



WAKE UP!! IT'S YER OPIUM OF THE MINORITIES...

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GOOD PLAN, 'STAN

AS THE BODY COUNT MOUNTS, WE LOOK AT THE UNWINNABLE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

There seems to be a real sense of surprise that eight British soldiers were killed in 24 hours, during the 'fiercest fighting yet in Afghanistan'. The Taliban have changed their strategies from massed wave attacks to the hit-and-run guerilla insurgency that stopped the US occupation dead in its tank-tracks in Iraq.

Whilst the patriotic coverage of "Our Boys" is not surprising, the fact that the Taliban can fight back isn't either. After all they the product-of / heirs-to the Mujahideen that defeated the Soviets in the 80s. Afghanistan is called 'the graveyard of empires' for good reason. The British were defeated there (just like in Iraq) in the heyday of the British Empire. In 1842, Afghans killed over 16,000 British soldiers and auxiliaries in a single battle. The Brits remained bogged down in Afghanistan for decades, eventually giving up in the 1920s. The Russians tried a few decades later. They quit after ten years with 14,000 dead on their side.

Since then Afghanistan has been in a near-constant state of war. The Taliban years meant a kind of harsh peace for many, although their brand of knuckle-headed Islam only really held any real appeal to the 2 million shellshocked survivors in the refugee camps.

It's hard to guess at the numbers of dead in the latest US-UK phase of their war. Human Rights Watch has managed to put together some figures; their minimum estimates (including only known, recorded deaths) suggest something like 1,000 every year - almost certainly a gross undercount.

With such high stakes it's obvious that this war is very important to Western leaders and NATO generals. Considering that the invasion was basically an act of revenge in the first place, it's worth taking a moment to ponder why 'our boys' are still being sent to die nearly eight years after 9-11.

KABULSHIT

But first we need to be clear about what the war is not about. It's not about oil. Or pipelines. Or bases. It's not about the War on Terror™ (sorry, Overseas Contingency Operation). It's not about the war on drugs.

Yes, there is a school of thought that says that the war in Afghanistan is part of a grand plan to control the world's energy resources - gas and oil especially. Some claim Afghanistan is perfectly placed to take gas from central Asia on to Europe, bypassing dodgy states like Russia and Iran. But these schemers' plans involve routing gas through such dangerous and unpredictable

EDO are exhibiting in an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle military conference on July 22nd-23rd. Anyone wanting to give them a warm welcome should get themselves down to the Celtic Manor Resort Hotel in Newport on the 22nd and 23rd of July. www.smashedo.org.uk

territory as northern Pakistan, Kurdistan and Afghanistan - a bad idea from the start, hugely expensive and impossible to defend.

A strongly worded communiqué from any one of a dozen rebel groups in the area is enough to send energy prices soaring. And anyway, this is only one of at least three mega pipeline projects crisscrossing Central Asia.

Russia, China, Iran, Turkmenistan, Pakistan and India have all been investing heavily in pipelines which don't need either America or Afghanistan.

OK, Afghanistan does have one multi-billion dollar export - opium. But a side effect of toppling the Taliban caliphate in 2001 was that opium cultivation and production skyrocketed. About the only nice thing the UN ever said about the Taliban was about their success in eradicating opium. But in the lawless post-invasion environment, Afghans now produce some 90% of the world's supply with the anti-drug Taliban showing their pragmatic side - needing cash to fund their insurgency, they encourage and then tax opium farming. A clever plan would be to buy opium directly from farmers (distributing

CALL OFF THE HOUNDS!

The Crawley and Horsham (C&H) foxhunt's attempt to crush hunt monitors under the weight of an injunction has collapsed ignominiously! As we reported back in SchNEWS 637, the C&H, backed by the Countryside Alliance, had engaged the services of Timothy Lawson-Cruttenden - pioneer of liberty-busting lawsuits under the Protection from Harassment Act (See SchNEWS 581) to prevent monitoring of their activities. On Tuesday (14th), hunt monitors received notice that the case was being dropped.

