

A SMASHING DEFENCE

AS EDO DECOMMISSIONERS PREPARE FOR COURT...

"I told many people in Gaza about the people's strike on EDO MBM... When I recounted this action to people, I saw an expression come over their faces that I hadn't encountered before when talking about international solidarity. It was a kind of respect, a sense of surprised pride at a tiny move towards a leveling between the blood sacrifices and living hell of so many here, and sacrifices made by people in comparative comfort zones on the other side of the world - for them" - Ewa Jasiewicz - human rights activist/journalist eyewitness to Operation Cast Lead.

In the early hours of 17th January 2009, during Israel's 'Operation Cast Lead' offensive against Gaza, six people broke in to the EDO/ITT weapons' components factory in Moulsecoomb, Brighton, and caused hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of damage to the production line. (see SchNEWS 663 and also check out www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-281XjHw50 for the local paper's video of some of the damage)

The six 'decommissioners' barricaded themselves inside, and proceeded to smash computers and other equipment, with the aim of preventing the factory from being able to produce weapons. The action succeeded in stopping production at the factory for days.

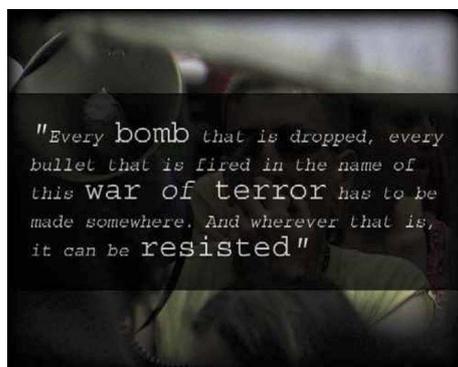
On May 17th nine people will stand trial accused of 'conspiracy to commit criminal damage'. Three were arrested outside the factory. The trial is expected to last for ten weeks at Hove Crown Court (see smashedo.org.uk to confirm). The decommissioners will be running the defence that their actions were legally justified as they were "acting to prevent a greater crime".

There is a history of juries finding anti-war activists not guilty when they attack machinery used in war crimes. In 1996 four women from Trident Ploughshares decommissioned a Hawk jet that was about to be shipped to Indonesia - they were found not guilty (see SchNEWS 62). In 2008 the Raytheon 9, who damaged a factory in Derry supplying weapons to Israel during the 2006 Lebanon war (see SchNEWS 555), were also unanimously acquitted by a jury.

Before entering the EDO factory the decommissioners recorded statements detailing the reasons why they planned to take

part in the action (see www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfa8R2AxUFg). One of the decommissioners, Elijah Smith said *"I don't feel I'm going to do anything illegal tonight, but I'm going to go into an arms factory and smash it up to the best of my ability so that it cannot produce munitions and these very dirty bombs that have been provided to the Israeli army so that they can kill children. The time for talking has gone too far. I'm not a writer, I'm just a person from the community and I'm deeply disgusted."*

The EDO factory on Home Farm Road in Brighton, has been part of ITT Corporation since December 2007. Before ITT took over, the factory was known as EDO MBM, a trading unit of the EDO Corpora-



tion. ITT have an interesting history, having done business with Franco, Hitler and Pinochet. The company was established in 1920 and diversified to weapons production in the 1930s when it acquired the German Focke-Wulf company, a manufacturer of aircraft for the Nazi Luftwaffe. They are now the 19th largest defence manufacturer in the world. ITT has well established links to the supply of the Israeli armed forces.

THAT DARK AND STORMY NIGHT

On January the 17th 2009 the bombs had already fallen relentlessly on Gaza for three weeks (see SchNEWS 661). Massive, passionate demonstrations and pickets had been held in many cities around the UK and the world in protest against Israel's war crimes, but to no avail (see SchNEWS 662). A growing sense of helplessness was grabbing hold of the peace movement as the Palestinian body count stood at 1400



**GREEK REFERENDUM ON AUSTERITY:
EXIT POLE SUGGESTS GOVERNMENT WILL TAKE A BEATING**

and rising. 300 of the dead were children.

Just after midnight the six activists broke into EDO's premises with the aim of stopping the factory's production. This was an entirely accountable action where each person had pre-recorded a video in which they stated the reasons for their participation - to help dismantle the war machine from the factory floor (to view their video statements go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfa8R2AxUFg&feature=related).

