

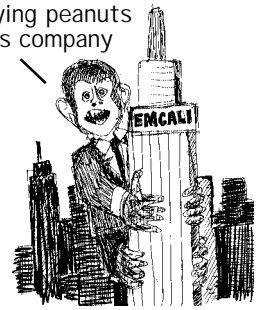


wake up! WAKE UP! It's yer SENT TO THE TOWER

I'm paying peanuts for this company

SchNEWS

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TOWER STRUGGLE

Colombia's second city Cali is today on a city wide stoppage in support of 800 workers from the Sintraemcali Union. For the past 31 days they have been occupying a 17-storey communications tower, the home of the state owned Emcali, who supply water, electricity and telephones to the city.

With the support of the Cali community, the workers - who have been there since Christmas Day - are demanding that the company isn't privatised, that there are no price increases and the corrupt company officials who have siphoned off money for years are prosecuted.

Apart from the riot police around the tower, the square surrounding it is in the hands of the people and has been "transformed into a beehive of collective action."

A huge make-shift kitchen feeds the hundreds of occupying workers with breakfast, lunch and dinner. Across the road is a stage where people make speeches, play music and try to keep people's spirits up. On some days there have been 20,000 supporters outside, and every few days there is a big meeting of several thousands. All around the square, the walls are adorned with banners with slogans such as "Better to die for something than live for nothing". Squatting such a sophisticated communications tower also has its advantages - with workers beaming video link-ups around the world.

Colombia is not a place for the faint-hearted. It has been in a civil war for the past 40 years, and in the past ten alone over one and a half thousand trade union activists have been assassinated. Since 1994 workers from the Sintraemcali Union have successfully fought off sixteen attempts to privatise Emcali - and the heavy price they have paid has been murders, assassination attempts and the forced exile of many workers. The leader of Sintraemcali is just 33 but has already survived three assassination attempts, and workers occupying what has now been dubbed Robin Hood Towers, cover their faces knowing that even if they are victorious right wing paramilitaries could exact revenge at any time.

Over recent years the paramilitaries have managed to grow in parallel with the US initiated Plan Colombia, a two billion dollar largely military aid package supposedly aimed at the eradication of cocaine production (see SchNEWS 273). However the paramilitaries have been untouched by this military war on drugs, despite admitting that

they fund themselves largely from drug production in the areas under their control.

As Mario Novelli from the Colombian Solidarity Campaign, who is currently in Cali as a Human Rights Observer points out "Could it be that the US is fighting not against drugs, but against resistance to the imposition of an economic model based on privatisation, budget cuts, and rising inequality? If it is, then the stakes at this negotiation table here are high, for if the Cali community and Sintraemcali stop the privatisation of public services, and prevent price increases for the poor, then they are not just preventing government plans, but the plans of the IMF and the World Bank, and their US masters. Plans that seek to ensure that Colombia fits in to the neo-liberal block being developed across the region." With the occupation now entering a fifth week and messages of solidarity pouring in from around the world, negotiations are now taking place at the highest level. As Mario Novelli says "We are beginning to get the feeling that the world is starting to take note of what those inside the tower already know: this is an historic battle."

* There will be a mass picket of the Colombian Embassy today (25th) 4-6 pm at 3 Hans Crescent, Knightsbridge, London (back of Harrods). The Union is facing bankruptcy so if you want to make a financial contribution to the strikers send cheques payable to "Colombia Solidarity Campaign" with SINTRAEMCALI on the back and send to Colombia Solidarity Campaign, PO Box 8446, London N17 6NZ . 07950-923448, colombia_sc@hotmail.com

* The campaign have also organised a conference: 'Plan Colombia - Clearing the Way For the Multinationals', 23rd-24th February at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (Holborn tube).

* Mario Novelli, who has been sending daily bulletins back from the occupa-

tion, will be speaking immediately on his return from Colombia on Saturday 2nd February at the CORAS Centre, 161 Lambeth Walk, SE11. (Vauxhall tube) 4pm

For general news on Colombia see www.colombiareport.org/

PROFITS ON TAP

"Here in Bolivia \$25 million is the annual cost to hire 3000 rural doctors, 12,000 public school teachers or hooking up 125,000 families who don't have access to the public water system. Which of these are you suggesting Bolivia should do without in order to pay you?" - Jim Schultz-director of the Democracy Center in an open letter to Riley Bechtel, Chief Executive of Bechtel Enterprises.

