

WAKE UP!! IT'S YER LATINO-ING ME KNOWING YOU...

SchNEWS

www.schnews.org.uk

Friday 11th May 2007

Free/Donation

Issue 587

THE SchINDEPENDENT

Iraqis tear down Blair statue after regime change is finally confirmed...



Never mind the Bolivars

As Latin America's '21st century socialists' look to break free from the West

"If we really want to live in a dignified Bolivia then we must take the path of anti-imperialism, anti-liberalism and anti-colonialism my friends," Evo Morales, President of Bolivia

Whilst May Day in the UK saw a march or two and a few suited anarcho types having space-hijacking fun at Canary Wharf (for report/pix see www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2007/05/369302.html), history was being made in South America. At the same time that Venezuela's president Hugo Chavez was announcing the re-nationalisation of the last parts of the country's oil industry still in private hands, several other countries joined in with May Day calls to leave the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank.

With two fingers to corporate rule, four oil refinery sites in the heavily polluted Orinoco Basin, believed to be the site of the world's largest single crude oil deposit, reverted to state control at midnight local time. State oil company PDVSA now controls at least 60% of the projects, which corporate criminals like Chevron, Exxon Mobil, BP and Total have been forced to give up. In return Big Oil have been offered minority stakes in the projects, but company bosses are busy whining about compensation details and, no doubt, trawling Washington and Langley's leafy suburbs (home of the CIA) to see if anyone's up for trying another coup (see SchNEWS 465).

Big Boss Chavez told cheering workers that foreign oil companies had damaged Venezuela's national interests and that reclaiming the refineries represented an historic victory. "This is the true nationalisation of our natural resources," he said during a media savvy ceremony at the Jose Oil processing plant, "Today we are closing a perverse cycle."

According to the Chavez Junta, that cycle cannot be fully closed until Venezuelans escape the clutches of the World Bank and IMF. So came the order to Finance Minister Rodrigo Cabezas to withdraw from the two international racketeers, which he accused of exploiting small countries and being "mechanisms of North American imperialism" (where can he have got such crazy ideas?!). Last week the Venezuelan government announced that it may also extend nationalisation to the banking sector, replacing western bank managers with its own cartel of card-carrying Chavistas.

Venezuela's not the only country in the region waking up to some serious bouts of anti-capitalist thinking. Bolivia is busily extending its own 'reclaim the power' policy which kicked off when they nationalised parts of the energy industry a year ago (See SchNEWS 542). In his May Day address, President Evo Morales promised to take

greater control of the economy from foreign companies, announcing that the state energy company YPFB will now control the production and marketing of the country's oil and natural gas. In Nicaragua, President Daniel Ortega led a march through the capital, Managua, having declared that he was negotiating with the IMF "to leave the Fund" and that he hoped to "get out of the prison" of IMF debt. Last week President Rafael Correa of Ecuador announced that it was booting the World Bank's representative out of the country: "we will not stand for extortion by this international bureaucracy". Two years ago the Bank refused to release a previously agreed £50 million loan in an attempt to force Ecuador to use oil revenues for debt repayment, rather than social spending as per the government's manifesto.

Chav & Chav Nots

Perhaps they will all soon join Chavez in his ambitious plan to set up a Banco del Sur (Bank of the South) to replace the World Bank and IMF. Meanwhile, north of the border, the Yanquis are trying to work out where it all went wrong. The Centre for Economic Policy Research, a Washington-based think 'tank' (as in dangerous and hard to stop), said

that the IMF's support for the botched coup against Chávez five years ago *might* have influenced Venezuela's decision to pull out of the IMF and the Bank. You don't say!

