

No-to-War, No-to-NATO
Annual meeting
Dublin
15-17 April 2011

Report from the working group on:

“Feminist critiques of militarization”

Report back by Cynthia Cockburn:

We discussed a paper drafted in the context of the Women-against-NATO network, dealing with the contradictions for feminists in NATO's positive policy on women and gender. In the year 2000 the United Nations Security Council passed its first ever resolution on women: Resolution 1325 on *Women, Peace and Security*. It recognized the specific effects of armed conflict on women, and women's particular strengths for contributing to preventing and resolving conflict. The Resolution speaks of the right of women and girls to be protected from sexual violence; and the inclusion of women in peace processes; and calls for a gender perspective in peace-keeping operations and disarmament processes after war. There has been an energetic programme to get member governments and their armed forces to implement the Resolution. It has been translated into scores of languages. In fact it has become quite an 'industry' worldwide.

NATO, rather late in the day, in 2007 'woke up' to 1325 and has been implementing it energetically – witness the forty or fifty press releases, speeches and texts on their website. They are so proud of themselves! In Afghanistan they have a string of gender advisers, women busily engaged in civil-military operations, women soldiers available to detain and search Afghan women. And, what is more, NATO are encouraging all contributing states to recruit more women into their armed forces! This is all very disturbing to anyone with a critique of NATO. It is doubly distressing to feminists.

Resolution 1325 was the product of three years of hard lobbying in New York City by international NGOs, among whom were some excellent feminist analysts and activists, profoundly committed to ending militarization and war, and redefining the meaning of 'security'. That they drafted 1325 and achieved its passage through the UN system was widely celebrated – it was our success story. But now, a lot of those women are angry and disillusioned. They see that 'our' 1325 is being recuperated by the military machine. They are saying 'what did we do wrong?'

Persuaded by those closest to the UN, and guided by their own sense of the possibilities, they had left out of the draft two things that, if insisted on, would have risked failure in achieving the Resolution. The first was a condemnation and refusal of militarization and war policy. The second was mention of the responsibility of men as men for the abuse of women in war, and the role of the patriarchal power system and its masculine values in

perpetuating militarism. Now those omissions have come back to haunt us all. We see the masculine war machinery of NATO profiting by our efforts. It raises bitter questions as to whether we can use the United Nations for progressive purposes.

Some of the women originators of 1325, including Cora Weiss and Felicity Hill, are now drafting a rejection of these uses of 1325. We would like to propose that the No-to-NATO network as represented here at this annual meeting, adopt our particular version of that statement, focused on NATO. It is attached.

Report back by Ursula Gelis:

The working group on *Feminist Critiques of Militarization*, we want to point out, was not for women alone. That is why we made enough copies of the paper discussed in the working group for all the conference participants. The issues we were dealing with are as relevant for men as for women.

In making the feminist case against NATO over this last two years we have been addressing the root causes of militarization and militaristic thinking. Cynthia Cockburn's research and writing stresses that patriarchy, inseparable from capitalism and other systems of domination, is one of the underlying causes of war. To reveal the mechanisms on which NATO is built we are obliged to talk, among other things, about the patriarchal structures we are all living in.

Our struggle is in fact to change societal patterns. As long as the violence, suppression and competition associated with patriarchy are accepted as a given in our societies, bodies like NATO will survive and prevail. Anti-militarism is not feasible without addressing patriarchy.

In our workshop we wanted to strongly urge that not just the women's network, but all of us understand and deepen the feminist critique of NATO, so that it becomes an integral part of No-to-NATO's thinking and actions.