

ALL THAT REMAINS...

AS THE EURO ECONOMIC MELTDOWN HITS ROMANIA.....

Welcome to the age of austerity. Romania has erupted in protests as harsh measures continue to grow and waves of discontent flood Europe.

Romania's capital, Bucharest, stood still for a day on Wednesday (19th) as ferocious cuts cripple the Romanian populace. The city was brought to a halt as an estimated 50,000 protesters marched through the streets in the largest of the demonstrations seen since the cuts were announced. Protesters poured in from all over the country, despite police attempts to block the streets to uphold order.

The government's latest bright idea is proposed wage cuts of 25% and pension cuts of 15% to reduce the country's budget deficit along with the stated intention of slashing 70,000 state employees out of a public sector workforce of 1.36 million (a third of the workforce) before the end of the year. Romania's economy shrunk more than 7% last year and is going for an IMF bail-out to meet its wage bill. The government says it needs to implement new austerity measures to qualify for the next instalment of the 20m euro (£17bn) IMF loan. No monetary aid packs are likely until the chiefs can demonstrate an ability to suppress dissent.

Last Tuesday (11th) thousands of farmers, furious over overdue agricultural subsidies, blockaded the area, surrounding the main government building in Bucharest as they arrived in tractors and parked up outside the cabinet command post. As Wednesday rolled on, 500 irate pensioners had a crack at the presidential palace, with other demonstrations taking place around the country. The protest followed four days of protests by unions.

The economy ministry official Marcel Hoara had stones hurled at him and was doused with water as he was jeered during a live televised debate in the middle of the protest. Police had to escort him from the area to safety after he was ambushed by demonstrators on his way out. "We will not leave until the government quits," said Bogdan Hossu, leader of the Cartel Alfa trade union. Marian Gruia, head of the policemen's union, called on Romanians to unite, "as we did in 1989, when we overthrew the dictatorship". Unions have issued a warning of a general strike on the 31st May if the Government continues to ignore their cries of insurgency.

The demonstration was one of the largest to be seen in the country since the days of the Romanian Revolution of 1989, when the communist government was overthrown after a week long series of escalating violent riots and street fighting. The conflict ended with the execution

of President Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife. Romania was the only eastern block country to overthrow its government forcefully or to execute its leaders. Since then the leadership has been more in the style of an austere free market capitalist product. Heavy foreign investment in the course of the last decade led to embellished economic growth which surprise, surprise has totally imploded as a result of the international economic crisis.

The Romanians' competence in resisting the measures will judge whether they will be the ones having to pay for the economic collapse. So it started with Greece, now we have Romania, so the question is "Who's next in the Euro zone?" Any takers?

* See also www.libcom.org/news



CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For being failure of first past the poster...

Met Police paid a heavy-handed election day visit to the home of a 63-year East London man, David Hoffman. His crime? Sticking a poster in his window showing a picture of Dave Cameron emblazoned with the word 'wanker'.

No doubt startled by having four burly officers arrive on his doorstep demanding identification, he momentarily tried to close the door, but the cops forced their way in, roughly seizing and handcuffing the top-toff-hating Hoff. They said he'd committed an offence under section 5 of the Public Order Act, was being detained and could be arrested.

Ironically enough, after cops confirmed his identification as a well-known photojournalist who has been cataloguing police brutality for over three decades, they calmed down somewhat and left, taking the offending item with them. It was swiftly replaced by another copy altered to say 'Onanist' instead.

THAILAND: RED WITH BLOOD

Mounting oppression is sweeping Thailand as, at the time of going to print (20th May), a state of emergency has been declared across 23 provinces, mainly in the north of the country - the main Red Shirt stronghold.

Thailand has been convulsed by a bitter struggle between the nation's elite and its disenfranchised poor, played out in protests that have paralysed Bangkok for weeks and now threaten to envelope the country.

The protesters' fortified camp in central Bangkok was attacked by the army on Wednesday (19th) morning. By evening, fires were ablaze across the city. There were over 1,000 Red Shirts (made up of the rural and urban poor) hiding inside the protest area, distrustful of government offers to ship them to safety. Fourteen were killed that day as the army moved in to suppress protests, with the bodies of six protesters shot by troops found inside a temple designated as a refuge for women and children. Two months ago saw the Red Shirt opposition movement stage relatively peaceful, ritualistic actions (see SchNEWS 714). However, the total number of deaths since the protests began are now reported to be at around 82 with over 800 injured.

Despite recent bloodthirsty government tactics to quell it, the insurgency continues, with Red Shirts holding rallies across the rest of the country. In the northern territory, town halls have been occupied and burned to a cinder. Banks, the stock exchange and media outlets have been some of the targets of

rioters, furious at their mistreatment. There have been reports that on "Red Radio", in defiance of ceasefire call by Red-Shirt leaders, a call out was made that "if you pass by a bank, burn it down".

