



WAKE UP!! IT' YER FIVE MORE YEARS OF...

SchNEWS

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Issue 496

ELECTION SPECIAL The People Choose:

- Keep things the same
- Keep things almost the same
- Futile vote for change made worthless by electoral system
- Didn't vote and assumed to be lazy or happy to keep things the same
- Better take direct action

KURDS AND NO WAY

"If you say, 'there is a Kurdish question in Turkey,' this is unfortunately creating an artificial problem. There is no such problem for us." - Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The plight of the Kurdish people is one that has been in the news recently. Supporters of the War on Iraq are quick to point out that the Kurds, who suffered heavily under the rule of Saddam Hussein, are now better off. But you don't hear much from Tony Blair or Michael Howard about the Kurds who live in Turkey - who have been victimised by widespread acts of State violence that include extra-judicial killings, torture, large-scale destruction of homes, forced evacuations, and the denial of basic human rights - such as the right to speak their own language or even call themselves Kurds.

You see Turkey, as friends of the west, like Saudi Arabia and Israel, can do no wrong despite massive human rights abuses in their countries, while "enemies" like Iran and Syria have the threat of military invasion never far away for behaving in much the same way but not towing the Western line.

The Kurdish people are the world's largest landless people, numbering around 40 million. In 1923 their homeland Kurdistan was partitioned between Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Their treatment by the Turkish Government led to an armed uprising in 1984 by the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) which continued until they called a ceasefire in 1999. As a result of the armed conflict an estimated 4,000 villages were destroyed, approximately three million people were forced to flee their homes and over 30,000 people died.

Due to the Turkish state's continuing repression, the conflict began again in June 2004 and this month saw the re-founding of the PKK.

KURDISH DELIGHT

SchNEWS has received this report from a British Activist who recently visited the Kurdish area of Turkey to observe the Kurdish Newroz celebrations and to report on changes in the human rights situation in the area since the start of the EU accession process.

"The Newroz spring fire festival, which had been illegal until 2000, took place on 21 March just outside Diyarbakir, the cultural capital of the Kurds in Turkey. The police stopped the coach before we entered the event and our passport details were noted. Police and military surrounded the event and had commandeered some nearby buildings.

This year's celebration was the largest ever, with an estimated one million people taking part in spite of the distance from the city and a ban on all civil servants attending. Many people made the journey on foot, others utilised whatever transport they could find, overloading motorcycles, hanging off the backs of lorries, with a few riding in on horseback. It was a display of unity, peaceful defiance and pride, with real warmth shown to outsiders who wanted to share it with them. There was much traditional dancing and people displayed their red, yellow and green national colours, making endless and enthusiastic peace signs, waving various Kurdish flags and placards of Abdullah Ocalan, the jailed leader of the Kurdish movement.

The police were moderate in their behaviour but the military sent their jets screaming noisily overhead several times and helicopters constantly circled the event.

DAM STATISTICS

We also visited the ancient city of Hasankeyf, which is at risk from the new plan to build the Ilisu Dam. The Turkish government has begun negotiations with the Austrian firm VA Tech to build the dam. When complete the dam would not only flood Hasankeyf but also forcibly displace 80,000 people.

Although physical brutality by the police and security forces has been reduced, it has often been replaced by psychological torture and increased harassment of Kurdish and human rights activists. This takes the form of prosecutions, raids, threats, intimidation, and bureaucratic obstacles. There had been an improvement in the incidences of torture and violence in the preceding period but, regrettably, despite the reduction in extra-judicial killings and disappearances there had been recently a resumption of killings. These included the state murder of 12-year-old Ugur Kaymaz and his father. This atrocity has evoked fear and alarm that the country was returning to the terror and lawlessness of the past.

SCHNEWS AND BRIGHTON DISSENT! BENEFIT SHOW

Homo-Electro-Punk-Disco
With Fuck the Pain Away's DJ
Wanker and A-Dam

Wednesday 11th May, 10pm-3am
Volks Tavern, Madeira Drive, Brighton
Price: Donations!

www.brightondissent.org.uk
www.fuckthepainaway.co.uk

The Diyarbakir branch of GOC-DER (Immigrants' Association for Social Cooperation and Culture) which works with internally displaced people expressed concern over the new compensation laws for those internally displaced during the conflict. The government has refused the offer of EU assistance stating there was no problem - a point vehemently disputed by GOC-DER, who also reports that the burning of villages by the state was continuing.

One of the most moving visits for me was to the Diyarbakir branch of Mothers for Peace, an organisation made up of the mothers of guerrillas who had died and now worked tirelessly to promote peace. These indefatigable women, many of whom were in their seventies, reported being severely harassed, their homes raided and they are constantly stopped at police checkpoints and regularly beaten whilst demonstrating. But as one of the women told us, "We have nothing left to lose, what else can they do to us?"

