



WAKE UP!! IT'S YER WHOSE SIDE ARE THEY ON...

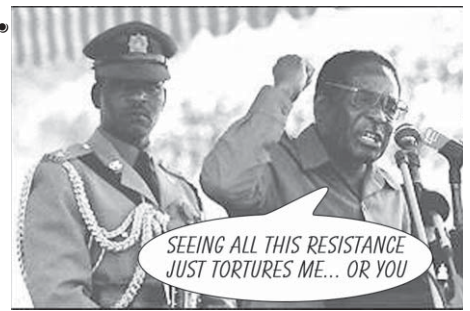
SchNEWS

www.schnews.org.uk

Friday 5th October 2006

Free/Donation

Issue 563



I DID IT MY ZIMBABWE

Strikes, Striking and Strikers in Mugabe's Zimbabwe

Workers' resistance in Zimbabwe has been on the rise recently, with street demos, trade union action and new forms of resistance such as the 'Uhuru Street Soccer Battles'. The ruling elite is attempting to silence opposition with the usual combination of police brutality and state propaganda. Injustice is commonplace, but Zimbabweans are showing great creativity in the struggle for change.

Life's been tough for most Zimbabweans ever since an increasingly unpopular Robert Mugabe began his reign of power. Illegal large-scale slum demolition has left many of the country's poor homeless. Despite the west imposing economic sanctions, Mugabe's grip on power remains strong - elections happen but they're rigged. Anger amongst his population centres around redistribution of land issues as war veterans were promised land after the struggle for independence.

Since then western media has focussed on the controversy surrounding the redistribution of large estates belonging to whites. We've heard a lot about the plight of the white dispossessed (many of whom were granted British citizenship without all the hurdles faced by less fortunate refugees) but very little about the plight of the average Zimbabwean and a growing popular resistance. As many farms have been handed over to cronies of the leadership with little agricultural experience, Zimbabwe now faces a potential famine. Western economic sanctions have led Mugabe into negotiation with the Russians and Chinese over access to Zimbabwe's mineral resources. The South African government, who essentially have the power to shut down Zimbabwe, are doing nothing either by employing a stance of 'quiet diplomacy'. Still the people refuse to be silenced, but in a brutal dictatorship they are having to find new ways to protest against their situation.

On the 25th of September, 27 people were left battered after baton-wielding cops crushed a protest by pressure group National Constitutional Assembly in the capital, Harare. This came just weeks after leading members of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions were arrested and assaulted in custody. They'd been nicked for protesting and trying to raise awareness by denouncing fuel and food shortages as well drawing attention to the crippling 1,200% inflation and 80% unemployment rates. Their chants, however were manipulated by the press who reported only that the protesters had been calling the police 'dogs'.

Unfortunately Mugabe's bite is every bit

as bad as his bark and there are many examples of human-rights and freedoms being violated by his 'dogs'. Lawyers representing arrested trade-union leaders and opposition activists say their clients were assaulted by police while in detention, with several sustaining broken bones and showing signs of having been severely beaten on the feet. Armed police pounced on leading members of the union as they prepared to petition the Finance minister and march on the offices of the Employers Confederation of Zimbabwe. "From the look of it they were attacked by the police as soon as they were herded into cells," says Lawyer Alec Muchadehama of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights. Whilst the activists were being detained, Muchadehama pleaded with the officers to allow them immediate medical treatment and, after much police stalling the detainees were eventually granted treatment under police escorts. The ZCTU president Lovemore Matombo had both arms broken.

MORE THAN A MATCH

The case is now being taken up in court with police representatives claiming that the broken limbs and bruises are not a result of police brutality but were actually self-inflicted! Police claim that all the detainees simultaneously fell out of a moving police van. Surprisingly this did not impress the magistrate who has ordered a fresh investigation. However it's doubtful any truth will emerge as the Criminal Investigation Department undertaking the investigation are confining the scope of the inquiry only to finding out who exactly was responsible for leaving the paddy-wagon door open.