Socialism of course, needs leaders. It's no good having the masses decide how best to organise things. OK, bung the poor a few extra dollars and improve their schools, but the smell of the dictatorship of the proletariat is hanging in the air. Perhaps Hugo's been spending too much time on the blower to his pal Fidel Castro, over in the less than democratic Cuba. On the surface newly proposed democratic reforms look pretty good. Chavez is instigating the creation of thousands of 'neighbourhood councils', comprising 200 – 400 families, designed to devolve power to local level. The idea is that these councils will also influence national policies. While this sounds promising, and an interesting experiment for anarcho types to keep an eye on, Chavez has also suggested this is best done through the creation of one national party – the United Socialist Party of Venezuela. That's right, one national party, headed by Hugo Chavez, seemingly angling to become President for life... whether this self styled '21st century socialism' manages to avoid some of the pitfalls of its repressive 20th century relative remains to be seen...

For some in depth (if very pro Chav) coverage of Venezuela's ongoing revolution check www.venezuelanalysis.com

CASTRO GTX

Talking of Latin American May Day speeches...Over in Cuba, Fidel 'I'm still alive' Castro gave his address on the theme of biomass and US plans to maintain its suburban sprawl by filling all its cars with biofuel. The European Commission is in on the idea as well with plans for mega-plantations of wheat and rapeseed oil (the most productive biofuel crops).

Sounds like a good plan - biofuels produce 70% less carbon than yer petrol fuelled motor don't they? But to grow enough rapeseed to meet UK targets, for example, would require a quarter of all the UK's cropland turned over to feeding internal combustion. Keeping on historical track, we can't go upsetting middle England like that so a-plundering we will go...

An alternative to wheat and rapeseed is African palm, a much higher yielding crop. Although most palm for biodiesel will come from Indonesia and Malaysia, the Colombian Pacific is a favourite spot which also conveniently receives bundles of EU cash to help smooth things over. Following a constitutional battle, local communities gained recognition for the collective ownership of

5 million hectares of land in this area. But money minded politicians reckon the land is not being used to its full economic advantage by developing cash crop biofuel production. With some paramilitary muscle, almost 1.5 million people have been displaced to make way for industrial scale plantations. Activists are regularly beaten, disappeared or generally harassed and there have been massacres in Rio Sucio, Bojaya, San Juan River, Naya River, Raposo River, Buenaventura and Barbacoas (to name a few..!)

Such monoculture destroys the diversity of local ecosystems and erodes Colombian food sovereignty, putting in place a competition for food between cars and people as the country becomes ever more reliant on food imports and the profit-orientated whims and wishes of agribusiness. More people leave the land and end up in city slums, hungry and out of work. But hey, its all good for shareholder value and SUV drivers! Besides, we all know that fuels rush in where angels fear to tread...

* Check www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/index.php and www.monbiot.com/archives/2007/03/27/a-lethal-solution-for-more.

INFORMATION FOR ACTION

Copyright
Published in Brighton since 1994

G8 GERMANIC PANIC

It's countdown to the latest G8 shindig with the main event only a matter weeks away. (6-8th June). And as usual, the warm up-act appears to be a spot of police repression.

While the build up continues apace across Europe, with all manner of sane thinking people (and probably some not so sane as well) preparing for their late spring break in Germany, forces in the Fatherland have been flexing their batons and forward intelligence muscles in the vain hope of spoiling the party.

Despite the chosen G8 venue being in the sleepy Baltic Sea resort of Heiligendamm in the far north-east of the country (already surrounded with a shiny new \$17m fence), last week saw many hundreds of cops involved in around forty raids right across Germany, with convergence and social centres, squats and anti-G8 group offices all targeted.

Several projects and flats in Hamburg (notably the Rote Flora, shortly due to become the city's main G8 convergence centre) and Bremen felt the crackdown as well as some farms in Schleswig-Holstein, Brandenburg and Niedersachsen.

In the capital, Berlin, at least eight properties were attacked, including a bookshop, flats, two offices, the kanalb radio and media group and the servers of autonomous tech collective so36. net were seized (a main website host for many lefty and anarcho groups.)

