
Civil Society and Global Responsibility: The Arms Trade and East Timor

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Abstract

This article describes the direct action and ensuing trial of the 'Ploughshares Women' who were acquitted by the Crown Court at Liverpool in 1996, having damaged a Hawk aircraft being sold by the British government to Indonesia. The women argued that the Hawk aircraft were being used as part of the Indonesian government's campaign against East Timor, a country it was illegally occupying, and in which it was carrying out gross human rights abuses. The women persuaded the jury that by selling the aircraft to Indonesia the British government was in violation of domestic and international law as well as 'simple humanity and love'. Direct action was said to have been necessary after the failure of groups to persuade the British government to stop resolving ethical dilemmas in favour of profit in their dealings with Indonesia. The article ends with a discussion of individual responsibility in relation to global problems, and urges readers to take seriously concepts of global responsibility and global citizenship, and working towards reconfiguring society and economics to serve human interests.

Keywords: arms trade, Critical Security Studies, East Timor, global citizenship, global responsibility, Indonesia, Ploughshares women.

'Not guilty. Not guilty on all counts!'

Tears were streaming down the faces of almost everyone sitting in Liverpool Crown Court on 30 July 1996 when the four Ploughshares women were finally released. They had faced up to ten years in prison for their act of damaging a Hawk ground-attack aircraft bound for Indonesia. Dr Ricarda Steinbrecher, one of the Ploughshares women's main supporters, described the feelings well, and said:

'Not guilty' – we had held it in our hearts and minds all through the trial, all through the six months our friends were locked up on remand for acting to prevent genocide. What a wonderful day for justice and for East Timor! I ran out . . . of the court . . . and the whole square erupted in cheers, laughter, tears. As we celebrated we knew that all over the world people were celebrating with us, including in East Timor. This action really did disarm for life and justice. Everybody was hugging everybody, knowing that we were all part of this moment in history, of wheels turning, of new hope born.¹

I was one of those four Ploughshares women. I had decided to join with three other women to do what my government had failed to do – to prevent the provision of weapons to the genocidal dictator of Indonesia, General Suharto – to



prevent at least one Hawk fighter plane from being delivered to a regime which has had one of the worst human rights records in the world.

Before describing our actions, the trial and our defence, I will give some general background and immediate context.

General background: Ploughshares actions

A new deal had been signed in June 1993 for British Aerospace (BAe) to supply Indonesia with 24 Hawk ground-attack aircraft.² Indonesia already had a number of Hawks, sold to them in 1978, and eyewitnesses had reported seeing these aircraft being used to attack villages in East Timor.³ Well before the second Hawk deal was finally signed, thousands of people in Britain had been working to try to stop it. A large coalition of human rights, peace and anti-arms trade groups had formed to oppose the sale. They had organized many protests ranging from letter writing, lobbying, petitions, vigils and leafleting, to setting up peace camps and carrying out demonstrations that included many acts of civil disobedience, such as die-ins, blockades and trespasses at government buildings and BAe sites.⁴ Some of us determined that if none of these activities had worked by the time the first batch of Hawks were due to leave for Indonesia then we would personally try to prevent them going by peacefully disarming as many as we could find. We formed a small group and spent over a year planning our Ploughshares action as a last resort if all else failed.

The Ploughshares movement originated in the North American faith-based peace movement that emerged during opposition to the Vietnam war in the 1970s. The first Ploughshares action was carried out in 1980 by the 'Ploughshares Eight'. They entered a General Electric plant in Pennsylvania, where the nose cones for the Mark 12A nuclear warheads were manufactured. Enacting the biblical prophecies of Isaiah (2:4) and Micah (4:3) to 'beat swords into ploughshares', they hammered on two of the nose cones and poured blood on documents. Ordinary household hammers were used to carry out this direct act of disarmament. By August 1997, over 140 individuals had participated in over 60 Ploughshares actions in Australia, Germany, Holland, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. The smallest group of hammerers consisted of only one person (with only one support person) – called 'Harmonic Disarmament for Life' – and the largest group of hammerers consisted of nine people and was called 'Trident Nein'.