The injunction would've seen huge areas of Sussex closed off to monitors - who could have been arrested regardless of what the hunt was doing. Since the ban came into effect in 2005, hunts have tried every trick in the book to ensure that they are still able to set dogs on wildlife. With senior cops making it clear that they weren't interested in enforcing a ban, it's been left up to hunt monitors to procure the evidence to ensure that the blood-junkies end up in the dock. Monitors and sabs are the last obstacle to the resumption of hunting. Having solicited donations from across the world to fight for blood-sports, it's clear that the Countryside Alliance saw this as a flagship case and were hoping to roll out similar injunctions across the country.

Chichester based monitors Simon and Jane Wilde have long been at the forefront of getting evidence of hunt cruelty. This year, using an undercover infiltrator, they were able to get

US IMPERIALISM GETS A MAKEOVER



CRAP SEARCH OF THE WEEK

....for an arresting aroma

On their way to this year's Workhouse festival in rainy North Wales last weekend, one van load of would-be revellers got pulled over on the Welsh border by West Mercia police. Apparently as they were going to a festival they might be "bringing drugs in from outside the area" (only local drugs here please!). After one copper got a noseful of a 'suspicious' smell they searched the van top to bottom, suspecting 'the presence of cannabis' - unfortunately for the keen-nosed cops the smell came from a pot of pungent organic pesto.

processed opiates to hospitals maybe) but this has been vetoed by the Americans, who can't be seen to be soft on drugs.

So if the Afghan war is about anything, it's about pride. The US (and us) can't be seen to be defeated by a ragtag group of peasants and refugees - because when you look at the globe, there are a lot of people that match that description and the last ten years have shown that it's exactly these types of forces that can defeat modern armies. 'Our' forces can't win, and they can't retreat; the only solution chickenhawk

CONTINUED OVERLEAF..

hold of conclusive evidence that the plaintiffs - who said that they were being harassed by the Wilde's activities - were engaged in illegal hunting. The principle plaintiff, Simon Greenwood, was filmed using his hounds to chase a fox to ground and then call in terrier-men to dig it out and throw it to the hounds.

Jane's solicitor Victoria von Strandmann told SchNEWS that these proceedings were an oppressive attempt by a powerful group seeking to use the courts to stop individuals concerned about the welfare of animals, in order to flout a law that they have unstintingly opposed. In the process, they were seeking to stifle legitimate opposition and rights to free speech, and prevent individuals from going about their everyday lives.

Simon Wilde told us: "The Crawley and Horsham hunt has been forced to withdraw from an action that the Countryside Alliance had originally engineered as a master plan designed to defeat the Hunting Act by preventing monitoring. If they had achieved this, it would have spread nationwide and been game, set and match for hunting. Now we have turned the tables, and the hunt will have to write out cheques for hundreds of thousands of pounds for legal fees, having achieved nothing."

Two's-up on yer new Land Rover then Simon!
* To contact West Sussex Wildlife Protection call 07990522712

* See also www.hsa.enviroweb.org

GOOD PLAN, 'STAN *continued...*

politicians suggest is to throw more young lads into the line of fire and drop more explosives on more people, escalating the conflict. It's worth recalling the suggestion of a US general during the last years of the Vietnam War: "Can't we just declare victory and leave?"

Much more than Israel's attacks on Palestinians, Afghanistan is as clear a case of complicity from the UK government as you could get. The attacks are ordered by our politicians with the active help of British corporate backers. Take EDO/ITT for example: while they don't like to admit they make cash supplying components to the Israelis, they are proud to admit they make entire bomb racks for British warplanes, used to murder farmers and shepherds in Afghanistan. EDO's bomb racks are specifically designed to be used with the Paveway bombs regularly used in 'close air support' missions to 'facilitate reconstruction and the extension of government authority' - i.e. bombing missions to you and me.

