



WAKE UP!! IT'S YER FULL OF PAZAZ...

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WHAT IF AL-QAEDA TRIES THE SAME IN BRITAIN?



DON'T WORRY TONY - WE HAVEN'T GOT A SOCIALIST OPPOSITION HERE

TOTAL PAZ TAKE

"I do not believe that this is the Third World War. Nor is it a "war on terror". Nor is it a "war of civilisations." But our own leaders are willfully leading us into a period of appalling suffering because they will not address the cases of injustice in the Islamic world." Robert Fisk, Middle East correspondent.

It began with the bombing of Spanish commuter trains and the deliberate slaughter of 200 people - one hundred hours later and the government of Jose Maria Aznar had lost an election they were predicted to win. Aznar had attempted to connect the bombings to the Basque separatist group ETA, knowing that if the attack were linked to al-Qa'ida, it would be seen as their revenge for Spain's support of the war in Iraq. A war which 90% of the Spanish population was against, yet Aznar had ignored this overwhelming majority and gone to war anyway. As thousands packed the streets of Madrid two days after the bombing, protesters demanded answers as to who was really responsible, carrying a banner reading, 'Your War, Our Corpses.' Aznar and the state-controlled corporate media struggled to maintain their hold on the rebelling populace, insisting that ETA was indeed responsible. But people just weren't buying it, and the powers that be got scared. Several voting centres were "mysteriously" damaged before the Sunday election, with one even being set fire to on Saturday night. In the Basque country, repression was intensified against the populace, with riot police roving the streets in an attempt to keep people from coming out onto the streets and voicing their belief that ETA was not responsible for the bombings. One man from Pamplona who had refused to display an anti-ETA sign in his shop window was murdered by a local policeman. When the citizens of Pamplona demonstrated against the murder, their march was brutally attacked by police and one woman was killed. Despite all this, people refused to listen to anymore lies. The surprising election results seem to reflect their anger at a useless war and its consequences.

'Your War, Our Corpses'

One year on from the American occupation of Iraq and does the world feel a safer place? In Iraq, one and a half thousand cluster bombs litter the countryside while depleted uranium pollutes the soil and air. 530 American soldiers and uncounted thousands of Iraqis have died. The economy is a disaster; electricity and water are sporadic.

Sweeping new laws have also led to Iraq's infrastructure being sold to Bush's corporate chums. There's a new secret police force containing former members of Saddam's security services and a bogus July 1st 'sovereignty transfer' planned that will actually maintain the occupation. The US is also planning to construct what will be the world's largest embassy in Iraq, staffed by up to 3,000 people, while the military plans to maintain permanent bases for as long as it wants.. But the occupation of Iraq cannot be seen in isolation from U.S. designs in the region as a whole, in which Israel is a central player. This role was perfectly described by the Israeli newspaper Ha'artez, "Strengthening Israel helps the Western powers to maintain equilibrium and stability in the Middle East. Israel is to become the watchdog...if for any reason the Western powers should sometimes prefer to close their eyes, Israel could be relied upon to punish one or several neighboring states whose discourtesy to the West went beyond the bounds of the permissible."

Today, Israelis are involved in training and advising US occupation forces in Iraq. According to one report last year, "As they prepared for war in Iraq, American military officers studied Israel's use of helicopters, tanks and armored bulldozers to fight in the claustrophobic quarters of Palestinian refugee camps." Today Israel is carrying out repeated assaults on Palestinians, including "targeted assassinations." Borrowing sentiments from the U.S. 'war on terror,' their charming Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said

"Israel will not be deterred from protecting its citizens and will strike its enemies in every place and in every way." Meanwhile, the illegal apartheid wall it is building continues to grow, cutting off more Palestinians from one another, from their lands, from their work, and from any hope of a future.

