



WAKE UP!! IT'S YER ALL TUC-ERED OUT...

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NO FLIES ON US

AS SchNEWS LOOKS INTO THE WEST'S SELECTIVE SUPPORT OF THE ARAB REBELLIONS

It's March, so it's time for a new war. To none's great surprise we're bombing the Arabs again. A few facts for history buffs - not only did "Operation Defend Libyans From Bombs By Bombing Libyans" start almost exactly seven years after the start of the Iraq War, but 2011 also marks one hundred years of aerial bombardment. The target of those first ever bombs dropped from planes in 1911? Libya.

The surprise was that this war has been OK'd by some sort of broad international consensus. There was even a vote by UN Security Council. The justification was the horrendous series of massacres conducted under Gaddafi's orders - artillery, tanks and aircraft have been used indiscriminately against demonstrators and civilians in rebel areas. Demonising Colonel Gaddafi was never going to be much of a hard sell. Gaddafi was the man the West loved to hate during the '80s - serial financier of armed anti-imperialist groups around the world, and fingered for the Lockerbie bombing.

All this changed back in 2003 though, when Gaddafi, despite his anti-imperialist bluster, blinked first during the USA's 'War on Terror' and gave up his terrorist links and WMD programmes. In their place he got to hug Tony Blair (OK, so he didn't sever all his terror links), got BP oil investment and access to Europe's petroleum markets.

Since then Gaddafi had been an ally of sorts of the west - useful for cheap oil, the torture of terror suspects (eg Omar Deghayes see SchNEWS 664) and, in Silvio Berlusconi's case, showing how to throw Bunga Bunga parties with underage prostitutes. But, as the old saying goes, there are no permanent allies, only permanent interests. And it seems that Gaddafi is no longer useful to the West.

CRUISE CONTROL

Libya's revolt/revolution is just one part of the great wave that is sweeping throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Now that the cruise missiles are flying you could be mistaken for thinking that massacres of protesters, and other grave breaches of human rights and international humanitarian law are only happening in Libya. But, ignored by the tame press, in Bahrain and Yemen things are as bad if not worse.

In Bahrain the ongoing mass peace protests have stretched the monarchy's security forces to their limit. At their peak more than one quarter of the country was on the march,

some 400,000 out of a population of 1.2 million. Fearful of what was going on on their doorstep the Saudis decided to invade and occupy Bahrain, sending in 1,500 Saudi and UAE troops into the tiny island under the diplomatic cover of the Gulf Cooperation Council - the Saudis' figleaf organisation for meddling in the Arabian peninsula.

Bizarrely, one of the first actions of the Saudi forces was to destroy the statue in the centre of the roundabout that had become the focal point of the demonstrations, as if the statue was the cause of the unrest. As us Brits know all too well, monarchies tend to foster stupid inbred leaders. Ironically, the statue commemorated the Gulf Cooperation Council - the same GCC that invaded and destroyed it.

But Bahrain and Saudi are US allies - Bahrain is home to the US 5th fleet, so don't expect any strong words, let alone calls to action, from the UN as Saudi and Bahraini troops arrest opposition leaders and shoot protesters at point blank range. Saudi Arabia's oilfields are of course the glittering strategic prize of the entire region. Saudi is also a major buyer of UK weapons systems. Armoured vehicles sent to help crush pro-democracy protests in Bahrain were made in the UK. Bahrain is also a big market for UK arms. In the first nine months of 2010, the UK approved export licenses for over £5 million worth of arms including tear gas and crowd control ammunition, equipment for the use of aircraft cannons, assault rifles, shotguns, sniper rifles and sub-machine guns.

If the oppression has been heaviest in Bahrain, it's uncertain whether Libya or Yemen has been the bloodiest in recent days. Yemen out-Gaddafi'd Gaddafi when security forces attacked a demo on the 18th - killing between 40 and 50. They were under orders to shoot to kill - many protesters died of gunshots to the head and neck. The Yemeni government has likewise been shielded from international criticism thanks to President Ali Abdulla Saleh's commitment to the 'War on Terror', giving US and Saudi forces free rein to bomb Yemeni territory. These desperate, brutal measures look like they may have backfired though; since the massacres senior military and tribal leaders have defected to the rebels. In defiance of the state of emergency Yemenis are planning to march on the presidential palace this Friday, demanding that Saleh leaves

MASS DEMO AGAINST THE CUTS

Central London, Saturday, March 26th



Assemble 11am Victoria Embankment

between Temple Place and Blackfriars

Set to be the biggest street mobilisation in Britain since the anti-war marches of 2003, bringing together a diversity of groups and tactics. For a rundown of the range of blocs and groups involved see <http://london.indymedia.org/events/7176>

power. Direct Saudi occupation a la Bahrain is unlikely though, its heavily armed population and recent history of rebellion and civil war means that a foreign occupation would be a suicide mission for any invader.

