



WAKE UP!! WAKE UP!! IT'S YER DON'T ALL GO RUSSIAN IN AT ONCE...

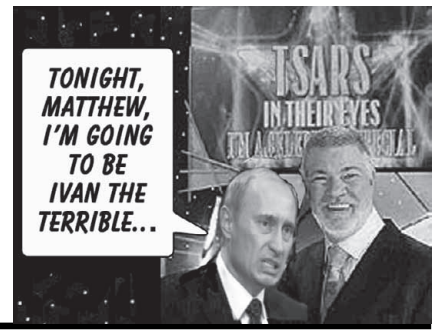
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TSARS IN THEIR EYES

PUTIN PUTS THE BOOT IN AHEAD OF G8 SUMMIT MEETING IN RUSSIA

One year on from Gleneagles (we can't believe it – poverty's still not history!), the G8 circus is re-forming (but almost certainly not reforming) for a St Petersburg-based shindig over the weekend of 15-17 July. As activists gear up for the most full-on anti summit mobilisation yet, the Russian state is already cracking down on those who might disrupt or inconvenience its chairmanship of the world's most powerful club.

As reported by activists from the Network Against the G8 (<http://g8-2006.plentyfact.net>), within the last few weeks St. Petersburg's cops visited the homes of 10 local anarchists and antifascists (participants of Anti-War Committee, Piter's League of Anarchists, Antifascist Association and other organisations) - those who were briefly detained after a May Day demonstration. Activists who were at home during those 'visits' had their fingerprints taken and written statements about their plans for the time of the G8 summit in July. This follows other recent 'visits' by police officers from criminal investigation units and officers of Federal Security Service (FSB) who came to the homes, workplaces or their parents' workplaces threatening activists. If activists could not be found - their relatives and colleagues were harassed.

It's not just the dreadlocked masses who won't be welcome though, as Moscow bureaucrats are still refusing entry to 40 foreign non-governmental organisations. According to one pen-pusher, the main reason was "mistakes in connection with the negligent filling in of forms." (It always comes down to that doesn't it?)

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia and its satellite states were subjected to a brutal, but profitable, free-market 'shock therapy' The military-political elite then used the privatisation of Russia's resources to become a super rich oligarchy and cling on to power. Taking on the mantle of the Tsar's, following the less than sober Boris Yeltsin, came judo black-belt Putin, who had previously operated in the shadowy world of the KGB. He has reasserted the Kremlin's authority, imprisoning and forcing into exile the oligarchs who stood in his way. Ruthless centralisation of the media (The oil-giant Gazprom, whose majority shareholder is the Kremlin, forcefully acquired the previously independent NTV station) has fuelled a climate of fear surrounding dissent. Following the Moscow theatre siege and the Beslan school massacre, Putin

has amassed broad support for his "war on terror", with a clampdown on any media who support 'extremism'. Sound familiar?

The Russian state's attitude to dissent was demonstrated at the Moscow Gay Pride last month, with an alliance of police and right-wing fanatics attacking the march. One of the gangs involved in street violence is pro-Kremlin youth movement Nashi ('The Ours'), which has proven links with football hooligans, and has been involved laying the boot into the opposition for some time. Who worries about PR when your opponents are increasingly reliant on your hydrocarbon reserves and with one flick of a switch you could plunge Europe into darkness?

RA RA TRASH PUTIN

Some of the preparations for the G8 summit are more open. St. Petersburg special forces police (OMON) have got themselves three armoured cars from Israel, where they know a bit about crowd dispersal - which can fire water, tear gas, or paint. The city police were put on heightened alert from May 15, St. Petersburg airport Pulkovo will only receive planes with official delegations during the summit, and the Neva and Eastern part of Gulf of Finland will be closed for shipping.

Much has been made of the differences between Russia and the other G8 nations, with Russia's excesses being excused like those of a pissed-up brother in law at a wedding reception; "Sorry but we had to invite him he's faaamily." But Russia's presidency of the G8 throws into light exactly what this rich man's club is all about. No, not giving the poor a leg up, Geldof, but divvying up the world's resources like Mafiosi. It's just that in Putin's case the links to organised crime are a little more obvious. The ongoing bloody war waged in Chechnya has involved horrific abuses of human rights, including targeting of civilian populations with forced resettlements, devastation of urban areas and mass rape, but is just part of the ongoing struggle between competing powers over the region's oil and gas reserves.

