

VANA NEWSLETTER - BC BRANCH



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Letter from Your Executive

Dear Fellow VANA Members in BC:

The good news is that George Bush and Vladimir Putin will soon sign an agreement to reduce strategic nuclear weapons; the bad news is that this agreement is almost worthless. We will compare this 'feel-good' agreement, below, point by point, with a serious proposal Mikhail Gorbachev made on 15 January 1986, to abolish nuclear weapons by the year 2000.

VANA members have always recognized the dangers of conventional wars escalating into nuclear war. In our view, all wars are smouldering fuses to nuclear war. Nowhere in the world is there a more dangerous network of these smouldering fuses than in the Middle East. We were therefore delighted to host Riadh Muslih at our 22 April meeting to speak about Iraq - George Bush's prime target for war. An account of Riadh's talk appears below.

East of Iraq in highly strategic Afghanistan, smoulders the first of President George Bush's anti-terrorist wars. Neither this war nor the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, had any U.N. mandate, yet Canada's military have been involved in both wars. "Why are Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan?" asks an article by Canadian Lawyers Against War. It appears below.

The kinds of actions that Canada SHOULD be supporting in Afghanistan were presented in a letter to the Globe & Mail by one of VANA's founding members, Kel Antoft of Halifax. Kel's excellent letter is printed below.

At VANA National's last exec meeting on Monday 13 May, a resolution was passed unanimously calling for Canada's forces to be withdrawn from Afghanistan and the Arabian Sea. It appears below

As mentioned in previous updates, VANA's Convention 2002 will take place in the second week of October and will be an "at home" convention.. The convention will operate by a conference phone call involving VANA branches across Canada. The National Exec members all agreed at their 8 April 2002 meeting, to run again for office. We will keep you posted on this

The passing of the years inevitably results in a decline in available energy for VANA members. The record of mathematician, philosopher, writer and peace activist Bertrand Russell who was going strong in his 90s is an inspiration to us, as are his concluding words to the War Crimes Tribunal on Vietnam. Read about it below.

At our next members meeting on Monday 27 May 2002, 1:30 p.m., at the Fireside Room, Unitarian Church, 49th Avenue at Oak, we will welcome Barbara Cullen who will speak about her trip, early this month, to Baghdad, Basra, Jerusalem, Ramallah and Jenin, together with three British M.P.s and several journalists from Britain. Barbara, a member of Womens' International League for Peace & Freedom (WILPF) and the Campaign to End Sanctions Against the People of Iraq (CESAPI) has lived and worked in the Middle East. Don't miss this interesting, eye-witness presentation.

Do keep sending in your news, information, articles, writing, questions, beefs and bouquets. They are always welcome.

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Bush-Putin N-disarmament compared with Gorbachev's offer.

On 15 January 1986, General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union presented a ... *"concrete programme aimed at the complete elimination of nuclear weapons throughout the world within...the next fifteen years before the end of this century."* These proposals were again presented to the United States when Gorbachev met President Reagan at Reyjavik, Iceland in October the same year. Without making any counter proposals or similar offer the US rejected Gorbachev's proposals. No such comprehensive proposals for nuclear disarmament have been made by the United States or Soviet Union/Russia since. Below is a comparison of Gorbachev's proposals and the agreement that Bush and Putin will sign next week.

Gorbachev

(15 January 1986)

Goal: Total abolition of N-weapons

Time frame: 15 years (ending 31 Dec'99)

Progressive reduction: 3 stages during 15 years

Stage 1 (5 years) US & SU halve N-weapons, & end N-tests, setting example.

Stage 2 (5 years) Other N-powers begin nuclear dismantling.

Stage 3 (5 years) Elimination of all remaining N-weapons

"Reduced N-warheads destroyed

Verification Inspections allowed

Tactical Nukes abolished

Other N-powers N-weapons all abolished

N-weapons in Europe abolished

Weapons in space Banned

SDI (Star Wars), ABM Banned

Exit from agreement unspecified

Bush-Putin

(23 May 2002)

Reduce US & Russian strategic N-weapons by two-thirds

10 years (Ending 22 May 2012)

None.

no stages

no stages

no stages

stored

no inspections required

not affected

not affected

not affected

not affected

not affected

3 months notice

An Iraqi on Iraq: Riyadh Muslih speaks to VANA BC.

The United States does not want to solve the problems it has with the Iraqi leadership, said Riyadh Muslih at the VANA BC 22 April meeting in Vancouver,.. "the U.S. wants a fight."

Riyadh, who was born in Iraq and studied abroad as an engineer, came to Canada in 1986. Married to a Filipino, Riyadh who is a Muslim and his wife who is Catholic, see Canada as a perfect place to raise a family. "We are typical Canadians," said Riyadh with a chuckle. "Immigrants should feel that they have become Canadians, but you can't break the emotional link with your native country."

