

# LONDON TO ALDERMASTON MARCH - 46 YEARS ON



On Easter Sunday, somewhere on the outskirts of Slough, an elderly cyclist in a tracksuit joined the March for a while.

"I didn't even know it was happening," he told me - hardly surprising, since the mainstream news coverage had been minimal - "I was on my way to meet a friend for lunch, but when I saw the marchers I just had to join you because I was on the first London to Aldermaston March in 1958 and I was one of the Committee of 100." The Committee of 100 was set up by CND in 1960 to organise non-violent direct action such as mass sit-ins and blockades. "I'm just sorry that you're still having to protest about nuclear weapons today."

The background to the 1958 London to Aldermaston March was the Cold War and the threat of nuclear holocaust, brought home by the first British tests of nuclear weapons. 46 years later, the background is the so-called "War on Terror", which has only succeeded in creating more terror, most of it perpetrated or aggravated by Arch-Terrorists Bush and Blair. Add to this Britain's refusal to abandon its own nuclear weapons and its plans to develop and build a new generation of nuclear weapons at Aldermaston Atomic Weapons Establishment, both in breach of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which Britain signed in 1968, and you have several very good reasons to march again.

**Under Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty signed in 1968, Britain is committed to "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date."**



*Banners on Nelson's Column*

The weekend's events began on Good Friday in Trafalgar Square with a rally and speakers before the March set off; speakers included long-time peace campaigner Tony Benn, veteran Aldermaston marcher and Greenham Common activist Pat Arrowsmith, our own Welsh MEP Jill Evans, actors Corin Redgrave and Roger Lloyd Pack, comedian and satirist Jeremy Hardy and poet Adrian Mitchell.

After the speakers, *Theatre of War* put on a riveting performance at the foot of Nelson's Column, which graphically illustrated the threat of Britain's current nuclear arsenal - the equivalent of 3,000 Hiroshimas. Surely we should have learned something after the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki? The performance continued to bring us right up to date with the latest plans for a new generation of nuclear weapons - "mini nukes" or "bunker busters" - which have been described, terrifyingly, as better because they will be "usable". For years we were told that possession of nuclear warheads was merely a deterrent; now, it seems, our leaders are making firm plans to use them.

Once the supporters had left us at Hyde Park, 300-400 four-day marchers including four of us from the Wrexham area (the others were Gay and Sophie Jacobsen and Emily Meilleur) continued to Southall where we were treated to dinner at the Sikh Temple. The Sikh religion is founded on an ethos of hospitality and sharing, and the Sikhs who welcomed us certainly made us feel at home; before long every inch of carpet was covered with munching marchers. On Saturday we continued to Slough via Uxbridge and were joined for the morning by Bruce Kent. At Slough we enjoyed an evening of music and entertainment in remembrance of Slough MP and peace campaigner Fenner Brockway (1888-1988).

Easter Sunday was the longest and most tiring day, with a total of over 18 miles to cover to reach Reading. Volunteer medics patched up feet along the way, and rescue vehicles picked up those who couldn't continue. On Easter Monday, the last leg from Reading to Aldermaston was swelled by young people who had marched from Oxford to join us, and by many others who were only able to come for the day including one woman of 96. On each of the four days, we were helped along by Sheffield Samba Band whose lively music and chants kept us all upbeat and positive, and fortified with excellent vegan food courtesy of Veggies of Nottingham.

We arrived at Aldermaston Advanced Weapons Establishment to be greeted by hundreds of other protestors who had already decorated the fence around the base with