Many different weapons systems had been disarmed. These included components of the US first-strike nuclear weapons systems such as MX, Minuteman, B-52 bombers, P-3 Orion anti-submarine aircraft and NAVSTAR; combat aircraft used for military intervention, such as helicopters, F-111 and F-15E fighter bombers and Hawk aircraft; anti-aircraft missile launchers, bazooka grenade throwers and AK-5 automatic rifles. Ploughshares actions are always peaceful and accountable actions. They are part of the tradition of non-violent and civil-

disobedience actions. Although originally rooted in Christianity these actions are now universal and gain their spiritual strength from many different faiths and traditions. Our action against the Hawk deal was the 56th such Ploughshares action carried out by ordinary people across the world, and we named it 'Seeds of Hope – East Timor Ploughshares – Women Disarming for Life and Justice'. It was the first all-women Ploughshares action, the first where any of the defendants were acquitted and the one where the most damage was done to the weapons system. The initial costs to BAe were estimated in the region of £2.5 million, but this was later reduced by the defence in court to £1.5 million.

Immediate context: British arms sales to Indonesia

The immediate context to our action was British arms sales to Indonesia, a country whose armed forces have repressed and denied human rights ever since General Suharto seized power in 1965. By the mid-1990s, his regime had killed an estimated 1 million people in order to ensure his power base.⁵ The armed forces continued to repress people in many parts of Indonesia, ignoring local indigenous people's land and human rights by resettling people from the central islands on their lands through the infamous transmigration policies.⁶ Conflict in the country has been widespread: in Aceh and Kalimantan it flared up into full-scale riots and killings in the mid-1990s. The Indonesian armed forces annexed West Papua in 1963 against the wishes of its people and has continued to exploit the natural resources there, backed up by a full repressive military system.⁷

Human rights abuses in Indonesia have been on an appalling scale. In the mid-1990s Amnesty International summed up the situation as follows:

Hundreds of thousands of civilians have been killed, their mutilated corpses sometimes left in public places to rot; prisoners have been routinely tortured and ill-treated, some so severely that they have died or suffered permanent injury; thousands of people have been imprisoned following show trials solely for their peaceful political and religious views; scores of prisoners have been shot by firing squad.⁸

In addition to the internal repression, the Indonesian armed forces violated East Timor's right to self-determination by invading the country following the end of Portuguese colonization in 1975. They continued to occupy East Timor illegally against UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions over the next 24 years. This illegal occupation led to the other criminal acts they carried out there – resource exploitation, land theft, torture, bombings and shootings.⁹ An estimated one-third of the population of East Timor were killed. Jose Ramos Horta, the exiled East Timorese Leader and Nobel Laureate, said in a 1996 speech, 'Entire villages have been wiped out. Entire tribes of indigenous peoples have been obliterated. This is genocide'.¹⁰

Yet despite all this, the UK since 1978 remained a major supplier of

armaments, military aircraft and naval vessels to Indonesia. The UK has a 'special relationship' with Indonesia based on trade which has undermined its commitment to human rights.¹¹ The UK has also supplied police and internal security equipment and has trained both military and paramilitary forces including the police, who have been at the forefront of torture and other human rights abuses. Two of the aircraft from the first Hawk deal, armed with missiles, were used daily over East Timor for almost six months in 1983 and were responsible for the death of hundreds of civilians and guerrilla fighters in three parts of the country. A Hawk was seen destroying a village in East Timor in September of 1994.¹² In December 1995 Hugh O'Shaughnessy, a journalist working for *The Observer*, saw Hawk aircraft flying over Dili, the capital of East Timor.¹³

The UK government, which claims it is concerned about human rights and respects international law, has continued to trade in military and police equipment with Indonesia, a systematic and persistent violator of international laws. Government officials in London tell us that they check all arms exports against the UK guidelines, the criteria of the EU, the OSCE (Organisation on Security and Co-operation in Europe) and the five Permanent members of the UN Security Council.¹⁴ All these guidelines stress the importance in arms exports of the human rights record of the recipient country and its respect for international law, its internal situation, the need to preserve regional peace and the need for restraint in the character of arms deals.

