

DEMONSTRATION AT MENWITH HILL - 11th OCTOBER



As anyone who has travelled along the A59 Skipton to Harrogate road in North Yorkshire will know, NSA Menwith Hill is that eerie collection of giant "golf balls" which dominates the landscape by the aptly named "Dangerous Corner" road junction. Menwith Hill is a little piece of America on British soil. It has been run by the National Security Agency of America (NSA) since 1966 with no accountability to the British people. NSA Menwith is a prime military target which puts the local population and the country as a whole at a greatly increased risk of attack, particularly now that the US is so aggressively pursuing its Imperialist aims.

What are those giant golf balls anyway? Menwith Hill is the largest spy base in the world, and the 29 "golf balls" or radomes conceal huge satellite dishes which collect intelligence information from orbiting satellites. Its primary role is military, and the base was and is crucial to the recent invasion and current occupation of Iraq. Indeed Menwith Hill won an award for the part it played in the 1990 Gulf conflict. In addition to its primary role, the base can intercept any airborne messages such as emails, faxes and telephone calls, and is the nerve-centre of ECHELON, spying for US domestic, diplomatic and economic interests.

Around 1996, it became apparent that Menwith Hill was to be further developed with new radomes which would form part of the American Missile Defense (AMD) System, more commonly known as "Star Wars". It is the stated intention of the US to dominate space solely for its own interests, so at the very least one would have expected some concerned debate in Parliament about developing "Star Wars" on British soil. There was none.

Bruce Gagnon, Co-ordinator of the Global Network against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space (GN) reports in the latest issue of *Peace News* that NASA, US Strategic Command, the National Reconnaissance Office and the Air Force Space Command have recently signed an agreement to work jointly on all their research and development. "Thus," writes Gagnon, "we witness the takeover of the US space program by the military and the weapons corporations." He goes on to say that AMD could be the largest industrial project in the history of the planet and that even the US can't afford to pay for it alone. Bush is keen to recruit international partners in "Star Wars" for another reason too. "By pulling in the aerospace sectors of other countries, Bush knows he can blunt international opposition to his goals of a new and

very expensive arms race that will clearly benefit the aerospace industry."

Our Government, predictably, is first in the queue to support these terrifying US plans. Last year, the Secretary of State for Defence, Geoff Hoon, gave the US Government permission to use Fylingdales military base near Pickering for the AMD system. Again there was no proper parliamentary debate. Menwith Hill and Fylingdales are vital parts of AMD, and without the use of these bases "Star Wars" cannot go ahead. The AMD system will mean that the US can attack anywhere on Earth without fear of direct military retaliation, allowing it to build an empire based on the domination of space. By permitting Menwith Hill and Fylingdales to be used for this system, the British Government is implicitly accepting "Star Wars" with potentially catastrophic results for liberty, democracy and the future of the planet.

4-11th October was an International week of protest entitled "Keep Space for Peace", called for by GN, and I travelled from Wrexham with my hastily-made (but toasty warm) "Milky Way" costume to take part in a demonstration at Menwith Hill on Saturday 11th October. The demonstration was organised jointly by the Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases (CAAB) and Yorkshire CND. Lindis Percy and Anni Rainbow, joint co-ordinators of CAAB, have been campaigning for years against US military bases in Britain. One of CAAB's stated aims is

"raising public awareness, scrutiny and accountability of American bases in the UK - over here, out of control and secretive."