Meanwhile Mugabe is showing his support for the force used, saying that "Police were right in dealing sternly...because the trade unionists want to become a law unto themselves." The 82 year old dictator went on state TV to warn others that "when the police say move, move. If you don't move, you invite the police to use force."

But some activists have been busy coming up with novel ways to subvert the system and avoid the old man's whip by deciding to 'grab them by the balls'. The recent and growing wave of resistance has become more creative than ever, shown by the Uhuru Network which took over the streets in the densely populated Hararian suburbs for the second round of their Uhuru Street Soccer Battles. Uhuru, (swahili for freedom) a network of community youth fighting for social justice, organised the guerilla soccer event in the middle of September with two

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For Command and Conker...

Anxious to get kiddies back onto more profitable pastimes such as the new Xbox 360, Sussex cops are cracking down on conkers.

Seven year old Kiya Jayne and her 11 year old friend Charlie Richardson were stopped, searched and deprived of their conkers this week-and handed the relevant paperwork to prove it! They'd been falsely told that the conkers were on private property, so hands off or else!

A spokesperson for Sussex police confirmed that they had seized a large bag of conkers (estimated street value, two marbles and a copy of the Beano) and came out with this little chestnut - "Forms are a necessary form of bureaucracy to ensure parents are aware we have spoken to their children." Well of course. Jolly good form, chaps!

*Meanwhile all-conkering kill-joys Worthing Borough Council have paid contractors £100 a tree to knock out all the conkers before thieving kids can get anywhere near them.

mock teams - the Vagari (residents) played versus Kaunzuru (the local council). The dusty street became a pitched battle of ideas, the vagri defending stoutly against the cheating antics of the Kanzuru team, and attacking them with flair. They refused to be intimidated by any penalties faced as a result of their play, and went on to be victorious (and who said football's rigged?). Passers-by began cheering for Vagari, urged on by a subversive commentator relaying the action. Fliers at the games spoke of the increased water rates and other 'supplementary charges' and urged the residents, the true vagari, to resist the council.

'Uhuru Sasa! Freedom Now!' was the chant that signalled full time as Uhuru members and others made their way from the Soccer Battles to the Toyi Toyi Slam. Organised by Uhuru's Toyi Toyi Arts Kollektive, the Slam is a monthly event that aims to create a freedom space for underground, radical Hip Hop, Poetry and Theatre and the Book café, Harare, was soon filled with underground MCs and poets encouraging the need for change through revolutionary rhymes. Zimbabwe is a country rife with political and social injustice which has been made clear during the events of the past months. Allegations of torture and assault are being thrown at the police and human rights are being ignored. As voices are being silenced and movements crushed, resistance continues and sparks of action and creativity have not been dampened. Find out more about the fiery workers' revolution at www.zimbabwe-situation.com

SHAKE PINEAPPLE

If you're the type of person who needs a good reason to send fruit to politicians, the Burma Campaign have been offering one this week. They're asking people to post pineapples (fresh, tinned or dried!) to Margaret Beckett to highlight Britain's hypocrisy over Burma. Whilst the European Union has recently banned EU companies from investing in a Burmese pineapple juice factory, details emerge about UK plc's investment in Burma's lucrative oil, gas and timber industries. British territories like Bermuda act as a back door for shedloads of illegal foreign investment to boot and assisted by the fuel of the free market (the widespread abuse of human-rights, slave labour and draconian state control), businesses have been doing very nicely. Britain has been the second biggest sugar daddy - propping up the regime with a tidy \$1.8 billion in investment since 1988.

Take oil barons Unocal and Total, who both funnelled their cash through British territories in an attempt to get round the 1997 US ban on Burmese investment. Their behaviour when building an oil pipeline resulted in the companies being the first ever to be sued for genocidal behaviour abroad (not that they admitted it of course, merely oiled the wheels of justice with a big payout - See SchNEWS 524). Other similar practices are sucking Burma dry of its natural resources with little fuss being made about it in the western mainstream. The logging trade has left Burma with the third largest deforestation rate in the world and forty planned hydro power projects threaten not only the people but will also have dire consequences for the local environment.