Of what use are such guidelines if weapons are sent to a country such as Indonesia? They are a total waste of time, effort and paper, and much worse than that, they are, in effect, a huge lie. These agreements, with their enumerated criteria, give the impression that there are some controls upon the arms trade, when in fact Britain sells arms for profit and strategic gain, regardless of any humanitarian considerations. This view is not based on jaded cynicism but on a thorough reading of letters, statements and policy documents of government departments, arms corporations and economic advisers.

A few examples of the double standards will suffice. The BAE *Corporate Governance Manual* states: 'The company demands and will maintain the highest ethical standards in its business activities. The company will respect the traditions and cultures of each country with which it deals. Performance against the ethical standards needs to be monitored regularly'.¹⁵ Dick Evans, then Chief Executive of BAE, wrote to me:

Regarding the issue you raise on limiting exports. In 1994 export markets accounted for 82% of our defence business and the FS Survey placed BAE as the UK's top exporter of manufactured goods. The world market for aerospace and defence products is highly competitive and we cannot afford to limit our export opportunities or to become reliant on the UK domestic market without risking extinction.¹⁶

The implication of this letter was that any ethical dilemmas would always be resolved in terms of commercial competitiveness.

The *Country Forecast* for Indonesia (1995) produced by the Economist Intelligence Unit (the government department that issues export licences for military equipment) found in the Department of Trade and Industry Library stated:

In seeking to achieve its foreign policy goals, the government will continue to be hampered by external pressure over two issues: Indonesia's controversial annexation of the former Portuguese colony of East Timor and its human and workers rights record . . . these pressures will remain manageable, with many of Indonesia's most important trading partners having implicitly accepted the country's role in East Timor and few foreign governments willing to sacrifice potentially lucrative trade relations with Indonesia on the altar of human rights.¹⁷

The sufferings in East Timor were characterized simply as 'pressures', and human rights issues were consigned to something to worry about on Sundays: what matters are 'potentially lucrative trade relations'. Britain's duplicity was exemplified in the letters sent to protesters. We were told that Britain defends itself and should not deny others the right to do the same. We were then given a quotation from Article 51 of the UN Charter dealing with 'the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence'. This is a partial and distorted irrelevance as this Article only recognizes the use of force in response to an armed attack, and the response has to be limited and proportional in compliance with international war laws. Indonesia has not been a country under attack fighting valiantly to defend itself. Over recent decades Indonesia itself was the aggressor in the case of East Timor and needed weapons to carry out offensive actions, not defensive ones. Indonesia's occupation of the country was never recognized by the United Nations. And no mention was ever made by the British authorities of the UN Charter's Article 1(2), which endorses 'the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples'.

British institutions have been playing word games like this for years and it does not seem to matter whether it is a Labour or a Conservative government in power. In 1978, in response to protest letters about the sale of the first Hawk aircraft, Lord Goronwy Roberts of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) said on 19 June, 'I hope you will be reassured to learn that the aircraft in question are of the trainer version; equipment for their ground-attack role has not been included in the sale, and therefore they cannot be used in East Timor or against civilians'. On 8 August 1996, Jeremy Hanley of the FCO said, 'In the case of the sale of Hawk aircraft, thorough assessments were made of the likelihood of this equipment being used for internal repression in Indonesia or East Timor. We concluded that it was not likely that they would be so used'. Obviously, neither protesters about human rights abuses and the arms trade, nor the East Timorese people themselves, were – or are – reassured by such words. This is why they have been taking their own action – working directly for the security of East Timor and in the interests of humanity as a whole.

After my release from prison (discussed below) and as a follow-up to the Hawk disarmament action, I worked with CAAT, TAPOL and the WDM at the High Court to test the government statements about arms exports to repressive regimes. In the case of Indonesia, British Alvis tanks were used in April 1996 during an assault on students in Ujung Pandang, South Sulawesi and British Glover Webb water cannons were used to break up peaceful protests in Bandung, West Java, in June 1996. TAPOL had acquired photos of these events and witness statements. These 1996 incidents formed the basis for the application of a Judicial Review at the High Court.¹⁸ The Judicial Review was to test the validity of government assertions that decisions about arms sales were based on careful consideration of the human rights record of the recipient country in accordance with several international codes of practice to which Britain had bound itself. It was the first ever legal challenge to the export of arms. It failed. But it did show that government assertions about being bound by human rights criteria were worthless. This led to an understanding that the only thing that can bind a government to strict adherence of its own policy of refusing to arm aggressive and repressive states is unambiguous legislation.¹⁹

