



UKRAINE GET IT IF YOU REALLY WANT

A special report from SchNEWS' Ukraine correspondent

Ever since the elections in Ukraine, hundreds of thousands people, particularly in the capital, Kiev, have been out on the streets for ten nights running. Some of them are living on the streets, expecting a long stand-off with the authorities and, with the temperature about -10°C, people have been living in tent camps in the centre of Kiev (the biggest camp has about 500 tents with more than 5000 people staying in them). Strikes have closed down universities, offices and factories: sometimes with their bosses, sometimes against the boss's will.

In the Western media the whole event was portrayed first as the action of opposition parties with popular support after the opposition officially declared defeat in the presidential elections. But soon the mood changed, and instead of "revolution", TV-screens started to show the country's territory split into "orange" and "blue" parts, while headlines spoke about a "divided Ukraine", and insisted that opposition leader Victor Yushenko's demand to stage another round of elections is the major hope of crowds on the streets.

This isn't a blatant lie - but it's not exactly true. Not all the people on the streets are active opposition supporters - a lot of them just several weeks ago had no interest in party politics at all. The decision taken by opposition leader, Yushenko to demand a new round of elections was a huge disappointment for many "orange" people, most of whom don't use the word "elections", talking instead of "revolution" or "uprising". There is no such thing as "divided Ukraine" or "regional conflict". It's not about "east vs. west" - it's about people vs. corrupt, criminal authorities.

For protesters it's not just a fight between two political leaders, but a struggle to overthrow the authoritarian system created and strengthened in Ukraine over the last 10 years. Yanukovich - prime-minister at the time of the elections and presidential candidate - was picked as a candidate by the current president, Mr. Kuchma, in return for guarantees to the president and his allies of immunity from prosecution for all his crimes, committed while in power, as well as protection of their assets gained through criminal privatisation.

Yanukovich's pro-Russian position made him popular in his home region of Donetsk, but the rest of the country rejects his kowtowing to Putin's Russia. His government acted in line with "a doctrine of lib-

eral imperialism", formulated by Russia's tycoons several years ago.

Yushenko is regarded as a pro-western politician, with informal support from the US and EU, western values and a wife who's a US citizen. It doesn't mean the country will be cut-off from Russia - he likes to remind people that while he was prime minister (about four years ago) - trade with Russia was much more active than now. But politically he's an openly pro-Western politician. Some of his supporters are NGOs and organisations financed by the west - but to say that the events are a coup initiated or provoked by the US or EU, would be to simplify things.

Mr Yushenko became the first prime-minister to create the conditions where people started to get their salaries and pensions paid after a long period of economic chaos. Meanwhile, he managed not to take (or was not given) any IMF loans. The most attractive part of his programme for his supporters are rights and freedoms. He promises to lift media censorship, installed by the current authorities, encourage democratic freedoms and encourage greater economic transparency. Now, it's nothing new for politicians to promise this sort of thing, but he'll have to answer to his loyal and active supporters anger if he lets them down after they took action to save him.

The Future's Orange
The majority went to the streets not to bring Yushenko to power, but to prevent Yanukovich from seizing it. The feeling from the people is: "With Yushenko - we'll be in opposition; with Yanukovich, there'll be no opposition".

This expression of people power hasn't been seen for many years in Ukraine. Busy with their own physical survival, the majority were always regarded as apathetic, cynical about politics, and unable to trust each other. That's why this "peaceful uprising", when millions flooded the streets within hours shocked everybody. The momentum of the "orange revolution" was so powerful that it looked like the government would fall within days.

After the first days of total paralysis, with the opposition insisting on a transfer of power, and more and more local councils switching sides, negotiations started. These were initiated at "round table" talks organised by, among others, the EU Commissioner Javier Solana. The talks led to nothing, apart from giving the authorities

CRAP MURDER OF THE WEEK

For singing a song

On the 19th November on Palm Island, a community just off the east coast Queensland, Australia an Aboriginal called Cameron Doomagee was arrested for singing a song on a street. One a half hours later he was dead.

A state of emergency has been declared with over 200 police officers sent to the island to suppress the community after the coroner's autopsy report found the death to be an accident, caused by falling over. To follow developments see <http://melbourne.indymedia.org>

time to mobilise, gather supporters, and finally, to turn the image of the conflict from "people vs. authorities" into "east vs. west" in an attempt to absolve themselves from any political or criminal responsibility.

The usual development of professional political leaders betraying their people looks likely to repeat itself again. After realising that the negotiations were a waste of time, the opposition pulled out, only to be pressured into negotiations again by EU (and personally by Mr. Solana who desperately tried to prevent any "revolutionary developments") the next day. The result was a dubious agreement, consisting of some conditions to be met by the opposition and none, apart from not using force, by the authorities. The decision about the elections was transferred to the Supreme Court.

However, while the party politics go on, in the street the best initiatives are being organised by organisations and networks, who make up the "non-party opposition" - networks of internet-activists and street volunteers - some self-organised and militant, but restricting themselves to using non-violent means.

