



WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YER HAVANA RANT...

SchNEWS

www.schnews.org.uk

Friday 18th August 2006

Free/Donation

Issue 556

US Major Label plans remix for Post-Castro Cuba

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SOCIALIST
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"Close but no cigar" - SchNME

ON THE FIDEL

BATTLE FOR THE FUTURE OF CUBA AFTER CASTRO

Fidel Castro's laid up in bed, with possibly weeks to live. He's had to hand the reins of power to his brother Raul, only five years younger and not terribly popular. Cuba's status as an alternative model of development for Latin America is clearly under threat. Over the water in Miami thousands of exiled Cubans were disappointed that Old Fifi made his 80th birthday earlier this week (13th August) but it's the end of an era and what happens next is the hot topic on the streets of Havana.

Although Cuba is often caricatured as a straightforward dictatorship, there's a lot more democracy at the community level and an extraordinary level of workplace labour organisation. The old guard have been trying to win over the post-revolutionary generation, but they're now up against the sparkles of consumer capitalism. After the 1959 revolution, the US embargoed Cuba, forcing them to rely on the USSR's to buy their staple crop - sugar. When the Soviet Union collapsed the economy was forced to hustle for the tourist dollar. As a result, Cubans have faced growing inequalities between those with access to hard currency through tourism or family abroad, and those depending on meagre state salaries and the black economy. Cuba's tourism boom has brought the population into contact with the high spending west and their consumer lifestyles.

Extensive migration from Cuba has followed. Other Latinos wanting to get in on the American dream face a heavily armed Mexican border but in a cynical attempt to undermine the island's economy, Cubans who flee to the US are given a leg-up and, since 1959, been treated better than any other migrants. Within one year they get residency, grants for education and health-care and access to a large ex-pat network. After thousands of Cubans tried to cross the Florida Straits in the 1990s in flimsy rafts, in 1996 the US granted 20,000 visas a year for Cubans - more than the number granted for the rest of the world.

Ironically, as a result of 40 years separate development and having been spared the CIA-sponsored military dictatorships inflicted on the rest of South America, Cuba has a highly literate and educated population and a diversified economy - just ripe for a bit of exploitation!

Exiled Cuban-Americans, and their multi-million dollar pals in companies like Bacardi, who lost the lot in '59 now see the chance to get their land, businesses and control back.

Dubya Bush's *Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba* 2004 report states clearly that US Inc wants to bring Cuba back under its control. They will support a 'democratic' transition in Cuba if corporations get a free rein and if Fidel, Raul and other members of the government are barred from participating in elections! The Commission has recently pointed out that they are urgently working "to ensure that the Castro regime's succession strategy does not succeed," and that their work, "demonstrates that we are actively working for change in Cuba, not simply waiting for change." The Department of State has emphasized that the plan includes measures that will remain secret "for reasons of national security" and to assure its "effective implementation". So it's time to expect the usual sabotage, subterfuge and CIA shenanigans.

MIAMI VICE

Although the country doesn't have enough oil to make it a member of the 'Axis of Evil', Cuba has been identified as one of the seven countries which sponsor international terrorism. But perhaps the White House should have looked a little closer to home to find some international terrorists. There is a long history of CIA involvement in Cuba (They tried to kill Fidel with a cigar etc). In the 1980s, Mexican, Nicaraguan and Venezuelan embassies were attacked because of their links to Cuba and a Cuban-friendly Chilean ambassador was murdered in 1976. In the same year Cuban-exiled Orlando Bosch and Luis Posada Carriles orchestrated the bombing of a Cubana plane killing 73, which was to be just one of over 50 bombings they were involved in during Posada's time on the CIA pay-roll. More recently, companies which have tried to open economic relations with Cuba have had their offices bombed, including Shell, Air France, Japan Airlines and Air Canada.