While reporting to the press on our Ploughshares action and with the deaths of 200,000 East Timorese people in mind, I had said:

Murder and genocide are not excusable, either morally or legally, on the grounds that they provide jobs for British people. Yet this is what is underlying the provision of arms to Suharto's regime. The Genocide Act is part of British Law and it is time it was used to prevent our Government and industry implicating ordinary British workers in the horrific killings and repression committed by the Indonesian state. British people need and want jobs but only those that are socially and ethically justifiable. Ploughshares activists are accountable for their acts of disarmament – we want to see a government accountable for their acts of armament and taking responsibility for their part in genocide.²⁰

The issue of jobs is of course a very emotive subject. Employment is one of the most commonly used defences for maintaining unethical business practices, and apart from being used to defend the arms industry is also used to defend many other contentious industries. Society cannot duck the question: to what extent should moral considerations and other values be placed higher than economic advantage? Is it right to earn our living at the expense of other peoples around the world?²¹ My own view is that no country should organize its economy around the suffering of others. This said, however, the arguments for the arms trade on the basis of economy and for jobs are often in any case very flawed. There are many studies showing that more jobs could be saved by switching resources from arms production.²² There is also a need for a drastic reappraisal of jobs and employment in modern society. Much work that is being done, it can be argued, does not really need to be done: many aspects of the arms industry, nuclear power, pornography,

production of hazardous products, clear-cutting of old-growth forests, advertising and the glut of redundant and frivolous consumer goods. (Do we really need 14 different brands of detergents or electric toothbrushes?) And much work that needs doing is not getting done: environmental protection, organic agriculture, community care, restoration of public services, peaceful conflict resolution, renewable and non-polluting energy production and the repair of goods. Many essential jobs are being done by unpaid volunteers. The work ethic and the current norm of employment whereby one sells one's time to an employer is only about 150 years old and is already showing major flaws. Alternative ways of supporting people and getting essential work done must be explored. There are plenty of ideas around including those of 'basic incomes' and 'ownwork'.²³ The arms trade needs to be rethought as part of a wider rethinking of our economy and society.

The Ploughshares action

Our Ploughshares group was all women (including the six supporters who made up our full group of ten) and was consciously so – to challenge the unbalanced, patriarchal basis of our society. We also wished to work with women because we wanted to explore certain ways of working that many men would not have been happy with. For instance, we wanted to explore our fears and emotions and to look after each other in order to prepare properly and to support ourselves for what might have been a very long time in prison. We also wanted to counter the rather macho image that Ploughshares actions up to that point had acquired by being dominated by men. We were successful in this aim because since our action there have been several more women-only Ploughshares actions. The arms industry, war and human rights abuses are controlled by men with women and children as major victims: it was estimated in 1997 that in the previous ten years 2 million children, far more than the total number of soldiers, had been killed in war.²⁴ It felt good to confront this challenge with an all-female team.

Our group wrote a 'Seeds of Hope' report of around 50 pages.²⁵ It included the background to the illegal and brutal invasion and 20-year genocidal occupation of East Timor by Indonesia, a list of relevant international laws and resolutions, information on British arms deals to Indonesia and our personal statements. We also produced a 20-minute video²⁶ that included many scenes from John Pilger's film – *Death of a Nation* – that had affected all four of us very deeply. The video included: personal testimony from East Timorese people who had seen Hawks attack and kill the people of their villages; some revealing statements from government ministers (who admitted that any reassurances from the Indonesian government that they would not use British weapons to kill their own people were not worth the paper they were written on); and interviews with all four of us explaining why we were ready to use our hammers to disarm a Hawk. Both the report and the video were made to explain to both the public and the Court the reasons for our actions.

