



WAKE UP!! IT'S YER PREPARED TO GO HUNGARY...

The SchUN BORAT ENLARGEMENT SHOCK

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HAMAS-IVE ATTACK

A SchNEWS correspondent reports after a visit to the Occupied Territories

Following the humanitarian disaster in Iraq during the 90s caused by UN sanctions, Palestinian society continues to be torn apart by the sanctions regime imposed by the US and EU and the crippling Israeli occupation (See SchNEWS 544). The US stopped all bank transfers to the Palestinian Authority from the outside when Hamas were elected in January. All US and most EU aid has remained frozen and Israel is refusing to pay the customs duties required on goods being imported to Palestine through Israel (and there is no other route for imported goods).

The US and Israel are intent on pushing Hamas out of government, to the extent of supporting the rival Fatah faction. The US have promised to sponsor Fatah to the tune of \$42 million in future elections. Spurred on by international pressure on the democratically elected Hamas government, the Palestinian president and head of Fatah, Mahmoud Abbas - originally foisted on Yasser Arafat by the US - is threatening to force new elections at the start of 2007.

Violence and tension is increasing. In early October, eight people including a child died after Hamas security forces fired on a Fatah-backed demonstration in Gaza. A few days ago Hamas Prime Minister Ismael Haniyeh's convoy was attacked, missing him but destroying a car.

Meanwhile, state employees have not been paid since the elections due to the sanctions. Palestinian workers continued to work for several months without pay, knowing the role they were playing in holding society together, but most have now been forced to stop. Palestinian schools have been closed since the summer. Health workers have also not been paid and have been withholding all but emergency services for over a month.

There has been a general strike in Palestine for the past five weeks which, on particular days of action, has shut the majority of shops in the West Bank and Gaza. Many of the strikers simply want to protest at the withdrawal of their wages and the international sanctions but the strike is also being used as a weapon by Fatah to weaken Hamas. The strike has sometimes been enforced with violence; Fatah gunmen shot a strike-breaker in Jericho in early October, and teachers in Salfit, who were teaching

a bare minimum of essential lessons, reported that gunmen had threatened to harm them if they did not stop work.

Throughout all of this, Israel's illegal occupation continues. The Israeli army last week mounted new operations in Rafah in the Gaza strip. Over the last three months at least a hundred civilians have died per month at the hands of the Israeli military. On Monday 23rd October, Israeli forces killed Palestinians and wounded thirty in an invasion of Beit Hanoun, in the Gaza Strip. Over Ramadan, Israeli border police have been out on the streets of the West Bank to do 'routine checks', suspiciously close to the time Muslims break their fast, delaying people getting home to eat for many hours.

NO WALL FLOWERS

The village of Bil'in has been resisting the confiscation of the majority of its land for nearly twenty months. The Israeli army is building a section of the Apartheid wall which has isolated 60% of the village's agricultural land beyond an eight-metre-high fence, flanked with barbed wire and patrolled by the Israeli army.

Technically, residents are supposed to have free access to their land, but the gates in the fence remained shut throughout the Jewish holiday of Sukkot earlier this month and can be closed on the whim of the soldiers policing them. When residents are allowed through, they have their photos and ID numbers taken by the Israeli soldiers.

Laith Yassin (19), a university student from the village, and schoolboy Mohammad Barakat (17) were arrested two months ago for allegedly cutting the annexation barrier. Both the boys' family lands are behind the barrier, their olive trees have been uprooted, and are earmarked for the expansion of the illegal Israeli colony of Modi'in Illit. It is sadly ironic that the boys' alleged crime is to have damaged a structure - Israel's Apartheid Wall - that was itself ruled illegal by the International Court of Justice in The Hague in 2004.

On 19th October, a Judge sentenced Laith and Mohammed to six months and five months respectively in Israeli prison, in addition to the two months they've already served. The judge gave the families the option of paying 1500 Shekels for every month they have been sentenced - amounting to 9000 Shekels for Laith (£1200) and 7500 for Mohammed (£1000).