These attacks go largely unreported by a Miami press which is controlled by the very same Cuban exiles who collaborate in the intimidation. One radio station set up as an alternative to the usual far right anti-Castro rants and calling for normalised relations with Cuba was bombed twice, employees beaten up and death threats made to sponsors of the station. Until 2000, Miami City employees had to sign a pledge that they had never been a member of the Communist Party. In the space of just three years there were more than 100 politically motivated attacks. A car bomb blew the legs off a news

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For having housemates...

An Italian **Earth Liberation Front** activist has been jailed for breaching the terms of her house arrest. Chiara Sacchetti was arrested for allegedly planning to blow up electricity pylons carrying nuclear energy. She was released on bail on the condition that she didn't meet with any of the other suspects in the case. However the other suspects were also on house arrest and this is where it starts getting tricky. Chiara actually lives with the other suspects in the case, and so a chance encounter over Sunday lunch was probably on the cards at some point... For more see: www.spiritoffreedom.org.uk

director for condemning exile violence, and the culprits of this and other similar bombings not only walk free but are referred to by the mayor of Miami as 'freedom fighters'. And it's the same people who helped to fund the illegal invasion of Nicaragua during the Contra War in the 1980s. One of the organisers of the Contra force was the Cuban American National Foundation, which helped to run clandestine operations, directed by the White House and CIA.

Miami is primarily run by a pro-Batista* cartel that set up in Miami in similar style of *gangsterismo* as 1950s Havana - running protection rackets, drug cartels and illegal gambling. These far right anti-Castro Cuban exiles may be the minority in Miami, but they own and run the media, government and business contracts - and make a fortune in the process. Judges are bribed and corrupt prosecutors will do what they can not to prosecute, even when confronted with overwhelming evidence. Vote rigging, embezzlement of funds and larceny are par for the course. It is these people who want to get their hands on power in Cuba.

The autonomous development of Cuba has been under threat since the revolution. US Inc. has never wavered in its opposition to this socialist thorn in its side. Forty years of communist rule have led to, by European standards, an authoritarian regime and yet side-by-side with the Latin American norm - a peasant economy dominated by a US-affiliated elite - it stands out as a triumph. Will Cuba stand by the progressive ideals of 1959 or bend its knee to a weak puppet democracy? With Venezuela, Bolivia and to certain extent Brazil bucking the US line the result of the battle is not a foregone conclusion.

☉ For a delve into Miami's danger world, a tabloidesque gossip about Castro's personal life and the Havana/Miami vendetta read "*Cuba Confidential: The extraordinary tragedy of Cuba its Revolution and its exiles*" by Ann Louise Bardoch, Penguin Books 2002.

* (the dictator overthrown by the Cuban Revolution)

FACE THE BASE

Last Sunday a peace camp was established at **RAF Mildenhall** (well used by the USAF), Suffolk, just off the A1101 next to the base. The camp is getting good local support, squatting land not owned by the council or MOD, and is calling out for more people now. A camper told SchNEWS "Just because there's a 'ceasefire' in Lebanon, that doesn't mean that there aren't still a lot of US military planes taking off from Mildenhall every day: spy planes, weapons, rendition and special operations flights. We will stay here as long as we can sustain it." The camp is logging all flights using the inside knowledge of an ex-air force planespotter. During the attacks on Lebanon, Israeli arms landed there after being diverted from Prestwick during three days of protest by Trident Ploughshares (See SchNEWS 555).

This area of East Anglia is host not only to **RAF Mildenhall** – the longest military runway in Europe, but also **RAF Lakenheath** – the largest and most important tactical nuclear bombing base in Europe used to store US nuclear weapons, and **RAF Feltwell** – a US communications, surveillance and missile tracking base. For more see www.lakenheathaction.org.

Get down to the camp – even for the day – bring a tent or there is some accommodation available but contact first. Site number is 07760 171655.

* The camp at **RAF Brize Norton**, Oxfordshire – which had been used for US flights carrying munitions to Israel – closed this week.

MINIMUM RAGE

1000 Workers at a factory in southern China which produces toys for McDonalds, Disney and others rioted for two days last month in protest against conditions. It took 100 factory policemen, riot squad and security guards to put the insurrection down, leaving dozens of workers injured and arrested.

