

WAKE UP!! IT'S YER COUNTING THE COST...



Friday 21st September 2007

Free/Donation

Issue 603

IRAQ AND A HARD PLACE

AS MEGA DEATH TOLL FROM OCCUPATION PASSES A MILLION

“A single death is a tragedy; a million deaths is a statistic.” - Josef Stalin

And how proud Old Joe would have been of our Soviet-style self censorship! Here's one that slipped past the headlines - the death toll in Iraq has now passed the one million mark. That's the astronomical toll of pain and suffering inflicted by the 'coalition' invasion and occupation. Yet somehow that news was lost in all the bluff and hype of the 'surge', as US Generals attempt to project a through-the-looking-glass version of Iraq where a triumph for 'democracy' is always just around the corner.

Opinion Research Business (ORB), BBC Newsnight's chosen pollsters, conducted a survey of 1,500 Iraqi households in August in which people were asked if anyone in the household had died as a result of the conflict since 2003*. This is the usual method for assessing the number of deaths in a warzone, and has been used in Darfur and the former Yugoslavia. ORB concludes "Given that from the 2005 census there are a total of 4,050,597 households, this data suggests a total of 1,220,580 deaths since the invasion in 2003. Calculating the affect from the margin of error we believe that the range is a minimum of 733,158 to a maximum of 1,446,063."

Detailed assessments such as those conducted by Iraq Body Count**, which rely on deaths being recorded in at least two media sources, typically offer a statistic of around 20% of actual fatalities. In sheer numbers, what is happening in Iraq has now surpassed the horrors of the massacres in Rwanda and is in the same order of magnitude as the great crimes of the twentieth century. And the government response to this is... nothing. The same cynical silence which greeted last year's Lancet report estimating Iraqi deaths at around 600,000.

DOGMAS OF WAR

These figures should be provoking howls of outrage from the liberal press at the bloody mess into which the Iraqi people have been hurled by Bush and the UK government. But as the number of deaths reaches the limits of human imagining, the sheer scale of the carnage prevents understanding. Perhaps the mainstream press over here have given this survey so little attention because the real implication of its horrific contents is that our leaders are out and out war crimi-

nals. Not just technical war criminals, who merely went to war illegally, but out and out bloody-handed tyrants who put Milosevic et al in the shade.

The poll also questioned the surviving relatives on the way in which their loved ones were killed. It broke down as 48% gunshot wounds, 20% car bomb, 9% aerial bombardment, 6% accidents and 6% another blast/ordnance. This poll didn't attempt to apportion blame for individual deaths but the earlier Lancet poll showed that 56% of deaths were directly attributable to Coalition forces i.e. that 350,000 were identifiably killed by US or UK armed forces. There's no reason to think that that proportion has changed and, with the 'surge', there's every reason to think it has gone up.

BULLET POINTS

How then is the Coalition accomplishing this carnage? The fact that deaths by shooting are so prevalent demonstrates the close-up nature of the coalition/insurgency conflict. For the past four years, the American military has sent around 1,000 patrols each day into hostile neighbourhoods, looking to capture or kill insurgents. (Since February 2007, this has increased to nearly 5,000 patrols a day, if Iraqi troops participating in the American surge are included).

These patrols are operating in areas where anyone could be an insurgent. If you were patrolling downtown Baghdad, would you take any chances? Their orders are to break down doors, shoot at anything suspicious, and throw grenades into rooms or homes where there is any chance of resistance. If they encounter tangible resistance, they call in artillery and/or air power rather than try to invade a building. If a patrol is ambushed or comes under attack from a roadside bomb, soldiers rely on their superior fire-power to extricate themselves from the situation. According to US military statistics, these patrols currently result in around 3,000 firefights every month, an average of just under 100 per day. The US army is currently firing more bullets than can be manufactured - with that amount of lead flying around, such high levels of civilian casualties seem not implausible but inevitable.

As Coalition troops find it harder to oper-

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For letting it all hang out...

Bestival (aka Arrestival), held on the Isle of Wight last weekend is a commercial theme-park masquerading as a hippy festival. You are welcomed by police dogs as you walk through the gates - all under the banner of 'Increase The Peace'.

