

MEXICAN WAVE

AS SchNEWS GIVES YOU THE ZOCALO-DOWN ON MASS RESISTANCE TO PRIVATISATION

Around 200,000 workers, teachers, students, unionists, farmers and social campaigners shut Mexican cities down on Wednesday (12th) in a national strike against the military backed privatisation of a national power company.

On October 10th, 6000 federal police and soldiers occupied various sites of power company Luz y Fuerza around the country and summarily sacked the 44,000 strong workforce. Martín Esparza, leader of the Mexican Electrical Workers Union (SME) said, "They came by night, like bandits, like cowards, and barked an order. They thought that they were going to wipe us out, but here there is the conscience of more than 100 years of the SME movement."

In Mexico City the day's 12 hours of action began with a rally outside Luz y Fuerza. With thousands of other protesters assembling around at points around the city, most of the main roads were shut down and blockaded. Students occupied buildings at several universities, provoking an aborted attempt to flush them out by police.

As the protesters began their march on the convergence point of the Zocalo - Mexico City's main square - there were several confrontations with police, who tried to disperse the crowds with tear gas and by firing in the air over marcher's heads. Three police were injured in the clashes and 12 protesters were arrested.

There were also marches and pickets around the country and a number of blockades of major transit routes. Maria Piñada de Zelaya of the People's Front in Defence of the Earth in Atenco (FPDTA), who was at the road blockade in Texcoco, said, "Today we are exercising our rights, the right to be free, the right to our roads. The rich have deceived us, they've deceived everyone, day after day, through congress, through the senators, they take away these rights."

The strike followed weeks of actions against the closure. A march of over a hundred thousand in Mexico City was followed by pickets in Tula, Tulancingo, and Juandho and an attempt to seize a substation in Pachuca. On October 24th Union members and social movements formed the National Assembly of Popular Resistance (CEND) to co-ordinate opposition to the government.

Thousands of federal police supported by at least 10,000 police reserves and 3,000 soldiers have maintained control over the 100 facilities. The plants have been kept running by 3,000 workers brought in from the other state-owned power company, the Federal Electrical Commission (CFE) and by 800 engineers and technicians provided by the army.

Since the plants came under police control, localised blackouts have left parts of Mexico City and other cities and towns without power

for hours at a time, with hundreds of factories unable to function.

The government claims Luz y Fuerza was economically non-viable - a financial black hole - with bloated payrolls, inherited jobs and massive pension payouts responsible for \$42billion a year subsidies.

The claim is denied by union leaders, who say CFE, which produces 95% of Mexico's electricity - 45% for private companies, was selling electricity to multinational companies and to Luz y Fuerza at a profit. The government was then forcing Luz y Fuerza to sell that electricity on to other companies and domestic consumers at a lower price.

SME leader Jose Hernandez said, "So the more it sells, the more it loses...its absurd, one government company selling to another...and then the government says it has to subsidise Luz y Fuerza with a lot of money, and it tells everyone it's to pay the so called high salaries of the workers and the retirement payments, which is not true. Our salary represents a bit less than one third of those subsidies, really the subsidies are for the big companies and for the domestic consumers."

Instead, the union suggest the move was provoked by SME blocking the governments attempts to take control of Luz y Fuerza's fiber optic infrastructure. Fibre optic technology provides television, internet and telephone service on the same line when cable is installed on any normal domestic or low-voltage electrical line. Luz y Fuerza served around 25% of Mexico's population with these lines - including Mexico City, which is responsible for around 35% of Mexico's GDP. With the potential to bring fibre optic technology to this section of Mexican society, Luz y Fuerza's network is worth a fortune.

In 1999, the Mexican government gave Spanish company WL Comunicaciones a permit to install, operate, and commercialise Luz y Fuerza's network to provide fiber optic services. SME claim the various agreements signed with WL have been nullified due to government legislation and WL not upholding its end of the deal.

In June, Luz y Fuerza executives and SME submitted an application to provide fibre optics through Luz y Fuerza's infrastructure. The proposal only covered the existing network and would have allowed WL to install and operate fibre optics in the power lines that don't currently have it - the majority of the network. Still, it would have allowed Luz y Fuerza to provide a service to its customers that would have competed with the telecommunications giants Telmex and Cablevision - both of which

Continued overleaf...

MEXICANS VOTE IN FORMATION TO GO ON STRIKE



VEG OF DARKNESS

Israeli settlement profiteers Carmel Agrexco suffered three days of disruption to their internationally illegal export business this week as feisty protesters launched the most audacious sustained blockade of the Israel-owned depot yet.

Between Friday 6th November and Sunday the 8th, activists endured crappy weather and attitude from Carmel staff and police at the headquarters in Hayes, Middlesex. On the Friday, London students, Anarchists Against the Wall and the International Solidarity Movement joined (literally, with locks) together using fencing panels to carry out the blockade, managing to disrupt Carmel's business all day. Some activists were trapped inside the premises by the Carmel staff, who the cops claimed had the right to use "reasonable force" to remove those on their work premises, indicating when questioned that breaking their necks was consistent with "reasonable force". The blockade lasted for eight hours before the d-lockers unlocked themselves. The best Carmel could do was to lift some produce over the gates with forklifts - not quite 'business as usual.' None were arrested.