1500 Shekels is the equivalent of one month's salary for Laith and Mohammed's families. Neither Laith or Mohammed's fathers have received any salary since international sanctions were placed on Hamas.

Laith's father, a local schoolteacher, told international volunteers working in Bil'in how his family had been crippled, first by the loss of access to their lands, then by the loss of their salaries and now the loss of its sons. The families cannot afford to pay the Israeli fines and are appealing to the solidarity movement to help free Mohammed and Laith. **(Details of how to make a donation to their legal fund are at www.palsolidarity.org)**

While the two teenagers have been locked up, the village's struggle against the annexation barrier has continued. Protests are held every Friday and remain a focus of non-violent resistance to the Israeli occupation. After a demo on October 6th, Israeli border police, who had invaded Bil'in firing sound bombs and tear gas, arrested Reuters cameraman Emad Bornat for 'assault on an officer'. He is currently in detention at Ofer Prison. Emad had been invaluable in refuting Israeli accusations against villagers because of his filming of countless arrests, including those of Laith and Mohammed.

Two weeks ago villagers marched to the site of the annexation barrier with a banner displaying a picture of a camera and the words 'Their eyes will not stop recording Israeli war crimes', in protest at the Israeli police and army's attempt to silence the media. Last Friday the barrier was breached and villagers broke through on to the settler-only road close to their confiscated lands. Today (Oct 27th) a huge demo is planned to mark the end of Ramadan, and the upcoming hearings of three petitions on the illegality of the annexation barrier in Bil'in, at the High Court of Justice in Jerusalem.

* November 12-16th is the **International Week of Action against the Apartheid Wall** in Palestine see www.stophthewall.org for details, for UK actions see www.palestinecampaign.org

Media Sources on Palestine:

- www.imemc.org - Independent Middle-East Media Centre
 - www.palsolidarity.org - International Solidarity movement campaign against the occupation
 - www.electronicintifada.net - Palestine's Weapon of Mass Instruction
 - www.stophthewall.org - Up to date info from the anti-wall movement
- And there's more at
- www.bigcampaign.org
 - www.palestinecampaign.org
 - www.brightonpalestine.org

BUDA-PEST CONTROL

History repeats they say, and almost 50 years to the day the streets of Budapest are again rising up to burn out police cars and demand for the government to be sacked. For the socialist government and its international investors its business as usual, but for the majority of Hungarians who now face serious economic belt-tightening in order to keep Western creditors happy, things are getting worse. A new budget means that people will be charged for seeing a doctor and will have to start paying for university education. Big increases in energy prices are on their way and the whole set of measures is likely to cost the average Hungarian a month's wages. Rather than telling the corporations where they can stick their loan repayments, the government is to meet their demands in an attempt to reduce the debt that is worth almost twice as much as the country's entire economy. The government spends half of its cash on social security but international investors are not willing to sit idly by and let people get free hospital treatment...

Things began to kick off when the Prime Minister, Ferenc Gyurcsany, told a private party in May that he (and here's the shocker) had lied to the country to win the last election! Just like his pal Tony Blair, the millionaire Gyurcsany is disliked by his socialist party colleagues for having both a dodgy personality and dodgy policies, but he's been tolerated because he keeps winning elections; this year was the first time that a left of centre government had won two elections in a row. But since the speech, the right wing Fidesz party has teamed up with the far right in their attempt to boot out the so-called socialists.

Fidesz used to be the youth party, where it was not possible for someone older than 30 to be a member. That is until more and more of its leaders reached their 30s...and decided to change the constitution to let any old codger in. They've teamed up with the murkier Party for Hungarian Justice and Life, Jobbik and '64 People's Committee'. Just this week, such groups have been reminiscing the City's Nazi past by busily plastering Jewish homes with the Star of David. High on the agenda for many is the usual false paranoia about foreigners, although this time most of the foreigners are actually Hungarian. 5 million ethnic Hungarians live outside the country, mostly in neighbouring states, the legacy of the carve-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after World War I, when the country lost two thirds of its territory. There are probably 2 million Hungarians in Romania, 600,000 in Slovakia, 400,000 in Serbia and 370,000 in Ukraine.

