



wake up! wake up! I t's the xmas prezzie you've always wanted

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TRIAL AND TERROR

“The world does not need a war against ‘terrorism’, it needs a culture of peace based on human rights and justice for all.”

Irene Khan, Amnesty International Secretary General

The events of September 11 and the campaign against terrorism are being used across the world as an excuse for governments to bring in more repressive laws, along with redefining and widening who the terrorists could be. And if that means taking away the very freedoms that governments claim to be defending, well, that’s surely a price worth paying.

In Britain we can feel proud that we are leading the way in the race to the bottom of the civil liberties barrel. On Monday the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act became law – two days later eight people became the lucky winners in the ‘we’ve decided you’re a terrorist so were locking you up without trial’ Christmas draw.

This hotch-potch of a bill includes not just internment (see SchNEWS 331), but a whole host of civil liberty busting BLAH. As Raif Smyth from the Coalition Against the Terror Act said “The truth is, the mandarins at the Home Office have used the Bill as a Trojan horse to get into law all the dodgy proposals at the bottom of their filing cabinets.” In Europe, heads of state are pushing ahead with an “anti-terrorism roadmap” with plans to add two new databases on the Schengen Information System (SIS - see SchNEWS 312). SIS already holds files on nearly one and a half million people. One of the new databases would cover public order and protests and lead to, “Barring potentially dangerous persons from participating in certain events.” Such as anti capitalist protests outside international summits by any chance? “Targetted” suspects would be tagged with an “alert” on the SIS computer, barring them from entering the country where a protest or event was taking place.

In the Czech Republic, a new law permits the prosecution of people expressing sympathy for the attacks on New York, or even of those sympathising with the sympathisers! Already one Czech journalist, Tomas Pecina, a reporter for the Prague-based investigative journal Britske Listy,

has been arrested and charged for criticising the use of the law, on the grounds that this makes him, too, a supporter of terrorism. Meanwhile in Turkey, that well known human rights haven, just publishing a book by Noam Chomsky could land Fatih Tas with a fine or spell in prison, under the country’s anti-terrorism laws. Chomsky apparently overstepped the mark when he wrote in ‘US Interventions’: “the Kurds have been oppressed throughout history... but that changed (in 1984) tens of thousands of people were killed, two or three million had to migrate, 3,500 villages were destroyed... an intense ethnic clean-up.” So while it’s ok for the Turkish state to carry out attacking the Kurds, it’s terrorism and “separatist propaganda” to talk about it.

COURT-KNAPPING

In America, more than 1,200 people have so far been held in connection with the attacks on September 11th - most because of the colour of their skin. The majority of those arrested have nothing to do with terrorism, but have been jailed for minor visa violations that normally would be ignored.

Take Ali Al-Maqtari, a Yemeni immigrant who spent eight weeks in jail. Al-Maqtari told the Senate Judiciary Committee about being interrogated for 12 hours, lied to by the FBI, accused of beating his wife, then locked up unable to contact his wife or solicitors. All because his wife wore a head scarf to a recruiting centre when she enlisted in the Army, spoke in a foreign language (French), and because soldiers found box cutters and New York City postcards in their car.

Or what about Samir Khalaf, a Palestin-

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For putting up a poster! A Swedish man has been banned from 14 countries for putting up a poster advertising an anti-EU meeting! Per Johansson put up the poster outside a Belgian police station shortly before last week’s demonstrations against the EU Summit. For that crime he was not only expelled from Belgium, but will also not be able to travel in Germany, Austria, Spain, France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Ireland, Norway, Finland and Denmark – all members of the Schengen agreement.

ian who worked at a petrol station in Connecticut. He went to the hospital with chest pains on Sept. 12. People thought he was acting suspicious. They called the police, who called the FBI. After his emergency operation, the Feds took him - against doctors’ advice - to jail. There he remained, charged with failure to get a work permit. However, he was in the country legally and was quickly cleared of terrorism suspicion and an immigration judge ruled at the beginning of October that he could go home. But then the Immigration and Naturalization Service wouldn’t let him go until November.

Michael Boyle, solicitor for Al-Maqtari, told the US Senate meeting discussing the Department of Justice actions that these aren’t isolated incidents, but are “part of a pattern of excessive detention and disrespect for the rights of non-citizens.”

The war on terrorism has become a war on people – if you’re the wrong colour, have the wrong views, or are merely in the wrong place at the wrong time, then you better watch out because you could potentially be the next terrorist. *C o a l i t i o n Against the Terrorism Act c/o Haldane Society, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL Tel: 0845 458 2966 <http://go.to/ta2000> * Read full story of America’s detainees on www.alternet.org

Brussel Sprouts

As the Belgium government held the final EU meeting of their six-month Presidency, cops were out on the streets of having a good old ruck with protesters at the summit of Laeken.