Day two saw the protesters locked on to oil drums, blocking access roads, and suffering pain when police removed them. Three protesters were nicked and eventually those locked-on were dragged, still attached to their barrels, away from the gates by police after five hours.

By Sunday (the final day of action) the Carmel staff had virtually given up, and a large public demo blockaded trucks. Five people were arrested, although the police have rarely charged anyone demonstrating against Carmel (the people nicked on the Valentine's protests were the first lot to be put on trial for three years (See SchNEWS 666, 698).

The Palestinians are experiencing their 42nd year of occupation. Carmel Agrexco is a part-Israeli company that operates out of the Geneva Convention defying settlements in Palestine. Vegetables make up 80% of Israeli exports and the UK is their largest market.

Lately there's been a serious escalation in the actions against Carmel, and not before time as the Israeli government feels free to lurch further and further to the right. A ragtag group of British based protesters are able to do what even the US president seems incapable of - impact, however slightly, on the Israeli settlement programme.

* For information on direct action and the boycott see www.bigcampaign.org and www.bdsmovement.net

have monopolised their markets. The government ignored the proposal.

The SME say the contradiction in shutting down Luz y Fuerza for being uneconomical while refusing to consider its potential in profitably and competitively providing a service highlights the underlying motivation for the government's actions. Especially when three of the ruling party's most prominent politicians have major stakes in WL.

Sergio Espinal Garcia of CEND said, "For us, it is clear that the primary objective of this blow against us was to fix the privatisation of all areas of electrical production. With this plan, the Federal Electricity Commission wants this small group of businessmen to control the entire network so they can continue to develop their enormous fortunes in the middle of this tremendous national crisis, which they want to load onto the backs of the people."

* <http://mywordismyweapon.blogspot.com>

* <http://upsidedownworld.org>

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Conscientious objector, Lance Corporal Joe Glenton, has been arrested and held for denouncing the war in Afghanistan.

In a further blow to freedom of expression rights, Joe - already charged with desertion - will face five additional charges for speaking at a demonstration and opposing the war in Afghanistan in the media.

Before his arrest on the 24th October, Joe told five thousand protesters in Trafalgar Square, "These are dark days for me. I am afraid for my colleagues and friends out in Afghanistan. They're being betrayed".

After going AWOL from Afghanistan in 2007, and returning from overseas earlier in the year, he wrote to Gordon Brown, "The war in Afghanistan is not reducing the terrorist risk, far from improving Afghan lives it is bringing death and devastation to their country." At a court martial pre-hearing in August his lawyer, Hugh O' Donoghue, said Joe will deny desertion, asserting the illegality of the war. Yesterday saw a flash mob of around 100 people congregate to protest outside the MOD building at The White Hall, to support of Joe and to demand his release from military prison in Colchester.

Afghan MP Malalai Joya sent a message to Joe, saying, "The majority of the Afghan people are with you and we respect and admire the stand you have taken. When there is no justice, it is better for honest people to go even to jail rather than go to war. Down with the occupation." Even the majority of the British public are now in agreement.

* More information at www.stopwar.org.uk

EXTERMI-NATO

The convergence space for SMASH NATO is now open - ready for three days of action against the NATO meeting in Edinburgh. After months of mobilising and planning, today the NATO Welcoming Committee set up the Smash NATO Convergence Space in Edinburgh. The space will act as a base for activists resisting the NATO Parliamentary Assembly meeting in the city from Friday. The address is Bristo Hall, upstairs from the Forest Cafe, on Bristo Place.

It'll open Friday at 10am and will provide legal support, a medics space, an Indymedia Centre, punk gigs, information regarding Friday's mass demo and food. For people coming from out of town who need accommodation turn up at the convergence centre or email or phone (07500163480). As much notice as possible is preferable!

* See <http://natowc.noflag.org.uk>

BIG PEACE UP

Yes, it is SchNEWS's 15th birthday next week, as well as issue 700. Mighty landmarks for pushers of radical literature you might think, but still greatly in the shadows of London's premier radical bookshop, Housmans, which marks 50 years operating as a radical bookshop from the same building this week.

The King's Cross hang out, innocently named Peace House, stock the widest range of 'out there' books, zines and pamphlets in the country (and now all available for purchase online!) and have always acted as a support hub for local like-minded communities - which certainly must have been many and varied given the sweeping cultural fashion shifts since 1959.

Five decades of political subversives, anarchists and pacifists continually in the same building... we can only imagine the state of the carpet.