In mid-January 1996, after preparing and planning everything together, we split into two groups, but took joint responsibility for each other's actions. In the early hours of 29 January 1996, Lotta Kronlid, Andrea Needham and Joanna Wilson snipped a hole in the fence around BAe's weapons factory in Warton, Lancashire. They opened the hangar door with a crowbar and proceeded to use their hammers on the Hawk warplane – to disarm it by damaging the control panels in its cockpit, the radar system and its wings, nose and fuselage. Their efforts resulted in about £1.5m worth of damage. Photographs of women and children shot at the Santa Cruz massacre at Dili in 1991, when Indonesian troops fired on a peaceful demonstration and killed 528 people, were hung on the warplane along with a banner we had carefully and lovingly sewn over the previous months. The video and the report were left on the pilot's seat and 'seeds of hope' (vegetable and flower seeds) were poured all over and around the plane. The three disarmers were able to make several phone calls from the hangar and it was not until the press informed BAe security that they had disarmed the Hawk that security officers finally arrived to arrest them and take them into custody.

A week later, on 6 February 1996, I joined them in prison. We had known that my time would be limited, as in the video and in the report we had all four appeared and had made it quite clear that we were jointly responsible for the action. Our names and addresses were quite openly printed in the report, for example. We did not want any confusion about who had planned the action or any suggestion that we were trying to hide. My role had been to try a second attempt if the others had failed to enter the hangar. If they succeeded and were caught, I was to ensure that their act of disarmament was reported, to widen the debate by trying to get others to stop the export of the remaining Hawks, and then to encourage others to join in further disarmament actions by asking them to join me in an 'open' Ploughshares action.

As expected, I was duly arrested at a public meeting near Warton a week later at which the police knew I was to speak. I was prepared, having already completed several press interviews, attempted to get the courts to get a warrant of arrest for the President of the Board of Trade for conspiring to aid and abet genocide by signing the export licences for the Hawks, and had met sympathetic MPs in order to try to get an emergency debate in parliament.

During the six months we spent in prison, awaiting trial, the four of us received thousands of letters of support from many countries. Although the mainstream press hardly covered the actual disarmament action or our arrests – writing it off as criminal damage, vandalism and irresponsible sabotage – the alternative press covered it widely and it was soon on the Internet. Public support grew.

Our greatest pleasure, however, came from the letters from East Timorese people themselves. Letters were smuggled out of the Indonesian jails, where East Timorese prisoners had heard of our action on their radios and through the underground prison network; and they expressed appreciation of our act of love and solidarity with their people's tragedy. We have a much prized letter from the captive resistance leader Xanana Gusmao himself. Perhaps the most significant

part of these letters was the recognition that we were acting with them, as global citizens, in defence of international justice, our own humanity, for equity, human rights and global security.

The trial and the defence

Our trial took place over six days and was the first time ordinary British people, in the form of the jury of 12 randomly selected people from Liverpool, were given the opportunity to hear the evidence against BAe, the British government and the Indonesian regime. Of course, ostensibly this was the trial of us four women. We faced very serious charges of criminal damage and conspiracy to commit criminal damage; we had been treated in prison as high security risk prisoners. If found guilty we faced up to ten years in prison. We had prepared for a long prison sentence, not daring to hope too strongly for an acquittal.

By the time of the trial public backing for our cause was strong. The Court was crowded and people had to take it in turns to witness the proceedings. There were also several hundred people processing down the streets of Liverpool each day to the Court and there were prayers and demonstrations in the large public square outside the Court buildings. The supporters all recognized the moral legitimacy of our actions and sent their love, prayers and backing.

We stood in the dock, but we knew that the real criminals were the Indonesian military, security and police forces, the British and other western governments who traded with and provided the support and means for the ongoing repression and the powerful commercial corporations who actually made and sold the equipment. We used every opportunity during our defence to put these real criminals on trial. At one point in the trial I said: 'Companies, governments and powerful people are often treated as if they are above the law – their crimes are frequently ignored or not recognised at all'.²⁷ Our trial was the opportunity to get *their* crimes recognized. Although we all wanted to represent ourselves we decided to use two excellent lawyers. Our solicitor was Gareth Pierce and our barrister was Vera Baird – both women. They officially represented Jo, on legal aid, but they protected all of us from abuses within the court system and tried to ensure that we got a fair hearing. We were all well aware that to some extent this was a 'political' trial.