One group of festie-goers came out of the sauna in the nude and walked around the site for a bit - hardly unheard-of behaviour at a festival - but came up against some aggressive boys from Showsec Security, who demanded they cover up because 'children might see it'.

After going back to the sauna to get their clothes, one reveller told the uptight goons, "c'mon on it's just a body" - which led to him being chased across the festival site by a load of security, after which he was assaulted, handed to police and then arrested for indecent exposure (meanwhile real criminals were fleecing punters' tents). Once off site, he was given a fixed penalty notice for "causing harassment, alarm and distress".

If he doesn't pay he'll end up in court - but police will have to find someone 'distressed' by the display of genitalia to make it stand up in court...

ate on the ground in Iraq, the US are massively expanding their aerial attack capacity. There was a fivefold increase in the amount of munitions dropped on the country in the first six months of 2007 compared to the same period in 2006. Squadrons of attack planes have been added to the in-country fleet. The air reconnaissance arm has almost doubled since last year, with the powerful B1-B bomber recalled to action over the country. The stage is set for an increase in civilian casualties as notoriously indiscriminate US air power is unleashed on the Iraqi people. Air Force planes have struck "factories" producing makeshift bombs, weapons caches uncovered by ground troops and, in one instance, "several houses insurgents were using as fire positions".

Iraq has already become a testing ground for a new breed of remote control or robot aircraft. The MQ-9 "Reaper", already being deployed, is a pilotless aircraft, capable of carrying four Hellfire missiles, plus two 500lb bombs. "It is possible that in our lifetime we will be able to run a war without ever leaving the US," said one colonel in the US Air Force. Hey presto! Remote controlled genocide. More endless news stories about Maddie anyone?

* www.opinion.co.uk/Newsroom_details.aspx?NewsId=78

** See www.iraqbodycount.org

'NOT ONE MORE DEATH' - central London demonstration on 8 October - assemble Trafalgar Square, 1pm. See www.stopthewar.org for more.

INFORMATION FOR ACTION

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PARTY & PROTEST

SEPTEMBER - 22 - World Car Free Day (we live in hope). For details see www.abdusters.org

22 - National Demo against detention and deportation - Crawley Town Centre to Tinsley House Immigration Removal Centre, Gatwick. Assemble 12pm at Memorial Gardens, College Road, Crawley, West Sussex RH10

23 - Manor Garden Allotments Demolition Day - March & Rally against plans to bulldoze site for the London olympics (See SchNEWS 575). 'This is not regeneration - it's obliteration'. Meet 2pm at Hackney Town Hall, Mare St, to finish at The Old Baths, 80 Eastway London E9. See www.lifeisland.org/?p=219

23 - U-Turn for Peace: Join Maya Evans and John Catt for Mass Civil Disobedience outside Neo Labour's conference in Bournemouth. Meet 1pm at the bandstand, in the Lower Gardens, Bournemouth, between the pier and "The Square" www.voices.netuxo.co.uk/masscivildisobedience.htm

23 - Big Name Comedy Benefit gig to raise money to help pay court costs to get the Serious Fraud Office to reopen the investigation into bribery by BAE Systems in its arms dealings with Saudi Arabia. With Mark Thomas, Russell Brand, Omid Djalili, Simon Amstell and others. Hammersmith Apollo, London, for tickets Ticketmaster (0870 606 3400) or Ticketzone (0870 011 26 26) www.markthomasinfo.com

26-30 - Open House Festival - More than 70 roots music events from traditional Irish, to bluegrass, blues and country at venues in Belfast, about half are free events. Tel: 028 90246609 www.openhousefestival.com

27 - Big Brother is Watching You: The Surveillance Society - ID Cards and the Surveillance State - and How To Fight It... 7pm at Marchmont Community Centre, Marchmont Street, London WC1. Free. Email info@afed.org.uk Web: www.afed.org.uk

28 - Critical Mass - The peddle powered direct action where cyclists retake the road en-masse. Held in cities around the world, usually on the last Friday of the month at 5.30pm at a regular meeting point. For the list of UK cities see www.schnews.org.uk/pap/guide.htm#crit-mass

28-30 - Animal Rights UK Gathering on land owned by a farm animal sanctuary near Tonbridge, Kent including talks, discussions and workshops on animal rights campaigning. Volunteers needed. www.veggies.org.uk/event.php?ref=1116.

