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SchNEWS

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Issue 473

HOLY WAR, BATMAN

"The redeployment of British forces in Iraq to support a US assault on Falluja marks another stage in a creeping return to the colonial era, when popular revolts against occupation were routinely suppressed by overwhelming force." - Mark Curtis, historian

"The assault on Fallujah has started. It is being sold as liberation of the people of Fallujah; it is being sold as a necessary step to implementing 'democracy' in Iraq. These are lies." - Rahul Mahajan, author and journalist

History was repeating itself again this week with a massive military assault against Falluja, where another episode of good versus evil panned out on our TV screens. But for some reason the people of Iraq are taking exception at the military invasion of their country, and don't realize we are there to save them.

Journalist Rahul Mahajan was in the first attack on Fallujah in April and told of that assault "U.S. forces bombed the power plant at the beginning; for the next several weeks, Fallujah was a blacked-out town, with light provided by generators only in critical places like mosques and clinics. The town was placed under siege; the ban on bringing in food, medicine, and other basic items was broken only when Iraqis en masse challenged the roadblocks. After initial instances in which people were prevented from leaving, U.S. forces began allowing everyone to leave - except for what they called "military age males," men usually between 15 and 60. Keeping noncombatants from leaving a place under bombardment is a violation of the laws of war. Of course, if you assume that every military age male is an enemy, there can be no better sign that you are in the wrong country, and that, in fact, your war is on the people, not on their oppressors, not a war of liberation."

Destroy and Save

At least 600 civilians were killed in the last attack on Fallujah, and Professor Edward Herman reckons that "we can be fairly certain that the town will be destroyed and that civilian casualties will be very heavy. Fallujah must be destroyed in order to save it from control by a resistance to the U.S.-invasion/occupation and U.S. control, as was the case with Ben Tre in Vietnam, about whose destruction the famous phrase "We had to destroy the town in order to save it" was coined by a U.S. officer implementing the destruction. Then, as now the U.S. right to invade and destroy in order to shape the politics of a distant country was taken as a

given by the media and intellectuals."

"In both cases there was this ready willingness to use advanced weaponry on relatively defenseless peoples, with heavy civilian casualties entirely acceptable, and of course kept under the rug as much as possible, with media assistance. There were no body counts of civilians in Vietnam, and U.S. leaders like Colin Powell and General Tommy Franks have been explicit that such counts, as regards Iraqi civilians, are not an interesting subject and in fact "We don't do body counts" said Franks."

This is because as Mark Curtis points out "Iraqis are regarded as "unpeople" whose deaths matter little in the pursuit of western power; the major block on committing atrocities is the fear of being exposed and ministers will do all they can to cover them up. The public is the major threat to their strategy, which explains why they resort to public deception campaigns."

But we can try to stop the attacks. As Jo Wilding, another eyewitness to the last attack whose ambulance was hit by American snipers said "Millions of us demonstrated against the war and, as a result, civilian casualties were reduced because of all the attention. We need to be out on the streets again, in every country, protesting against the invasion of Falluja and the ongoing killing." * Demos and vigils against the attacks have been taking place across the country. Check out www.indymedia.org.uk for others planned. (Worthing demo this Saturday 2pm Montague Place)

* Angry at the ongoing carnage in Iraq? Want to take part in or organise some direct action or civil disobedience but lack the confidence, skills or knowledge? Get along to a workshop this Sunday 11am - 4pm, 7a Rampart Street, London E1 2LA (nearest tube Whitechapel) 0845 458 2564

* 13 - 21 Nov., Justice for Iraq's detainees: A Speaking Tour by Peggy Gish from the Christian Peacemaker Teams' Iraq Project. For dates www.voices.netuxo.co.uk/detainees.html

* 18 Nov. Eyewitness Iraq: Stories of occupation and solidarity 7.30pm, Friends House, 173-177 Euston Road. With Peggy Gish, Jo Wilding and Philip Pritchard (who spent a few months in prison after trying to disarm B52 bombers).

* Mark Curtis' new book, *Unpeople: Britain's Secret Human Rights Abuses* (Vintage) www.markcurtis.info

* Rahul Mahajan is author of 'Full Spectrum Dominance: U.S. Power in Iraq and Beyond' www.empirenotes.org

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For having work tools in your car!

At a recent demo against the IMF in Sussex a man was arrested for having a pruning saw in his car. Thing was the man in question happened to be a tree surgeon so it's a bit like nicking a plumber for having a wrench.

