

WAKE UP!! IT'S YER GREAT BRITAIN: NIL PWAN...



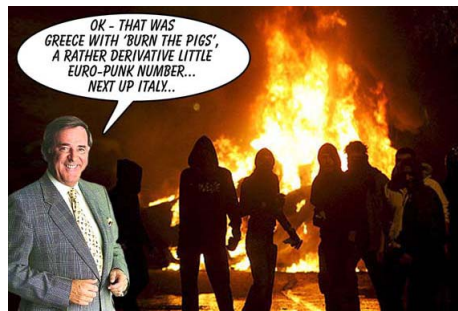
SchNEWS

www.schnews.org.uk

Friday 19th December 2008

Free/Donation

Issue 660



EURO TRASHED

SchNEWS PRESENTS: SMASH HITS FROM THE EURO-VISIONARIES

NEW ROME-ANTICS

The radical student movement in Britain can take some lessons from what is happening in Italy at the moment, specifically from events at the Roman Sapienza University campus - a hotbed for radical political mobilisation in Italy. For months students have been occupying areas of their University in response to the racist, market-driven education reforms proposed by the Berlusconi government in law 133, also called the Gelmini law, named after the Minister of Education, Mariastella Gelmini.

On Friday 12 December students and workers from Italy's most militant trade union COBAS marched in Rome. The movement, self-titled 'the anomalous wave', has not seen a repeat of the mass turn-out of October when over 2 million people marched in Rome. However students at la Sapienza, Europe's biggest University, continue to occupy a number of departments in order to push their agenda called 'autoriforma' - educational reform led by students and workers from the bottom-up.

The movement is inspired by anarchist principles, and many slogans include fury about the recent death of Alexis Grigoropoulos at the hands of the Greek police. On Wednesday December 10th, after a vigil at the Greek embassy in Rome, a number of copper vans got burned but no large scale clashes occurred between protesters and police. On a critical note, it seems the students are merely pushing an educational agenda and fail to reach out to those who do not have the privilege to study - the Italian working class, the oppressed Roma gypsies and large numbers of African immigrants, all under threat in the face of an openly racist government and a growing number of fascists getting their grubby hands on power.

Some lessons may be learned from the French mobilisation against the CPE in 2006 (see SchNEWS 537), where students and workers organised together and defeated Sarkozy's law. In any case, the fresh radicalism of this movement may inspire the by-and-large capitulated British student movement. Some Italian students are expected to come to the University of Sussex to talk about their experiences in February 2009. Watch this space.

* See <http://anomalialogs.blogspot.com/category/1>

TRACKS OF MY TEARGAS

Following on from the last week's shenanigans, the Greek rioting/demonstrating is rolling on. After nearly two weeks of continual confrontation with the police (allegedly forcing the Greek cops to go begging to the Germans and the Israelis for more tear gas canisters after theirs ran out), the protesters' determination to keep on fighting doesn't show any signs of flagging (despite the international media having gotten bored and gone away). The Greek media doesn't quite have that luxury however. Radio and TV stations have been occupied by protesters, broadcasting revolutionary propaganda. Municipal Tripoli Radio, 'Nea Tileorasi' TV in Chania, Politeia FM of Sparta and 'Star FM' and Imagine 897 FM in Thessaloniki have all been occupied.

Ten people got into the studio of NET state television, turned off a broadcast of a speech by Prime Minister Karamanlis and held up banners saying 'Stop watching, get out onto the streets!', and 'Free everyone who has been arrested'. Here's a lesson from the Greek DIY guide to Anarchism for anyone thinking about inspiring a wave of anti-state protest that brings the country to a standstill and a government to its knees - if the media won't tell your side of the story, take over the TV stations and tell it yourself.