OCTOBER - 7 - 'Stop Bombing Afghanistan' walk to mark the 6th anniversary of the 2001 invasion. Meet 10am, St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, 78 Bishopsgate, EC2N 4AG. Tel: 0845 458 2564 or visit www.voicesuk.org

9 - Stop Deporting Cameroonians! Anti-deportation, anti-immigration acts demonstration called by UK Cameroon Support Network (CSN). 12-2pm at UK Immigration Service, Sandford House, 41 Homer Road, Solihull, West Midlands B91 3RJ. www.ncadc.org.uk

* For full listings updated weekly see www.schnews.org.uk/pap

WE'RE ALL GOING TO WEMB-ER-LEY

LESSONS IN DIRECT ACTION FROM LONDON TEACHERS

Anti-academy protesters, who set up camp on a community sports ground in Wembley to prevent the building of a neo-Labour City Academy (see SchNEWS 584), have taken things to the trees. The group (mainly composed of teachers) have been occupying the site for the past six months. In response to the potential eviction threat they have seized the high ground. Expertly built platforms, apparently inspired by a visit to Thailand, now give protesters a vantage point on Brent Town Hall.

Despite massive investment, pupil's test results in city academies have shown little or no improvement. The proposed site is used extensively by a local community which was promised by their local councillors that the land would not be used for the new high tech, corporate sponsored school. A nursery, community hall and three local businesses face the axe if the building goes ahead. The Academy would cost around £30 million of public money, but would be under control by its corporate sponsors. Whilst there are three successful schools already in the area, South Brent

desperately needs more school places with 3,000 kids having to travel out of the local area to get to school.

SchNEWS spoke to one tree-sitter: "We're in sight of the town hall, we're not going to let them build this school - we're taking direct action because they've not engaged in consultation. We know we'd win a consultation because we've got the local people behind us. We're inspired by the M11 campaign and we're going to be taking more direct action."

* See www.tentcityoccupation.co.uk



DISASSEMBLY LINE

In **Nordhausen, Germany**, 135 workers at Bike Systems GmbH have been occupying their factory. They've been on strike against the closure of their workplace following their employer filing for bankruptcy last month. Undeterred, the workers are aiming to produce nearly 2,000 of their own 'Strike bikes' in October. Now the factory is self-managed, Zanon style (see SchNEWS 477), and all production and distribution is carried out by the workers in co-operation with the Free Workers Union.

The factory, which was owned by Biria AG, had been hassled by the European Union to repay £3m in state aid and grants it had received from the German authorities. In late 2005 and facing financial, a majority stake in the company was bought up by Texan investment company Lone Star. Despite making a nice profit from the purchase and latter sale of the company to rival bike manufacturers MIFA, Texan investors will not will be repaying a penny back to the Eurocrats with what's left of Biria picking up the tab. Nice little earner!

More info: www.strike-bike.de (in English, German, Spanish and Dutch).

SchNEWS APPEAL

We need a person to help do our website on a weekly basis (It's not essential that you're in Brighton). SchNEWS is a low opportunities unemployed. Contact the office now.

BIG SHOUT OUT

Two companies planning to explore for oil in Peruvian rainforest inhabited by uncontacted tribes have revealed their sensitive plans to 'communicate' with them using megaphones, if their oil crews feel under threat of being attacked.

It is hoped that the uncontacted tribes, who have been previously deaf to appeals, will be overcome by the amplified voices and leave their own personal Eden and join in with the hurly-burly of global capitalism. The plans have been labelled 'farcical' by Peru's national Indian organisation, AID-ESEP. "No one knows the languages the Indians speak, and they are likely to view oil crews as hostile intruders."

In the past, oil company workers in the Amazon region have been killed by isolated Indians. Despite this critical risk to their own workers, and the equal danger of spreading fatal diseases to the Indians, the companies - Barrett Resources of the US and Repsol YPF of Spain - have refused to suspend their plans.