REVOLUTION AND ON

The wave of revolt through North Africa and the Middle East has shown no respect for the traditional politics of the region. Mass protests are taking place in countries with pro-western governments (Bahrain, Egypt, Yemen) and anti-western governments (Syria, Iran, Libya) alike. Regardless of their governments' alliances, living conditions in these countries are very similar. Powerful security services backed up by networks of civilian informants have kept either monarchies or 'hereditary republics' in power while the country's wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few. Democracy, redistribution of wealth, and an end to corruption and state violence have become suddenly become realistic aspirations thanks to the regional 'Arab intifada'. Britain, France and the USA now act as if they can pick and chose amongst these revolutions - supporting state repression against popular movements in Bahrain and Yemen while condemning oppression in Libya and Syria. Meanwhile the people of North Africa and the Middle East have sensibly decided that they will carry on fighting for their rights regardless of whether the our governments' weapons are launched against despotic regimes or sold directly to them.

EDL: READING LESSONS

The EDL (see SchNEWS 758) shambled into Reading last Saturday (19th) to preach their message of hate. Around 200 lager swilling morons marched the short distance from the train station to the old town hall (now an art gallery). They were greeted by an admittedly poor turn out of counter demonstrators. The EDL had been planning a mass demo in Birmingham on the same day but cancelled. This last minute filler demo unfortunately attracted a few more stragglers than Reading anti-fascists had anticipated. However there were no punches thrown and no arrests.

Prominent in Reading town centre was Bill Baker - March for England and English Nationalist Alliance organiser. He's going to lead his rag-tag mob of "Not the EDL, honest guv" through Brighton on St Georges Day (well - the day after) 24th April. Brighton anti-fascists have promised a warm reception.

Meanwhile the EDLs next official outing is in Blackburn 2nd April.

PARTY & PROTEST

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

INFORMATION FOR ACTION

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TUC RIGHT OFF

Wednesday's budget was another banker-friendly cop-out, with a cut in corporation tax (like they don't make enough from tax avoidance...), designed to encourage the multi-nationals to set up in the UK, while ordinary people feel the brunt of the spending cuts. The freezes in fuel and aviation tax may be a PR-friendly concession for the Ford Focus, Florida holidaying classes, but the massive anti-cuts sentiment has been once again ignored by the Con-dems.

Don't despair though, on Saturday 26th March the TUC will be leading the masses into the revolution. The so-called "March for The Alternative" will gather on Victoria Embankment from 11am aiming to arrive in Hyde Park shortly around 1:30pm for a speech by Milliband the Younger. You can then get a coach home and vote Labour at the next available opportunity, after all it's about time they had a turn.

If that's not quite enough for you there are a number of other activities that are planned, however "There are no official feeder marches!" so don't get carried away by ideas of autonomy or empowerment. Despite this here's a run-down of just some of the fun things to do in London:

The **Radical Workers' bloc** will assemble 11am Kensington Park, 11.30am march over Westminster Bridge, 12pm march to Hyde Park. Nearest tube Oval. See www.afed.org.uk

The **Education bloc** (including militant workers' and anarchist blocs) will assemble 10am University of London Union, Malet St. Apparently anarcho types should follow the banners and sound-systems which will end up at Oxford St. at 2pm. Nearest tube Goodge St. (more info see www.studentassembly.org.uk)

"**Occupancy For the Alternative**" called by UK Uncut, will form up at 11.30am at the National Theatre on the South Bank, heading to Oxford St. for 2pm for a variety of occupations and actions, then gathering at Oxford Circus for a mass occupation of a top secret target. Nearest tube Oxford Circus. (more info see www.ukuncut.org.uk)

Pink and Black Bloc called by **Queer Resistance**. Soho Square, London W1D, 10am moving off 10.30am to Cambridge Circus then on to the main march. Nearest tube Tottenham Court Rd.

Dissident feeder march Cable Street, E1, 11am. Nearest tube Shadwell or Aldgate East.

Women's bloc. Meet 10am Royal Courts of Justice, The Strand. Wear purple and green bring noise making equipment. Nearest tube Temple. For more details Twitter @WACLon or call 07582288913 on the day.

North London feeder march Lincoln Inn Fields at 11am. Nearest tube Holborn.

There'll be an **IWW rally** by Park Lane fountain, Hyde Park 3.30pm.

Missed out on getting busted at Earl St? Get down to the **Big Society HQ** - a squatted convergence space at 61 Curzon Street and you too could win a stale pasty and £3,500 courtesy of the Met. Nearest tube Green Park. (more info see <http://reallyfreeschool.org>)

Resist 261 (Chris Knight - see SchNEWS nutter-alert 942) are calling for "peoples occupation" of Hyde Park. They want people to bring sound-systems, car batteries, lighting, food etc. (see <http://www.resist26.org>)

All in all expect heavy policing, intrusive surveillance, stewards collaborating with police, confusion, chaos, kettling and just possibly something to make the day worth while. See you on the streets.

* See Indymedia.org.uk for a full listing of the day's action.

LUCKY HETHERINGTON

Glasgow students responded to the eviction of the occupied Hetherington Building in the best possible way on Tuesday (22nd) - with an immediate reoccupation.

Around 80 cops, more than a dozen vehicles, canine units and a police helicopter descended on Glasgow Uni in support of the university's attempts to end the 49-day occupation. Several students were injured in the heavy-handed eviction, including one female student who was left concussed when a security guard allegedly banged her head against a wall and the floor. According to the Glasgow Defence Campaign six protesters were arrested and then released at the time and one was arrested at his home the following day.