The main reason given for the raids was that catch-all 21st century ruse, "forming a terrorist association" - but as Hanne Jobst of the Berlin Bethanien Glocal anti-G8 office explains, "**Who invites the G8 summit also invites the protest against it. All attempts to criminalize this movement will not prevent us from exposing worldwide inequalities during the G8 summit.**"

Meanwhile the clampdown is proving more of a downer for the inhabitants of the most famous autonomous squat in Berlin, the Kopei centre. Germany's largest, resisting, self-organised space has existed since the early nineties and has been no stranger to attacks from Police (for most recent see SchNEWS 573) but the latest problem is the

small matter of the building and surrounding land being sold from under their feet. A hastily arranged auction was run by owners Commerzbank, and on May 8th the properties were sold (for a knockdown price) to a specially-created mystery shell company. Having only been informed a few weeks earlier, Kopeites had attempted to warn off prospective buyers, as they had successfully done before, but this time to no avail. Mass protests were organised before and during the auction and cops responded by attacking the protesters at the Heinrichplatz with baton abandon, repeatedly moving and attempting to snatch individuals from the crowd, which spontaneously formed into human chains to stop them. The cops also used the event as cover to storm a local alternative Café, brutally injured the guests and staff in the process. Five people were arrested, with one so badly beaten that he was hospitalised.

Kopei residents and supporters remain resolute and warn they're not going to leave easily, regardless of who the state says owns the property and images of Copenhagen spring to mind (See SchNEWS 579)... See kopei.squat.net

* Over a hundred two-wheel activists involved in the G8 bicycle caravan were arrested and harassed in Utrecht, Holland last Saturday (5th). But not for pedalling their own ideas about the elite knees up of course, but the spurious charge of failing to use bike lanes properly. Unusually for this offence horse mounted cops charged into the ride with batons swinging, and forcibly arrested everyone in sight, confiscating their vehicles and equipment - much of which was returned damaged, after activists were finally released 48 hrs later complaining of ill treatment and overcrowding. That it was all one big pre-G8 intimidation exercise was left in no doubt, with cops telling activists that what they'd done that day was nothing compared to what they'd do if they continued to carry out their actions. The battle lines are drawn... the **next UK G8 Mobilisation meeting** is on Thursday 17th MAY from 7pm-9pm (ish) at RampART Social Centre, 15-17 Rampart Street, London, E1 2LA. www.rampart.co.nr

CAN U DIG IT?

Camp-based activists against the welsh gas pipeline (see SchNEWS 576) brought work to a standstill last Friday, at least on one section of the route. At approximately 3pm, three JCBs were sighted to the west of the camp - six miles outside Brecon. Around twelve campaigners swiftly occupied the site and stood in front of the diggers. After a short stand off, and the occupation of one machine, work was halted for the day.

Support for the camp is growing but more help is needed. Currently on the camp wish list: real coffee (how would the Brighton contingent survive without a morning cappuccino?) and a 'dagger headed shovel' - whatever that is. For more see www.fightthepipe.co.uk

SchNEWS in brief...

The Basement Social Centre in Manchester has suffered water and smoke damage from a fire next door. Forced to close for essential repairs they're calling out for volunteers with refurb skills to help get them back open. You can also donate on the website, see <http://thebasement.clearerchannel.org/new/?q=node/3>

****Escanda** is the name of a non-hierarchical, anti-capitalist collective space set in a picturesque Austrian landscape. It has proved a successful grass-roots networking resource, undertaking a number of projects including local environmental activism and education, and the establishment of a permaculture garden. They've got a call out for people to visit for a 'work camp' from May 20-26th. You'll get a chance to learn new skills and help maintain the village by helping with tasks like installing an irrigation system, building a compost loo, repairing traditional stone walls and building a house. In return, they will provide "wonderful food, basic accommodation, lovely company and entertaining evenings." Well how could you resist an offer like that? To sign up email info@gmx.net (pref. ASAP) or see www.escanda.org/english/indexen.php for more info.

