

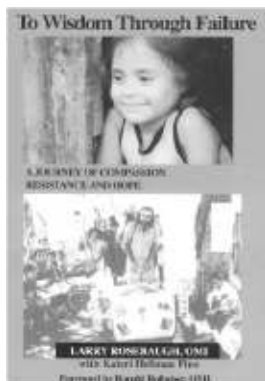
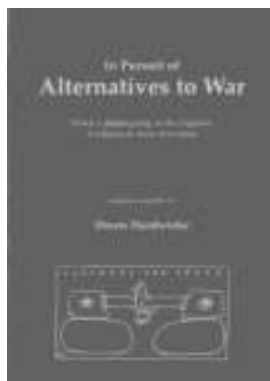
BOOK REVIEWS: TURBULENT PRIESTS

In Pursuit of Alternatives to War

Owen Hardwicke
2006 Bridge Books, Wrexham

To Wisdom through Failure

Lawrence Rosebaugh
2006 EPICA, Washington, USA



These memoirs by Catholic priests, both troublemakers but from quite different backgrounds (one a former public schoolboy, the other an erstwhile baseball star) indicate just what a broad church they belong to.

Owen Hardwicke's essay, subtitled 'Peace Campaigning in the Eighties: a Chronicle from Wrexham' covers the development of the local peace and justice movement through these years, together with his own globetrotting witness for peace as a member of the international committees of CND and Pax Christi.

This is roughly the period that's been designated the Second Cold War, during which Washington jacked up military spending, along with the anti-communist rhetoric to justify it, to absurd levels. Ronald Reagan denounced the Soviet Union as *the evil empire*, while Margaret Thatcher, not to be outdone, declared it was *our sworn enemy*. In those days it was an article of faith that the Red Army was poised to sweep across Western Europe at a moment's notice, and that it was only NATO's hydrogen bombs that deterred it. Owen records the incredulity among ordinary Russians that people in the West might be frightened of the USSR. About the same time, Reagan made the astounding claim that it would take the rag-tag-and-bobtail army of Sandanista Nicaragua, that terrifying Soviet satellite, only two days to reach the US border. This was the ultimate justification for the US-sponsored violence in the isthmus that killed around a hundred thousand Central Americans during that period.

Looking back at it now from twenty-odd years on, it's hard to recapture the feverish atmosphere. As Owen points out, peace campaigners were characterised as 'peaceniks', 'commies' or at best 'communist dupes' – but traitors essentially – who would 'rather be Red than dead'. There were dark hints that CND must be in receipt of serious amounts of Moscow gold. It took some moral courage to pick a way through this swirling bulls-hit, and to say quietly and calmly that it was self-serving nonsense, that actually most Russians were just ordinary

people like ourselves, and it was maybe just a little crazy even to think about slaughtering them wholesale as they went about their daily business.

These days we're being served up a rehashed version of the Cold War, the so-called War on Terror. If we're a bit less likely to swallow it this time around, that must be due in some measure to the patient work of the peace activists of the eighties, some of whom, like Owen himself, are still with us to point out the parallels between then and now.

Larry Rosebaugh's book covers a longer timespan: from protests against the US attack on Vietnam in the 1960s through to working with poor communities in El Salvador and Guatemala during the terrible years of the eighties and early nineties. Rosebaugh was an associate of the Berrigan brothers and Father Roy Bourgeois. He spent six years on the streets with homeless children in one of the poorest parts of Brazil. He served three longish spells in US prisons for non-violent direct actions. After one arrest he went on hunger strike for 60 days to publicise the fact that the Atlacatl Brigade, notorious for its human rights abuses in El Salvador, was being trained in the black arts of torture and assassination at Fort Benning in Georgia.

I should declare an interest, in that I worked alongside Larry in a community of rebels and former refugees in El Salvador in the early 1990s. He came across as a shrewd, humorous, very approachable guy who never made a big deal out of his extraordinary adventures. Somehow I doubt if writing the book was his idea.