Gross Products

Across the world, inequality grows and with that, resentment and anger. Millions upon millions are trying to survive under conditions of unspeakable degradation. Nearly 4 billion people earn less than \$1,500 (US) a year, less than \$5 a day. Yet satisfying the entire world's need for food and sanitation would cost just \$13 billion. A huge sum? Well that figure is less than one percent of the combined wealth of the world's 587 billionaires, who between them are worth more than the Gross National Product of 170 countries.

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For working for the wrong news agency...

Salah Hassan, a cameraman for the Al Jazeera news network, was arrested by US troops at the site of a roadside bomb attack on a US military convoy in Iraq last November.

US troops accused him of knowing in advance of the attack even though his footage showed that he arrived at least half an hour after the attack!

This heralded the beginning of 6 weeks of imprisonment, abuse and torture. Salah was initially taken to the US military base at Baghdad airport and held in a bathroom for 2 days. Next, he was flown bound and hooded to Tikrit, and finally, Salah was moved to Abu Ghraib, a massive Saddam-built prison currently holding 13,000 prisoners, where he spent his first night standing naked for 11 hours in the cold winter air. The following day, Salah was given his prison issue clothes—a puke-stained set of red overalls. He was then locked alone in a tiny cell. Meanwhile, Salah's employers at Al Jazeera hired a top lawyer to defend him. At the trial, Salah ended up being released for lack of evidence and dumped on a roadside outside Baghdad. He is now back working for the news network.

In Europe and America, the danger is that, in order to try to pre-empt the kind of hellish scenes witnessed in Madrid, governments will crack down even harder on civil liberties. Although Blair might find it difficult to actually find one of our British 'civil liberties' that hasn't already been attacked.

What happened in Madrid was a crime against humanity, but other such crimes go unreported day in, day out across our world. So while politicians tell us that "terrorism is now the greatest threat in the world today" ask them about the millions of innocent people dying daily from war, filthy water, climate change, environmental degradation, and preventable diseases.

As Robert Fisk points out, "If America's neo-conservatives believe in the "war of civilisations", then so does al-Qa'ida... Civilians are now to die in Europe as brutally as they have died in Bali and Tunisia and Istanbul and - let us, for a moment, see the world through another prism - as they have been torn to pieces by our bombs in Afghanistan and Iraq."

* Bypass the corporate media: www.indymedia.org www.zmag.org/

* Demos across the world to coincide with 1st anniversary of the war in Iraq. www.stopthewar.org.uk

COCA-KILA

On Monday morning, March 15, Coca-Cola union workers in Colombia began a hunger strike in front of Coke bottling plants in Barrancabermeja, Bogotá, Bucaramanga, Cali, Cartagena, Cúcuta, Medellín, and Valledupar. Juan Carlos Galvis, vice president of the local union in Barrancabermeja, has said, "If we lose the fight against Coca-Cola, we will first lose our union, next our jobs, and then our lives." Although this may seem like dramatic language to some, he speaks from experience. This past August, there was an assassination attempt against him, and just a few months ago, in December, his brother-in-law was brutally murdered in an incident that many human rights groups have linked to anti-union thugs.

On September 9, 2003, Coca-Cola FEMSA, Coca-Cola's largest Colombian bottler, closed the production lines at 11 of their 16 bottling plants and launched a new offensive against union-affiliated workers in an effort to break support for Sinaltrainal, the union Galvis belongs to that is fighting to organise Coke workers. Coke FEMSA imprisoned workers by force in factories or hotels and pressured them to renounce their employment contracts in return for a measly payout. Since September, more than 500 workers have pressured into "voluntarily resigning" from their contracts. Most of the union leaders have refused to resign and the company has escalated the pressure against them. There have been numerous cases of assault by mysteriously "unidentified" assailants, including the kidnapping and torture of one union leader's 15-year-old son, as well as the murder and attempted murder listed above. On February 25, the Colombian Ministry of Social Protection (Labour) authorized Coca-Cola FEMSA's plans to dismiss 91 workers - 70 percent of whom are union leaders. Sinaltrainal hopes that the hunger strike will draw international attention to the situation, but also fears for the safety of the workers. To keep up-to-date on the situation, www.killercoke.org/news.htm