Undercover cops, dressed in black, were seen directing protesters to smash up the Palace and attack shops, only this time the international black bloc were having none of it. Instead of following their instructions protesters surrounded the 15 cops and herded them into a corner and held them there until riot cops had to rescue their mates. For info on the meeting <http://belgium.indymedia.org/>

Number of civilians killed in World Trade Centre **3,234**

Number of civilians killed in Afghanistan by U.S. Bombs **3,767**
<http://pubpages.unh.edu/~mwhero/d/>

Money raised by UK and American citizens for victims of September 11th **£900m**

Money raised by UK and American citizens for Afghanistan refugees **£14 m**

DON'T RIOT FOR ME ARGENTINA

As SchNEWS goes to press food riots and strikes in Argentina have led to a state of emergency as President De La Rue's economy finally hit rock bottom this week after just two years in government and nine economic plans.

South America's second largest economy has been in recession for the last four years as government attempts to tie the Peso to the dollar lead to the sell off of state owned utilities and the countries gold reserves. This has left the country with a £90bn debt and unemployment running at nearly 20% as the government caves in to pressures of the free market. Nearly half the population are below the poverty line - with a further 2000 people joining them every day.

Behind it all lies those global loan sharks the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Continual reliance on IMF policies has stripped the country of its assets and left them with few alternatives and huge debts. When the loans looked perilous more was given. The bigger the debt the bigger the interest repayments: the more for the bankers, the less for the people. The west has looted Argentina of its finances and left them the bill to boot.

On the brink of financial and social collapse with debts they cannot repay and people anxious of food shortages in a country formerly self-reliant the IMF may give another billion. This will mean further cuts of £2.7bn. But cuts from where? The government last week even sold off private pensions from already strapped public sector workers in order to repay international creditors. Money is now worth nothing and people have resorted to their own methods in order to eat (see SchNEWS 319).

Protesters armed only with pots and pans met police armed with tear gas, water cannons, CS gas and rubber bullets. The state of emergency has led to 16 deaths including a 15 year old boy shot by a shopkeeper; hundreds of arrests and 108 injured as young and old take to the streets.

20,000 people marched on to the presidential palace. Police issued warnings of arrests for an illegal gathering, after 15 minutes they opened up with plastic bullets. "The incredible thing is that not a soul is on the side of the police, so everyone who drives by honks, people walking by try to help, clap, boo the cops, throw things".

The food riots began in the provinces but spread into Buenos Aires, banks have been destroyed and the Israeli embassy attacked. In Cordoba Argentina's second biggest city civil servants set fire to the city hall in protest of the governments economic plans. One protester said 'I have never seen anything this intense in Argentina in all my life'. According to press reports this isn't just about getting rid of the government, most Argentinians do not trust any of their politicians and are revolting against the whole political class. Find out more <http://argentina.indymedia.org>

SchNEWS in brief

Looking for a New Year Resolution? Why not get involved in SchNEWS - we need writers, researchers, envelope stuffers, web designers, town distributors. Come along to our next training day on Wednesday 16th January. Ring the office to book your place ** This week protestors dressed as **pigs occupied BOCM Pauls animal feed mill** in Exeter. The porkers shut down the mill for 5 hours to protest against the continued sneaking of genetically modified organisms into the food chain via animal feed. Tel: 020 7272 1586 www.geneticsaction.org.uk

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BYKER GRAVE

You might think that an organisation called the Environment Agency (EA), with over 10,000 full-time employees and an annual budget of £655m could be expected to look after our environment. Well think again, this government Quango*, just like the Health and Safety Executive, seems more concerned with protecting the interests of business than safeguarding the environment. Alan Dalton one of the board members of the EA has been saying what SchNEWS thinks, he spoke up and criticised the Agency, but for his honesty the Board Chairman sacked him.

Alan Dalton was appointed to the Board of the EA to look at the workings of the Agency. His report is scathing of top-level management, he says "...the real role of the board is essentially negative. In that, should the EA step out of line with government policy, too much, then the board will come into action to reign-in the EA." He was even told this by a senior civil servant that the Labour government didn't want any "surprises"!

One of the biggest failings of the Environment Agency has to be with regard to the Byker Incinerator in Newcastle (SchNEWS 260). For a period of six years 2,000 tonnes of highly toxic ash from the incinerator was spread on allotments and paths. This was against the incinerator's licence; the ash should have gone to landfill. The ash should have also been analysed and the results sent to the EA, but this never happened either. According to the EA "the Duty of Care is intended to be self regulatory ...there is no legislation requiring the Agency to productively ensure that all waste stream from all waste producers are properly and legally dealt with. This would require a huge resource commitment which is simply not available." So they just trust polluters to tell them they aren't polluting? Brilliant!