Once inside the building, the six barricaded themselves in and set to work; equipment used to make weapon components - including some used in Israeli F16 fighter jets - were trashed whilst computers were thrown out of the windows. A dummy missile was also hurled out into the car park. Once they were done they calmly waited for the police to arrest them. Three bystanders have also been charged with aiding the decommissioners.

DCI Graham Pratt of Sussex Police was quoted in the Guardian, saying "Windows had been smashed and offices turned over in what I would describe as wanton vandalism, but with machinery and equipment so targeted that it could have been done with a view of bringing business to a standstill".

According to Andrew Beckett, increasingly secretive press spokesman for SMASH EDO, *"Far from being a 'wanton' act it was a pre-planned act of resistance against the massacre going on in Gaza. However, the second part of his statement was entirely accurate: the decommissioning prevented the manufacturing side of EDO from working, slowing down the murderous war machine they are a part of"*.

The Decommissioners supporters will be holding a vigil outside Hove Crown Court at 9am on the first day of the trial, May 17th. Supporters are encouraged to attend court but politely reminded that the decommissioners want to win this one through force of argument.

There will be an 'If I had a hammer' themed demo in support of the decommissioners on Wednesday 19th May - Bring rubber and inflatable hammers.

* See www.smashedo.org.uk,
www.decommissioners.co.uk

PARTY & PROTEST
For events listings updated weekly see
www.schnews.org.uk/pap

KANT PAY, WON'T PAY

Students at Middlesex University have occupied a campus building in their campaign against the closure of the university's philosophy department.

The deep-thinking students spontaneously occupied a meeting room after the university management failed to show for a meeting to discuss the closure.

Around 50 students had shown up on Tuesday (4th) to demand an explanation for a decision they have labelled "abrupt, unjustified and unacceptable". They were left fuming after the Dean of Arts Ed Esche and Deputy Vice Chancellor Margaret House pulled a no-show without even a hint of an excuse, in what one occupier described as a "complete lack of respect".

The students refused to budge from the meeting room until management agreed to a meet. After their phone calls and emails met with a deafening silence, they opted to occupy the room for the night. With no response forthcoming, the next day they seized the entire building. Later that day over 100 students staged a solidarity rally outside the building.

A delegation from the occupiers met with Esche and House yesterday (6th), but no agreement was reached. The students have now announced they will hold the building indefinitely, and today will open it up as a free space where they will hold seminars and reading groups. All are welcome. The occupier spokesperson told SchNEWS, "We're going to turn this place into what it should have been in the first place, a place for education and not just a skills factory for making money."

They will open up the Mansion Building at Trent Park today at 5pm.

* See www.savemdxphil.com

GOT IT SUSS-ED

Elsewhere this week, the ongoing campaign against the savage cuts set to hit Sussex University saw a strike on campus and march through the centre of Brighton.

The proposed £5million of cuts, which will see over 100 job losses, were approved by university management in March.

After a wave of student protests and campus occupations earlier this year (see SchNEWS 713), members of the University College Union (UCU) first staged a walkout days before the cuts were approved. This time they were joined on the picket lines by over 100 students and other university support staff.

At around 4pm the protesters joined staff and students from the University of Brighton and City College in a march through the centre of Brighton.

One campaigner told SchNEWS, "They were resolute, it seems there is more to come; this was just a shot across the bow."

* See www.defendsussex.wordpress.com

LEWES ROAD

The Lewes Road community garden in Brighton will be celebrating its first birthday with a Mad Hatters tea party this Sunday (9th). It was a year ago to the day that a hundred random locals revitalised the derelict sight, turning it into a oasis in the smoggy urban desert for local residents. Kicking off at 2pm, there will be live ska and folk, stalls and, of course, tea and scones.

* See www.lewesroadcommunitygarden.org

WURZEL DAMAGE

Bristol eco-village (SchNEWS 719) was dramatically evicted today as bailiffs charged onto the site, toppling tripods and booting out the occupying community.

On Wednesday (5th) at 9am, the site project manager arrived flanked by workers from a construction company and 15 hired heavies from Constant & Co (notorious bastards - SchNEWS 669). A crowd of around 40 supporters quickly formed to join the nine villagers on site, two of whom had scaled tripods. Local residents were among the first to show, one even parking his car across the main site access while villagers were dragged out of the area.

A JCB and cherry picker arrived and 5 people instantly climbed on to the cherry picker, causing the owner to promptly agree to leave. Despite efforts to prevent the JCB getting on site by climbing on to it (the digger driver responded by simply driving at anyone who came near), it pushed a mound of earth up against a building occupied by the remaining villagers, allowing the thugs in attendance to climb up and forcibly remove them from the roof.