And EDO must be rubbing their hands as the UK government makes galvanising claims that the Afghan war is 'showing signs of success' - despite that fact that after eight years the Taliban now control something like 40% of the country. Even areas theoretically under Coalition/'Afghan Government' control often have to sway back to

Taliban law at night, when the US/UK military are back at their bases.

But it's been difficult to get people on to UK streets to protest the war in Afghanistan lately. Understandable as most folks are reluctant to be seen supporting the Taliban, undeniably amongst the most humourless bunch of bastards you could ever hope not to meet.

Another reason may be that, much more than Iraq, there just isn't much media coverage from the other side of Afghanistan. Very few images of Afghan dead permeate the mass media filters. Apart from the odd Channel Four special, and Robert Fisk in the *Independent*, what we see is what we're spoonfed - squaddies in rough terrain doing a tough job, alternately doling out sweet to local kids and lobbing mortars at enemy positions.

When the Trots are the most active force agitating against the war, we've really taken our eye off the ball.

Information About Afghanistan

* www.tomdispatch.com (US alternative news source that's kept focussed throughout) * www.atimes.com (Asia Times Online - their reporter, Syed Saleem Shahzad, seems to have really good sources within the Taliban)

Information For Action

* www.antimilitaristnetwork.org.uk * www.stopwar.org.uk (reluctantly) * www.smashedo.org.uk

DOW AND NOWT

This Monday (13th) the international campaign to bring justice for the survivors of the 1984 Union Carbide (UC) chemical spill in Bhopal held a demo at Dow Chemical's office in Staines. Dow bought out UC in 2001, but they are doing their utmost not to take ownership of Bhopal's deadly legacy.

The world's largest industrial accident (See SchNEWS 580) on the night of December 3rd 1984, saw 42 tonnes of methyl isocyanate gas pouring out of the UC pesticide plant, killing up to 10,000 within the first 72 hours, with a subsequent death toll of an estimated 25,000. The mess was never cleared up, let alone due compensation paid out, and the toxicity continues to wreak havoc.

The 20 campaigners at Staines included Sathyu Sarangi, long-term Bhopal activist, and founder of the Sambhavna Clinic which treats survivors. Sathyu estimates that up to 150,000 people are still chronically ill as a result of the spill. Involved since day one of the disaster, Sathyu's efforts to help victims and bring the US corporation to account have seen him serve three prison sentences, endure beatings and have a contract put on his life.

The demo was accompanied by the latest stunt from pranksters The Yes Men who, on the same day, 'launched' a new brand of bottled mineral water, B'eau-Pal, featuring water from hand pumps near the disaster site. The minerals in this water pack a punch: tests show that it holds 2000 times the EPA limit of Carbon Tetrachloride - a deadly compound which affects the nervous system, liver and kidneys. Worryingly, this figure has tripled since 1999, demonstrating the way toxins continue to leech into the water system. Other chemicals present in B'eau-Pal include the carcinogenic Dichlorobenzene. A report by the Sambhavna Trust shows that groundwater, vegetables, and breast milk in the area are contaminated by toxic quantities of nickel, chromium, mercury, lead, and volatile organic compounds.

This year is the 25th anniversary of the disaster, and, in the build-up, the campaign are touring Europe in a bus, starting in Germany in October. There will be international demos this December - for more see www.bhopal.org

* For more about B'eau-Pal see www.theyesmen.org/blog/dow-runs-scared-from-water

VA-VA-BOOM!

Following a spate of 'bossknappings', blockaded ports and barricaded factories, feisty French workers have gone one step further and are now threatening to blow up their factories in response to job losses.

Car parts manufacturer New Fabris, in the town of Chatellerault in central France, went into liquidation in April, making every one of its 366 staff redundant with, at most, two months wages in compensation.

As the operations were winding down, workers decided to take action and occupy the factory. After hanging black cardboard cut-outs in the shape of coffins noting workers' names, they dragged machinery from the factory into the courtyard and torched it. Then, deciding to get really serious, they placed 20 canisters of acetylene and butane all around the factory and rigged them to explode.

