

British Pugwash Group

Annual Report of the Executive Committee 2008 - 2009

The British Pugwash Group is the UK arm of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, an international network of scientists and others concerned about the social impact of science, with particular emphasis on abolishing weapons of mass destruction and war. Using its reputation for absolute integrity and lack of nationalistic bias to facilitate dialogue, Pugwash helped to make possible agreement on issues such as the Partial Test Ban Treaty, the NPT, the ABM Treaty, the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty and the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions. Pugwash is currently engaged in dialogue to build bridges between the US and Iran, in the Middle East, North Korea and Kashmir. Together with one of its founders, Joseph Rotblat, it was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1995.

British Pugwash is one of the most active national Pugwash groups. It currently has more than 200 members, a third of whom are fellows of the Royal Society. British Pugwash activities range from private meetings with officials to regular public discussion meetings, and from in-depth publications and books to letters to newspaper editors.

British Pugwash is particularly concerned that the UK's continued reliance on its submarine based Trident nuclear weapons system seriously undermines a shift toward a world free of nuclear weapons. We applaud the government's positive public statements in favour of an eventual nuclear weapons free world, and we will work to encourage the UK government to deliver practical steps consistent with its avowed aims.

Activities

British Pugwash itself was instrumental in stimulating the *Times* letter of 30 June 2008 from four former UK defence and foreign ministers calling for movement towards a nuclear weapon free world. This example has since been followed in related letters in the press in both Italy and Germany, and British Pugwash is actively working with French Pugwash to generate a similar initiative in France. We are now taking the UK initiative forward in a number of ways. For example, at the instigation of British Pugwash, the President of the Royal Society, who is an executive committee member of British Pugwash, hosted in December 2008 a discussion lunch for influential UK politicians and officials, at which senior members of all three main parties were present, together with Pugwash President Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala, former UN Under-Secretary General for Disarmament, and Pugwash Secretary-General Paolo Cotta-Ramusino.

In a recent letter to the *Times* on 16 January 2009, General Sir Hugh Beach, a member of the British Pugwash Group Executive Committee, joined two senior military colleagues, Field Marshal Lord Bramall and General Lord Ramsbotham, in questioning how the United Kingdom can exert any leadership in pursuing its stated aim of a world free of nuclear weapons if it continues to pursue a successor to Trident. They wrote, "Our independent deterrent has become virtually irrelevant except in the context of domestic politics. Rather than perpetuating Trident, the case is much stronger for funding our Armed Forces with

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what they need to meet the commitments actually laid upon them.” On 20 January the *Times* carried a letter by John Finney and Robert Hinde, supporting the generals’ letter, which stated, “World opinion is becoming increasingly antipathetic to the possession of nuclear weapons and the use of force to settle international disputes.... Were we to postpone a decision on renewal, we would not only save money, but also create a space in which to assess fundamentally how the UK can best respond to the threats of today’s world rather than of yesterday’s.”

British Pugwash has recently convened a Nuclear Weapons Policy Liaison Group comprised of experts from academia and NGOs. The Liaison Group seeks to maximise currently fragmented and under-used UK expertise, by providing decision makers and officials with robust technical and policy advice in a timely manner. It also continues to take a leading role in the WMD Awareness Programme. Initiated by British Pugwash, this collaboration of concerned NGOs continues to develop and use innovative methods to raise public awareness of nuclear weapons issues. A particularly successful initiative this year, as part of the celebrations of Joseph Rotblat’s Centenary, was an arts project aimed to encourage school children to express in their chosen art form their interpretation of his vision of a world without war (see <http://www.peace-of-art.co.uk/>).

Meetings

“The Strangest Dream”. On 9 December 2008, British Pugwash and International Pugwash co-hosted at the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) theatre the European premiere of a major new documentary about Joseph Rotblat and Pugwash, produced by the National Film Board of Canada. The film’s director, Eric Bednarski, and producer, Kent Martin, joined Pugwash President Jayantha Dhanapala in a question & answer session

after the showing. This event was organized in celebration of the Rotblat Centenary.