Amongst the phrases Barrett's workers are expected to say to their potential attackers are, 'How many days (moons or suns) have you walked for?', 'We are people just like you', 'Is something disturbing you?' and 'We haven't come here to look for women, we have our own women in our own village' - and, presumably, "Which do you prefer: Coke or Pepsi?" * See www.survival-international.org

SELFISH SHELL SCHEMES ON THE SEA SHORE

Last Friday a national day of action was held at the proposed gas refinery site in Rosspport, County Mayo, Ireland.

Hundreds of people from around Ireland joined forces with the local community clearly demonstrating their opposition to the development. The state mobilized and the protesters numbers were equaled by a team of hundreds of over zealous cops. The day began with a sit down protest outside the refinery gates, but after an hour or so it evolved into a site occupation as the gates were kicked in and around 100 folk entered the site. They were met by security, some carrying iron bars. Fortunately protester numbers were high enough to dissuade the hired goons from taking the violent option.

A second fence (erected the previous day) was scaled by most of those that had entered the site and machines were occupied and work brought to a standstill. Shortly after, large numbers of police entered the site and forcibly evicted those inside. Violence perpetrated by police included one of the senior officers present taking a running kick at a well known campaigner while he was held down on the ground. Protesters then held a sit-down protest on the site and were eventually removed one by one by the police.

As is standard practice at Bellanaboy protests there were very few arrests. Shell don't want the publicity of protest court cases and the police seem happy to use violence as a substitute for detention and those that were arrested have been released without charge. Protests continued outside as demonstrators attempted to block trucks. But the huge numbers of police and their aggression towards protesters made successful blockading difficult - a significant number of protesters sustained injuries but fortunately no one was seriously hurt. The mainstream media made much of rumors that one cop had suffered a broken nose, however, he was spotted mid afternoon, uninjured, going to the pub!

Although work wasn't entirely stopped for the day the message to Shell and their government backers was clear - there remains massive local and national opposition to the development. Meanwhile solidarity actions occurred across Europe including, Madrid, Berlin, Belfast, Reading, London, Brighton, Bristol, Leeds and various locations across Ireland. Follow up national days of actions have been called for the 12th of October and 9th of November.

Things aren't looking great for Shell on the legal front either as they continue to face massive opposition to their plans to build a gas refinery and high pressure gas pipeline in County Mayo, Ireland. At present, although construction of the proposed refinery site is ongoing, Shell have still not been given full permission to operate the plant, nor do they have an agreed pipeline route. In addition, there are significant structural deficiencies with both the concrete and steel used so far in

construction, and engineers have still not been able to design the pressure reduction valve - an essential component of the project.

Shell are currently waiting for the Environmental Protection Agency's decision (expected later this month) on whether they should grant an Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) license for the refinery. Considering the extent to which the government has facilitated the project so far and the questionable independence of the EPA (it's Director appeared in an early promotional video for the project in her capacity as a member of the Irish business and employers group) it is almost certain that the license will be granted.

However, Shell were dealt a severe blow last month when An Taisce (the Irish National Trust) joined the campaign against the plant. They have publicly stated that the local reservoir, which provides the drinking water for over 10,000 people, will have to be closed as a source of drinking water if the refinery goes into operation. They maintain that on these grounds alone the IPCC license should not be granted, and if it is, they have vowed to take the matter to the European courts.

BAD EIRE DAY

Meanwhile, over the past few days, Shell have announced a shortlist of three potential pipeline routes for the project (they were forced to change their original route due to massive resistance, including that of the 'Rosspport 5' who were jailed for refusing Shell access to their land - see SchNEWS 595). However, Shell's hope that altering the route would bypass opposition appears misguided. Environmental groups are angered that all possible routes are within designated environmentally sensitive areas under EU habitats directives.

In addition, several people on the new routes have already stated in the local press that they will go to prison rather than allow the building of the pipeline on their land. So, it looks likely that 'Shell to Sea' cases will continue to clog up the courts.

Last week saw several cases were brought before Judge Mary Devins. In contrast to her response to the last 'Shell to Sea' cases she dealt with, where she dubiously jailed three local fishermen, she was noticeably more balanced in her approach - although this may largely be due to her having little choice after the total failure of the police to fabricate coherent prosecution cases! She dismissed one case against a prominent protester charged by police for obstruction after hearing several police statements that not only contradicted each other but also the police video. Another case bought by the police, against the local 'Shell to Sea' spokesperson, was adjourned after the Judge claimed there was not enough evidence to reach a verdict.

