, it is also one of economic policy. We need to put human rights and environmental safeguards ahead of profit and change the global trade agreements to make sure they do not undermine our efforts to co-operate for the sake of the planet rather than profit.

All of these issues at their heart are about real security. Everyone on earth has a right to a clean, safe and secure environment, to live and to love. Real security cannot be found at the end of a gun – the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have shown very clearly that you cannot bomb a country into democracy or liberty or safety. Violence just creates more violence. We have to deal with the root causes of violence – and to do this we must be honest and compassionate. We must not take more than our fair share of the resources of the world and our policies must be respectful of the rights of every other life-form to have its space on this planet. We have to put our own society right before blaming others.

To put into practice the changes our society will have to make we need to transform the most destructive forces. We need to dismantle Trident, re-commit ourselves to international humanitarian law and get out of all the current wars and occupations that we are involved in. We must stop supporting repressive regimes and stop our arms trade. We must stop the flagrant waste of resources and stupendous carbon use of the war machine that depletes natural resources on a massive scale and causes huge environmental and societal destruction and poverty – those very issues that we need to be addressing co-operatively in order to survive the challenges of global climate change. We have to divert resources to life-enhancing work. And in the process we will revitalise and renew our own culture and put the heart and soul back into ourselves.

In our society it is the politicians who will have to join with us against the state abuse of power and

ensure that international law is upheld and Trident dismantled. And they need people-power to push, encourage, and support them to act in the best interests of the global community.

To enact social change on such a scale we need to have all the elements of a movement for social change active – ranging from analysis, debate, education, letter writing, and lobbying, to demonstrations and nonviolent civil resistance. In a society such as ours where we have no constitution, no real separation of powers, where democracy is crumbling as people feel more and more disempowered, where responsible appeals to the 'authorities' to deal with the criminal activities of the state are not heeded, we need a nonviolent street presence to show more directly our concerns and requests for change. Sometimes we even have to disrupt what is going on - we have to engage in nonviolent civil resistance campaigns like Faslane 365.

This was my personal perspective from which arose the idea of the 'mad plan'. Called mad not because people thought it was a bad or crazy idea but because it seemed much too ambitious. How could we expect to be able to mobilise groups of 100 plus people to come and blockade the base every single day for a whole year? The peace movement was at another low ebb and there were so many more direct problems that needed to be addressed. On the other hand Trident Ploughshares had built up a great deal of experience in training and empowering people to engage in civil resistance and had kept up the political pressure for nuclear disarmament in Scotland by organising disarmament camps at Faslane and Coulport over the last 6 or 7 years. The annual Big Blockades had attracted much publicity and some of the high profile court cases had brought the issue of international law being broken by deploying nuclear weapons right into mainstream discussion.<sup>1</sup> However, by 2005 the energy was beginning to slacken and the camps and the Big Blockades were not bringing in many new people. There was a waning of people pressure just at the time when it seemed to me the opposition to nuclear weapons should be increasing. However, many people were struggling with trying to make a living alongside a massive feeling of political disempowerment after the anti-war protests of millions of people had failed to prevent the war in Iraq.

The 'mad plan' would have remained just that, except that a group of friends with whom I had worked in Trident Ploughshares – Adam Conway, Anna-Linnea Rundberg, David Mackenzie and Jane Tallents (all of whom have contributing chapters to this book) – decided to try and make it happen. With 5 of us working together we began to meet. David Mackenzie came up with the name – Faslane 365 – and we began the hard work translating mad ideas into reality. And of course the idea developed and changed over the year as all implemented visions do. But that vision of 100 blockaders at the gates of Faslane every day for a year gave us the energy at the start to facilitate the reality that emerged as Faslane 365. This book is about the extraordinary events of this year-long blockade of Faslane.

Faslane is the UK Naval Base where the UK's weapons of mass destruction are based and is thus a prime military target. Faslane is about 30 miles North West of Glasgow. Glasgow is Scotland's commercial capital and is Scotland's largest city with a population of around 600,000. Faslane is the home port of 4 nuclear-powered Vanguard submarines, equipped with US Trident missiles and upto 200 nuclear warheads, each of which can deliver around 8 times the destructive power of the bombs that flattened the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan in 1948. The spare warheads are stored at Coulport, which is very close to Faslane.