The distinctive red, yellow and green of the Kurdish flag is banned in Turkey, indeed at the height of the conflict in Batman, one of the largest towns in the Kurdish area had the amber light of the traffic lights removed as the red, amber and green was seen as symbolizing the Kurdish struggle! The Turkish flag however, was flying everywhere, some of the flags so big they covered the fronts of entire buildings. Also written everywhere above the streets, in very large letters was the slogan, 'How happy is he who calls himself a Turk?' - Maybe, but what about the Kurds?"

* For further information or to get involved, please contact the Kurdish Solidarity Committee: knklondon@gn.apc.org.

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For bringing art to the brasses!!!

Naughty "interventionist" artist Jo Furlong has been bound over to keep the peace for six months for the heinous crime of attaching small brass plaques to seven benches along the Mumbles seafront last September. The plaques had inscriptions such as "For Miriam, whom I should have married", "Dedicated to Dafydd, who was conceived here in May" and "Coffa da amdano Angharad, a wneath byth eistedd yn llonydd." (No we're not going to translate it for you!)

Jo said his art "is designed to have a low economical and environmental impact while reaching a public less likely to go to galleries."

Anti-war campaigners won a major victory in the High Court last Friday. Arms manufacturer EDO MBM had applied for an injunction under anti-stalking laws to restrict protest outside their Brighton factory. The order sought by the corporation would have created an exclusion zone where protests would only be allowed on Thursday afternoons for two hours with a maximum of 10 silent protestors.

Judge Gross (!) ruled against EDO, saying freedom of expression is a right jealously guarded in English law. Smash EDO are to step up the campaign, beginning with a "Pro-EDO" demo on 11th May. "We will be telling the warmongers what a wonderful service they provide and how grateful their "end-users" are. Let's give them a hero's welcome! Meet at entrance to Wild Park at 4pm." Then on Tuesday 31st May there's another Noise Demo at EDO's factory gates - make them realize spending £500 per hour on lawyers is a waste of money, 3pm-6pm.. www.smashedo.org.uk

Inside SchNEWS

Keith Mann was sentenced to 6 months in prison on Friday, in relation to the raid on Wickham Labs when 700 mice were rescued and evidence of botox experiments on animals was uncovered. Keith would really appreciate your letters of support, at the following address: **Keith Mann** [KJ0365], HMP Winchester, Romsey Rd, Winchester, SO22 5DF.

EUROVULSION

Later this month the Ukrainian capital Kiev is to host the crappiest music contest in the world - the bastion of bland euro-pop that is the Eurovision Song Contest. Like all cities that host corporate bullshit events, they are having a clean up of the streets; while Brighton have a blitz on graffiti when Neo-Labour comes to town and Sydney swept all the homeless off the streets prior to the Olympics, Kiev is trying to wipe out all the stray cats and dogs.

The city is being "cleansed" of animals through the putting out of poisoned meat, but it's not just strays that are getting sick and dying, it's also pets, wild birds and other urban wildlife. The state funded animal shelter now looks more like a slaughterhouse where sick animals are put down.

Kiev animal rights group SKA (Stop Killing Animals) have held actions at the Kiev State Administration and are asking for solidarity actions and a boycott of Eurovision-2005 (As if we weren't anyway?). Info: ska.activists@gmail.com

CURRENT AFFAIRS

How do you prefer it, sir/madam? Electrocuted, stunned, overheated or beaten up with a good old fashioned baton?

The US (where else) Police are developing new "non-lethal" weaponry in the war against the have-not's. Taking cues from the US Army, they are trying guns that fire electricity, heat and stun bombs. The guns leave no lasting physical scarring, thus making abuse cases harder to prove. They build on previous weaponry like the Tazar, which is so non-lethal Amnesty International have attributed it to 103 deaths thus far. This stuff is all in the research stage still, so SchNEWS advises it's gentle readers not to be too alarmed (or shocked) just yet...

www.newscientist.com/chaonnel/mech-tech/mg18624975.800

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Meat, meat, meat! It might not be all that they grow in Central America, but vast tracks of land are still being turned over for cattle grazing to satisfy the growing need of the rich and foreign visitors to munch on beefburgers and the like. Contrary to popular opinion, the beef reared in the region is not all ending up on North American dinner plates; Central America is awash with its own burger chains where you can blow a month's worth of minimum wage earnings on McCrap. Despite Costa Rica's eco friendly image, during the 1970s and early 1980s vast stretches of rain-forest were burned and converted into cattle pastures. Nicaragua has been losing its forest at a rate of 3% a year. Deforestation has resulted in flooding, the conversion of land into barren wasteland, soil erosion and silting up of rivers, making it much harder to farm - and in Nicaragua they need to farm: half of the population do not have enough to eat.