Far too much going on for SchNEWS to write about: Wildcat strikes - doctors, teachers, airport staff; student occupations; occupying the trade union building for the official unions being useless; massive demos and oh yeah, more rioting! Plus solidarity demos and actions across the world. * See www.occupiedlondon.org/blog and www.athens.indymedia.org/?lang=en

RIOTSCHOOL MUSICAL

Schoolkids in France have been out in the streets against school reforms which would drastically cut teaching hours and fire 13,500 education workers. In the past week actions have flared up across the country. In Lyon five police officers were injured when school kids threw rocks and damaged cars, thirty eight were arrested. In Dijon the high speed train line was blocked by around 200 protesters. Several thousand marched in Paris and tear gas was fired by police at parts of the demo.

The government have temporarily backed down, but the kids aren't fooled and refuse to stop protests till the government agrees to scrap the plans completely. A student's spokskid said: "You keep hearing about the financial crisis, that there's no money for young people, and on the other hand you give out billions to the banks and of course that creates discontent."

UP ON THE ROOF

Last week we reported about a roof occupation at arms corp Raytheon's office in Bristol. On December 9th the protest began against Raytheon's supply of weaponry being used in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine. After covering it we assumed it had finished. Well it hadn't and nearly two weeks later the occupation is still on, despite the freezing weather.

The Smash Raytheon campaign have done several rooftop occupations and blockades of the Bristol Raytheon office in the past few months. They are part of a network of anti-militarist groups springing up around the country, including Nottingham Heckler & Koch campaign (see SchNEWS 658), and 'veterans' Smash EDO (see www.smashedo.org.uk), against Brighton's bomb factory EDO-MBM. Recently a gathering was held in Edinburgh in the build up to protests in November 2009 against the NATO summit to be held there (see SchNEWS 659).

It's hoped the roof-sitter is still there for the solidarity demonstration 1pm-3pm this Saturday (20th), at Raytheon, Argentum House, Unit 510, Bristol Business Park, Frenchay, Bristol. * See also <http://raytheonout.wordpress.com>

GO YOUR OWN WEY

The Weymouth Relief Road protest is still going on strong, after setting up in the early hours of last Thursday (11th). The camp has got one large tree house in an oak, attached to other treehouse structures, as well as the 'grand camp' next door, which is on neighbouring land owned by the Woodland Trust.

Yesterday (18th), the protesters were in court and after losing the case, are expecting eviction papers to be delivered today. Being the festive season it's going to be harder to raise a private bailiff team anytime soon, but there could be an attempted eviction this Monday (22nd). The grand camp - on separate land - would require its own eviction papers, and is likely to remain at least until after Xmas.

The site is in an ancient woodland in Dorset, which the proposed plan would duff over for a £84 million relief road.

The crew need more numbers - particularly on Monday morning if bailiffs arrive - and there is also a tat request list including warm clothes, food, rope and climbing gear.

For directions call 07792717821 or see www.bypasssthebypass.org

SHAC YER BOOTY

The trial of campaigners linked to Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC) is drawing to a close. The jury have been out since Monday morning and are still trying to reach a verdict. The trial is of eight people charged with 'Conspiracy to Blackmail' (see SchNEWS 652). The maximum penalty for this offence is fourteen years in prison. Watch this space for coverage once the verdict is reached. See www.shac.net

INFORMATION FOR ACTION

Copyleft Published in Brighton since 1994
- back in mid January -

MAMA MIA... HERE THEY GO AGAIN

In April 1977 fourteen middle-aged women quietly walked round and round the pyramid at the centre of Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires – the site of government in Argentina. Capped in white shawls they walked round in ones and twos because to pause or to walk in larger groups would have contravened the anti-freedom of assembly laws of the military dictatorship. It was this group of mothers of ‘disappeared’ Argentines that five years later led the first Marcha de la Resistencia; one of the first large scale protests against the military government of the time and its kidnapping, torture and murder – policies which resulted in the ‘disappearance’ of an estimated 30,000 people. And it was this group, the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, that last week led the 28th Marcha de la Resistencia a protest that also included, unions, unemployed organisations and hospital workers.