Riyadh who has many cousins and relatives in Iraq, "detests" the present government of Iraq. and deplores the horrendous Iraq-Iran and Gulf wars. The current regime, in power since 1968 is a ruthless police state similar to those under Stalin and Ceaucescu of Romania. Iraqi dissidents are pursued by Saddam's agent in the Middle East, but Riyadh sees no evidence for Iraqi "terrorists" in circulation. US eagerness to attack Iraq is nothing new. President Bush's first foreign policy "statement" was to bomb Iraq. The search for a pretext for war is ongoing, centered around US charges of Iraq's supposed production/possession of "weapons of mass destruction."

Motivation for this attack is of course OIL. The *supply* of oil is not the issue - "Iraqis will not drink it" - the *control* of Iraq's hug oil reserves is the U.S. motive. So, war is coming. The U.S. will act alone if need be; Canada will be on-side.

Currently the U.S. is acting against Iraq by its intrigues to remove Bustani of Brazil from the U.N.'s Chemical Weapons control agency, as he believes in a conciliatory dialogue with Iraq on the issue of chemical weapons. This does not suit U.S. strategy. The U.S. wants a fight and will not be denied. It will be brutal and bloody. No country on earth can stand up to U.S. weapons. There is no moral justification for any such war.

(continued on page 3)

Riyadh Muslih (continued from page 2)

Question: Saddam Hussein's hold on power?

Riyadh: With his five very efficient security forces and the isolating effect of the sanctions, Saddam's hold on power is stronger than ever. The military failed to bring victory in the war with Iran. The army is mainly conscript and rich, better educated Iraqis can buy-out of military service. Therefore, a low education, unskilled army which is hopeless in modern hi-tech war. Iraq no match for U.S. military. Also, no Arab country, alone or with others is a match for Israel.

Question: Al Qaeda: Size? Reality?

Riyadh: It certainly existed as an organization, but the portrayal of its power (manuals on nuclear weapons, computers, payrolls) is absurd.

Question: What is the position of Iraq, threatened with attack, in the Arab world now?

Riyadh: Iraqis are the best educated, most aggressive and arrogant among the Arabs, but Egypt is the tinder box with 70 million people who are quiet and humble and take a lot of pressure - and then explode. Saudi Arabia is really a U.S. colony. Civil war may result from an attack on Iraq. Arab rulers know this and oppose any such attack. All Arabs consider themselves brothers.

Why are Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan? Lawyers Against War (LAW)

A bomb dropped from a US F-16 fighter jet in Afghanistan killed four Canadian soldiers and seriously wounded eight others last week, bringing home to Canadians the real costs of the "war on terrorism". These horrible and tragic deaths must be added to the thousands of Afghan civilians killed by American bombs in this illegal and useless war, and the thousands more killed through starvation, exposure and disease. From the moment it was launched, this war was decried by the leading Afghan Women's Association RAWA as "a vast aggression against our country [that] will shed the blood of numerous women, men, children, young and old of our country".

The people of the world called for peaceful and lawful solutions to the crisis provoked by the tragedy of September 11 -- peaceful and lawful solutions that were readily available but were shunned by the American government. Yet the government of Canada put our soldiers at the service of a terrorist war machine, without UN sanction and operating under a pseudo-justification of self-defence, far from the temporary, proportionate measure known to international law, one that has been taken by the Americans as a license to make war indefinitely.

The "war on terrorism," from Afghanistan to the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel, now appears little more than an excuse for America and its allies to carry out a merciless crackdown on legitimate opposition to their unlawful and oppressive policies. As terrorist in its means as any used by its enemies, the "war on terrorism" is inherently indiscriminate, unable to distinguish combatant from civilian or, as we Canadians have just witnessed, friend from foe.

The responsibility for the deaths and injury of these Canadian soldiers lies with the Americans, of course, but it also falls squarely on the shoulders of our own Canadian political leaders. Instead of involving Canada in the worthwhile cause of trying, through lawful and appropriate institutions such as the UN, to redress the injustices of the world, Canadian Parliamentarians send our young men and women to die in the service and at the hands of those who perpetrate them. SLAW calls on its members and friends to re-double their efforts to oppose this war, which has already brought such sadness to thousands of families and will continue to do so unless it is stopped.