FLOG IT

Two anti war protestors will be in court later this month challenging the corporate pillage of Iraq. Ewa Jasiewicz and Pennie Quinton were nicked for "aggravated trespass" after protesting against the Iraq Procurement Conference held in London in April.

Windrush Communications, who organised the Conference, which they boasted would "discuss the wide range of economic opportunities available... following the awarding of up to \$18.4 billion in contracts from the US Congress."

The two will argue that it was the conference that was in fact illegal, under the Hague Regulations of 1907 and Geneva Conventions 1949. The US-led provisional authority was breaking international law by flogging off state assets, raising the prospect that contracts signed now by foreign investors could be scrapped by a future Iraqi government.

In a leaked memo last year UK Attorney General Lord Peter Goldsmith advised Prime Minister Blair that in his view, "the imposition of major structural economic reforms would not be authorised under international law."

As Ewa put it "It's as simple as this. Iraq is not America's to sell. It is up to the people of Iraq to decide, finally, theirs' and their county's destiny - political, social and economic. Everything right now is being done to prevent that from happening."

Their trial will be held at Highbury Corner Magistrates Court on November 23-24 10.30am. A lively support picket will take place on both days, starting at 9am. For more up to date information contact Ewa Jasiewicz: freelance@mailworks.org 07749 421 576 or their solicitor, Rhiannon Jones at Bindman and Partners, 020 7833 4433 r.jones@bindmans.com

More info: www.infoshop.org/inews/stories.php?story=04/11/09/3388857

* 24 Nov, 'Making a killing: the Corporate Invasion of Iraq' with author Naomi Klein. Friends House, Euston Road, London 6.30pm £5 waged/£3 unwaged

LIFE OF BRIAN

“The fact is the Government doesn’t want people to hear what I’m saying and to see the pictures of tortured and bombed innocent children which I have on display here.” - Brian Haw, peace protester.

In the upcoming Queen’s speech the government is to bring in an organised crime bill to deal with things like drug dealing, money laundering, people trafficking, firearms and one person holding banners in Parliament Square.

The government is once again using the cover of “organised crime” to crack down on people’s right to protest. A clause in the upcoming bill will mean protests near parliament will be time limited and will need a specific permit. This is being brought in to deal with Brian Haw, an anti war protester who has been camped out in Parliament Square for over three years - existing laws have failed to remove him and an injunction from Westminster City Council failed. Peter Hain MP said that they need legislation to deal with “long-term demonstrations”.

Speaker of the Commons Michael Martin said “I myself have exercised these rights to protest and would defend to the last the rights of others to do so, including in Parliament Square.” Sounds like he supports Brian - funnily enough he doesn’t. He said legislation was needed to protect parliament’s “unique position” and make sure MPs are “free from harassment”. The harassment Brian has caused is displaying pictures of Iraqi children killed by the US/UK occupying forces and the use of a megaphone, Brian says “My only crime is to have a megaphone – it’s absurd, barking mad.” But not as barking mad as Tory MP Sir George Young who reckons Brian is a security threat – apparently terrorists could hide behind the peace protester’s banners and

“pick us off as we arrive at or leave the House”. Er, right.

Other measures to “crackdown on crime” that the government have been talking about are extending police powers of arrest, search warrants to extend to any property a suspect has access to and allowing entry on more than one occasion with no time limits, drug testing of anybody arrested, allowing the use of covert taking of fingerprints and DNA for “speculative searches”. There may also be new clauses to deal with “animal rights extremism” which will tighten up the harassment laws even more.

All this is being introduced to deal with “organised crime” at a time when crime figures are going down. It looks like the organised crime bill has more to do with curbing effective protest than tackling crime. More about Brian Haw’s protest: www.parliament-square.org.uk

* Another injunction under the Harassment Act has been gained against peaceful campaigners which will do nothing to stop harassment. Oxford University has gained an injunction against SPEAK who are campaigning against a new vivisection lab being built (or not built as no work has happened for 16 weeks after the last building firm pulled out).

Merely publishing and distributing well-informed material, in which animal experiments are described and referenced, could from now on be illegal. Such a move would deny the public access to information to which they are entitled.

Oxford University has consistently said it is acting in best scientific interests, but declined to take part in a debate organized by SPEAK with pro and anti vivisectionists talking. The campaign against the Oxford lab continues: SPEAK - www.speakcampaigns.org.uk 0845 3307985.

Union U-Turn

Workers at Kings Cross Channel Tunnel Rail Link site have forced contractors Laing O’Rourke to negotiate with the GMB union over a new contract dubbed the ‘conrick’ by the workers (see SchNEWS 471).