One occupant who was on a tripod on the roof received the heaviest-handed treatment. Bailiffs started to pull the poles down with him still on top, thus crushing his body between the metal. They then went on to sit on him while he was still trapped to prevent anyone filming or seeing what was going on. He was packed off in an ambulance before being released later that day with severe bruising, leg ligament damage, crutches and painkillers.

The local community now plan to hold talks with the council and the owners to negotiate the site becoming a green space rather than the proposed industrial units. The eco-village organisers have pledged to help the residents in any way they can to keep the space green.

The next Bristol eco-village is not far away with a site already picked out and a swoop planned for on Saturday (15th). Meet outside the Hippodrome at 11am to join the movement.

* See the Facebook group: Bristol Eco Village - the Urban Centre for Alternative Technology.

DEPORTATION IRAN

Attempts to stop the deportation of Bashir Foris were not enough at Gatwick airport this Thursday (6th).

Bashir, an Iranian asylum seeker fled his home country with his wife Nadia Arzane to avoid persecution. During recent elections held in Iran, Nadia had struggled for democratic change in her country but was victimised by the government for her views.

At 6.30 in the morning immigration services seized Bashir and took him to Gatwick, separating him from his 14 weeks pregnant wife.

As he was being prepared to a board a deportation flight to Gatwick, twelve activists intercepted passengers flying checking in to Air Baltic, his carrier. Leaflets were handed out to people in the queue in an attempt to strike a chord. The action was allowed to be carried out without any interruptions by airport security mainly owing to its subdued nature.

The couple have been detained since their arrival in the UK and were recently held in Yarl's Wood. The couple were twice told to pack their bags and be prepared to leave only to be told it was a false alarm, before the UKBA decided to separate the couple and deport Bashir alone. Bashir Foris is now awaiting his fate in Latvia.

* See www.NCADC.org.uk

INSIDE SchNEWS

Renata Zelazna is currently in prison in the Netherlands for attempted murder of a policeman. She received no representation or legal advice.

According to her friends Renata was cooking in her home when she went out to ask some nearby builders to keep the noise down. A fight ensued which ended with Renata throwing a rock at a bulldozer and then going back indoors. Half an hour later plainclothes police arrived, she opened the door and was told she was under arrest for criminal damage. She was holding a small knife at the time but she didn't threaten anyone with it. The policeman seized her, threw her to the floor and then CS gassed her. She was then carried to the car in handcuffs.

She was held for three days in a cell with no toilet, refused vegan food or a change of clothes or sanitary products. A judge came to the cell window for ten minutes and remanded her. She is currently awaiting trial in prison.

* Send mail to Renata Zelazna, Penitentiare Inrichting Ter Peel, T.A.V. Renata Zelazna, 7138606, cel 1/10, Paterstraat 4, 5977 NM Evertsoord, Netherlands

BITA SWEET

Iranian human rights campaigner Bita Ghaedi has been released from Yarl's Wood detention centre after her removal order was overturned by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

Bita had been scheduled to be deported on Wednesday (5th) (see SchNEWS 717), but won a last minute reprieve when the ECHR granted interim relief pending a renewed application to apply for judicial review. She is now free to re-submit her application, which will be considered by the ECHR in July.

* See www.NCADC.org.uk

MELTDOWN TOWN

Last Saturday (1st) saw the Mayday Meltdown in London as the 'four horsemen of the apocalypse' dragged the main party leaders (plus Nick Griffin) - well effigies - were dragged from their party HQs to Parliament Square, where they were publicly executed to a crowd of 500. Many stayed on to set up the Democracy Village in the Square, which is still going strong. Yesterday, on election day they held a festival and will remain as events unfold.

* See 'Democracy Village' on Facebook.

...and finally...

TOMORROWS NEWS TODAY! THAT ELECTION RESULT IN FULL:

(Delete as applicable) A bright new day has dawned/ a new bleak era of repression has begun. Romping home on a landslide/clinging on hoping for a minority rule, the Tories/Labour/Lib Dems were carried aloft/slunk into Number Ten to take the reins of power/begin lavishing gifts on their largest backers.

As the results were announced crowds burst dancing onto the streets/the nation yawned apathetically/concrete blocks were hurled at police lines in Trafalgar Sq. The new Prime Minister announced a package of swingeing austerity cuts, a law and order agenda and a clampdown on immigration.

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers, it's a complete load of ballots. Honest.

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