Whether giving Margaret 'can you name anything I've ever done in politics' Beckett a juicy mailbag will help matters is unclear, as we're sure she'll just smoothie it over. But anything to raise awareness and push Burma up the priority ladder would be most welcome.

For more see www.burmacampaign.org.uk/pineapple.html - www.freeburmacoalition.org

* Just for interest's sake, plenty of other high-street multinationals also have greedy fingers in the 'what sanctions?' pie, including Daewoo, Proctor & Gamble, Suzuki, Sony, Mitsubishi, Toyota, Toshiba, Acer, Lacoste, Compaq, Abercrombie, Black & Decker, Hitachi, Samsung, Sta travel, Harrods, Hobbs and Lillywhites... and the list goes on...

MOSLEY ON DOWN

Despite it's current ongoing internal disarray, infighting and general incompetent blockheadedness, the recent electoral creep of the BNP was enough to make this week's 70th anniversary of the Battle of Cable St a poignant and timely one. On October 4th, 1936, tens of thousands hit the streets in the East End of London for a bit of direct action to stop Oswald Mosley and his British Union of Fascists from marching down Cable Street - then a mainly Jewish area (See SchNEWS 93). To commemorate it, why not get yerself down there on Sunday 8th where there'll be a free festival from 12-4pm. Cable Street, London. E1. (Shadwell tube). See www.naar.org.uk

THAI STICK

Every coup has a silver lining! Tesco is facing curbs on its power to extract as much money from the Thai people as possible. The new military 'ruling council' has been briefing journalists that it is planning to bring in legislation to curb the growth of overseas retailers. Tescopoly is the biggest investor in the corporate food business in Thailand, managing to flog £1bn worth of stuff from just 200 'Tesco Lotus' branded stores. And the profiteering wasn't stopping there - Thailand is Tesco's fifth biggest market and company bosses were planning to set up another 170 stores in the next ten years. Every little dubious military takeover helps.

Inside SchNEWS

It's always a joy to get copies of SchNEWS back unopened. Well it is when they were sent to prisoners and returned because the addressee has been released. Occasionally one comes back because its in the 'wrong type of envelope' but we can't remember a time when its been thrown back at us by a prison bureaucrat because its 'unsuitable' content. Clearly our politics is so far off the traditional political scale the poor dears can't understand it. We obviously need more pictures of rich people getting their heads kicked in so we can join in solidarity with papers like 'Class War' which have been deemed too 'left wing' to be read by prisoners in HMP Woodhill, Milton Keynes. Ray Gilbert and Chris Basher have been told under the '14 day rule' that they're not to read such scholarly titles as 'Fight Racism, Fight Imperialism', 'Class War', 'State Watch' and the ever present 'Socialist Worker'.

Here at SchNEWS towers we can think of a million better things to do with the latest copy of Socialist Worker than actually read it and, thinking about having to plough through all that boring socialism, some of us can even agree with the prison rule that allows the banning of reading material that might have "an adverse effect on a prisoner's physical or mental condition". That aside, supporters are arguing that the action by prison officials breached Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, the right to freedom of expression. Check out www.mojuk.org.uk for more info.

NOTT A JOT

Taking the SOCPA legislation (See SchNEWS 483) one step further, and which if rolled out nationally would chill the bones here at SchNEWS plaza, Nottingham City Council have brought in sweeping new laws that will seriously affect the distribution of free activist literature in and around the city. As with fly posting, laws designed to deal with the activities of commercial promoters are going to have a serious affect on activism and other legitimate free speech. What a surprise, a new law claims to be the solution to one type of problem and then conveniently turns out to really handy for clamping down on all kinds of other things - well we never!

In certain areas (already including the city centre) free printed material may only be given out with permission and a permit from the council. Activists will now have to either stump up the cash for the permit (and cross their fingers that their literature meets with official 'approval') or ignore the law and face prosecution and fines up to £2500.