(22 Apr 2002, Michael Mandel and Gail Davidson, Lawyers Against the War)

Afghanistan: Canada & reconciliation (VANA member Kel Antoft letter to Globe & Mail)

Bridgewater, N.S. -- Re Afghan Children Going Back To School: The reopening of schools for 1.5 million Afghan children is an enormously encouraging development in a world suffused by endless news of bombings, shootings, massacres, and random acts of personal and organized military terror. We can feel justly proud of Canada's contribution toward the UNESCO program, which one hopes will overshadow any body counts attributed to our military snipers. This is the kind of investment in the Third World that has far greater significance for world peace than any fleet of frigates or contingent of commandos sent in response to the finger-snapping of our imperial allies. Teachers, text books and school supplies are weapons of civilization, and they cost a lot less than the lethal alternatives. The events of Sept. 11 happened on the same day that an Atlantic provinces meeting of VANA, Veterans Against Nuclear Arms, opened in Bridgewater, N.S. As we heard the dreadful news, our agenda was radically changed. After expressing our sorrow and our sympathy for the families of the victims, we agreed to pose two basic questions to fellow Canadians: "Why are we hated?" and "How do we start the process of reconciliation?" Debate continues on the first question, but UNESCO has provided a resounding answer to the second. (Tuesday, March 26, 2002 Print Edition)

VANA Motion: Withdraw Canadian forces from Afghanistan

Motion Whereas Canada's military involvements in Afghanistan and the Arabian Sea offer no benefit to the people of Canada, the United States or Afghanistan, and lack any legitimacy under international law or the UN Charter , **Therefore, Veterans Against Nuclear Arms calls on the Canadian Government to withdraw Canadian forces from Afghanistan and the Arabian Sea and to refrain from any further Canadian force deployments outside Canada which are not clearly carried out under the terms of Canada's National Defence Act, International Law and the UN Charter.**

Bertrand Russell: VANA role model

VANA members can draw inspiration from British mathematician and philosopher Bertrand Russell on how to spend our declining years:

**At age 42 in 1914 Russell opposed WW I, and was subsequently jailed for this.

**At age 84 in 1956 together with Joseph Rotblat, (Nobel Peace Laureate 1995 & Honorary VANA member since 1 March 1997), Russell founded the Pugwash Movement which organized meetings between Soviet and western scientists at Pugwash, NS.

**At age 85 in 1957 Russell opposed nuclear weapons by helping form the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in London.

**At age 95 in 1967 Russell organized the Russell War Crimes Tribunal hearings in Stockholm. (Computer hackers can visit the website of this tribunal to get an idea of the scale, scope and validity of its damning indictment of U.S. war crimes in Vietnam. <http://www2.prestel.co.uk/littleton/v1tribun.htm>)

Here are some of Russell's words, which sound topical today, from his concluding remarks at the close of the tribunal's proceedings in 1967:

"Each day bombers leave Thailand to saturate Vietnam in steel pellets and liquid fire. Has one American city been attacked? Are Canada and Mexico bases for the destruction of America by a power on the other side of the world? If one American city suffered two hours of bombing such as has been inflicted for two years on Vietnam the world press would inform us rather fully. This imbalance is a clear indication of the great injustice we are investigating.

"Nazism emerged from a nation unable to stabilize itself and degenerated to unforeseen limits of depravity. The policy of aggression in Washington has brought a comparable degree of scientific extermination and moral degeneracy. The International War Crimes Tribunal must do for the peoples of Vietnam, Asia, Africa and Latin America what no tribunal did while Nazi crimes {187} were committed and plotted. The napalm and pellet bombs, the systematic destruction of a heroic people are a barbarous rehearsal. The starving and the suffering will no longer die in silence. We must discredit the arrogant demand that they protect our comfort with their quiet agony. Our social institutions, impregnated with racism, must be reconstructed.

"The Tribunal must begin a new morality in the West, in which cold mechanical slaughter will be automatically condemned. The Tribunal must inspire a new understanding that the heroic are the oppressed and the hateful are the arrogant rulers who would bleed them for generations or bomb them into the Stone Age. The Tribunal must warn of the impending horror in many lands, the new atrocities prepared now in Vietnam and of the global struggle between the poor and the powerful rich. These are themes as old as humanity.

"The long arduous struggle for decency and for liberation is unending. A Tribunal such as ours will be necessary until the last starving man is fed and a way of life is created which ends exploitation of the many by the few. Vietnam struggles so others may survive. The truths we must declare are simple truths. Great violence menaces our cultural achievements. Starvation and disease cannot be tolerated. Resistance at risk of life is noble.

"But we know this. Western Europe and North America are drenched in the blood of struggle for social change. Feudalism, the reduction of men to starving hulks, the purchase of their minds, the eradication of their spirit - these are blights on human culture. These are vicious forms of aggression at once more fundamental and more pervasive than the crossing of frontiers by foot soldiers. Wherever men struggle against suffering we must be their voice. Whenever they are cruelly attacked for their self-sacrifice we must find our voices. It is easy to pay lip-service to these ideals.