Back in 2005, the World Federation of Hungarians, a group dedicated to the protection of Hungarians living abroad, managed to get the 200,000 signatures required to force the Hungarian parliament to pass a law to allow anyone who claims Hungarian ethnicity to be granted citizenship. The government decided to call a referendum which narrowly voted in favour of the new law, but did not have the required 50% of voters to make it a valid decision. There are around 10,000 citizenship requests submitted each year, and the racist right just can't stand to see more than half of these end up in the hands of people from foreign places like Romania.

The government is keen to portray all the recent trouble as a purely right-wing protest despite the fact that fascists are in a clear minority. In order to prevent the anarchist student movement, Hallgatoi Haloza, from holding a meeting on Budapest's university campus, the authorities closed down lectures for the day. Very educational! Meanwhile, riot police resorted to tear gas grenades in the efforts to stop some anti-government protesters who managed to nick a Russian-made T-34 tank from an exhibition of the 1956 revolution last Monday (amazing that it still worked really; c'mon everyone, let's hit Duxford and get Spitfires for the next anti-war demo!)

Anger had broken out after police prohibited protesters from getting closer to the Hungarian Parliament building where top foreign politicians were celebrating the 1956 anniversary. Last year, an old socialist "pioneer" shopping mall was squatted with a cultural 'centrum' for autonomous movements as more and more Hungarians are realising that there's just no difference between left and right; both just love those corporations - its merely that the latter wish they weren't owned by foreigners. And on that subject it's worth remembering that as the tabloid press in the UK stoke up fears about hordes of Romanian workers coming to our shores, 50 years ago this week, we welcomed refugees from Hungary with open arms.

Check out www.hungary.indymedia.org/index.shtml?&cat_name=English for more info. * For the socialist historian contingency, there's a public meeting on the Hungarian revolution on 2 November at 5.30pm at Room 143, Richard Hoggart Building, Goldsmiths College, London.

RUE-MANIA

Staying in vampire country, we notice that pride of place, next to their 'posh knickers picture sensation', *The Sun* this week has a lambasting rant about eastern Europeans this week, warning readers of the impending doom that could see 1,000s of Romanian and Bulgarian plumbbers flooding into the country. Welcoming Home Secretary John Reid's proposals to limit immigration from the two new members to the European club, the newspaper has joined much of the right-wing press warning that these two 'hubs' of organised crime threaten our very survival.

It's not surprising that in Bulgaria, where one in ten workers is on the dole, people want to come to the UK to earn a few quid, filling our labour shortages in the process. And the minimum wage in Romania is £40 a month, forcing many to seek work abroad to make ends meet. But while globalisation is all about controlling the movement of people - particularly hordes from poor or war-torn countries entering 'The West', of course the same doesn't apply to money, which can move as freely as you like. The flip-side of Eastern Europeans coming here is that property prices have shot up by 50% in places like Romania in less than two years, as international property speculators flog the country off by the square metre to moneyed Brits, and others, who didn't manage to get on the French village / Spanish villa bandwagon ten years ago. Oh, it's all too complicated - blame the immigrants!

BARISTARDS

Last Saturday (21st) around a dozen activists from the **Birmingham Guantanamo Campaign** staged a 'vigil' outside Starbucks in New Street to protest against the fact that the multinational leaves no stone unturned in its quest for a profit - they're only too happy to have branch in Gitmo'. After all, there must be nothing like a refreshing frappuccino at 4 in the morning to keep you pepped up when you're busy beating a confession out of a 'terrorist' suspect.

