

## MOSQUITO BITE

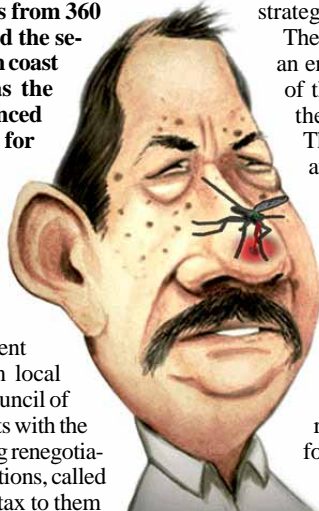
AS A SWARM OF MÍSKITOS TAKES OVER THE COAST OF NICARAGUA

On April 19th representatives from 360 Miskito communities declared the secession of the entire Caribbean coast of Nicaragua, also known as the Mosquito Coast. They announced that the area, which accounts for 46% of Nicaragua's territory and an estimated 11% of the population, would form the independent Nation of Moskitia.

Met with barely a mention from the world press, a stony silence from Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega and scorn from local government, the indigenous Council of Elders annulled all land contracts with the Nicaraguan government pending renegotiation, cancelled government elections, called for businesses to begin paying tax to them instead of the government and gave the police and military six months to organise an orderly and peaceful withdrawal. Not only have the new 'government' already begun work on a currency, a flag and a national anthem they are also backed by the 'Indigenous Army of Moskitia', comprised of up to four hundred conflict veterans.

One of the first acts of the 'Indigenous Army' was the unarmed takeover of the party headquarters of the political party Yatama – the party which represents the indigenous population in central government and is an ally of the ruling Sandinista party, the FSLN. The party, like the members of the 'Indigenous Army', has its origins in the region's struggle against the Sandinista government in the 1980s. Following the overthrow of dictator Anastasio Somoza in 1979 the Miskito people, the region's majority indigenous group, found themselves caught up in the conflict between the new revolutionary Sandinista government and US backed militias, the Contras. Those in the firing line faced forced relocation into government camps, arbitrary imprisonment and even disappearances and torture. In response many took up arms, some later to join with the Contras, others independently, in a rebellion that lasted until 1987.

The treatment of the Miskito people was always one noticeable stain on the Sandinista's less than impressive human rights record, which as well as accusations of arbitrary imprisonment and disappearances also included the curtailing of freedom of speech and assembly and the freedom of the press. Most of the Sandinista abuses of the time could at least be put into the context of a conflict with well-armed, foreign backed and completely ruthless paramilitary organisations which habitually employed the worst kind of terror tactics. The Miskito people, however, just lived in a



strategically important location.

The legislation which eventually brought an end to hostilities was the 'Autonomy of the Caribbean Coast' law passed by the Sandinista government in 1987. The law divided the region into two autonomous regions, one in the North – RAAN and one in the South – RAAS which, in theory, had control of natural resources and a degree of self-determination. In practice any semblance of autonomy quickly came to an end following the 1990 electoral defeat of the Sandinistas and the accession of the conservative Violeta Barrios de Chamorro who had little time for autonomy but a keen interest in the region's natural resources.

Since then the Miskitos have suffered in poverty. Struggling against an increasingly unpredictable climate and hit hard by natural disasters, the Miskitos have also witnessed the destruction of around 50% of their rainforest in the last 50 years from logging and the pollution of their water supplies with mercury and cyanide from gold mines. The issue of secession first came to attention in 2002 when the Council of Elders declared independence in theory but took no concrete steps to achieve it in practice.

### BUZZ OFF

In 2006 Daniel Ortega, leader of the Sandinista party that first fought the Miskitos then granted them autonomy in the 80s, returned to power after 16 years in opposition. Back in the 80s Ortega and the Sandinistas gained world-wide renown following their ousting of the vicious Somoza. While they were demonised by the Americans, with Ronald Reagan labelling Sandinista Nicaragua a "totalitarian dungeon", they were idolised by many on the left for being a uniquely multi-class, multi-ethnic, multi-doctrinal, and politically pluralistic movement.