Progressing the nuclear disarmament agenda: policy, diplomacy and science.

British Pugwash and International Pugwash co-sponsored this seminar held on 10 December 2008 at the Royal Society, which explored concrete suggestions for creating and developing the political and technical environments conducive to the eventual attainment of a nuclear weapons free world. Speakers included Mr Simon Manley, Director of Defence and Strategic Threats, UK FCO; Gordon Brown’s Special Advisor on Non-Proliferation Baroness Shirley Williams, Royal Society President Sir Martin Rees, Pugwash President Jayantha Dhanapala, Pugwash Secretary-General Paolo Cotta-Ramusino and others. This event also celebrated the Rotblat Centenary.

The Role of Independent Scientists in WMD Threat Assessment.

British Pugwash co-sponsored a NATO Advanced Research Workshop with the Croatian Pugwash Group, 13-16 November 2008 in Zagreb. Senior scientists and policy advisors from NATO, Partner, and Mediterranean Dialogue countries explored ways to strengthen the advice governments receive on weapons of mass destruction. A book from this workshop, co-edited by BPG Chair John Finney, will be available later in 2009.

Evidence-based policy or policy-based evidence? Nuclear weapons decision-making in Europe.

British Pugwash, French Pugwash, and the WMD Awareness Programme co-sponsored this session at Europe’s major science festival, the Euroscience Open Forum, in Barcelona on 19 July 2008. Chaired by Sir David King, former UK Chief Scientific Advisor, speakers included: Ana Maria Gomes, European Parliament; Bruno Tertrais, Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique, France; Professor Steve Fetter, University of Maryland; and Dr James Acton, King’s College London.

The Urgency of Disarmament. British Pugwash co-sponsored a keynote talk and reception at SOAS by Pugwash President and former UN Under-Secretary for Disarmament Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala, on 13 June 2008. In addition, Cambridge Student Pugwash held a special garden party on 12 June in honour of Amb. Dhanapala.

A WMD Free Zone in the Middle East. British Pugwash co-sponsored for the 3rd year a SOAS public meeting on a Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone (WMDFFZ). Speakers included HE Dr Hussain Al-Shahristani, Iraqi Minister for Oil; HE Wael Al-Assad, Director of Disarmament and Multilateral Affairs, League of Arab States; HE Dr Ali Asghar Soltanieh, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the IAEA; Mr Simon Manley, Director of Defence and Strategic Threats, UK FCO; Pugwash Secretary-General Paolo Cotta-Ramusino and others. A private International Pugwash workshop on related topics also took place in London in June 2008.

Joseph Rotblat Lecture, Guardian Hay Literary Festival. Philippe Sands, Professor of Law and Director of the Centre on International Courts and Tribunals, Faculty of Law, UCL, gave this year's Rotblat lecture at the Hay Festival on 1 June, co-sponsored by British Pugwash and the WMD Awareness Programme. Jon Snow chaired the session, and Robert Hinde introduced the lecture.

Special Double-Session Meeting: Launching the Joseph Rotblat Centenary Year. On 8 April 2008, the British Pugwash Annual General Meeting featured the following speakers: Prof. Sir John Sulston, Nobel Laureate ("Genetic Equity and Global Medicine"), Prof. Alistair Hay, Chemical & Biological Weapons Expert ("Multiple Uses of Chemicals, What to Choose?"), and John Ainslie, Nuclear Weapons Expert ("Trident Replacement, the Practical Implications").

Publications

Report of Working Group on the Management of Separated Plutonium in the UK. British Pugwash established a working group to explore options for the management of separated plutonium in the UK, with a report planned for release in 2009. The working group includes General Sir Hugh Beach, Dr Ian Crossland, Prof. Roger Cowley, and is led by Dr Christopher Watson. The late Dr. Jack Harris contributed significantly to this group.

The validity of the rationale for UK's possession of nuclear weapons. In this January 2009 analysis, Robert Hinde argues that "the basic reasons that have been given for retaining or improving our nuclear weaponry have remained surprisingly similar across the years."