Bizarrely, instead of throwing the case out, the judge asked for more witnesses to be found. Five protesters who had taken part in a lock-on at the proposed site were found guilty of one charge out of three and sentenced to 100 hours community service. Judge Devins also announced in court that she had received hate mail relating to 'Shell to Sea' cases, leading one barrister to ask her to stand down because 'a reasonable person' might assume that this could prejudice her decisions. She refused and stating that she's as independent as they come. Sceptics remain unconvinced considering her husband's position in the Fianna Fail government who back the project!

* See www.shelltosea.com

DRESS TO OPPRESS

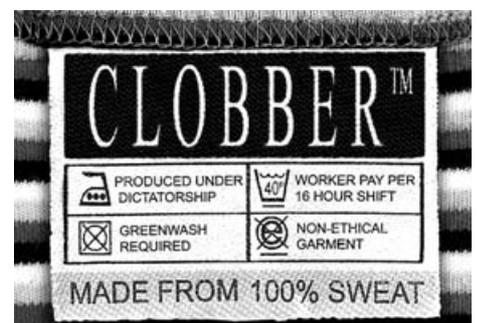
While the paparazzi have been out perverting at **London Fashion Week**, much less coverage was given to a report highlighting the even darker side to fashion than the exploitation of young models; the use of sweatshops, labour abuses and a wall of PR spin.

Despite over a decade of public 'awareness', NGO work and consumer boycott campaigns, the corporations selling the masses the clothes on their backs (we shop entirely at charity shops and knit our own of course) show few signs of cleaning up their act. Nearly all the big names on the High Street are slammed in a new **War On Want** report into the continued use of sweatshops, minimal labour standards and other dodgy practices.

The standard industry tactic has been to push 'Codes of Conduct' (voluntary, of course) and then to largely ignore them. Then when later, after a long and difficult investigation hampered by a lack of transparency and fear amongst the workforce, a particular factory is exposed as paying slave wages and denying workers their rights,

they just pass it off as (yet another) isolated incident, more the fault of some subcontractor they have no power over (Chapter 7, the Joy of Capitalism).

In case you're a dedicated follower of fashion crimes, the dirty dozen brands singled out for being even worse than everyone else were: Bhs, Diesel, House of Fraser, Kookai, Matalan, MK One, Moss Bros, Mothercare, Peacocks/Bon Marche, River Island, Rohan Designs and Ted Baker. For the full report see www.waronwant.org/cleanupfashion



ALL ALONG THE WATCHTOWER



...AT THE GATWICK NO BORDERS PROTEST CAMP

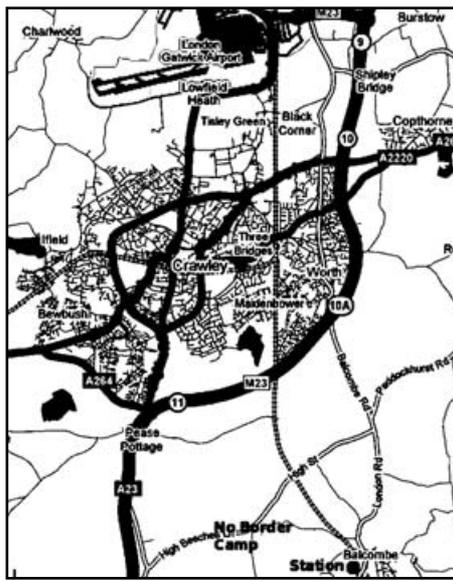
The UK No Border Camp is up and running this week after police attempts to shut down the gathering. Activists have spent the week preparing the infrastructure for a four-day camp, part of the campaign against the building of the new Brook House detention centre at Gatwick. The new prison will be the second one at the airport and, in response, the camp has organised this convergence to "to try and stop the building of the new detention centre, and to gather ideas for how to build up the fight against the system of migration controls". There'll be four days of workshops, protests and debate.

Various actions have already been announced, including an international demonstration on Saturday 22nd from Crawley to Tinsley House, the existing immigration prison. No Borders are organising coaches from London for those wanting to go to the demo. If you're going from Brighton then meet up for the 10am train at Brighton station.