The workers at the Hengli Factory in Guangdong province kicked off over working conditions which make most McJobs look like a picnic. They typically do 66 hour weeks, with 70 hours overtime a month, and earn \$75-100 a month. Pay is deducted for those who refuse to work overtime (which is paid only at the regular flat rates of course). With no base salary, they are paid per piece, and aren't paid for holidays or sick leave. And forget medical insurance or pensions.

The Hong Kong company which owns the factory, Merton Co Ltd, export the toys to the US and Canada, with half going to McDonalds. For more see www.china-labour.org.hk

Also in China, at the end of July, our friends in the World's biggest retailer – **Walmart** – were forced to admit defeat in a two-year battle against allowing any unionising for its 28,000 Chinese employees (more than 75% of its products are made there). Unions will now be established and it is hoped it may set a precedent for other foreign companies in China, of which only 30% currently allow unions.

However, that's not to say any of this will really benefit the workers. As one western diplomat said, "Chinese unions have no bargaining power because the labour market is so flooded with workers. For the government, the formation of official unions is a way to control workers because they are less likely to strike." While China is now drafting a labour contract law to allow unions to participate in some management discussions on personnel issues, European and American chambers of commerce are opposing the draft because they say it gives too much power to the employees. Global Inc. is more than happy with the current near slave-like arrangements, thank you very much have a nice day!

* Keep an eye on China at www.worldwatch.org

LOSING THEIR BOTTLE

Following a long-running local resistance campaign (see SchNEWS 501), Atlanta-based aspartame-peddlers, (One of the cancer-causing chemical sweeteners used in 'diet' drinks – see www.dorway.com) Coca-Cola have fallen flat in India once again. In recent months effective protest hit one of the country's largest bottling plants, situated in Mehdiganj. Activists initiated an indefinite vigil outside of the factory, starting in March this year, and, being disappointed by the lack of action on side of the government, finally started a hunger strike on June 23rd. They were supported by almost 1000 from surrounding villages who engaged themselves in a number of creative projects. In July they ended the vigil and hunger strike after governmental authorities assured them they would take action.

After reviewing several studies showing that both Coke and Pepsi had 24 times the level of noxious chemicals (mainly pesticide residues) in them than their European counterparts, the southern Indian state of Kerala has become the latest state to ban both companies from producing their foul spew. Coke tried to hit back, producing its own results from a UK Government lab, which gave them a clean bill of health. According to the Indian Centre for Science and Environment, "the company's contention that only a foreign laboratory can test its products is patronising and borders on racism." Their own samples came from local shops and were the 'real thing'.

This all follows a catalogue of abuse by the companies in India (See SchNEWS 447), including Coke sucking villages' water-supply dry (which they take for free, of course) and polluting the water table. It takes 4 litres of freshwater to make one litre of the fizzy stuff, meaning that three quarters of the water the companies extract ends up as polluted wastewater, pumped back into the local environment. The Indian Supreme Court has ordered Coca-Cola and PepsiCo to reveal the ingredients in their products – and potential toxic by-products – in six weeks, or face a potential national ban (See www.IndiaResource.org).

Following another campaign by activists, Coke was recently ejected from the £4.4billion TIAA-CREF Social Choice Account, an investment fund which buys shares according to social criteria. Better still, Cube Microplex, an alternative cinema in central Bristol, have begun brewing their own, cruelty-free, version of coke – for the recipe see www.guardian.co.uk/food/story/0,,1832134,00.html

* Read a report on the fizz-barons by the Centre for Science and Environment at www.cseindia.org

* Make sure you don't accidentally buy any Coke products masquerading as healthy options by checking www2.coca-cola.com/brands/brandlist.html for full list.