In its latest incarnation the Sandinistas have proved to be equally divisive, although along very different lines. Throughout their years in opposition Ortega was accused of accumulating personal power by strengthening his grip on the party machinery. This led to a rift in the party with dissidents breaking away to form their own Sandinista party, the Sandinista Renovation Movement (MRS). Unperturbed, Ortega began forging alliances with what had previously been regarded as Sandinista enemies, including former-Somoza regime officials, Contra leaders and the Catholic church.

Since regaining power Ortega has been attacked for clamping down on democracy. Things reached a head in the November municipal elections

### CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For sod all...

One queer activist in Scotland copped the wrong side of PCs gone mad after being arrested for having 'homophobic slogans' on a placard. She was sat quietly at a table in a cafe when the cops pounced, having just returned from a pro-gay counter demo against headline god-botherers, the Westboro Baptist Church. Who were, in turn, protesting against the church of Scotland General Assembly. Confused?.. well it certainly seems the forces of law and order were. The placard actually said "Sinful Sodomite Seeks Similar For Sin + Sodomy. Westboro Baptists Need Not Apply". Well ...durrrh

when candidates from MRS and the traditional Conservative party were banned from running and there were allegations of widespread fraud.

Ortega has also faced criticism from disillusioned social movements especially for his stance on women's rights - Ortega not only supported a blanket ban on abortion but has also persecuted the Autonomous Women's Movement (MAM) for opposing it.

Nevertheless, Ortega's return has seen the reintroduction of a number of progressive policies; literacy rates are approaching 100%, free health clinics are once again staffed and stocked and the small and medium farming sector has been revived.

The current Ortega government is clearly considerably different in character to the one that battled the Miskito in the early 80s and to the one that signed a peace deal years later. So far it has yet to actively respond to the declaration, perhaps waiting to see if the movement finds wider resonance in the region

The proposed Nation of Moskitia would be divided into seven autonomous regions, reflecting the diversity of the region which is home to a wide variety of ethnic groups aside from the Miskitos. This diversity is already presenting the separatists with one of their biggest challenges. While the Miskito are the majority in the Northern region, in the South they form a minority. So far, although Southern Miskito leaders have declared their support for independence, the rest of the region's population has remained detached and silent.

While the national government has yet to comment, the regional powers have been considerably more vocal. The Governor of the RAAN, Reynaldo Francis, stated that it is merely a "poorly organised" effort by a "group of old men". This charge was strongly denied by separatist leader Rev. Hector Williams who has been elected as Wihta Tara, or 'Great Judge' of Moskitia by the Miskito communities. In response to Francis' comments Williams said, "We are not puppets. We are men. And now we have the weight of a nation on our shoulders".

Whether it proves successful or not the independence movement of the Mosquito coast is further proof of the increasing rebelliousness of Latin America's indigenous population after 500 years of abuse and exploitation. With an indigenous president in power in Bolivia, the continuing Zapatista autonomous zones in Mexico and mass movements from the Minga in Colombia (see SchNEWS 656) to the continuing protests in Peruvian Amazonia (see SchNEWS 675), Latin America's indigenous peoples are becoming increasingly vocal in demanding not just recognition and resources but also to live in a society organised on different principles, their own principles.

\* See online for extended version of this article.

### SchNEWS & Radio 4A Benefit

With Prehab, The Lovely Brothers, Malarki, DJ Newspecies and more. The Volks, Madeira Drive, Brighton, June 11th 10pm-3am, £5.

## NO COUNTY FOR OLD MEN

The thirst for fossil fuels has seen an increase in willingness to search for black gold in the most provincial of places. The latest area of outstanding natural beauty under threat is Bury Hill Wood, part of the Abinger Forest, Surrey.

A firm called Europa Oil and Gas has applied to drill there for oil, proposing a 120ft high drilling rig in a prominent position, visible from miles around including the North Downs. In case you miss it, it will be lit at night – as will the whole compound for health and safety reasons – and it will be capped by a flashing aircraft warning light. There will be four gas and oil flare units, generators and buildings including storerooms and staff accommodation covering most of the two acre site, currently pristine ancient woodland. And if they actually *find* oil, well...!