We knew that we did have a defence in law, whatever the police and prosecutor said to the contrary. We used Section 3 of the Criminal Law Act ('A person may use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances in the prevention of crime') to good effect. Vera explained, after our trial, that our acquittal was not 'a perverse verdict'. The latter was often claimed by the press, whose journalists found it hard to come to terms with our acquittal.²⁸ As Vera explained it:

It was not a perverse verdict. . . . It was neither wrong in law nor contrary to the weight of evidence . . . the disarmed Hawk was one of the first batch of four

due to be delivered in January . . . the three that were not damaged were sent to the Bandung Squadron of the Indonesian airforce. Evidence at the trial was that this is the squadron most dedicated to counter-insurgency operations. Those are operations to eliminate lightly armed or unarmed individuals and the squadron is within operational range of East Timor. In short, the new BAe built Hawks were being sent to the squadron which spearheads airborne attacks against East Timor . . . they were able to show that nothing but physical intervention could stop the imminent delivery of this plane . . . the evidence in this case showed that a crime under British and international law was imminent and that crime was stopped.²⁹

The three other defendants mainly concentrated their defence on the British Criminal Law Act, but we all endorsed a powerful moral argument. We did not attempt to hide from the Court our belief that while having a good legal defence our act was based on simple humanity and love, and whatever the state of the law we would still have acted to prevent that warplane from going out to kill innocent people.

For my own part I purposely used an international law defence. This was because, viewing myself as a global citizen, I wanted to use a global defence regardless of what was open to me as a British citizen. My defence was based on the following outline:

International law is binding on all individuals, all states and in this particular court right now . . . Indonesia is a systematic and persistent violator of international laws. . . . Our British government and BAe are complicit in these crimes and in breach of major international laws themselves. . . . The export licence issued for these Hawks may be an official British government licence but it is actually illegal under international law. . . . It is every citizen's right and duty to try and uphold international law by trying to prevent such horrendous crimes from being committed. . . . We thus had a duty to take affirmative action under international law, the reasonable exercise of which made our Ploughshares action lawful.³⁰

One of the most interesting cases that I brought to the Liverpool Court's attention, in connection with corporate crime, was that of the Zyklon B case.³¹ This dealt with the question of whether or not two German businessmen had been entitled to sell the poisonous gas – Zyklon B – to the SS when there were good grounds to believe that it would be used for the purpose of exterminating human beings. After the war the owner and manager of the company selling the gas were put on trial at Nuremberg. They argued that Zyklon B was just an article that could be used for a lawful purpose and could be sold just like any other article in the market. This attitude was similar to that of the prosecutor and BAe about the supply of the Hawks. The Nuremberg Tribunal, however, ruled that under international law it was a war crime to sell Zyklon B and the owner and manager of the supplying company were found guilty. In my final address to the Court I was able to explain:

We need to be aware that the further we are from the physical and personal impact of our actions or the human effects of our decisions, then the less moral responsibility we feel. The longer and more complex the chain of events, the more moral responsibility gets dispersed and reduced. Then the point comes when the system may be guilty of an appalling crime against humanity but no individual feels obliged to own the consequences of their actions. The Indonesian regime denied their responsibility, BAe denied theirs, the British government denied theirs. Therefore *we* were obliged to take responsibility. We knew of the crimes that would be committed by any one of these Hawk aircraft if they ever reached Indonesia, we knew that any Indonesian trying to disable the planes *there* would be tortured and shot, we therefore took responsibility *here*, after trying all other possible steps.³²

The jury agreed with our defence and found us not guilty. The judge, prosecutor, BAe and various other officials were shocked and angry but obviously not totally unprepared for this verdict. As we stepped out of the Court we were immediately served with temporary injunctions, later changed to permanent injunctions, to prevent us from going anywhere near any of the many BAe sites in Britain. But the struggle continues. A total of 13 people have permanent BAe injunctions against them but continue to either defy them or find other ways of campaigning. The campaign to stop the unethical arms trade continues with many more people taking part.³³ The publicity from the trial encouraged lots of new people to join in the protests against arms sales fairs, at the Annual General Meetings of various arms manufacturers,³⁴ and demonstrations outside the Department of Trade and Industry.³⁵ A large number of East Timorese refugees from refugee communities in Ireland, Portugal and Britain took part in these protests, and this was a powerful new development in the campaign. More East Timorese refugees moved to Britain and participated in non-violent direct action. Four East Timorese were arrested alongside seven British protesters (myself included) after breaking in to the Glover Webb factory near Southampton and painting on the sides of the armoured vehicles and water cannon awaiting export to Indonesia, 'Not for Export' and 'Prevent Human Rights Abuses'. The police were ashamed at the true life stories of torture that the East Timorese had suffered, and the company were perhaps similarly embarrassed and did not want the publicity that would come with a trial, so the charges were quietly dropped.³⁶ However, the journalist accompanying the protesters had his footage taken from him and did not get it back from the police until over a year later.