Inside SchNEWS

Rod Coronado has been sentenced to eight months, as well as three years supervised probation, for his role in an Earth First! mountain lion hunt sabotage. After both being accused of spreading false scents and pulling up a sensor and trap, his co-defendant Matthew Crozier has also been given a non-custodial sentence with three years of probation and 100 hours community service. Both have been ordered not to associate with members of the Animal Liberation Front, Earth Liberation Front, Earth First and other groups. His postal address is Rodney Coronado #03895000, CCA Central Arizona Detention Center, PO Box 6300, Florence, AZ 85232, USA. For more see www.supportrod.org

CAMP FOR CLIMATE ACTION

is on next week - Aug 26th- Sept 4th. It will be held somewhere near the Drax power station near Leeds - see website for location www.climatecamp.org.uk

DANGER MONEY

In the UK's 'contracted out' workplaces, one 16-24 year old will be killed at work every month, with one seriously injured every 40 minutes. SchNEWS lost a friend in 1998 when Simon Jones was killed on his first day of work unloading cargo from the hold of a ship. He had only a few minutes training and hours later was killed when the grab of a crane crushed his head (See SchNEWS 333).

Company bosses, with an ever careful eye on profits, are failing to be careful with their employees, skimping on providing health and safety training. Almost a million young workers are in insecure or temporary employment, where they are less likely to be trained properly. Research by the Trades Union Congress found that over one third of 15 - 24 year olds had received little or no health and safety training. So what's UK Plc's response to this problem? A 20% cut in staff at the Health and Safety Executive – following a 25% reduction in inspections over the past three years! As SchNEWS has said before "If you want to kill someone, become a boss and do it at work. Then you'll get away with it."

* If you're facked off with bosses putting profit before worker safety contact Families Against Corporate Killers (FACK) www.fack.org.uk, 0161 636 7557. For more about Simon Jones see www.simonjones.org.uk

SchNEWS in brief

Noise Demo against EDO MBM, Homefarm Rd, Brighton every Weds 4-6pm; **Smash EDO Phone Blockade** Tues 29th, call 01273 810 500; **Smash EDO Mass Demo** - Sat 16th Sept. Meet 12 noon at the Level. www.smashedo.org.uk **

Want to Stop Nuclear? London Faslane 365 meeting. Sat 19th, 3pm at Everything4Everyone, 4 Dalston Lane, Hackney, E8 (Opposite the Peace Mural). See www.faslane365.org ** 29th Aug to 10th Sept. **Failed States** - a play Inspired by Kafka's The Trial, about the world fixated by the threat of terror and the promise of counter-terrorism. Barons Court Theatre, Kensington. Tickets via venue: 020 8932 4747, £10/£8 concessions in week (£12/£10 Fri/Sat) **

The anti-war protest at the **Israeli Embassy** this Sat 19th has been cancelled, but others in Barnstable, Barrow, Brighton, Cambridge, Camden, Newcastle, Sheffield, and York are still going ahead. For details see www.stopwar.org.uk ** **A Gay Pride event in Tallinn, Estonia** was attacked by fascists, with 15 people injured, but this and a bomb scare didn't stop the Pride march from going ahead. The march was a culmination of a week-long series of related events in the capital. See www.gayrussia.ru/en

...and finally...

Suspicious about the Kennedy assassination? Reckon 9/11 was faked with holograms? Think Elvis was a lizard? Are you wearing a birdcage wrapped in tinfoil on your head to stop Illuminati mind control... Well get this, the U.S. government has 'misplaced' the original recording of the first moon landing, including astronaut Neil Armstrong's famous "one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind" speech. Unperturbed by the widespread whispers that the whole thing was faked in a shed in Nevada, an unruffled NASA spokesman Mr Hautoloma casually revealed, "We haven't seen them for quite a while. We've been looking for over a year and they haven't turned up. I wouldn't say we're worried - we've got all the data. We're looking for paperwork to see where they last were." Presumably, it's like when you lend some old X-Files videos to a mate but you can't remember who – it'll turn up, just ask around! Perhaps its down the back of the Bilderberg sofa – The truth is out there...er, somewhere.

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers don't go SchCuba diving - you'll soon be out of your depth... Honest!

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