Pissed off at losing control over their food to the multinationals, people are fighting back with alternatives. On the volcanic island of Ometepe in Lake Nicaragua, land previously used for cattle ranching is being turned into permaculture settlements. Organisations like finca Magdalena and finca El Zopilote are sharing self-sufficiency techniques with farmers who had previously been used to watching their food being exported to rich countries. The emphasis is on a positive environmental footprint - putting more into the land than taking away, and some of the farms are looking to move towards wind power. "Why are people always looking to work so hard?" asks one of the farmers "can't they just sit back, relax and take in the nature? I might not have a lot of money coming in, but I've got no boss and only have to work 4 hours a day, leaving plenty of time for family and friends." Not good enough says the World Bank. In a 1999 report on Nicaragua it argued, "Factory work brings discipline and an acceptance of routine by workers". Work for a day at 50p an hour and you might just be able to afford a walk to the mall to pick up a Big Mac. Nice. SchNEWS will leave it up to readers to decide whose advice they'd prefer to follow.

X-ORCISM

The charade has come full circle again. Every four years this sham of democracy bids us to "choose", to take our part in the decision-making process. X marks the spot. Out of respect for those who suffered and died - the Chartists, the Suffragettes - we vote, but as we do so we must push to the backs of our minds the painful reality.

Government, any government, always jumps to the beat of the economic drum. Long gone are the days of Party Principals and Ideology, for all their faults. In these days of "free-markets" and business conglomerates, real control of the economy, and by implication, of society is in the hands of unelected, unaccountable corporations, who only believe in the bottom line. The State, meanwhile, merely act as the mouthpiece for decisions made higher up the power chain, in boardrooms across the globe.

This is why it doesn't make any difference was elected yesterday. It's not so much that the State isn't listening; it's more that they have no control over what is happening. However the illusion of democracy is always maintained in order to make us think we have a voice in how our lives are governed. Until there is economic democracy, nothing will fundamentally change in our lives. Voting never got rid of GM food, the Poll Tax and the road building schemes of the 90's - it was through DIRECT ACTION.

Direct action - organizing together as equals - is the seed from which true freedom grows. Anything else and we only fool ourselves.

Shameless Peter Mandelson is calling for a lift on the long standing arms embargo on China. As EU Trade Commissioner, Mandelson criticised the Ban, saying China should be welcomed into the Neo-liberal fold. Plus, it will be a godsend for the UK Arms Trade. Hooray! China, meanwhile, promises to get tough on its huge black market. ** Our Man on the Street has been testing the new TV-B-GONE devices around betting shops in sunny Brighton. These little fellas are key ring sized zappers that will turn off TV's anywhere. Just point and press. Fun guaranteed. Anti TV group White Dot are giving out a load of them for free. www.whitedot.org ** This years Mayday being on a Sunday, London activists targeted that bastion of casualisation (or precarity as it's now known), Tesco's. A Samba Band led the march into Tesco's Hackney while others handed out leaflets to happy shoppers. Police violently ejected the MayDay'ers, with a handful of arrests. See www.indymedia.org.uk for a full run down on events around the country. ** A new film entitled "Capitalism and Other Kids' Stuff", which argues the anti-capitalist case in simple language can be viewed free at www.socialist-tv.com ** A new search engine has been created by and for activists. www.activista.org is a multi-language ad-free resource site for info and links on all we hold dear. ** Statewatch UK have teamed up with the American Civil Liberties Union to produce a report on the increasing use of surveillance by Governments worldwide. Read the full report: www.statewatch.org/news/2005/apr/icams-report.pdf ** Manchester No Borders are to launch a spoof newspaper, called the "Hate Mail" this Wednesday. 30,000 copies are to be distributed nationwide, attacking with humour and anger the fear-mongering of the media's reporting on immigration. Look for a copy in your town. Call May on 07730523537 or Jackie on 07962172507.

...and finally...

Two new examples of rampant US paranoia... **It's A Wrap**

Police were called to a school in New Mexico, US, when a boy carrying a suspicious item was seen approaching his school. Fearing the worst, snipers were put on rooftops, streets closed and the school locked down. As the kids were being told what was going on by their principal, a young boy came forward carrying a 30-inch burrito wrapped in tinfoil, saying "I think I'm the boy they saw". The burrito was part of an extra-credit assignment to create commercial advertising for a product. Cue tears of relief all round.

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No it's supercloud!

Meanwhile, President Bush was bundled into an underground bunker, Dick Cheney was evacuated to an "undisclosed location" and heavily armed secret servicemen took up defensive positions when a fast-moving object scudded towards the White House last Friday.

It was, in fact, a cloud that had materialised 30 miles south of Washington on Wednesday morning. It was so dense it triggered radar monitors of the "Domestic Events Network", seemingly unable to distinguish between man made flying objects and unusual weather phenomena. It wasn't until a black-hawk helicopter was scrambled to intercept the offending object that it was found to be a cloud... in the shape of Osama Bin Laden.

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers to vote with your feet, a D-lock and a tube of superglue...Honest!