In fact, the theme of this year's summit is Energy. One reason why Vlad has put energy top of the bill is that Russia is in a very strong negotiating position. The European Union has to import one third of its energy, a figure that is expected to climb to 70% by 2030. Meanwhile Russia is the second largest exporter of

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STARVED OF JUSTICE

"We the detainees of Colnbrook IRC have come to the conclusion that we are being held hostage by a monster that appears to be out of control by its creator. Like a Dr. Frankenstein, who lost control of his creature, the Home Office has now completely lost control of its three headed monster, the IND, the AIT and Detention Centres. These three organisations have turned into a coven of evil, promoting heart rendering injustice, bone crunching torture, psychologically destabilising malevolence, and spiritually crushing, methods of handling immigrants."- statement issued by Colnbrook Detainee's Forum.*

This week the UN High Commission for Refugees condemned Britain's racist handling of asylum claims which found "serious flaws in the handling of claims from refugees fleeing persecution in Iraq, Afghanistan and Zimbabwe" – and sending those who should be given asylum back into life threatening situations (often the consequences of UK foreign policy) – all in the name of pandering to the tabloid press.

At Colnbrook Detention Centre, near Heathrow, around forty refugees are seven days into a hunger strike. While the Home Office publicly denies this completely, inside, away from the public gaze, civil disobedience at the centre is at an all time high, with hourly clashes between guards and detainees.

Meanwhile at Campsfield Detention Centre in

Oxfordshire, where there are currently 15 hunger strikers, a detainee who gave an interview to Sky TV was forcibly removed last Wednesday evening, with his whereabouts currently unknown. "Close Campsfield" campaigners, who were using him as a contact for the hunger strikers, believe that he has been badly injured. According to them, Campsfield is in a critical state. There is mutiny amongst some staff who are witnessing the humiliation of detainees at the hands of racist officers. Reports claim detainees are being bribed to reveal who the ringleaders of the strikes are, and visitors to the camp are being told they have to give their fingerprints before being allowed entry (which they wouldn't have to do in any other prison in UK). A group of people who went there to help detainees' bail applications refused to give officers their fingerprints and are now seeking legal advice.

A Somali man is alleged to have attempted suicide at the camp last week and there was a yard protest involving 40 men last Friday morning. These men were all placed in isolation and were threatened to be sent to other detention centres.

☎ To contact Colnbrook Detainees email colnbrook.detainees@googlemail.com

☎ See also www.ncadc.org.uk or www.close-campsfield.org.uk

* IND - Immigration & Nationality Directorate, AIT - Asylum and Immigration Tribunal

oil and owns more than a quarter of the world's natural gas reserves. On New Years Day (2006), the Russians turned off their gas exports to Ukraine for four days until Ukrainian politicians agreed to a hefty price increase. But the idea has spread a little and now Turkmenistan is threatening to cut all gas supplies to Russia unless state-run Russian gas monopoly Gazprom agrees to pay for a 50% price hike.

Not that the G8 is in agreement about its policies, except of course the right of the mighty to oppress the poor. Recent criticisms of Russia's abysmal human rights record from western powers have been taken by the Russian administration, with some justification, as attempts to expand western influence in the old Soviet Union. Dick 'Halliburton' Cheney, that well-known purveyor of democratic values took the opportunity in a speech in Lithuania to lambast Putin's Russia over its anti-democratic tendencies, before hopping onto a plane and going to do business in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, well-oiled states which rule by fear. In his oration 'What makes a democracy' Cheney pontificated, "Can a person walk into the middle of the town square and express his or her views without fear of arrest, imprisonment, or physical harm? If he can, then that person is living in a free society. If not, it's a fear society." Perhaps he should have a word with Tony about recent shenanigans in Parliament Square.

