



Holland in Springtime

GOOD NEWS SERVICE #26: MAY-JUNE 2013

May 1st, 2013: Tulips and daffodils, eternal harbingers of Spring! Once again we feel the pulse of new life and fresh hopes; this time, we say, we'll get it better than before. If new hopes centre on global disarmament, however, the lead story is far from reassuring.

Yes, says the headline from Stockholm's Peace Research Institute, (SIPRI), the US and the Europeans are cutting their defence budgets, When one examines how much and what has not been cut, however, the picture darkens. Though the US and Russia have reduced their military spending, many of their nuclear warheads remain in Launch-on-Warning mode. This means that a false signal received of incoming missiles by one side could result in a "preventative response" by the other, resulting in a preventative holocaust, destroying both sides. A few years ago a trillion dollars a year for military spending was considered preposterous, if not obscene. Today, global military spending of almost two trillion (1.75 trillion) is deemed a reduction, though hardly a bold step toward arms control, let alone disarmament.

1. WORLD MILITARY SPENDING DOWN IN US AND EUROPE; SHARPLY UP IN RUSSIA & CHINA; CLOCK CONTINUES TO TICK

April 14/13. Stockholm (Reuters), via Patti Willis: Global military spending dropped in 2012 for the first time in 14 years, thanks to deep cuts in the US and Europe, which made up for increases in countries such as Russia and China, a leading think tank said on Monday. The US and its European allies face tight budgets in an economic down turn and have scaled back involvement in conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The world's second biggest economy, China, however, is ramping up spending and registered 7.8 per cent growth in 2012 from the year before, up 173 per cent from 2003. Military expenditures as a whole fell 0.5% to 1.75 trillion last year in the first decline in real terms since 1998, SIPRI said in a statement. It should be noted, however, that the US spent more last year, (\$696 billion) than the next ten biggest military spenders combined. Both the US and Russia maintain significant numbers of nuclear warheads on high alert. And so the doomsday clock ticks on, and remains at five minutes to midnight...

2. FROM CAPITAL TO CAPITOL; THE VOYAGEUR WAY

Spring/Summer 2013. *Healthwise Ottawa*, by Clive Doucet:

Editor's Note; On September 5, 2012, Clive Doucet left the nation's capital for its counterpart in the United States. Not by car, and not alone, but along with 11 other enthusiastic paddlers in a voyageur canoe. The team covered 1,800 kilometres in memory of Algonquin Elder William Commanda who died in 2011, making the journey to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the American Clean Water Act, and to advocate for the twinning of the Ottawa and Potomac Rivers. Here is Clive's story::

“As we set off from Ottawa headed toward Washington, D.C. we had no sure idea where we were going to sleep each night, or where we would eat or rest. No one has canoed from Ottawa to Washington in a voyageur canoe for many generations... A 35-foot canoe loaded with camping gear, barrels of food and powered by nothing more than muscle is a different world. Looking back on the trip, what amazes me is...we made it. There were so many ways we could have failed. Physically, the five core paddlers who made the entire trip weren't exactly in the bloom of youth. The average age was sixty. Forty-two days of paddling from sunrise to sunset, often into a driving headwind and driving rain, we only stopped when driven off the water by

storms,...Yet we arrived with great smiles on our faces.. We saw America and Canada in a way few people are ever privileged to do...

“Everywhere we went, we were met with kind and helpful people... Mayors of small towns opened waterfront washrooms that normally would be closed. The welcome was always astonishing. The message that we carried – that Canadians and Americans needed to work together to protect the water on which we all depended – resonated with people. It didn’t matter what religion or political persuasion a person might have: these divisions and allegiances disappeared when it came to clean water.

“We arrived in Washington on October 18, just in time to participate in celebrations of the 40th anniversary of the American *Clean Water Act*, an Act which has made a difference. We saw it. Fish are back; bald eagles are back... Our other message – to twin the Ottawa and Potomac Rivers to celebrate our national rivers – if successful, will be another small step toward returning our rivers to the way they were found...”

3. FACING ARREST, MUSHARRAF FLEES COURT TO FORTIFIED COMPOUND AFTER HIGH COURT REVOKES HIS BAIL

April 19, 2013. The Globe & Mail. By Aftan Chowdry.

Karachi. High drama mixed with farce gripped Pakistan Thursday when a Court revoked the bail of former dictator Pervez Musharraf and ordered his arrest. The ex-army general, facing charges dating back six years, should have been easy to catch. But instead he managed to escape the Islamabad courtroom when his personal security guards pushed him through a thick crowd and into a black SUV, and then bolted out of the Court compound and drove him to his fortified luxury farm-house on the edge of Islamabad.

Mr. Musharraf, a man who cultivated an image as a fearless strongman, was behind the high walls of his residence Thursday night. Police had set up a cordon around the property and were controlling access. Millions of Pakistanis watched footage of the 69 year old Mr. Musharraf hurrying away from the Islamabad High Court, with a crowd of angry, shouting lawyers in his wake. Television stations played and replayed the scene throughout the day. It was a riveting scene – a former dictator on the run, barricaded inside his compound in the middle of an historic general election campaign – and raised questions about how the caretaker government would handle his arrest.