They are now threatening to detonate the canisters if their demands for a 30,000 Euro per person redundancy package are not met by 31st of July.

Blockaded in the factory with the workers is millions of pounds worth of machinery and equipment. The workers are now offering the return of the machinery (that hasn't yet been toasted) in negotiations with car makers Renault and Peugeot, the two customers of New Fabris, whom they hold responsible for its demise.

The action has provoked copycat incidents at Nortel Networks research centre in Châteaufort, near Paris, and at US construction equipment-maker J.L.G., in the Lot-et-Garonne region where workers loaded gas canisters on top of aerial platforms and threatened to blow them up.

While representatives at Nortel claimed they wouldn't have followed through on their threats after they obtained an agreement to stage talks, the New Fabris workers maintain that they are completely serious. "We are at the end of the line," union rep Guy Eyermann said. "A lot of people worked here for 25, 35 years. Many have given their lives to the company." Eyermann called on "all factories in Europe that are closing to protest and do what the workers are doing here."

* www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/07/15/french-auto-workers-threa_0_n_233890.html

COUP STARK

As the region's politicians continue to attempt some kind of political opposition to the military coup in Honduras (see SchNEWS 682), the people are still on the streets confronting the military with non-violent direct action. Thousands of protesters have now blockaded three of the four main roads that feed the capital, Tegucigalpa. With union organisations in Nicaragua and El Salvador announcing plans to shut down the borders with Honduras in solidarity, the coup government are becoming increasingly isolated.

Desperate to cling on to power the military is resorting to terror tactics, including arbitrary imprisonment. Last week, Jose David Murillo Sanchez, the father of a protester shot and killed by the military (see SchNEWS 683), went to the police station to make a statement. While returning home he was bundled into an unmarked car by police and taken away.

Sanchez, a member of MAO, a campesino environmental defence organization in Olancho, is now being detained on trumped up two-year-old charges. * See www.narconews.com

CALAIS BRUISE CREWS

Calais migrant-support activists have received word that a major police operation is planned for next week. As we reported in SchNEWS 682, thousands of migrants hoping to get into the UK hide out in the Calais area, waiting for their chance to cross the channel. The police are said to be planning the clearance of the shanty dwellings and squats that house the migrants on Tuesday (21st), followed by a mass deportation of Afghani migrants on Thursday (24th).

France's Interior Minister Eric Besson made it clear in January that he wanted to see all migrants removed from Calais and the surrounding area by the end of this summer. And the project has already started, with the bulldozing of camps at Loon-Plage and Teteghem and the destruction of squats in Calais.

Activists are sending out an urgent call-out for people to get down to Calais to support the migrants and act as legal observers. Call 07884 040683, email calais.press@riseup.net or see www.calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com

* London No Borders and No Borders Brighton are calling a demo at 12.30pm outside the French Embassy, 58 Knightsbridge, London, SW1X 7JT on Monday 20th July to protest the repression. (Brighton station meet-up 10am)

* The next No Borders camp will be held August 25th-31st on Lesvos, a Greek island which serves as a main entry point for thousands of refugees and migrants looking to reach Europe. For details see www.lesvos09.antira.info

...and finally...

Also at the Workhouse Festival (see Crap Search this issue), one punter enjoying a relaxing herbal smoke was surprised to be seized by two burly blokes and informed that he was under arrest. That's right, plain-clothes plod bumbling round a festie and - shock-horror! - catching someone having a joint.

Although the unfortunate toker only copped a street caution - the crowd weren't going to take this lying down. So shortly afterwards, the undercover developed a bit of a following, with two stalkers dressed as police with one holding a sign just saying "COPS" with an arrow. Being the centre of attention didn't really suit them and the two were soon reduced to hiding behind festival security. After a half-hour stand off they left site and weren't seen again all weekend, and there were no more surprise busts - pass da rizla!

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers - do mention the war, we didn't once but we think we got away with it. Honest!

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