Human rights abuses have become just another propaganda tool while the U.S and EU have been active in promoting 'Orange' revolutions in places like Ukraine and Georgia, where it suits them, propelling business friendly elites into power on the back of popular outrage at Russian interference in the old Soviet empire. When a local ruler is US friendly it doesn't matter how many people he locks up or tortures. The idea that the US, with its hands still bloodied from the disasters of Iraq and Afghanistan, is fit to lecture Russia on democracy must be raising a few wry smiles in Red Square. Russia's elite aren't taking this lying down, with Putin's second in command Vladislav Surkov saying that "The West talk about democracy but they're thinking about our natural resources." Not that Russians are averse to a bit of trespass in Bush's backyard, recently flogging 30,000 AK-47s to Venezuela.

Russia's presidency of the G8 must be challenged not because Putin is different from the other leaders but because he is playing the same game using the same tools of fear and patriotism to enforce a corporate state. Raising the voice of dissent in Russia is, in the current climate, an altogether different beast to pulling down the fences around Gleneagles but has the potential to be far more significant.

☛ For more info on British activists travelling to the G8 see www.dissent.org.uk

PARTY AND PROTEST

On July 1st **56a InfoShop**, South London's finest (only) anarcho outlet, archive and social centre is having it's 15th Birthday Party at 2pm. Bring food, drink, music and laughter...At 56a Info Shop, 56 Crampton St, London, SE17... Tube/Overground: Elephant & Castle. **July 1st also sees **London Anarchist Forum**, 2:30pm, at The Autonomy Club, Freedom Press, Angel Alley, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX, (2 doors from Whitechapel Art Gallery), Aldgate or Aldgate East Tube, No 25 Bus stops out side. Web www.freedompress.org.uk ** July 10 **Big Aldermaston Blockade**. Resist Britain's WMD programme - Stop the next generation of nuclear weapons! Join the a big and practical/active NVDA blockade of the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Aldermaston and block the builders working on the new facilities. Web www.blockthebuilders.org.uk/action

SHELLING OUT

Plans to force a lethal on-shore gas refinery onto Mayo residents in Ireland are still being successfully resisted by the community of Rossport and activists from the local solidarity camp (see SchNEWS 545). In the last few weeks, Rossport Solidarity Camp celebrated its 1st birthday and a full year of blocking Shell's attempts to start work at the refinery. But Shell are not beaten yet and have recently exploited Ireland's corrupt State bureaucracy to try and get their way. Environmental lobby group An Taisce discovered that naughty Shell didn't have planning permission for an access road, a local compound or a valve station, threatening what little work Shell had completed before the blockade got going.

But Shell were not to be thwarted by mere bureaucrats. The next day the planning authority quickly backtracked and issued a press release saying Shell did not need planning permission after all. They claimed the need for planning permission had been a typo and that they'd inadvertently written 'yes' instead of 'no!' on the application. The pen must have slipped through their greasy palms, recently oiled with lucrative business contracts, and they hastily apologised to Shell for any inconvenience caused.

This decision came as no surprise the local community. Shell has used a range of tactics to get their way, beginning with the recruitment of local man John Egan to act as Shell's press secretary. Egan was a BBC journo in Nigeria when, at Shell's behest, ten activists were executed by the Nigerian State. Despite witnessing such a crime John's now happy to help oil barons devastate his own community. In March they hired local journo Christy Loftus and local ex-top-cop John Carey as a local 'consultant' - who like many of his colleagues has a questionable dodgy career behind him. Local sports hero Padhairc Hughes was brought in to help and soon Shell's mates in the Irish government released their so-called 'independent review,' which gave the go-ahead to the entire project. The minister for marine and natural resources reckoned that you'd still be safe if you stood three metres from the pipe and it exploded! Shell have also been trying to entice local people to support them by offering 'facilitation payments' - that are, of course, nothing short of a bribe.

However, none of this has weakened the resolve of the local community or activists in the solidarity camp. Whilst Shell has thrown millions into the fight against the local campaign, one simple fact remains the same - the project has been halted. As always the Solidarity camp encourages people to come to Rossport and help with pickets and camp activities, whether for a day a week or more, all are welcome.