It seems there's a need for some dissent down by the Trent. See more at www.indymedia.org.uk/en/regions/nottinghamshire/2006/10/352444.html

SchNEWS in brief

'**The Coupe**' is an exhibition of pics and poetry about logging and resistance in Tasmania. Showing as part of Brighton Photo Fringe season throughout October at Brighton's premier anarchist theme pub and cafe, The Cowley Club, London Rd. ** 7th Oct - **International Day of Action on Migrants' Rights**. To **March**, assemble 12pm at Imperial War Museum Park, Lambeth Rd, London SE1. **Benefit gig** from 7.30-2am at Rampart Social Centre, Rampart Street Whitechapel. There's a **conference** on the following day (8th) at @ Queen Mary's University Mile End Rd E1. For more see www.ncadc.org.uk ** 9th Oct - **Sack Parliament Demo** 1pm Houses of Parliament, London. See www.sackparliament.org.uk ** 10-11th - **Sustainable Energy & Energy Efficiency Expo**. Showing off the most up-to-date energy efficient products and services. Grand Hall, Olympia, London. See www.energy-expo.info

APE SHIT

Animal rights protesters are getting used to a rough deal from the forces of evil, er law'n' order, but a recent over-reaction by the London Met has left even hardened demonstrators open mouthed. Forty supporters of the SPEAK campaign gathered in central London to protest against companies who fund research at Oxford University. "It was clear from the start of the day that policing would be different: the usual police officers who normally watch over the peaceful demonstrations had been replaced by what looked like extras from a futuristic film, none wearing any numbers that could identify who they were."

The police began to push protesters, threatening to nick anyone not complying with their orders to move. Once the protesters had been forced into a march, the Met imposed section 12 of the public order act (which allows them to place conditions and limitations on any march / demonstration) on them for marching!

Campaigners quickly turned the tables on the plod, put their banners away and walked to the next demo at the Esmee Fairburn Trust, lining up peacefully outside. The mighty Met could not take this challenge to their authority and waded into the crowd. One young woman was hurled to the ground and at least one brave copper couldn't resist the opportunity to stick the boot in! Other protesters, including pensioners, were punched and roughly handled.

After a brief withdrawal the group set their sights on the next target, the offices of the deputy prime minister. John 'Two Chins' Prescott, was chosen because he dismissed a report by an independent inspector (appointed by himself) which stated that Cambridge University should not be given permission to build the largest primate lab in Europe.

Running out of options to silence the protesters, police issued a section 14 with the generous offer of 'allowing' a ten minute demo across the road. This offer was declined by the activists, who once again set off playing cat and mouse, regrouping and defiantly staging the best demo of the day outside the Sainsbury Family Trust.

In the words of a 63yr old woman who'd met the Met: "They provoked, they pushed, they really tried to cause trouble. I suppose they want to discourage us but they have not dampened our spirits." www.speakcampaigns.org.uk

...and finally...

As Tony 'Tree-Hugger' Blair and David 'Mighty Oak' Cameron busy themselves with spinning the extent of their caring green policies, they've not so good at getting their own house in order. A big renovation of the Houses of Parliament is taking place, and where have they turned to for some nice quality timber at the, wink, right price? Greenpeace have proved their place of choice is, er, the ancient tropical rainforests of Papua New Guinea, home to many unique species of plants, animals such as the tree kangaroo and the world's largest butterfly, as well as indigenous communities dependant on the forest for their livelihood. Robber barons plunder the rainforest with impunity, their crimes ranging from illegal logging to corruption, torture and rape - as confirmed by a recent UK Government report.

But none of that's put off our great and good form using a couple of tons of prime Papua plywood during the reconstruction - in the one place that won't cause a media storm... the parliament press room.

Still, as far the ruling elite goes, as Greenpeace has now proved for the fourth time is as many years, why dish out the sterling when you can just pay guineas?

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers...always take yer free kicks wisely. Honest!

Subscribe!

Get SchNEWS free every week by email in pdf or text file - visit our site, or send us stamps and we'll post it to you. Copy and distribute! Keep SchNEWS free with donations (via website or cheques payable to Justice?). Posted free to all prisoners. SchNEWS, P.O. Box 2600, Brighton, East Sussex, BN2 0EF. Tel +44 (0)1273 685913 Email schnews@brighton.co.uk Web www.schnews.org.uk