While only around 20 students were inside the building, a crowd of several hundred quickly assembled outside to show their support. Following the eviction the crowd marched to the main university building and occupied the Senate.

A two-hour long meeting between management and the crowd of occupiers yielded nothing. However, the management soon came back with an offer - if the students left the Senate, they could re-take the Hetherington. After being evicted mid-morning, the students were back in the building by midnight.

The students have used the building for workshops and social activities as the Free Space since it was taken over in February in protest against the university's plans to make £20 million worth of cuts.

* On Thursday (24th) academics and university staff from Aberdeen to York went on strike in action against attacks on pay, conditions and pensions. Students occupied buildings at SOAS and UCL in solidarity with the strikers and against cuts and fees. <http://freehetherington.wordpress.com>

SQUAT THRUSTS

It's been a dark week: the criminalisation of squatting is on the cards. An early day motion tabled by tory MP for Hove Mike Weatherley has attracted only 20 signatures so far, but enough for Weatherley to declare on his self-congratulatory waste of webspace that "his" anti-squatting campaign is "close to victory".

Changes to the law, which would effectively criminalise trespass, have been on the horizon since the Tories came into power - rumour has it the whole thing emerged as part of ongoing attempts to clear travellers' sites. The recent high-profile protest squats of multi-million pound properties in London have surely added a sense of urgency for the government. Now, official government press releases say changes will be made in the 'new year'.

Defending the right to squat will mean facing head on the ideologically driven campaign of misinformation coming from the government and happily relayed by the media. Grant Shapps, the Housing Minister, has said: "There's never been such a thing as squatters' rights - they are just a misreading of the laws that are actually designed to protect the home owner."

Actually, Shapps, there has, and they're going to be defended...

0742 CLUB EVICTED

The 0742 club, a squatted social centre on Sheffield's main drag has been evicted. The building was pounced on by police as soon as the only person present left for a quick dog walk. Two of the centre's residents were then held in police custody over the weekend. The squatters behind the centre are now looking for a new premises.

GLENGAD-ABOUTS

After keeping the camp fires burning through the long winter months with workshops and skillshares, Rosspoint Solidarity Camp sprung back into action this week with a blockade of Shell's Glengad site.

On Monday (21st), IRMS security guards foiled the initial attempt to block off the entrance with a reinforced banner. However the quick-thinking protesters formed a human barricade by lying on the ground and linking arms. The action stopped the survey work from starting for nearly three hours.

The camp is shaping up nicely for another of summer of direct action against Shell's Corrib gas project (see SchNEWS 730). Last weekend eager activists put up the main marquee and a large communal sleeping structure. Another camp work weekend will take place this weekend and a call out has been issued to help prepare for the days of action ahead.

* See www.rosspointsolidaritycamp.org

WOOD CUTS

Twelve rallies and walks went ahead in forests up and down the country on Sunday (20th) despite the embarrassing Con-dem u-turn on selling them all off. In Sussex, 130 rambling massive pitched up at Friston forest to hear a number of speakers from Keep Our Forests Public telling how we're not out the woods yet. The aim is still privatisation of the English Forestry Commission's estates with voluntary NGO labour being brought in from the likes of the Woodland Trust who don't have the right skills. By comparison the Forestry Commission now work supporting wildlife and forests with ecosystems very much in mind, different from the past when they were forced to plant row upon row of conifers.

The Con-dems new Independent Panel on forests represents landowning conservation NGOs and private landowning interests which stand to gain by 'cherry-picking' the Forestry Commission's estates. "Not a single representative of the array of forest defence organisations or of the Forestry Commission's trade unions is on the Panel," said KOFP rep Dave Bangs adding, "The call has to go out - No sell-off, No funding cuts, No job cuts." <http://saveourforests.co.uk>

...and finally...

In case you hadn't noticed - perhaps downloading yer music from other top P2P sources, the internet filesharing service 'LimeWire' went pop and was closed down last October, after eventually losing a protracted legal battle in the States. They were up against all the big swinging corporate hitters of the industry, Arista, Atlantic, Capitol, Elektra, Sony, Warner, and others - with an unimaginable number of lawyers between them - all determined to make an example of LimeWire in the hopes of ultimately crushing free filesharing on the web. Well they do have their profitable multi-billion pound business of flogging second rate culture to the masses to protect.

But their collective sense of self-worth goes way beyond this. The case has now moved on to the punishment stage with court dates set for May. But ahead of that, this week a New York judge threw out the plaintiffs pre-hearing submission for its wonky workings out of what LimeWire has cost them. By their own reckoning, that figure should be somewhere in the region of er, 75 trillion dollars - or about 7 global credit crunch bailouts combined. With understatement the judge ruled, "The absurdity of this result is one of the factors that has motivated other courts to reject Plaintiffs' 'damages theory', telling them to get lost and come back something more sane. That's rock'n'roll for you.

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers, beware the ideo of March, and mind the bombs too while yer at it... Honest.

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