"We will be judged not by our reputations or our pretenses but by our will to act. Against this standard we too will be judged by better men."

**On the Light Side
English Spell Checker**

I take it you already know
Of tough and cough and bough and dough?
Others may stumble, but not you
On hiccough, slough, thorough, and through.
Beware of heard, a dreadful word
That looks like beard and sounds like bird.
And dead: It's said like bed not bead -
For goodness sake don't call it deed!

Watch out for meat and great and threat...
They rhyme with suite and straight and debt.
A moth is not the moth in mother,
Nor both in bother nor broth in brother.
And here is not a match for there,
Nor dear and fear for bear and pear.
And then there's dose and rose and lose,
Just look them up - and goose and choose.

And cork and work and card and ward,
And font and front and word and sword,
And do and go, then thwart and cart,
Come, come, I've hardly made a start!
A dreadful language? Sacre bleu!
I'd learned to speak it at age two.
And yet to write it, tis no wonder
Although I'm seventy I still blunder

On the Heavy Side: The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation's Top Five Nuclear Accidents in 2001

1. A nuclear explosion in a Russian factory leaves four dead and three injured.
2. After six months of secrecy, The Romanian National Commission for the Control of Nuclear Activities (CNCAN) reported on 12 December that nine workers were exposed to serious levels of radiation while dismantling a smelting plant in western Romania.
3. A serious accident at the Chapelcross nuclear reactor in Annan, Scotland sent 24 radioactive fuel rods crashing to the floor, nearly causing the death of plant workers and the release of a radioactive cloud which would have contaminated the entire region.
4. Russia loses contact with four military satellites for part of the day on 10 May after a fire ravages a ground relay station southwest of Moscow.
5. Local Officials reveal in May that a nuclear reactor at the Nuclear Cycle Development Institute in Fukui (185 miles northwest of Tokyo) has been leaking radioactive tritium since January.

VANA MEMBERSHIP

To renew your membership in or to join VANA, please fill out the form below and send, along with a cheque payable to VANA, to Ted Powis, Treasurer, #603-1745 Esquimalt, W. Vancouver, V7V 1R7 The dues are \$30, \$20 of which go to the national office and \$10 to the branch. (You can use the enclosed addressed envelope)

Name: _____ **Phone:** _____

Address: _____ **Code** _____

City _____ **Prov** _____

Email Address _____ (More on next page. Please turn over).

Middle East Peace Protests

Resistance to the Middle East war is growing. Not only did more than 60,000 Israelis participate in a recent anti-war rally in Tel Aviv but also two important groups, military personnel and academics, issued the statements below opposing the war.

Statement Signed by 455 Israeli Soldiers

- We, reserve combat officers and soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces, who were raised upon the principles of Zionism, sacrifice and giving to the people of Israel and to the State of Israel, who have always served in the front lines, and who were the first to carry out any mission, light or heavy, in order to protect the State of Israel and strengthen it.
- We, combat officers and soldiers who have served the State of Israel for long weeks every year, in spite of the dear cost to our personal lives, have been on reserve duty all over the Occupied Territories, and were issued commands and directives that had nothing to do with the security of our country, and that had the sole purpose of perpetuating our control over the Palestinian people. We, whose eyes have seen the bloody toll this Occupation exacts from both sides.
- We, who sensed how the commands issued to us in the Territories, destroy all the values we had absorbed while growing up in this country.
- We, who understand now that the price of Occupation is the loss of IDF's human character and the corruption of the entire Israeli society.
- We, who know that the Territories are not Israel, and that all settlements are bound to be evacuated in the end.
- We hereby declare that we shall not continue to fight this War of the Settlements.
- We shall not continue to fight beyond the 1967 borders in order to dominate, expel, starve and humiliate an entire people.
- *We hereby declare that we shall continue serving in the Israel Defense Forces in any mission that serves Israel's defense.*
- **The missions of occupation and oppression do not serve this purpose – and we shall take no part in them.**

Open Letter from 287 Israeli Faculty Members

We, faculty members from a number of Israeli universities, wish to express our appreciation and support for those of our students and lecturers who refuse to serve as soldiers in the occupied territories. Such service too often involves carrying out orders that have no place in a democratic society founded on the sanctity of human life.

For thirty five years an entire people, some three and a half million in number, have been held without basic human rights. The occupation and oppression of another people have brought the State of Israel to where it is today.

Without an Israeli declaration of an end to the occupation, accompanied by appropriate action--unilateral, if necessary--***the present war is not being fought for our home but for the settlements beyond the green line and for the continued oppression of another people.***

We hereby express our readiness to do our best to help students who encounter academic, administrative or economic difficulties as a result of their refusal to serve in the territories. We call on the University community at large to support them