Cops turned up around lunchtime saying that there had been an allegation that the entrance to the shop was being obstructed. After all, Saturday shoppers have a right to a cup of coffee; all that rampant consumerism can be a tiring business. Unsurprisingly, it would appear that the manager of the shop himself made the complaint, and coppers obliged by dishing out a few threats of breach of the peace in the ensuing debate with protesters.

Why not ask Starbucks when they're going to stop flogging espressos to the torturers of Guantanamo - you can find your local branch by looking out yer nearest window or visiting their website: www.starbucks.co.uk/en-GB/About+Starbucks/Contact+Starbucks.htm

STOP THE HAW COALITION

Cops in **Parliament Square** were suspiciously prepared during their latest arrest of **Brian Haw**, the anti-war demonstrator who's been camped outside parliament since 2001 (See SchNEWS 543). Just after 5am last Saturday morning (21st), a woman turned up and started trashing his camp, but it was Brian who actually got nicked under the Public Order Act for threatening behaviour.

Despite the early hour and 'unexpected' nature of the attack, keen cops were on the scene within minutes in three cars, two vans and several on foot, to boot. Whether it was a stitch up or not, the response time was pretty impressive, and it's nice to see such a high level of commitment which sees several community support officers, a handful of sergeants and an inspector working so hard at such an early hour. Brian was released on bail after a pleasant five hour stay at Belgravia police station, meanwhile the custody sergeant confirmed that the woman who attacked the display was released with only a caution. For the full story and more about possible agent provocateurs in Parliament square see www2.indymedia.org.uk/en/2006/10/354016.html See also www.parliament-square.org.uk

PARTY & PROTEST

OCTOBER: This weekend is the '**No More Fallujahs**' protests marking two years since coalition forces devastated the Iraqi city. On Saturday (28th) there is a march from the UK's military nerve centre in **Northwood** to the Peace Memorial in Tavistock Square (via U.S. Embassy). Meet 11am, Northwood tube station (Metropolitan line tube), finish 4pm, central London. On Sunday (29th) is the "**Unauthorised**" **24-hour peace camp in Parliament Square**, London - assemble 12 noon. For more call 0845 458 2564 or see www.rememberfallujah.org ** **30th - Noise demo** against a **Military Nanotech conference** on 30-31st Oct, at 53 Haddon Gardens, London. Meet 12pm at Farringdon tube in frankenstein/cybermen fancy dress theme. ** Not to be outdone for fashion, the 31st sees the **Spooky Halloween Demo at EDO MBM**, 4-6pm, Home Farm Rd, Brighton. Come masked Up! For more see www.smashedo.org.uk ** **NOVEMBER 4th - National Climate March** - part of a Day of International Climate Protest. Events start with a bike ride at 10am - meet at Lincolns Inn Fields. Rally at the US embassy at 12pm, marching to Trafalgar Square. Be prepared to rub protesting shoulders with all types! www.campaigncc.org and www.global-climatecampaign.org ** **For full listings see www.schnews.org.uk/pap/guide.htm**

...and finally...

Dick 'the Sith' Cheney kindly tipped us off this week that some of his fellow countrymen (and women, Stan) suspect he is really that dark evil wanna-be overlord of the galaxy, Darth Vader. The revelation came during an interview on that most liberal and venerable civil society media platform, the Fox News channel. He rasped, "Of course, (huh-phrr, huh-phrr) I have my view, and people will say, 'Well, that's just Cheney. He's the Darth Vader of the administration, always taking the dark view.'" This helped us discover that there are many online parodies, like (www.wsbtv.com/politics/10154701/detail.html) which catches him in full rubber-fetish life-support suit.

Cheney also discussed the bloodshed terrorists could cause if they used a nuclear, biological or other dangerous weapon on an American city, adding that he was feeling strange disturbances in the force, and all resistance must be crushed now before it becomes more powerful than we possibly imagine.

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SchNEWS warns all readers... the Palestine issue will keep you fully occupied. Honest!

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