* See www.struggle.ws/rsc or www.shelltosea.com

CRANK IT UP

This week London Critical Mass cyclists won a high court decision against the Metropolitan Police over the legality of the peddle-powered demonstrations. This comes after police handed leaflets to cyclists at a Critical Mass last September claiming that they were unlawful because under the Public Order Act the organisers were required to give six days notice of the date and proposed route, plus their names and addresses. However Lord Justice Sedley and Mr Justice Gray ruled that police were misinterpreting the law, and that no advanced notice was required because Critical Mass was not a 'notifiable procession' under the POA. So Critical Mass will continue in London, with the regular rides meeting 6pm on the last Friday of every month under Waterloo Bridge.

* **Critical Mass** are held in cities all round the world - typically on the last Friday of every month - reclaiming urban space from cars and asserting cyclists' right to use roads. Check out if there's one near you at www.critical-mass.info

RIP GARI ALLEN

Gari Allen, long time animal rights activist from Coventry, died last week at 43. A stalwart in the animal rights movement for over twenty five years, with everything from hunt sabbing to countless demos to rattling a tin for the Green Meadow Animal Sanctuary, cat rescue and more. His funeral was yesterday (Thurs) in Coventry, with Veggies providing a vegan buffet, and the proceeds going towards funeral expenses and Gari's preferred cause, the Green Meadow Animal Sanctuary. Further donations to support the sanctuary are being asked for by Gari's partner of twenty years, Lesley Phipps (sister of animal rights activist Jill Phipps, murdered in 1995 - see SchNEWS 8) cheques payable to Lesley Phipps, 10F Pioneer House, Adelaide Street, Cov, CV1 5GX. See also www.geocities.com/wmids_animalaction/

UP AGAINST THE WAL-MART

Over in one of London's most ethnically diverse markets more than 12,000 people signed a petition to keep ASDA/Wal-Mart and 220 'executive apartments' out of the Queens Market in Upton Park, East London. The 140 or so businesses based at the 100 year old market finally beat the sprawl as ASDA/Wal-Mart buckled under popular pressure. Celebrating the success of small business against the world's biggest and greediest supermarket chain, the New Economics Foundation found that not only did the market generate £9million of sales for local food producers - the average cost of food was actually much cheaper than in a nearby ASDA/Wal-Mart.

* See www.friendsofqueensmarket.org.uk

COPSE AND ROBBERS

The protest camp at Titnore Woods which is resisting the building of 875 homes, more roads and an ever expanding Tesco in woodland near Worthing has entered its 6th week (see SchNEWS 547). Last week the Crawley offices of Taylor Woodrow - one of the property developers involved - got a visit from protesters, who unfurled a banner outside saying "Hands Off Titnore Woods" and presented a letter urging them to pull out of the project, saying "We want to make the people behind this destructive scheme fully aware of the strength of feeling about Titnore Woods among Worthing people...Do not expect opposition to the development to simply melt away, under any circumstances. It is, in fact, likely to intensify." For more see www.protectourwoodland.co.uk

...and finally...

Who needs meat-market nightclubs when there's going to be three 'Vegan Speed Dating' nights next month. The tofu market will end the nightmare scenario of waking up after a one night stand to find a give-away packet of Jaffa Cakes in the cupboard. The question is whether three minutes is even enough to compare e-numbers let alone get into the crucial Schese / Cheezly debate. A vegan Casanova should avoid cheesy one liners, porkie pies or trying to butter up potential lovers but cut to the chase and asking "Can I be the first animal that your lipstick is tested on?". Why not tell the bloke you fancy that you'll, "sabotage anyone who tries to hunt him down" - you'll soon be getting on like a lab on fire and a home visit might be on the cards. SchNEWS reckons this idea will catch on - We're looking forward to 'Socialist Speed Dating' - the vanguard of romance, 'Countryside Alliance Speed dating' - aren't we related? and 'Anarcho-Primitivist Speed Dating' - though we don't know if the three minute time slot will be enough to rub two sticks together to suavely light your date's cruelty free cigarette. (These events are in July - see www.schnews.org.uk/pap for details)

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers, there's no des-putin - all that gas is heating up a new cold war... honest.

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