The founding members first met back in the early days of the Junta in 1976 while, as mothers of ‘disappeared’ people who were still hoping for answers, haunted police stations, military barracks, churches and the Ministry of the Interior. After the first protest they met and grew in whatever ways were available, even when directly confronted with state terror – three of the founding members were kidnapped and tortured then dropped, alive, into the sea. By the fall of the dictatorship in 1983 they were one of the most famous and influential protest movements in Latin America and, as housewives who habitually carried tear gas remedies in their handbags, one of the most original.

With the return of democracy the Madres continued campaigning, protesting and marching. However, in ‘86 they split into two factions, the Linea Fundadora (Founding Line) who decided to work ‘within the system’ campaigning for legislation and the Asociación (Association) who took a much more radical approach. They became involved in and remain active in a number of social causes, often taking far-left and controversial stances. However they deemed the 2006 Marcha to be their last, stating that the marches were no longer necessary as the current President - Nestor

Kirchner - was a ‘friend of the Madres’ and not indifferent to the victims of the ‘Dirty War’ as Argentines refer to it. But the Linea Fundadora continues, this year with three main demands:

The first demand was for justice and the incarceration in common jails for the ‘genocidal murderers, their accomplices and ideologues’. Although the impunity laws that previously protected members of the military from facing punishment were repealed by Kirchner in 2003, there is still considerable anger that the guilty are not treated as common criminals and frequently permitted to remain under house arrest in luxurious surroundings paid for by their stints in the deeply corrupt Junta.

The second was for the restoration of the identities of the children snatched from ‘disappeared’ people. An estimated 500 children were taken from their soon to be murdered parents and placed in the hands of ‘friendly’ families, their identities erased. So far 95 of these have been located.

The last was for the reappearance of a live Julio Lopez. In 2006 Lopez - a 77 year-old retired bricklayer who was incarcerated and tortured for three years in the late seventies - was testifying at the trial of one of his torturers, Miguel Etcheco-latz. Before taking the stand for the final time in what was the first trial after the repeal, he disappeared again and has not been seen since. His continued absence is marked by monthly marches and has become a symbol of the unrepentant power the military still exerts.

But these were by no means all of the demands. The list was long and covered everything from an end to illegitimate external debt, wealth redistribution and a new ‘democratic and popular’ media and communications law. The process of ‘memory and justice’ may finally have begun and the Madres by now may all qualify for free bus passes but they’re still going and with an energy and dedication that often puts the young’uns to shame.

* www.madresfundadoras.org.ar

* www.madres.org

* www.womeninworldhistory.com/contemporary-07.html (in English)

THAT'S THE WAY WE LAKE IT

After two years of delays, postponements and legal nonsense the verdict on the Lakenheath 8 case (See SchNEWS 655) finally came through after a four day trial. After locking themselves to the munitions store of the US airbase at Lakenheath back in 2006 the eight were prosecuted for criminal damage and trespassing - under SOCPA section 128. As a maximum punishment the defendants had been looking at a year in the slammer and a £5000 fine. Yet on Wednesday (17th), in spite of being found guilty on both counts, they walked free on a conditional discharge and were ordered to pay the rather more modest fee of £250 each in court costs.

In a case described by the senior crown prosecutor as ‘very complicated and unprecedented’ the defence based their case on the idea that they were acting legally as they were stopping a war crime – the dropping of cluster bombs - from taking place. They claimed that their attempts to alert the authorities had been ignored and so the only action left open to them was to physically prevent the bombs from being loaded onto the planes. The argument was rejected by the prosecution who said that possession of cluster bombs did not constitute a war crime. It did, however, lead to the admission from the USAF that cluster bombs were present

at the base, a triumph of sorts after years of ‘we can neither confirm or deny’ responses.