Global citizenship

The idea of global responsibility and global citizenship, of seeing ourselves as one family, is an ancient concept. Although many people in power have a very materialistic, industrial, linear frame of mind, characterized by concepts of

'national security needs' and 'economic growth' many ordinary people have not forgotten our roots in the interconnected life-web and recognize that we are but one of many species. We perceive that our life support systems around the world are deteriorating and dying. Not only have most of our natural forests been destroyed but also the life in the oceans is under challenge. The basic security of healthy and vibrant ecosystems upon which we can base our own human societies is no longer intact. We can see, feel, hear, breathe and taste the death of the life-support systems all around us. There are reports from ordinary people all over the planet telling us of new diseases, decreased fertility in many species including our own, contaminated and dwindling fresh-water supplies, soil-erosion, deforestation, desert encroachment, mass extinction of species, climate change and widespread social dysfunctions. We can see the evidence in our own areas. At the same time it is evident that practical solutions to these pressing problems are not being put in place by our governments or by the 'leaders' and 'decision-makers' in our world.

Furthermore, local people who protest at the exploitation of their natural resources that are ripped up and sent to markets thousands of miles away, leaving them destitute, are often harshly repressed and are put down with weapons supplied by the industrialized nations that are importing their raw materials from these very places. Britain's Rio Tinto Zinc (RTZ) is the world's largest mining company and has a large share in the Grasberg mine in the highlands of West Papua (the Indonesians call it Irian Jaya). This mine holds the world's largest gold and third largest copper deposits and is controlled by the US company Freeport-McMoRan Copper and Gold. The mine is operating against the wishes of the local Amungme, Dani, Komoro and Ekari peoples, who consider the mountain to be the home of their ancestral spirit. The area is effectively under military occupation and the protests by local people have been met with severe repression. The Indonesian authorities themselves had to admit in 1995 that locals had been murdered and 'disappeared'.³⁷

Something, globally, is very wrong. There is a basic problem in the system as a whole. Ordinary, local people have been disempowered. They have lost their autonomy, self-sufficient economies and cultures, and the global economy is being run for the profit of global corporations rather than for the well-being of the peoples of the world. Britain is a part of this global system that is not working in the global public interest; nor is it behaving sustainably. The present system has been set up and is being used by nation states, corporations and financial institutions for their own interests, the interests of those with power and with control over the world's resources. Small-scale businesses and companies that once were able to work for the benefit of local peoples and local markets have now been swallowed into the globalized market. The World Trade Organization has been set up by global corporations. Its aim is to ensure that local communities, democratically controlled institutions and even countries, can be brought to heel if they attempt either to control their own resource use for the benefit of their own people, or try to ensure sustainable and equitable trade restrictions by preventing

the import of unsustainable or damaging products.³⁸ Austria, for instance, banned the import of tropical timber from unsustainable, industrial-style, old-growth logging but was threatened with severe trading penalties by the World Trade Organization if it did not repeal the national legislation and allow the timber in.

We have the information that we need to make necessary changes yet no action is taken. More and more governments and corporations acknowledge the problems, sometimes recognize the solutions, and perhaps even write good policy statements, but they are not implemented. Many documents, guidelines, charters and laws express wonderful ideas of service to and on behalf of the people, and in the interests of long-term sustainability but effective policies and their implementation are often at complete variance.

This state of affairs has led to more and more citizens' groups realizing that if they are to survive, if they are to have real security, then they have to work for it themselves. They have to reclaim their lives, their lands, their laws, their religions, their cultures. They have to start the difficult process of becoming free, autonomous and fully alive. They have, peacefully, to hold their governments and corporations to account. This kind of worldview that I share sees an interconnectedness between the problems of human rights abuses and indigenous people's rights, between environmental destruction and civil war and conflict, between arms sales and corporate power abuses and increasing numbers of refugees.