Inside SchNEWS

After recently being released after serving 27 years for actions including robbing a bank and setting fire to the money to condemn capitalism, Helen Woodson is back in jail. Last Thursday she walked into a federal courthouse and allegedly covered security apparatus in red paint before making a Christian inspired eco/peace statement. She is also alleged to have sent four threatening letters and made one threatening phone call. Send letters to Helen D Woodson, #03231-045, c/o Bates County Jail, PO Box 60, Butler, MO 64730, USA. More info: nukeresister@igc.org

PET CEMETARY

After failing to build a primate vivisection lab at Cambridge (SchNEWS 439), mad scientists are now trying a more subtle approach by building an "animal housing facility" at Oxford University, which will (surprise!) be doing some of the same research that was going to be done at Cambridge. In a desperate attempt to hoodwink the public, the new project has been euphemistically called a research "hotel" in the planning application. Some Hotel!—Where you get kept in solitary wire cages, injected with drugs, deliberately brain damaged and then killed. In response to this latest development, the campaign that stopped the Cambridge lab has been resurrected to fight the new proposals and started with a demo last Saturday. 0845 3307985 www.speakcampaigns.org.uk
A computer game has been released featuring an electro-shock tested weasel and a rabbit deformed from cosmetic testing. The aim of the game is to rescue animals from a laboratory by smashing up security cameras and lab equipment and chain whipping policemen! www.whiplashgame.com

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FUNK OFF!

Stephen Funk, conscientious objector (CO) to the Iraq war, was freed this week from a US army clink after being locked up for 6 months. "In the face of this unjust war based on deception by our leaders," he said, "I could not remain silent. I spoke out so that others in the military would realize that they also have a choice and a duty to resist immoral and illegitimate orders." Last September, Stephen showed up to work for the army 47 days late, clutching his CO papers in hand. He was accused of going AWOL, although the initial, harsher accusation was "desertion" which supporters claimed was an over-reaction intended to scare other soldiers into keeping their concerns under wraps and their guns on display. Why so paranoid? Well, this week has seen a trickle of other potential COs—two US army medics have applied, saying the idea of killing is to them "revolting" as well as one sergeant who has vowed not to fight in this "oil-driven war". Three more isn't exactly a trend but, according to the Center for Conscience on War, this small number of applicants is just the tip of the objector-iceberg. They estimate that the number of military personnel seeking CO status at the moment is several hundred at "the bare minimum". Applying for CO status is hardly a walk in the park either. After completing a 22-question form and attending interviews, soldiers have to wait 6 months for applications to be processed - by which time they're probably eating out of mess tins anyway. According to the Center and their stats from previous wars, COs waiting for their case to go through are often beaten, harassed or threatened with court marshal. During the first Gulf War, the US army received 111 applications from COs before freezing the process and instead sending people to prison. www.nisbco.org

CATAKILLER

Around a dozen people walked calmly into the Caterpillar defence plant in Shrewsbury at around midday on Tuesday, occupied various areas within the complex, and shut it down for the entire afternoon. Several protesters locked themselves onto factory fixtures using bicycle locks. The action took place exactly one year after peace activist Rachel Corrie, an American working with the International Solidarity Movement against the Israeli occupation of Palestine, was crushed to death under a specially-designed armoured bulldozer manufactured by Caterpillar as she attempted to peacefully stop it from bulldozing a Palestinian home in Rafah. This city has now been virtually razed to the ground by such bulldozers in the year since she was killed. The demolitions are a violation of international law.