Ahead of the council planning hearing, locals and potential activists are going through the motions of registering objections – but as their website notes, sometimes these proposals get the nod despite all the objections. Well fancy! See [www.thevirtualvillage.com/oilwell.cfm?CFID=2332556&CFTOKEN=36851118](http://www.thevirtualvillage.com/oilwell.cfm?CFID=2332556&CFTOKEN=36851118)

## GUERRILLAS IN OUR MIDST

Dissident factions in Brighton have seized control of a derelict Esso petrol station on Lewes Rd. Raising the black flag they declared it a community garden. The first day of clearing, planting and painting took place on Sunday 10th May. The team cleared broken glass, rubbish and debris, painted concrete tubes (to-be plant pots), created a circular lawn in the centre of the ground and planted 11 giant pots of flowers and plants. Regular days of further planting and maintenance are planned – check out <http://lewesroadcommunitygarden.webs.com>

## MEDICAL ALERT

A group of European medics are now into the second week of a hunger strike in protest at being denied permission by Egyptian authorities to cross the Rafah border into Gaza in order to provide desperately needed medical support. “We are aid workers here for humanitarian work. We are not politicians, even our demonstration here is not a political one, it is a desperate act for people who have come for humanitarian purposes and have been denied entry,” said British doctor Omar Al-Mankoosh. Some of the medics have been at the border since early May while others have now been there for more than 50 days.

Meanwhile the ‘Hope’ aid convoy, consisting of around 40 trucks of medical supplies finally gained admission to Gaza after initially being refused permission. After being stranded at the border for several days the Egyptian authorities finally relented, albeit only admitting 22 of the 100 strong party to accompany the trucks.

\* <http://www.assedbaig.blogspot.com>

## ECO-VILLAGE PEOPLE

Plans are afoot to squat a derelict site somewhere near Hammersmith in London – with a view to establishing an eco-village, somewhat in the vein of the Pure Genius community in 1996 where This Land Is Ours ([www.tlio.org.uk](http://www.tlio.org.uk)) established a thriving camp on a large site in Wandsworth for nearly six months (see SchNEWS 95). Anyone looking to join the gang in helping establish the camp, vegetable plots, compost toilets etc. should meet up on June 6th at Waterloo Station (under the clock in the middle of the station) at 10am sharp. The exact location of the site will be revealed on the day. Email [diggers360@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:diggers360@yahoo.co.uk)

## Ronnie Easterbrook RIP

Britain’s oldest political prisoner, **Ronnie Easterbrook**, has died at 78 in a hunger strike (See SchNEWS 661). After being fitted up in 1987 in a set-up armed robbery that ended with the death of another supposed robber, he was sentenced to life. Ronnie spent the remainder of his life inside, refusing to apply for parole because he did not recognise the legality of his sentence, and maintaining to the end that unless he got a new trial justice would not be done. He was an agitator in prison who held protests and hunger strikes fighting for justice, supported other prisoners’ struggles, and was key in the formation of MOJUK, the miscarriages of justice campaign. The funeral will be held 2pm on June 2nd at Eltham Crematorium, Crown Woods Way, London, SE9 2AZ.

\* See [www.mojuk.org.uk](http://www.mojuk.org.uk)

## WITHDRAWAL METHOD

Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC) have scored a major victory over Huntingdon Life Sciences as major shareholders Barclays have pulled out. Barclays Global Investors sold their 398,187 shares while Barclays Plc sold 26,945. HLS are £72 million in debt, their 1st quarter revenue for 2009 is down 24% from 2008. As vivisector in chief Brian Cass put it “revenue levels are down from last year and the outlook remains uncertain”.

This makes Vanguard Group and new shareholder Highbridge Capital Management the top two shareholders. SHAC said “Barclays have seen sense and sold their shares after protests in London, Europe and across the US. Thanks to all campaigners that have protested, emailed and contacted these companies over their investments.”