This is the main result of this "orange revolution" - the biggest example of non-violent self-organisation in Ukraine in a century. Whoever comes to power will now face a different people, a people who are no longer apathetic about the corruption of the party parliamentary system. They have realised that they can defend their rights together, and the old consensus "we can't change anything" now rings hollow. So in the short term, if they manage to get rid of censorship, systematic police brutality, corruption and state ordered killings, that in itself will be a victory. But in the long run, something new has been born. Call it "civil society" or "autonomous networks of resistance", whatever it's called, it will influence future events and, hopefully set an example to people everywhere.

* President Kuchma is notorious for his stifling of opposition, murder of journalists and bleeding the economy dry while lining the pockets of himself and his cronies.

* For a direct action/anarchist take on events see <http://eng.maidanua.org>

ZSF?

Organising a social forum is always a big thing. Organising a social forum for thousands of 'f**k the system' types in a country where public meetings are banned, non-government newspapers are bombed and hundreds of pro-democracy activists murdered is nothing short of a miracle. This miracle happened thanks to the crazy grassroots forces determined to host the Zimbabwe Social Forum. 'Crazy' because at the moment the paranoid Zanu PF regime is trying to ban all political NGOs, lock up journalists and generally get into the rhythm of good ol' repression ahead of the Presidential elections. So the ZSF was denied 'permission' to go ahead. But, after weeks of court challenges and determination, ZSF happened, running from 28th to 30th October under the slogan: 'A People's Forum Against Poverty, Sexism and All Forms of Oppression'.

Five different themes were tackled. The National Constitutional Assembly group talked about doing away with the current constitution to achieve social justice; the Debt and Development team decided that repaying debt was bollocks and that pressing for debt cancellation was vital. The HIV/AIDS tent urged the need for free anti-retroviral drugs, while the Young Workers group decided that "if we destroy capitalism, then we would also be attacking the foundations of ZANU PF and all the forces of oppression" Residents' Associations from across the country were pissed off about the non-existent drinking water and electricity. Loads of single issues came together to attack one system.

The Freedom Youth Camp was loud, self-organised and rebellious. Debates ranged from the never-ending student repression under the Zanu regime to sexism and gender, anti-corporate music and ghetto youths' visions of community democracy via direct action. Like most social forums, the ZSF ended in a huge revolutionary piss-up.

There are lessons from the ZSF for both the Zimbabwean and the global anti-capitalist movement. Those pissed off with the Elitist Social Forum (sorry - European Social Forum) can learn from the horizontal process of the ZSF. Since the first ZSF in 2003 the forum has been run by all those participating. The ZSF National Council is a consensus-based collective open to all, making it participatory and transparent. ZSF is also awededly anti-capitalist - so no corporate bollocks at the forum! Now the Zimbabwean movement must avoid mere summit-hopping and strengthen the local networks, coordinating actions and uniting single issues into a tidal wave of anti-capitalism. And this all seems to be beginning as ZSF forces plan marches and actions for World Aids Day. Fleets of anti-capitalist buses leave soon afterwards for the Africa Social Forum in Zambia, carrying forward the freedom message.

www.southafrica.indymedia.org/news/2004/11/7009.php

Positive SchNEWS

A new independent radical bookshop is about to open in Manchester. As well as providing a radical library 'The Basement' will have a campaign info space, an exhibition space, free internet use and a vegan café.

The opening party will be happening next Sunday (12th) 11am-7.30, where political cartoonist Polyp will be speaking and there'll be a screening of the film Camp X Ray. Once open hours will be 11-8 everyday (except Monday), food served 12-4. 24 Lever St (off Piccadilly Gardens) 0161 237 1832 mustsocial@yahoo.co.uk

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SchNEWS in brief

Tresspass Stroll against Brighton Council's idea to permanently close the Black Rock Undercliff Walk, it is believed ASDA want to close the path, so that they can expand their store. Meet 11am sharp this Sunday, ASDA Car Park, Brighton Marina. ** **Can Iraqi Resistance defeat US Imperialism?** Talk on Monday (6th) at the Mad Hatter Café Western Rd (Corner of Montpelier Road), Brighton. 7:30 pm ** **Hacklabs** - building autonomous labs against capitalism. Info talk next Thursday (9th) at Brighton's Cowley Club 6pm ** **Demonstrations** against the proposed **Newhaven Incinerator**, Tue 7th County hall, Lewes, 9.30am and Wed 8th Hove Town Hall 3.30pm 01273 300116 ** Workers at the **Tricolan** clothing factory in Naoussa, Greece have occupied their factory for over a month following the closure by its owner. www.thessaloniki.indymedia.org/?lang=en ** Open discussion on the impact of **flexible labour contracts, temp agencies and casualisation** and collective resistance, Dec 11th, RampARTS Social Centre, 15-17 Rampart Street, Off Commercial Road E1. 10am - 6am (+ Food, DJ's, Cheap Bar 'til late) wombles@hushmail.com ** An activist from **Voices in the Wilderness** has received bail conditions banning him from the whole Congestion Charging Zone of London! He can catch the tube or bus but not set foot on the ground in Central London! ** In the US **Greenpeace** have been banned from taking any direct action against **Exxon-Mobil** for the next seven years! ** Activists targeted the **Icelandic Embassy** last week, protesting against the construction of the **Karanjukur dam**, which will wreck Icelandic wilderness. The activists were arrested, and held overnight, but managed to rattle diplomats and get the issue onto Icelandic TV. The system of nine dams is being built just to supply electricity for an aluminium smelter planned by US company Alcoa. www.inca.is/www.corpwatch.org/article.php?id=5828