Ending War: A Recipe. In this booklet, based in part on his experiences in World War 2, Robert Hinde presents a possible way to end reliance on war as a means of resolving international disputes.

Professor Pugwash: The Man Who Fought Nukes. Kit Hill wrote this book about Jo Rotblat for people of all ages. With the science accessibly explained, this biographical sketch is an introduction to one of the major figures of our times.

Joseph Rotblat's Would-Be Advice to the New President. This piece by Sandra Ionno Butcher appeared on the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists'* website on 4 November 2008, the centenary of Jo Rotblat's birth.

International Activities

International Pugwash Responsibilities. John Finney is a member of the Pugwash Council, the Executive Committee and the Nuclear Weapons Task Force. Julian Perry Robinson is one of four coordinators for the International Pugwash steering committee on CBW issues, and organized two International Pugwash workshops on these

topics in 2008. Robert Hinde serves as a trustee of the Geneva-based Pugwash Foundation. Sandra Ionno Butcher is Director of the Pugwash History Project.

Other Meetings. BPG Chair John Finney participated in a series of meetings in 2008, including:

- “Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament and Arms Control: Lessons for Trust-building.” Cardiff, 1-2 February, organised by the David Davies Memorial Institute, University of Aberystwyth;
- “Trust Building and Conflict Transformation.” Gregynog, Wales, 10-11 September 2008;
- “In the spirit of Sakharov: science, ethics and politics, yesterday and today.” John gave a talk on Sir Joseph Rotblat and Pugwash at this seminar in Strasbourg, organised on 21 November 2008 by Euroscience, and sponsored by the French National Committee for UNESCO;
- “Nuclear Weapons in Europe: Time for Disarmament?” (with General Sir Hugh Beach), International Pugwash workshop, Antwerp, 21-23 November 2008;
- “Ethical Responsibility and Scientists” (with Robert Hinde), a workshop on teaching ethics and peace to science and engineering students, Hamburg, 15-17 October 2008;
- “Dealing with Uncertain Technological Risks: Improving the Appraisal and Regulation of Risks from Emerging Technologies,” organized by The Netherlands Pugwash Group, in Edinburgh, 31 May–1 June 2008.

Other Public/Educational Outreach

PeaceJam is the only education programme devised by, and involving, leading Nobel Peace Laureates, such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu and His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Before he died, Jo Rotblat sought to establish PeaceJam here in the UK, and the network here—led by British Pugwash—continues to grow. The programme inspires young people to be active citizens and

peacemakers and helps them choose non-violent solutions to their issues and problems. The 2008 PeaceJam featured Nobel Peace Laureate Rigoberta Menchu Tum, and two ‘slams’ took place in Coventry and Bradford in October and November respectively. The featured laureate for the March 2009 conference is Shirin Ebadi.

WMD Awareness Programme. The Programme has had a very successful year of activities and events in addition to those mentioned above. These include:

- a further three-week period at the Edinburgh Fringe of our increasingly popular ‘Get Up! Stand Up!’ show mixing comedy, music and ‘mirky politics’;
- an overflowing show at the Glastonbury Festival featuring comedians Marcus Brigstocke and Shazia Mirza, and Tony Benn;
- a joint seminar with BASIC examining the process of defence procurement, including Trident and big ticket conventional items. This event gave rise to several follow up articles in the financial press;
- presence at the NUT conference over Easter weekend where we found an exceptionally receptive audience;
- our award-winning film ‘Anthropology 101’ has been used as a very effective teaching vehicle at a leading French advanced tertiary educational institution as part of their English language teaching for maths and science students.

Other Public Speaking: Sandra Butcher spoke about Pugwash history at a conference at LSE on “Peace Movements in the Cold War and Beyond: An International Conference”, and she spoke about Pugwash history to a class on “Science, Warfare and Peace,” at UCL in November 2008. Sally Milne spoke about Jo Rotblat to the British Institute of Radiology.