When the practice of spreading the ash was revealed, studies by Ergo Laboratories of Germany found that dioxin concentrations were up to 800 times above the 'safe' level. However when the EA studied the allotments 18 out of 20 tested, contained only half of what Ergo found. The reason? Ergo took their own samples, the EA and the Food Standards Agency (another dodgy Quango) used the highly scientific approach of asking the polluters to collect the samples! The EA was going to press 19 charges, but quietly dropped 17 of them including the most serious one of causing harm to health, the company received small fines for the other two offences.

On the Byker fiasco and incineration in general Alan Dalton says: "I have no faith in the EAs ability to regulate the current domestic and toxic waste incinerators in England and Wales.

For the full report read the Winter 2001 edition of Toxcat from Communities Against Toxics, PO Box 29, Ellesmere Port, CH66 3TX, 0151-339-5473, ralph.ryder@communities-against-toxics.org.uk, for £2.50

* SchNEWS Vocab Watch: Quango - Quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation, which is a government body supposedly independent from the government.

** A study by a Cornell University researcher suggests that living in a house surrounded by woods, meadows or other natural habitats is good for a child's mental health - for which Schnews gives them the 'Bleedin Obvious' study findings of the year award ** 'Local Voices' in Newbury will be commemorating the 6th anniversary of the beginning of the 'Battle of the Trees' to prevent construction of the Newbury Bypass. Meet 13th Jan 11am in Northcroft Lane, by the leisure centre. Info: 01635 47437 ** **Take-Over-The-Streets** in-line skating event in London every Friday (subject to weather). Meet Duke of Wellington Arch, Hyde Park Corner 7:30pm. Info at www.citiskate.com

Inside SchNEWS

"He did not receive a fair trial. The justice system is stacked against poor people, against people of colour, and against political radicals. And Mumia Abu-Jamal fits all three criteria...I think the entire justice system in our country needs to be re-examined." Howard Zinn, Historian.

You've probably heard about Mumia Abu-Jamal the former Black Panther and journalist - the most famous death row prisoner in the US - well, his death sentence was overturned on Tuesday by a District judge in Philadelphia. This ain't as good as it sounds. The Judge responsible, has refused Abu-Jamal's request for a new trial, upholding his 1982 conviction on first-degree murder charges. So while Jamal knows he isn't going to be killed by lethal injection, its pretty likely he'll stay in prison, period. The judge gave state prosecutors 180 days to conduct a new sentencing hearing, and ordered that Abu-Jamal be given a life sentence if authorities do not meet his six-month deadline. Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham said her office would lodge an appeal, while Jeff Mackler, from the Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal group said "If they give him to a life sentence without bail, that's totally unacceptable to us." Mumia was convicted of having shot a police officer in 1981, who had pulled over a man over the road from Abu-Jamal who had been in his taxi. Celebrities, death-penalty opponents and foreign politicians have since rallied to Abu-Jamal's cause, calling him a political prisoner and saying he was railroaded by a racist justice system.

* Two weeks ago, hundreds gathered in his hometown of Philadelphia to demand his release on the 20th anniversary of the Faulkner shooting. The peaceful demonstration was marred by police violence. At least seven protesters were arrested and beaten. For more info check out www.nyc.indymedia.org

...and finally...

Last Sunday the Countryside Alliance went to Edinburgh to march against the anti-hunting bill going through Scottish Parliament. As they stomped through the Edinburgh streets they were joined by members of a 'splinter' group the Real Countryside Alliance. Waving banners like 'Aristocracy Against Democracy', 'I Love Torturing Animals' and 'Put the Blood Back into Sport' the group joined the front of the march for several minutes. For some reason the hunters didn't seem to pleased with their new found friends, with one woman brandishing a knife and another hitting one of the gatecrashers across the head with her own placard. The cops then confiscated the banners and threatened to charge the protestors with 'Breach of the Peace'!

* Tally ho for another season of killing as the ten-month ban on hunting ends this week. First bunch of hunts out were the Duke of Beaufort lot from Gloucestershire, with another thirty recommencing animal terrorism again this weekend.

*Feeling bloated after yer crimbo dinner? Fancy a day out in the country? Call the Hunt Saboteurs Association 0845 4500727 www.huntsabs.org.uk

Schrimas Message

SchNEWS warns all readers that in this time of peace and goodwill expect to see Osama escape disguised as Santa, George 'WW3' Bush sing 'White Christmas' (with Bill Clinton on sax) and Tory Blair stuff a turkey while us bunch of terrorists have a few weeks off...see you 'orrible lot next year (or the 11th January to be precise). Ho..ho..ho..nest.