Despite police repression the AR movement continues at a frenetic pace – check the SHAC website for a torrent of actions/demos [www.shac.net](http://www.shac.net)

## SLIPPING THE NET

The National Extremism Tactical Co-ordinating Unit (NETCU) – the anti-protestor political police – have suffered an embarrassing setback with the acquittal of Vikki Waterhouse-Taylor. Vikki, along with three others, was charged under SOCPA 145 ‘conspiracy to interfere with the contractual relations of an animal research organisation’ after being caught trespassing near to Highgate Rabbit Farm in Lincolnshire. Despite huge police expenditure – with one source estimating nearly £1 million – the case against Vikki was thrown out due to lack of evidence. In a comment on Indymedia UK, Vikki said the reason she pleaded not guilty and went through with the trial was “mostly because I was/am too stubborn to listen to anyone.” That stubbornness paid off.

During the prosecution it emerged that Highgate Rabbit farm had been induced to stay open by the state. Following an ALF raid in January 2008 the farmer had been about to call it a day. He sold his remaining stock of rabbits to HLS and set about winding the business down. At this point, the farmer said, he was visited by the police “and others” and was persuaded to keep the business open.

\* NETCU was essentially set up to protect corporations from increasingly effective animal rights campaigns such as SHAC. It monitors the policing of animal rights activists and other political movements; follows prosecutions through the courts and cultivates informants. Animal rights campaigners have been targeted with increasingly repressive new legislation in a series of show trials against the SHAC campaign and Stop Sequani Animal Torture (SSAT).

\* <http://netcu.wordpress.com>

## Inside SchNEWS

Student political prisoner **Hicham Yezza** has been moved to Canterbury prison. Sentenced in March to nine months for immigration irregularities, Hicham was originally arrested on bogus terrorist charges in June 2008 after he and another student had downloaded Al Qaeda manuals from a public domain US govt website, for research purposes (See SchNEWS 668). After that nonsense fell through, Algerian-born Hicham was re-arrested for immigration problems. Letters to **Hicham Yezza** XP9266, HMP Canterbury, 46 Longport, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 1PJ

\* See also <http://freehicham.co.uk>

## GONE POSTAL

Posties have been up in arms as the BNP have been using the Royal Mail to distribute their racist leaflets in the run-up to the European elections. Too few in number and too scared to be seen in public delivering their brand of hate propaganda with a PR spin, they’ve used their privileges as a ‘legitimate’ political party to spend some £270,000 sending them door to door.

Although many posties have been told that they must deliver these leaflets or risk disciplinary action, a deal thrashed out in 2007 with the Communication Workers’ Union does allow posties to refuse on conscience grounds. However, they can only refuse individually, not collectively and it means they face stick from their bosses and lose wages (they’re paid 3p for any leaflet that they deliver).

One refusenik postie even wrote to us in disgust, explaining why he won’t be helping spread the bad word and speaking out against the “racist (and) barmy” BNP, making an erudite case for their racist founding premises.

As always, casual workers get it hardest; brought in to deliver the BNP leaflets when post people refuse, they don’t have any sort of uniform and there have been cases of them being ranted at when people think they are the BNP actually delivering them!

Let’s hope it’s not the BNP going first past the post in next week’s EU elections, and that they get stamped out soon...

## ...and finally...

The BNP website was brought crashing down last week in what the far-right group themselves dramatically described as the ‘largest cyber attack in recorded history’. The denial of service attack began on Saturday night, at one point flooding servers with 28 million hits (allegedly) emanating from Eastern Europe and Russia. It continued for a number of days. BNP Leader Nick Griffin is calling them ‘Marxist cyber criminals’.

Also last Friday Clear Channel, the huge media conglomerate who provides billboards for the BNP (see SchNEWS 541, [www.clearchannelsucks.org](http://www.clearchannelsucks.org)), suffered a similar cyber-attack.

In a urgent communique to “fellow patriots”, Nick Griffin is foaming at the mouth and knows exactly who to blame, thundering, “The rising popularity of the BNP’s website ...was obviously simply too much for the alliance of Communists, Tories, Labour, Lib-Dem and UKIP parties to bear, hence the decision to try and close it down by illegal means.” Well, that narrows it down Nick – at least there’s a united kingdom opposing you.

## Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers – by all means break away from your government, but do try and replace it with a horizontally ground-up, decentralised anarchist utopia. Honest!

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