To celebrate their miraculous longevity they are having a big bash with poetry, comedy and music - from protest folk to very 21st century-style DJ's spinnin' til the wee hours on November 14th, 3pm-2am at The Cross Kings, 126 York Way, King's Cross, London N1 OAX. For line up and info see www.housmans.com/peacehouse.php

BAD APPLES

Much to the dismay of locals, the Earth Centre in Conisbrough, which has been left derelict for the last five years, is now in danger of being sold for re-development. The site, which went into administration in 2004, was repossessed by Doncaster council who were recently asked to grant access to a local community group so that they might gather the fruit, vegetables and herbs growing in abundance on the 400 acre site. Access was repeatedly refused on the grounds that the fruit in the forest gardens was "rotten" and "infected with wasps".

Instead, the council have given the green light to the likes of war games company Cerbus Airsoft, the local police, for dog training, and the Ministry Of Defence for fuck-knows-what. Not easily discouraged, a group of likely scumpers defied the law of the day and gathered the apples from the orchards to distro to people in the local community. A small act of defiance but in the SchNEWS office we think its scrumptious!

Plans are being made to reclaim the site for an eco-village or a community education centre for sustainable living before it is sold off to commercial scumbags and lost forever. To get involved email thereismore2lifefolks@yahoo.co.uk

* For background see <http://underclassrising.net/reports/earth-center.html>

CROSS WORDS

MOVEMENT is the new free monthly newsletter covering updates from the No Borders Network and beyond. With the editorial collective keen to encourage other groups, organisations and individuals opposing the border regime to contribute, MOVEMENT looks set to be the one stop source for news on radical migration activism.

Issue one has short articles on the situation in Calais, resistance to deportation flights, migrant workers on strike, and lots of protests against the UKBA, detention centres, corporations and racist groups plus a call out for COP15.

The deadline for articles for issue two is Nov 24th (publish date Dec 1st).

* See issue one at http://noborderswales.files.wordpress.com/2009/11/movement_one.pdf

** Newcastle has a new independent newsletter - The Grey Matter - with issue one out now. See <http://thegreymatter.wordpress.com>

UNFASTEN YER SEATBELTS

A victory for anti-deportation campaigners on Thursday (12th) as passenger action forced the cancellation of a forced removal. Rose-Jane Wanjohi and her UK-born daughter Natale were due to be deported to Kenya. They were put on a plane at Heathrow but, thanks to the efforts of supporters, are now back to the relative safety of Yarls Wood detention centre.

Rose-Jane and Natale were taken from detention and 'escorted' on to a British Airways flight by four security guards. Supporters leafleted passengers about to board. The leaflets explained that a fellow-passenger and baby were being taken against their will into extreme danger (Rose's late husband had forcibly enrolled them in the Mungiki cult, which believes in female genital mutilation). As Rose-Jane sat on the plane, several passengers refused to fasten their seat belts. The pilot refused to take off until it was resolved, and so Rose-Jane and Natale were taken from the plane.

Speaking from the van taking her back to the detention centre, Rose-Jane told NCADC:

"I don't know what to say. I am so happy. I would like to thank my friends, and thank the people on the plane, for saving my life and my daughter. Thank you so much. God bless you."

Rose-Jane and Natale are not out of danger yet. For details on how you can help, see: <http://bit.ly/rosejane> and www.ncadc.org.uk

TOMLINSON VIGIL

Eight months after his death, Ian Tomlinson's family has announced a candlelit vigil to remember him, Tuesday 1st December from 6pm - 7.15pm at Royal Exchange by Threadneedle Street, London, EC3V 3LL (tube: Bank).

The family say "Ian died in tragic circumstances, an 'innocent passerby' trying to get home, after a police assault at the G20 protests on April 1st 2009. Eight months later our family are preparing for our first Christmas without him and still waiting for justice. We have been grateful for public support this year and would like an opportunity to hold this public memorial gathering to remember Ian, with our friends and supporters around us. We ask that those who attend please wear black as a mark of respect and remember that this is peaceful event."

The actual evidence around Ian Tomlinson's death remains obscured as the CPS is sitting on the files and no doubt hoping that the whole problem will just go away.

* See www.iantomlinsonfamilycampaign.org.uk

...and finally...

It's a right crystal balls-up. Dyfed-Powys police recently squandered 20 grand on an extended pub crawl instigated by psychics.

Stumped officers investigating the death of Carlos Assaf turned to sleuthing local mystics (presumably crossing their palms with silver), who told them that a "lion, a horse and a man called Tony Fox" were significant.

The ghost tour took in dozens of pubs named the Black Horse or the Red Lion and, in one final moment of booze-fuelled inspiration, a hostelry named The Feathers 'cos it had a statue of a horse outside! Despite widening the search to local late night off-licences and a kebab shop, Tony Fox remained untraced.

It all appears spookily like a phantom expenses claim and Welsh coppers probably need to stop mixing in the spirit world...

Disclaimer

SchNEWS advises all readers - it's great to celebrate the falling of the Berlin Wall - but what about the rest of the walls which are claiming lives and freedom? Honest.

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