This recent chapter was set in motion after the Government of Abhisit Vejjajiva - as supported by the Yellow Shirt movement (a sect of Thais opposed to former leader Thaksin Shinawatra and his allies) came to power in 2008 following a parliamentary vote engineered by the military. The Red Shirts movement began as supporters of Thaksin (a former policeman and brief owner of Manchester City Football Club). Thaksin was deposed in a military coup in 2006 and convicted in absentia for corruption.

In past years, similar rebellions have been calmed by Thailand's 82-year-old monarch, Bhumibol Adulyadej, who has reigned since 1946 - making him the world's longest serving current head of state and the longest-reigning monarch in Thai history. But as the country suffers through its worst political crisis in decades, the king has disappointed 'his subjects' by saying nothing that might calm the turmoil, as he did in 1973 and 1992 when - with a few quiet words - he halted eruptions of political blood letting. The geriatric and ailing king is no longer in a position to influence events as his power fades.

This time the divisions in society have become too deep and the anger too hot to reconcile with a few words.

VILLAGE GREENS

Last Saturday's weekend of discontent in London enticed the full spectrum of subcultures to the capital, drawing diverse groups of anarchists, pissed-off politicians, eco-hippies, alcoholics and space cadets to raise their various issues with our glorious new leader(s) Clameregg. Protests sparked off all over the city, centring around the Democracy Village in Parliament Square.

Party At The Pumps 2 kicked off when the No Tar Sands Campaign hit a Shell garage in Islington, shutting it down for the afternoon. Around 50 activists unfurled banners proclaiming 'Closed' and 'Danger Keep Out - Shell Hell In Operation' across the entrances while a samba band partied away on the forecourt. 'Crime Scene' tape was wrapped around all the pumps and people leafleted local houses, cafés, car windscreens and passers by. Also present at the protest were campaigners from Shell to Sea who have been fighting the building of a gas pipeline in Rosport, Ireland (see SchNEWS 716), and supporters of the campaign against Shell's destruction of the Niger delta.

As well ecological disaster, human rights abuses were top of the agenda, with hundreds rallying outside the gates of 10 Downing Street calling for the new government to demand an end to Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people. A letter signed by supporters was delivered to number 10, asking Clegg to stick by the pledges he made before the election to fight for the rights of Palestinians.

About 2,500 people joined in the 'Purple Patch' march outside the Houses of Parliament calling for electoral reform. Waving banners and purple ribbons, activists covered the railings around the building in purple and later delivered a petition to number 10. Mostly present at the march were disenfranchised youth, angry at the under-representation of their views in the current political system.

All of this was viewed from across the street by the Democracy Village at Parliament Square. A fascinatingly bizarre mix of guerilla gardeners, poi-spinning hippies, homeless alcoholics, militant anarchists and people who take orders from their pet rabbit (to name just a few) - came together to plant strawberries and form a new government. The afternoon was full of sunshine, reggae, vegetable planting and the most eclectic open mic session you've ever sat through. Despite the comical mix of characters, the common goal was definitely actively working towards a solution to the failings of the current system.

The day's excitement drew to a close with a candlelit procession through Whitehall, highlighting the ongoing climate emergency. Starting with a service organised by Christian Ecology, the march ended at Old Palace Yard for a night of speed debating, poetry, theatre, arts and crafts, and a climate-themed pub quiz until the dawn broke.

Visit the websites below to find out how you can be part of the next ones.

* **Oil Industry/Climate Change Direct Action:** www.no-tar-sands.org, www.shelltosea.com, www.risingtide.org.uk

* **Palestine:** www.palestinecampaign.org

* **Electoral Reform:** www.takebackparliament.com

* **Democracy Village:** www.democracyvillage.blogspot.com

* **Climate Emergency:** www.campaignccc.org

PARTY & PROTEST

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

LOST IN TRANSNATIONAL

Hundreds took to the streets of Paris and Berlin to protest the treatment of migrants in Calais at last Saturday's (15th) day of transnational action.

A crowd of over 200 people joined the main demonstration in Paris, despite police attempts to disrupt the action by ordering all cars to leave the area and shops to close. The protesters stopped traffic and set off flares in their calls for an end to the escalating repression of migrants in Calais and across Europe. Afghan migrants gathered to watch, despite threats from the police to arrest any migrants associating with the No Borders activists.

At a simultaneous demonstration in Berlin, several hundred people protested outside the French Cultural centre.

Following the demo, No Borders activists put out an urgent call out for activists to join the campaign in Calais as numbers have now dropped while police harassment is on the increase.