In a letter to friends and family in the US, Rachel described her difficulty in trying to convey the larger picture, "The assassinations, rocket attacks and shooting of children are atrocities - but in focusing on them I'm terrified of missing their context. The vast majority of people here - even if they had the economic means to escape, even if they actually wanted to give up resisting on their land and just leave (which appears to be maybe the less nefarious of Sharon's possible goals), can't leave. Because they can't even get into Israel to apply for visas, and because their destination countries won't let them in (both our country and Arab countries). So I think when all means of survival is cut off in a pen (Gaza) which people can't get out of, I think that qualifies as genocide..."

Protesters at the Caterpillar plant tried to talk to workers about Caterpillar's role in killing people but management closed the plant and ordered the staff to leave after triggering the fire alarm. All the protesters were later arrested and released at around 11pm, bailed to return to face charges of attempted burglary. Police also confiscated mobile phones and video footage taken during the action. www.catdestroyshomes.org

SchNEWS in brief

Another two GM crops have been dropped from potential commercialization in the UK. Both of Syngenta/Monasanto's sugar beet varieties have been withdrawn from the national seed listing process, leaving only three out of an original potential 58 varieties of GM crops.

**** Leeds No Sweat public meeting** next Monday (22) will hear reports from Alice Nutter from Chumbawamba speaking about her visit to Mexican trade unions organizing in sweatshops and from Wendelin Huang, a trades union activist from the Chinese Labour Federation. It's at the Adelphi Pub, 8pm, ohrm@thereason.net **** Phantom Conservation Volunteers, 2nd Big Day Out** this Sunday (21) at a destination close to the South Downs Way. Help reclaim a piece of land neglected by the landowner who has banned people from the land for decades. Meet 11am, Brighton Station, bring strong gardening gloves, picnic food, and drink to share. Site location and transport details on the day: 07966 952018

**** There's a refugee film night** at the Sanctuary Café, Brighton next Wednesday (24) 7.30pm **** Oil on the Warpath, meeting to discuss Petrol Addiction**, energy alternatives and resistance to big oil. Next Saturday (27) Quaker Meeting House, Sheffield, 10am-6pm £5 donation. 0114 268 6216 **** As well as a London to Alderminster Atomic Weapons Establishment march** (last week's SchNEWS) there will also be a **youth march from Oxford**, over the Easter weekend 07967 392229 www.youthstudentcnd.org.uk **** Day of Action against the Israeli Apartheid Wall**. Meet midday, 27th March, outside Waitrose, to take part in the building of a security wall between Brighton and Hove. **** SchWOOPS!** The website for the Palestinian Olive Oil mentioned in last week's SchNEWS is <http://zaytoun.co.uk>, orders from cathi@gn.apc.org **** TV news reports in America** that showed Bush getting a standing ovation from potential voters have been **exposed as fake**. The US government also admitted that it paid actors to pose as journalists in video news releases sent to TV stations, as well as preparing scripts to be used by news anchors. SchNEWS expects any day now to be informed that Bush himself is merely an actor (albeit a bad one) hired by Corporate America, the Oil Bosses and the Military Industrial Complex to simply read the scripts they prepare for him. Standing ovation anyone?

www.informationclearinghouse.info/article5862.htm **** A recent article in the British Medical Journal reviewing animal research** said that there was "little evidence" that the research has contributed to treating human disease. A separate study published in New Scientist showed that studying mice brains had delayed treatment for Multiple Sclerosis because mice have, er, different brains!

...and finally...

Some cheeky chappy has managed to carve "Tony Blair is a c****" into the Commons table used by the Prime Minister! Now you might have thought that the Conservatives being the opposition would have agreed with these sentiments, but obviously not, as Conservative MP Derek Conway criticized the "bright clown" and proudly stated, "Furniture polishers were brought in straight away and the message was removed shortly before the Prime Minister's question session started." Such communal back slapping just shows that all politicians are a bunch of ...

And across the Atlantic, a maintenance worker has been suspended after he displayed a sign with the word "traitor" on a snowplow while helping provide security for President Bush's motorcade in Ohio. <http://tinyurl.com/2h3df>

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers that when Blair says "things can only get ETA", you know that they're only getting worse... Honest!