The camp was forced to change location after hassle from the cops led to the site's landowner pulling out from renting his land. One of the camp organisers, Ian Bros, said: "Every time I phoned him, there would have been yet another police visit. They were consistently trying to paint a nasty picture of the potential camp participants but their priority seemed to

be putting pressure on him to sign an agreement with the police to let them on his land during the camp, which he refused to do at our request."

The Gatwick Area No Border Camp will be held between 20 and 23 September near the village of Balcombe, West Sussex. It's the first of its kind in the UK, with other No Border camps taking place in the Ukraine in mid August and more planned in the Americas for November. They are an opportunity to share ideas, experiences and plot the downfall of capitalism.



Check www.noborders.org.uk for more info or ring the camp on 07949790570

NAVAL GAZING

Is it really a whole year since the rolling 365-day blockade of Faslane Naval Base began? (See SchNEWS 565, 581 for background.) On October 1st over a thousand people are expected to join in on one final 'Big Blockade' to round off the Faslane365 actions against Trident, Britain's own nuclear weapon of mass destruction. Entertainment for the day include Leon Rosselson and the omnipresent 'Seize the Day', a full choir and a host of Scottish MPs joining the throngs out to block all the entrances and generally make nuisances of themselves.

With the current action count standing at 952, it will take one final big push on everyone's part to get over that magic 1,000... So c'mon all, you can do it!

A Faslane 365 steering group spokesperson said "We will join together to mark the end of this year's campaigning, and to make clear our determination to keep up pressure on the Scottish and UK governments to get rid of Trident and to take the lead in moving the world towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons, in accordance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the wishes of the majority."

* See www.faslane365.org

NORWAY TO BEHAVE

Another killer ship has joined four of its partners-in-crime in Davy Jones' locker .

On August 30th, a group calling itself Agenda 21† claimed responsibility for sinking the whaling vessel 'Willassen Senior' in Norway's northern port of Svolvær.

Valves were opened on the ship and it quickly took on water and sunk, putting it permanently out of harms way (and providing marine life with a new home, ironically enough). There were no injuries.

Norway has slaughtered almost 600 Minke whales in the last year. The Mayor of Svolvær in rather alarmist tones described the sabotage as a terrorist attack on Norway itself!

Agenda 21 said "The sinking of the whaler and the silencing of its deadly harpoon is dedicated to the memory of the yangtze river dolphin who because of humankind's greed will never again grace the waters of our blue planet. The turn of our wrenches is a rational response to a world where tens of thousands of species disappear every year."

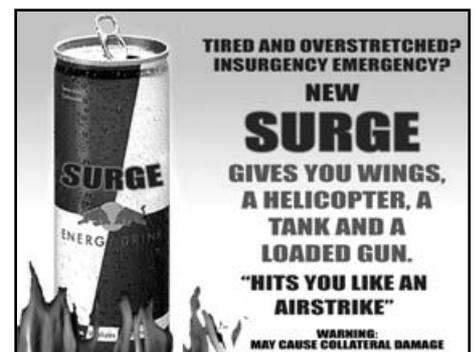
The 'Willassen Senior' is the fifth whaling ship to be scuttled in Norway since the 1990's. It should be noted that some of these Norwegian whalers dock at Scottish ports sometimes... a whole new type of hunt to sabotage (minus the running through ploughed-up fields).

* For footage of the ship killing a whale, and photos of it sunk, go to www.seashepherd.org/news/media_070902_2.html

† Agenda 21 refers to the Rio Earth Summit pledge to dedicate the 21st century to saving the environment way back in 1992.

...and finally...

Long distance lorry drivers, athletes and students... all benefiting from the kick-up-the-arse in a can that is Red Bull (well according to the side of the can anyway). Curiously not mentioned are a recent addition to the customer base - US troops in Iraq. Around 140,000 tins of the tooth-rotting stuff are shipped into the country every month and being poured down the throats of heavily armed teenage US infantry. Frightened by the 'hoodies' down the road as you peer through yer net curtains?...Now imagine them wired to the tits on Relentless and driving an armoured Humvee...



Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all occupying forces - involuntary surges may lead to premature evacuation... Honest!

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