The 'Africa House' squat in Calais is facing daily raids, with the CRS (riot police) harassing activists and arresting migrants, often violently. The morning before the demonstration, the CRS forced their way in, smashed up tents and cooking utensils and poured the migrants' water over their bedding. While the activists were rounded up and searched, 19 migrants were arrested.

Police have also returned to the Hazara and Pashto camps, now little more than scattered shelters built out of scraps of tarpaulin. Still, the CRS have trashed what camps they have found and arrested any migrants they have seen, usually those leaving their hiding places to head to charity food distribution centres.

* See www.calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com

NAMA-ED AND SHAMED

With the spectre of economic crash lurking, the Irish have been nervously eyeing the situations in countries like Greece and Romania, wondering if they will be next. Irish anti-capitalists however, are not about to sit back and wait patiently for the crisis to bite.

Tuesday (18th) saw the third protest in eight days as an "anti-capitalist" block of 200 people, pushed past police lines to join a thousand strong Right to Work demo taking place outside Anglo Irish Bank.

The protest followed a demonstration and roof top occupation of Anglo Irish on Saturday (15th) which was violently broken up by police. The Tuesday before (11th) also saw a Gardai attack as they enthusiastically cracked the heads of protesters trying to enter the Dail (the Irish parliament) car park, resulting in five arrests.

Protesters are up in arms over the Irish government's bank bailout and the creation of the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA), which props up the market by swapping dodgy property development loans for government bonds.

The campaign has picked up pace since an occupation of the Anglo Irish building on April 24th - timed to coincide with the 94th anniversary of the Easter Uprising and the day in 1916 when the Proclamation of the Irish Republic laid out a vision of Irish society that guaranteed equality for all. Brian Leeson, chairperson of Irish socialist republican party éirigi said, "The time for polite debate has passed. We believe that the only way that NAMA, the bank bailout and the cutbacks can be defeated is through a campaign of mass civil disobedience."

* See www.eirigi.org/index.htm

GENOA GOOD LAWYER?

Finally senior Italian police have been convicted for the violent Carabinieri police raids on protesters' centres during the G8 in Genoa on July 21st 2001 (see SchNEWS 314-5). 93 were arrested, 28 hospitalised and three critically injured - one of them, Mark Covell, from UK Indymedia, was in a coma for two days. Tensions were already high as the previous day the Carabinieri had killed protester Carlo Giuliani.

Trials in 2008 convicted 40 coppers - mostly lower ranking - but let 32 walk free - and that included most of the officers in charge (See SchNEWS 640). But now some of Italy's top detectives have been brought to justice, receiving 4-5 year sentences (not that they'll go inside due to a legal loophole). They are also banned from public office for five years - as if being convicted and sentenced for crimes isn't enough to get them sacked.
* See www.schnews.org.uk/archive/news7237.php for the full version of this article

BRIM AND PROPER

An EDO Decommissioners solidarity action organised by Target Brimar took place in Manchester this Monday (17th). Target Brimar is a campaign group opposing Brimar, the Manchester based company which makes military components used by the British and American armies in Iraq and Afghanistan and by Israeli forces in Palestine and Lebanon.

Nine protesters leafleted outside Barclays (the UK's largest investor in the global arms sector including EDO/ITT) on Mosley Street, brandishing banners and placards. The picket started at 12.30 to coincide with the street's busy lunchtime hour.

All Brighton locals are cordially invited to a Barclays picket on Saturday 22nd May outside the North Street branch starting at 11am.

* See smashedo.org.uk, targetbrimar.org.uk

...and finally...

Send out the Clowns: Many people in Spain have failed to see the funny side of a PR custard pie thrown by an increasingly jumpy and paranoid Israel. Israeli ringmasters were resolutely unmoved by the recent visit of Spain's most famous clown, Ivan Prado. The organiser of the International Clown Festival in Spain, he was hoping to help set up a similar event in Ramallah. But his arrival at Ben-Gurion airport must've set off alarm klaxons in the paranoid security forces' minds.

He was swiftly detained before being interrogated for six hours about presumed links with 'Palestinian Terrorists' before being unceremoniously booted out of the country.

In true clown fashion, Prado kept schtum throughout the ordeal, although attempts to leave via an imaginary door and chucking a bucket of water over himself only led to further questioning.

The deportation caused a media circus in Spain, with even the Israeli embassy reported as outraged after the only explanation they were given for the ejection was 'security reasons'.

Whilst their image in Spain has taken a comedy oversized hammering, Israel obviously couldn't risk any outbreaks of organised clownsurgence and the possibilities for smuggling rocket launchers around in over-sized trousers.

Denying activists, humanitarians and anyone publicly critical of the great 'One State Solution' access to Palestine is now an old worn out routine, but this new stunt has succeeded in making Israeli a genuine laughing stock once again.

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers, clowning around in occupied territories is no joking matter. Honest.

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