In a country where the military and ex-Army generals are virtually untouchable when it comes to the courts, the sight of a former general fleeing a courtroom to evade arrest

was unprecedented. “It marks a new territory in politics, law and judicial proceedings that the culture of impunity is over – particularly for those who really conquered Pakistan through military intervention and who threw the constitution in the dustbin”, said Rasul Bakhsh Rais, professor of political science at Lahore University.

4. BHUTAN PLANS TO BECOME A WHOLLY ORGANIC NATION

Thimpu, Bhutan, From the April/13 CCPA Monitor, compiled by Elaine Hughes: The Himalayan state of Bhutan plans to become the first country in the world to make its agriculture completely organic. It will ban the sale and use of pesticides and herbicides, relying on its own animals and farm waste for fertilizers. This will cement the nation’s status as a paradigm of sustainability.

The move to total organic farming will not mean farmers of the small kingdom of 1.2 million people will have to grow less food. On the contrary, the government expects them to be able to grow more – and to export an increasing amount of high-quality foods to neighbouring India, China and other *countries*.

“The decision to go wholly organic was both practical and philosophical”, said Peman Gyamtsho, Bhutan’s Minister of Agriculture and Forests. “Ours is a mountainous terrain, so when we use chemicals, they don’t stay where they’re sprayed, but leak away to contaminate our water and other plants. But we are Buddhists, too, and we believe in living in harmony with nature.” --*The UK Guardian*

5. THE UN’S FIRST INTERNATIONAL HAPPINESS DAY IS SERIOUS BUSINESS!

March 20/13. from Yes! Magazine, Spring 2013, via Randy Weekes. Frances Moore Lappé (“Diet for a Small Planet”): “Don’t laugh, it’s true, and it’s serious business. Today (March 20) is the world’s first International Happiness Day, declared by the UN to signal the importance of going beyond Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as a measure of progress. We need, says the UN, better measures of society’s real well-being – including happiness.... Since the 1960s, the US GDP per capita has doubled. But average happiness? It hasn’t budged.

“Finally, people are starting to pay attention. An international movement is underway to create metrics of progress that incorporate multi-faceted well-being – and it could be a game-changer, if you consider this finding of the Gallup Millennium World

Survey. Polling almost 60,000 people, in 60 countries, Gallup ranked the ten things that matter most to people. At the top were health, a happy family life, and a job, while “Standard of Living” – what the GDP supposedly captures – was one of the least important.

6. EX-DICTATOR OF GUATEMALA TO BE RETRIED FOR GENOCIDE IN PERIOD OF 1982-1983

April 19/13. Guatemala City, *The Globe & Mail*, via *Associated Press*: A Guatemala judge recently re-instated to the case of a former US-backed dictator has ordered the suspension of his trial, saying that all actions taken since she was asked to step down from the case in 2011 are now null. Judge Carol Patricia Flores made the announcement Thursday after the day’s proceedings abruptly ended when the defence lawyers for former general Efraín Ríos Montt stormed out of the courtroom arguing that the trial is illegal.

General Ríos Montt, who ruled between 1982-83, was ordered to trial for genocide and crimes against humanity in January, to answer for a counterinsurgency plan that killed more than 1,700 members of the Ixil indigenous group during Guatemala’s long civil war. Prosecutors dismissed the walkout by the lawyers. “It’s all a political show”, Hector Reyes told reporters. “What the defence is showing is that they have no legal argument to defend their client and that they have no way to prove his innocence.”

7. GIRL RISING: THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION AND THE CONSEQUENCE OF ITS ABSENCE

April 24/13. Ottawa Citizen, Aid & Development Section, by Ian Smillie.

How do you convey a message about something that is almost unbearably heart-breaking, something that affects hundreds of millions of people and has been going on for so long that it’s almost taken for granted? Who do you tell and what do you expect them to do about it?

“Girl Rising” is a powerful and emotive film produced by the Documentary Group, a company created by people who worked with Ottawa-born Peter Jennings on his award-winning docs at ABC News. The film is about girls in developing countries, about the importance of education and the consequences of its absence. The consequences are economic. Not only does an uneducated girl live a stunted life, often in poverty and domestic violence.

It is well known by now that every year of additional schooling increases a girl's earning power by 10 or 20 per cent. Educated girls marry later, have fewer children and more of their children survive to adulthood and to healthy lives of their own. Violence against girls is commonplace; many never make it to school, and many of those who do drop out early. One of seven in developing countries marries before the age of 15 and many are much younger than that.

Girl Rising chose girls in nine countries, and paired each with a prominent local author who could help her to tell her own story. The film is narrated by Liam Neeson and the individual stories are voiced by luminaries like Meryl Streep, Anne Hathaway and Cate Blanchett. The life of each girl is almost intolerably bleak. What makes the film so watchable and so striking is the fact that each one of them is, no matter how fragile, tough. They each have dreams and hopes...In Nepal, Suma, sold into bonded labour at 6 – breaks free and now helps other girls. These are real children and there is hope in each story.