The Joint Sites Committee (JSC) has been organising unofficial resistance to the ‘contract’, which proposes cutting the basic rate of pay in half, after workers were told to sign them by the construction union UCATT. Yesterday, The JSC organized a sit-in protest against the deal agreed between Laing O’Rourke and UCATT. The ex-general secretary of UCATT, George Brumwell has also agreed to talk to Laing O’Rourke to renegotiate the deal; he’s ‘reconsidered his position’, after signing the original ‘contract’ and trying to convince workers it was a good deal.

Workers’ representatives are calling for a national ballot of all Laing O’Rourke workers to reject the deal. If there is going to be a new contract - they are demanding no cut in take home pay, no discretionary bonus scheme, full holiday and sick pay, a pension scheme, and redundancy pay.

Workers at other Laing O’Rourke sites are also resisting the conrick and have also been visited by the JSC.

* More info: Steve Hedley - 07985-438301

Positive SchNEWS

The Green Dragon Woodland Project Co-op collects and sells secondhand books to raise money for regenerating British woodland habitat. After only 2 years of life the project has recycled tons of unwanted books and with the funds turned them back into living trees. Check out their new expansive and very interesting website at: www.greendragonwoods.org.uk

SchNEWS in brief

Brighton’s premier pirate **Radio 4A** will be broadcasting this weekend 101.4 FM www.radio4a.org.uk ** **Resisting ID Cards** meeting next Tuesday (16) at Friends Meeting House, Mount St., 7.30pm organized by Manchester Anarchist Group www.af-north.org ** **Maelstrom** is a new info squat in Leeds at the old Post Office, Hyde Park Corner, Woodhouse Street. For events www.indymedia.org.uk/en/regions/leedsbradford/ ** There’s a couple of talks at Brighton’s Cowley Club (12 London Road) next week: On Monday (15) Corporate Watch will be talking about the film ‘**The Corporation**’ - and how we can fight back against the multinationals. Starts 7pm. On Thursday (18) community publishers **Queenspark Books** will be talking about their work 6pm. ** The next Scottish **Dissent meeting** will take place in Perth, on the 20th November, from 2pm till 5pm at the Twa Tams on Scott St. disabled access, no dogs, email: dogenid123@hotmail.com

...and finally...

People might remember the stickers from a few years back proclaiming “Avoid Hunger – Loot Tescos”; well 200 Italian anarchists did that last week in the Panorama hypermarket outside Rome. After cheekily asking the manager for a 70% discount, which was unsurprisingly refused, the masked up proletarian shoppers swarmed the store shouting “Free shopping for all” while filling up trolleys full of goodies, overcoming the security and then distributing it to crowd outside! No one was nicked on the day probably because lots of cops had to deal with a 10,000 strong demo about the rising cost of living since the Euro was introduced, cuts in state benefits, and the cost of the war in Iraq. * Don’t forget No Shopping Day on 27th November www.adbusters.org

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers that whilst Batman is a fictional character, supervillains do really exist ... Honest!

Deadline

A 23 year old French environmental activist was killed this week by a train transporting nuclear waste from France to Germany. Sebastien Briat had his leg severed by the train whilst he was chained to the track, and died before reaching hospital. Earlier in the day, the train had been delayed for two hours while police cut free two other protesters who had chained themselves to another section of the track.

Opposition to the cargo has been growing and actions have sprouted across France and Germany, from the establishment of resistance camps in south Germany, to farmers driving their tractors on the track.

* See www.indymedia.org for more info.

Dredgeful

Sharks at the government have come up with another typically imaginative way of fast forwarding us all toward environmental collapse: they want to marine quarry the seabed of the Median Deep, halfway between the Sussex coast and northern France. Then they want to dump the dredged seabed onto areas of the south east of England and build hundreds of thousands of houses on greenbelt land.

The plans have caused outrage among fishermen on both sides of the Channel and among environmentalists, who say the government risk breaking EU laws designed to protect fragile seabed habitats.

The good news is that residents of Sussex are not taking this lying down. The latest in a series of actions against the dredging saw pixies use bike locks to close the Newhaven Swing Bridge on the A259 in East Sussex, blocking the exit of the Hanson dredging ship the ARCO Dart at high tide on Sunday. The bridge was due to open at 9pm but was closed for an hour and a half while the ships crew struggled to remove the locks and eventually had to call in the fire service. www.eco-action.org/sos/

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