During 2006 to 2007 the whole non-proliferation regime was threatened by the renewal and

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<sup>1</sup> The story of Trident Ploughshares and People's Disarmament efforts has been told in the book 'Trident on Trial' that I put together in 2001.

modernising of nuclear weapons systems by the UK, USA and France. The nuclear weapon ambitions of Iran and Korea were also in the limelight. It was a year of political upheaval and controversy with Westminster voting for the replacement of Trident and Scotland voting against it. Chapter 2 – Why Scotland - written jointly by David Mackenzie and Rebecca Johnson explores this political context and Chapter 3 – International Security, Law and Abolition - written by Rebecca Johnson, analyses the international ramifications of the UK's stance over the years.

Faslane 365 came at this most crucial time and managed to keep the spotlight in Scotland on nuclear weapons at Faslane. The campaign encouraged a renewed nonviolent confrontation with the State to pressurise it to implement its promises of disarmament. I summarise this story in Chapter 1 - People Power. There is a long history of demonstrations and nonviolent civil resistance opposing nuclear weapons in Scotland, and this context is explored in Chapter 4 – A History of Scottish Anti-nuclear Protesting – written by Helen Steven.

Vital questions of what real security should look like and how the nuclear threat distorts not only the UK's foreign and defence policies but also environment, development and economic policies, were raised by the inclusion of a wide variety of civil society groups taking part in Faslane 365. The linked issues of poverty, arms sales, war and occupation, refugees and asylum seekers, carbon footprints, morality, international law, and spirituality are all explored through the stories, songs and witnesses of various Blockading Groups. These reports from the actual blockades themselves are interspersed throughout the book to bring the campaign to life.

Since it is often not realised how much hard work and organisation these seemingly 'spontaneous' civil resistance campaigns need, I have included a few chapters to give an insight into the organisation of Faslane 365. They are also included in order to share experience and power. The whole campaign was designed to be as autonomous as possible and this was facilitated by the liberal sharing of information and training materials. Thus you will find Chapter 5 - Trainings and Skill-Sharing - written by Anna-Linnea Rundberg, exploring the nonviolent workshops that all groups were encouraged to participate in.

Linked in with the trainings were legal briefings and encouragement to groups to organise their own legal support. Adam Conway deals with this along with the wider issues of the consequences of being arrested and the impact on defendants and courts in Chapter 6 – Legal Support.

Jane Tallents, in Chapter 7- Local Impact Around the Rosneath Peninsular - looks at the impact on the local community of the disruptions caused by a year long blockade and how this affected the campaign as a whole.

Another very necessary part of any nonviolent civil resistance campaign is the stance one takes with the police. I explore this in some detail in Chapter 8 – Dialogues with the Police, in order to give people an insight into this little known process.

And finally, to give a deeper insight into the thought and philosophy that went into so many of the blockades I have included an example from the Academics Blocks – Chapter 9 - Universities Vs. Weapons of Mass Destruction: Not Just an Academic Exercise – written jointly by Justin Kenrick and Stellan Vinthagen

As I write this the sun is shining through the sycamore leaves onto the ferns and the little stream that I can see out of my caravan window here at Faslane Peace Camp. A nuthatch perches upside down on the goat willow. The traffic going into the Faslane Naval base thunders past on my other

side. 11,000 people going in and out, working to service and deploy weapons of mass destruction that are a constant threat to all life on earth. I am pondering the different viewpoints and philosophies, hopes and fears that are symbolised by these two realities. The view into the trees and water, the quiet life that slowly passes through its seasons, have been my constant companions over this extraordinary year of blockades. It is what sustains me. The mountains and lochs dominate the view around the base and remind me of a geological time-scale of millions of years, putting into a different perspective our human toils to prevent the loss of our natural world. The constant stream of dedicated, wonderfully compassionate, people who have joined in this year of blockades have provided the hope, companionship and co-operation that have been essential to living and working to rid the world of nuclear weapons. I hope that the book will not only record part of the history of the peace movement in the UK but will also inspire readers to have faith in their power to act and change the world they live in. I dedicate this book to all the thousands who have made the pilgrimage to Faslane and who believe that they can make a difference.