Hit The Roads

Another victory against the Neo-Labour road building scheme this week as Transport Secretary Alistair Darling announced that the A303 dual carriageway would not now go through the Blackwood Hills, near Yeovil, an area of outstanding natural beauty.

Environmental groups had a preference for the A358 to be "dualled", as this would cause significantly less damage to the countryside. Apparently a major deciding factor was to avoid the kind of protests that have dogged other road schemes.

Business leaders condemned the decision, saying that it was a "black day for Devon and Cornwall", but we reckon it was probably just a bad day for their profits!

* Sherwood Forest protest camp in, Nottinghamshire has been served with new eviction papers. The site is now on "amber alert" and volunteers are urgently needed to go on the telephone tree. 07891 986 208

* Furious residents campaigning to save trees on Lincoln's historic hill occupied trees being felled illegally by developers. Last week residents occupied a private meeting between the developers and the council, taking back democracy the direct way! saveourtrees@hotmail.com

* Faslane Peace Camp Needs You to take direct action against the UK's nuclear weapons. They need volunteers to help with actions against the nuclear base, where weapons that violate anti-nuclear treaties are kept. Everyone is welcome if you are prepared to chip in with tasks like cooking and chopping wood, and want to get involved with lock-ons and blockades. Even just a day or two a month can make a really big difference. 01436 820901 or e-mail faslanepeacecamp@hotmail.com

Soft Drinks, Hard Bastards

Over 1000 people marched to the Coca-Cola factory in Mehdiganj, in India last week, demanding its closure. The demo was the end of a 10 day, 250 km march from Ballia, another bottling facility, bringing attention to Coca-Cola's negative impacts on communities across India (SchNEWS 474).

The peaceful marchers were met at the bottling facility by armed police. Speakers at the rally denounced Coca-Cola's illegal practices in India and internationally.

Marchers then went to the factory gates, near the site of the rally, where police reacted violently with no warning. They baton-charged and beat the marchers, then chased onlookers in surrounding fields to give them a beating too. Over 350 were arrested, and 100 injured.

"While shocking, the violent attack on the peaceful demonstration against Coca-Cola is not surprising. Coca-Cola operates with impunity, and violence is an inherent part of how Coca-Cola does business the world over", said Amit Srivastava of the India Resource Center. Images and film from the rally also available by contacting info@IndiaResource.org, www.IndiaResource.org

Send a FREE FAX to Neville Isdell, CEO of Coca-Cola in Atlanta, US demanding they stop the violence and address the problems created by Coca-Cola in India. www.indiaresource.org/action/faxcoke.php

Off His EDS

Blunkett launched his new ID card crusade this week, at the same time as computer failures were casting doubts over whether such a scheme is even workable.

Civil servants in the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) had to write out thousands of giro cheques and process benefit claims by hand, after a software failure left them without computers. This has been described as the biggest government computer failure yet, but it's by no means the first.

Electronic Data Systems (EDS), the firm responsible for the software has a ten year contract with the government, worth £2bn. Many might question whether this is value for money considering they've created chaos at the Child Support Agency and the National Air Traffic Control System, and been sacked by the Inland Revenue Service. So guess what EDS is trying to get its useless mitts on now? Yep the biometric ID card scheme.

* People who refuse to register with the national ID database will be fined £2,500. If you fail to update details when you move home it'll cost you £1,000 www.defy-id.org.uk

* 30,000 civil servant jobs are due to be axed at the DWP - to make way for more er, IT 'modernisation'!

...and finally...

"Anarchists!! Abandon your principles! For one day only uphold the law! Citizens Arrest a hunter on February 19th" - Toffbusters!

On February 19th 2005, the first Saturday after the Hunting Ban comes into force, the self-proclaimed Toffbusters! are urging radicals to don wellies and perform citizens arrests of hunters. Toffbusters! reckon it's "...an unparalleled opportunity to return class warfare to the political centre stage... The Countryside Alliance and their inbred toff followers have ruled the roost for years, but are now squealing like stuck pigs." So, ready with yer best coppers' patter? Altogether now: "Excuse me sir, is that a horn in your pocket, or are you just pleased to see animals violently disembowelled?". South West: toffbusters@yahoo.co.uk, Northern: durhamtoffbusters@fastmail.fm

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers, that standing around in sub zero temperatures will turn you blue even if you were once orange... Honest!