The problem, however, isn't a lack of school fees and uniforms, it's inadequate and unenforced government policies: on education, child labour, child trafficking, child marriage – it's time for some naming and shaming, some heavy duty policy work and some loud advocacy...This is, nevertheless, a beautiful, powerful and touching film, and CNN will broadcast the film on June 16.

8. GLOBAL SOLAR IS SKYROCKETING, WILL SOON BE NET POSITIVE ENERGY SOURCE

April 9/13. from *Climate Progress*, by Ryan Koronowski, via Steve Graham: The great thing about renewable energy is that it generally requires no fuel and starts to pay for itself as it scales. The energy cost to produce and install solar has been shrinking, and can be expected to continue doing so. Thinner silicon wafers are now used to make solar cells. Looking down the road, 10 per cent of global electricity will come from solar photovoltaic cells by 2020. More than 40 per cent of the total US solar capacity came on line last year. The growth, nationally and globally has been exponential:

Australia has reached one million solar rooftops, installations, homes and businesses.

Austria more than doubled its capacity last year.

Peru inaugurated two new solar plants comprising nearly 100 megawatts of capacity last month.

In India and Italy, solar power has reached grid parity.

- # The Middle East and North Africa should reach 1 gigawatt of demand this year.
- # And the UK has seen a record-breaking start to 2013 in solar production.

9. NIGERIA'S AGEGE; VIGILANTE JUSTICE TURNS THE TIDE

March 23/13. The Globe & Mail: At 52, Omodele Morufu is an unlikely vigilante. But sitting in a police station in this slum on the outskirts of Lagos, the municipal garbage collector explains why he ended up patrolling one of West Africa's more dangerous urban areas by moonlight. Rape and murder were common in Agege, as was burglary. Agege residents come from many regions in Nigeria and neighbouring nations. In 2004 violence between local ethnic Yoruba and Hausa from the north led to street battles waged with spears and guns.

In 2009, fed-up residents acted for themselves, forming a vigilante group to stamp out the chaos. Police here are poorly paid, highly susceptible to bribes and are often vindictive. And at first, the vigilantes were little better than their targets... But word of the midnight patrols spread, prompting a non profit organization dedicated to better policing to get involved. The CLEEN Foundation (formerly the Centre for Law Enforcement Education) gave the vigilantes rain boots and flashlights, and started a community forum in which the police trained them to write reports on their patrols, some of which stretched all night. Now, instead of throwing bottles, they provide officers with information about the community and its problems.

Mr. Morufu, who had just finished a night patrol, even has the station chief's personal mobile number, and not long ago used it at 2 in the morning to call for armed support. The vigilantes have not recorded a single rape in more than a year, Morufu says. The Agege policing model is now being applied across the city and beyond, even in the violent, oil-rich Niger delta. "Police can move now anywhere in here", Morufu says, gesturing out the window. He calls Agege "one of the most peaceful communities in all of Nigeria – really!"

10. HOW COOPERATIVES ARE DRIVING THE NEW ECONOMY

Spring 2013. Yes! Magazine, by Marjorie Kelly: "Pushing my grocery cart down the aisle, I spot on the fruit counter a dozen plastic bags of bananas, labelled "Organic: Equal Exchange". My heart leaps a little. I'd been thrilled, months earlier, when I found my local grocer carrying bananas – a new product from Equal Exchange - because this employee-owned cooperative outside Boston is one of my favourite companies. Its main business remains the fair trade coffee and chocolate the company started with in 1986. Since then, the company has flourished, and its

mission remains starting small farmer co-ops in developing countries and giving power to employees through ownership.

“Maneuvering my cart forward toward the dairy case, I search out butter made by Cabot Creamery, a Cooperative owned by dairy farmers since 1919. At the checkout counter I hand over my Visa card from Summit Credit Union, a depositor-owned bank in Madison, Wis., where I lived years ago. Credit unions are another type of cooperative, meaning that members like me are partial owners... On my way home, I pull up to the drive-through at Beverly Cooperative Bank to make a withdrawal.. Though the bank is small. Its ATM card is recognized everywhere; I’ve used it even in Copenhagen and London.

“With this series of transactions on one afternoon, I am weaving my way through a profoundly different and virtually invisible world: the cooperative economy. It aims to serve customers, rather than extract maximum profits from them. It operates through various models which share the goal of treating suppliers, employees and investors fairly. The cooperative economy has dwelled alongside the corporate economy for close to two centuries, But the latter may be an economy whose time has come,...”

* * *

The Good News Service is published periodically by **Murray Thomson, O.C.**
at 43 Aylmer Ave., Ottawa K1S 5R4, in cooperation with
Randy Weekes of 599 South Laurent Rd. Lanark, ON K0G 1K0

Correspondence and suggestions for future issues are welcome via
mothom@rogers.com, or via raw@superaje.com.

i