Our Ploughshares action against the arms trade to Indonesia was an example of a small citizens' group attempting to further global security because the constituted authorities were unwilling or unable to act in a globally responsible manner. Responsibility and global citizenship was a persistent theme in the rationale for our action, and for the way we carried it out. It is evident in all of our personal statements contained in the Report.³⁹ For instance, Lotta Kronlid stated:

For twenty years Western governments' dealings with Indonesia and East Timor have been two-faced. In the UN they have passed numerous resolutions condemning the brutal Indonesian occupation and calling on Indonesia to withdraw. At the same time Western companies, with the consent of their governments, have provided the very means to carry out the occupation, by arming and supporting economically the Indonesian regime. We have a joint responsibility to put an end to this trade in murder and oppression. Acting from that responsibility I'm taking part in this Ploughshares action. By hammering on the Hawks we put into practice our visions of a society where human life is sacred. This is the most direct and practical solidarity I can show my sisters and brothers in East Timor, who are struggling for peace and justice in their country.

She went on to say:

We human beings have a strong and rich ability to love and care for one another. With our lives and our actions we can make the world a just and

beautiful place to live in. . . . With our action I want to show that it is possible to join together with others and overcome the fears that stop us from taking action against injustice. We have the resources. We don't have to obey a government that makes immoral and unjust decisions.

Andrea Needham said that she had been trying to stop the Hawk sale for over three years and that she believed the sale to be immoral and a contravention of both British and international law as well as being a real and imminent threat to the people of East Timor. She said:

I therefore feel that I have no option but to disarm these planes myself in order to prevent them from leaving for Indonesia . . . I believe that above all else in life, we are called to love and to be human. I can therefore not stand aside and allow the Hawks to be delivered without doing all that is in my power to peacefully resist. I believe that to be silent in this situation is to be complicit with injustice.

For Joanne Wilson:

At least 200,000 East Timorese people have died as a direct result of the Indonesian invasion and occupation of their country. Many children, women and men have been killed by British weapons – supplied by British companies, with the approval and support of the British government. I am angry, ashamed and distressed at Britain's complicity in these brutal mass killings. . . . As a human being, I believe I must use all peaceful means available to me to prevent my government from committing this crime against humanity and against international law. Therefore, together with my friends, I have decided to take personal responsibility for the disarmament of Hawk aircraft destined for Indonesia by hammering on parts of the plane essential to their ground attack role – so rendering them harmless . . . instead of fear, pain, grief and death, I want to offer hope, peace, justice and freedom to my sisters and brothers in East Timor.

Part of my personal statement was as follows:

Hawks from a previous arms sale have been seen bombing villages in East Timor. I believe that the British Government and BAe are aiding and abetting genocide in East Timor by sending Hawk aircraft to Indonesia and that it is clear that they have no intention of taking responsibility for the deaths that have and will result from their arms deals. Many people in this country and abroad have exposed the acts of the Indonesians and asked that an arms embargo be imposed on them. . . . But the Suharto regime continues to get support from the USA, Australia and Britain who are more interested in the resources of gold, timber and oil that Indonesia is ripping from the lands of its peoples than with the brutal disregard of human rights.

I went on:

I am not willing for innocent civilians to be killed in my name and for this to be 'justified' as providing jobs for British people. I wish to act as a responsible member of the world community. I believe my act of personal disarmament is a way to uphold international laws . . . which set out rules for the protection of innocent civilians. I believe that it is the responsibility of every individual to do all in their power to physically and peacefully stop any evil that they see taking place.

The New Labour government in Britain in 1997 said it would put ethics into foreign policy. There were reasons to think that it might not actually implement its fine words.⁴⁰ But regardless of the actions of governments and corporations we, global citizens, will be peacefully experimenting with alternatives, trying to gain our humanity, build up our communities, reclaim our land, rebuild the commons, restore morality and the law, and empower ourselves and others in the process.⁴¹ We will join our struggles with others', and learn from and with each other, not allowing ourselves to be imprisoned and domesticated by our governments and corporations. We must all not only live locally but also take our global responsibilities seriously and humanely.

Notes

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