While defendant Mel Harrison stated the group’s intention to continue to fight against the use of cluster bombs, Cdr Bob Mehal, spokesman for the US Department of Defence stated his group’s intention to continue to use them saying “Use of cluster munitions can result in less collateral damage to civilians and civilian infrastructure than unitary weapons”. As the recorded casualties of cluster bombs are 98% civilian we can only assume the ‘unitary weapons’ he was referring to were the type dropped on Hiroshima. For more see www.easterncnduk.org

* Meanwhile, over in West Yorkshire, veteran peace activist Sylvia Boyes was sentenced to three months in jail after refusing to undertake the 150 hours of ‘community punishment’ she was sentenced to for her part in an action this year at Fylingdales Ballistic Missile Early Warning Station in North Yorkshire (see SchNEWS 539). Alongside fellow activist Erica Wilson, Boyes cut through the base perimeter fence and liberally dispersed red paint, a reference to the bloodshed caused by US foreign policy and it’s ever eager friend, the British government. See www.tridentploughshares.org

Coal The Whole Thing Off

On Monday 15th thirty campaigners from Coal Action Scotland together with local residents peacefully blockaded the entrance to the Scottish Coal-operated Ravenstruther coal rail terminal in South Lanarkshire.

The action lasted eight hours, resulted in six arrests and prevented the delivery of thousands of tonnes of coal to power stations across Scotland for the whole day. It is estimated that 6,380 tonnes of coal were stopped from being transported from the coal mines to power stations, equivalent to 11,675,400 kg CO₂ (11,675.4 tonnes) released into the atmosphere.

The action was aimed at disrupting the operations of Scottish Coal and Scottish Power in the region. The protesters are acting to oppose the five open cast coal mines that deliver coal to the rail terminal and in resistance to the thirteen new open cast coal mines due to open in Scotland.

At clear odds with it’s carbon reduction targets the government is currently overseeing the largest expansion in coal extraction in 40 years. In the past 18 months fourteen companies have requested permission to dig nearly 60 million tonnes of coal from 58 new or enlarged opencast mines across the UK and so far the government has not been shy about accepting applications.

The plans affect all of Britain, not just Scotland, and the action follows on from a number of other protests in Derbyshire (see SchNEWS 643) and around the country.

* See <http://coalactionedinburgh.wordpress.com>
<http://coalintheuk.org>

...and finally...

And how could we not mention the Bush shoe incident.

As Dubya spends his last days in office jetting around the world visiting his ‘successes’ in fortified compounds, he has been surrounded by well-armed bodyguards to protect him from reality. However one journo managed to puncture any illusions he may still have about Iraqi welcomes of ‘flowers and sweets’ by hurling his pair of size 9s at him. “This is a farewell kiss you dog,” shouted Muntazer al-Zaidi, “This is from the widows, the orphans and those who were killed in Iraq.”

Journalists whose job it is to report on the vacuous and sycophantic press conferences with the talking monkey and his favourite puppet of the day were gladdened by the opportunity to report on something actually happening. The video of the shoe attack has been played, replayed and thoroughly enjoyed. Although Bush avoided any physical damage, the impact of Muntazer al-Zaidi’s twin shoes of justice have been felt around the world. Across the Arab world al-Zaidi (who writes for a non-sectarian, anti-occupation Iraqi rag) has become the man of the hour. In Iraq itself demos to secure his release from imprisonment in the Green Zone (and torture at the hands of Bush-installed freedom lovers) have united Shia and Sunni, secular and religious around the country.

Waste a minute of your time and play the shoe throwing game at www.sockandawe.com or kill time at <http://bushbash.flashgressive.de>

Disclaimer

SchNEWS advises all readers - what Bush needs is a bit more sock-an-awe. Honest!

PARTY & PROTEST
For full listings updated weekly see
www.schnews.org.uk/pap

Subscribe! Get SchNEWS free every week by email in pdf or text file - visit our site, or send us stamps and we'll post it to you. Copy and distribute! Keep SchNEWS free with donations (via website or cheques payable to Justice?). Posted free to all prisoners. SchNEWS, c/o Community Base, 113 Queens Rd, Brighton, BN1 3XG. Tel +44 (0)1273 685913 Email schnews@brighton.co.uk Web www.schnews.org.uk