****MAY: 18 - National Day of Action for Refugees** - Demo: 1-2pm outside the UK Immigration Service, Communications House, 210 Old Street, London, EC1V 9BR (tube: Old Street). Street Event: bring your drums and whistles for a noisy protest! 1-3pm at Wood Green Library, High Rd, London, N22 6XD (tube: Wood Green). For more tel: 020 7837 1688 or email: defendasyllumseekers@yahoo.co.uk ****19 - Global Boycott Procter and Gamble Day** - action against the worlds largest consumer products company. Events include demos at P&G sites across the UK with 'supermarket sweeps' of P&G products. See www.uncaged.co.uk/pgday.htm for more. ****23 - Brighton Against the Arms Trade** - public meeting of local and national activists fighting the arms trade 7.30-9.30pm at the Brighthelm Centre, North Street, Brighton.

* For full listings updated weekly see www.schnews.org.uk/pap

...and finally...

Here's one the tealeaf gazers didn't see coming. Philadelphia cops decided to clampdown on local tarot readers and dreamcatcher artisans by digging up a disused thirty year-old law which makes it a crime to make money by "pretending for gain or lucre to tell fortunes or predict future events."

Their pals in the Department of Licences and Inspections promptly shut down a range of tarot card readers, astrologers and various other cranks. Fortunately the end wasn't nigh as the mystics launched a legal campaign and have since reopened, which cops apparently hadn't foreseen.

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers -viva la revolucion but one party rule ain't cool. Honest!

DRM ROLL PLEASE

A user-powered 'blogosphere' was gagged last week - leading to a cyberspace revolt and a bit of digital direct action.

Digg.com is an online community where users freely post, rate and promote information themselves. One user had posted a 16-number sequence that breaks the digital rights management (DRM) encryption on High Density DVDs, known as a 'crack'. Cracked DVDs will play on any machine, so bypassing the movie industry copyrighters in their mission to commodify and control all artistic content.

The posting sent shock-waves throughout the corporate tech world and the Digg site providers were swiftly lent on by the Advanced Access Content System Licensing Administrator (AACs), the consortium behind the DRM system. Apparently, the code-busting information upsets the US Digital Millennium Copyright Act. The DRM hacking info disappeared from Digg, along with many posts in support of the crack. The self-censorship caused angry dissent from thousands of other Diggers who began to repeatedly repost the original message.

The info farce was resolved as the level of protest eventually turned the tide - founder Kevin Rose announced: "You've made it clear. You'd rather see Digg go down fighting than bow down to a bigger company. We hear you, and effective immediately we won't delete stories or comments containing the code and will deal with whatever the consequences might be."

Join the information revolution (or is that revulsion) at www.digg.com

We're now all off to copy the latest hollywood blockbusters....

FAN-DABI-SARKOZY

France celebrated the victory of its new right wing president Nicholas Sarkozy with 2 days of solid rioting that left several hundred cars burned, 600 arrested and 30 police injured. Sarkozy, who as interior minister inflamed an already tense situation in France's ghettos during the last but one round of rioting by saying that he would clean the 'scum' from the suburbs. His not so veiled racist remarks did him well in winning the far right vote from Le Penn's national front party.

Another of his electoral promises was to "liquidate the legacy of 'May 1968' - the mass movement of students, workers and libertarians.

Sarkozy (referred to by many French as, 'the American President') wants to improve relations with the US, and has criticised Chirac for his 'arrogance' in opposing Bush & Blair's push to invade Iraq. Both Bush and Blair have responded warmly to news of his victory - which speaks volumes about the kind of guy that he is.

Aiming to bring in a raft of Thatcher-esque style reforms, he has been threatening to make France a more hard working, more efficient nation, hoping to bring in something like an uncomplaining slave, or sorry, protestant work ethic to a country famous for long lunch breaks and an easygoing attitude to a tipples on the job. He plans to end the 35 hour working week and cut benefits. The last time an incoming French president promised something similar was when Chirac was first elected back in 1995. The result? A wave of strikes ripped through the country that forced the government to back down. Plus Ca Change! In response to his victory / the riots, Sarkozy decided to go on a short holiday on a luxury yacht.

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, c/o Community Base, 113 Queens Rd, Brighton, BN1 3XG. Tel +44 (0)1273 685913 Email schnews@brighton.co.uk Web www.schnews.org.uk