At one point he left the community to go back to the States to raise the money to build a small chapel. Several months later he arrived back with the dosh. Only then did he tell us that, instead of catching the plane home, he'd bought a bike and pedalled it back to Ohio. All the way up through El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, and then on up through the southern states of the USA. I can't remember now just how long he said it took him. It must have been two or three months. More than two days at any rate.

WREXHAM PEACE LIBRARY

Both books are available from the Peace Library which is housed at:

**Wrexham Peace & Justice Centre,
35 Kingsmills Rd, Hightown, Wrexham.**

In Pursuit of Alternatives to War can be purchased at the discounted price of £7.50.

To Wisdom through Failure can be borrowed.

Many other books dealing with issues of peace and justice are available for loan.

The library is well worth visiting. There's no red tape, but phone first to arrange a time to visit:

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NAMING THE DEAD - A SERIOUS CRIME

Book review:

Maya Anne Evans

Naming the Dead: A Serious Crime

JNV Publications, 2006, price £7.



In 2005 Maya Evans was arrested for reading out the names of British soldiers killed in Iraq during a remembrance ceremony at the Cenotaph. Maya was charged with taking part in an 'unauthorised demonstration' in a 'designated area' under section 132 of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 (SOCPA) and on December 7th 2005 she became the first person to be convicted under this Act.

The case attracted huge attention in the mainstream media as well as being closely followed by activists across the country, and Maya found herself thrust into the media limelight. In *Naming the Dead: A Serious Crime* Maya interweaves an account of her early life and her growing involvement in the anti-war movement with the story of the ceremony at the Cenotaph and her subsequent arrest, trial and conviction. It is written in a candid, direct style which is attractive, readable and refreshingly unpolished.

Born and brought up in the East End of London, Maya became interested in Islam at school and studied the faith with her Muslim school friends. Although she decided against converting to Islam, Maya writes that *my Muslim teacher Ahmed was the most influential person of my childhood, apart from my family... I empathise a lot with Muslims. In fact, to a great extent I still*

feel I have many Muslim values... how to conduct yourself, what's fair to other people, morality.

Maya became active as a member of *Merseyside Stop the War* in 2001, then worked with *Voices in the Wilderness* in the US, and later with *Justice Not Vengeance* in Hastings. In 2005, she spent two weeks on a peace walk to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, culminating in direct action at NATO's European headquarters in Brussels.

All this was excellent preparation for the *Naming the Dead* action. Right at the beginning of the book, Maya conveys her anxieties when she discovers that arrest is almost certain: *I hate personal confrontations of any kind, and the idea of a face-to-face conflict with... a police officer is really uncomfortable, but she quells her doubts: I was suddenly very calm. I said... 'I'm ready to do this.' ... I had to put my weaknesses and personal feelings away... I needed to be very focused.* Although she describes herself in early adult life as *a quiet, quite withdrawn person*, Maya has overcome her natural shyness to undertake public speaking engagements and has learned how to deal with a blaze of media attention.

Maya's accounts of how she prepared for the action, the circumstances of her arrest, the time she spent in police custody, her preparation for the court case and the day of the trial make this book a 'must-read' for anyone considering taking part in non-violent direct action for the first time. Chapter 7 examines the background to SOCPA within the wider context of an ongoing erosion of our civil liberties, and looks at how 'anti-terror' legislation has been used to target Muslims and anyone who dares to speak out against government policies, a useful summary which gives a clear overview of the situation.

The whole book is under 100 pages. I read it in an evening, and the next day I read it again. Get yourself a copy and a few for your would-be activist friends. I very much hope that the book achieves Maya's stated aim, which is to *encourage more people to become active for whatever cause is close to their hearts.*

Order your copy direct from Justice Not Vengeance (cheques payable to JNV), 29 Gensing Rd, St Leonards on Sea, East Sussex, TN38 0HE (tel: 0845 458 9571).

To put your name on our mailing list or to make a donation to support WPJF, complete and return this form to WPJF, PO Box 661, Wrexham LL11 1QU. Please make cheques payable to Wrexham Peace & Justice Forum.

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