In February 2000, just months after it took over the water system of Bolivia's third largest city, Cochabamba, an American corporation Bechtel hit water users with enormous price increases. They forced some of the poorest families in South America to literally choose between food or water. A popular uprising against the company, repressed violently by government troops, left one 17-year old boy Victor Hugo Daza dead and more than a hundred people wounded. Due to the protests Bechtel was forced to leave and the water supply handed back to public ownership (see SchNEWS 286). Then in November last year Bechtel decided to add to the suffering it had already caused by demanding compensation of \$25 million against the Bolivian people - compensation for its lost opportunity to make future profits.

The employees of the consortium didn't leave empty handed. They took the hard drives from the computers, the cash left in the company's accounts, and sensitive personnel files. They also left behind an unpaid electric bill for \$90,000. Now its saying it wants more.

In his letter to the company Jim Schultz continued "Your losses, however you may calculate them, are numbers on a ledger. Mrs. Daza's loss is buried in a cemetery. No one will be representing her in your arbitration. For Bechtel, with revenues of more than \$14 billion annually, \$25 million is what you take in before lunch on any given workday." www.democracyst.org

* Tell Riley Bechtel - the 51st richest person in America - why does he need to take any more money from the one of the poorest countries in South America. email: rbechtel@bechtel.com

White label Mark Thomas Video.

Live in Brighton at the Gardner Arts Centre. For £8 + 80p postage on an SAE from SchNEWS.

Apologies to all those who have ordered a copy, the first batch we got had a dodgy soundtrack (not our fault) but now we've had more copied. If we sent you one please send the old one back and we'll get another one to you. If yer still waiting you'll get one soon(ish).

Within Tent

The Australian Aboriginal Tent Embassy celebrates its 30th anniversary this Saturday (Australia's national day, otherwise known as 'Invasion Day'). The camp was started in 1972 by a group of Aboriginals who decided that unlike other nations, theirs wasn't represented by an embassy – so they set up camp outside the then national parliament house. After several violent evictions over the years, and the seat of power since having been moved up the road, this embassy remains right under the noses of the government. It is the longest running protest camp we know of in the world. There is a celebration the 'Festival of Living Lore' 18-28th Jan on the site, featuring music, but also elders from all around the land, activists and supporters will gather around the sacred fire to pray for Aboriginal Sovereignty, and world peace. living_lore@start.com.au

Cops cop Kop

These days some people are saying that the new rock 'n' roll is... terrorism. Well the Dutch police thought so this week when they arrested Marc - lead singer of the band 'Kop' and Barcelona squatter - in an Amsterdam supermarket accusing him of ETA (Basque Militant Separatists) collusion. Then just to show how 'rock 'n' roll' cooperation between police across Europe has become, the Dutch boot boys did their Spanish mates a favour and violently raided and searched the Amsterdam squat where Marc was staying.

Marc is accused of having given a list of names of Cedade members (a Spanish neo-nazi group) to ETA, he is now in an isolation cell waiting to be extradited back to Spain to face trial.

Following his arrest the legalised squat 'Vrankrijk', described by the local scum rag the 'Telegraaf' as a 'hotbed for terror', was raided by 200 cops who prevented people phoning lawyers. One woman needed stitches after being batoned. Terrorist items seized were some water pistols, a couple of books in Spanish and two mobile phones.

The Spanish government is using the frenzy against 'terror' to legitimize their ongoing campaign to terrorise anyone that goes against their agenda. People fighting for autonomy of Basque Country are lumped in with ETA – and labelled co-conspirators in their terrorist acts. Squatters, anarchists and anti-globalisation protesters are all feeling the force of 'terror' in Spain.

* March against the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act. 12.30pm, 2nd February at Temple, London. Called by the Federation of Kurdish Community Associations to highlight the Kurdistan Workers Party becoming a proscribed (banned) organisation. Tel 078790 24737 e-mail: fedbir@yahoo.co.uk

Bollockswood

Hollywood is a propaganda machine – a new movie about the American 'aid' involvement in Somalia in the early nineties coincides with the fact that Somalia is likely to be targeted next in the 'war against terrorism'. This film represents the US as peacekeepers rather than the killers of 10,000 Somali civilians. Bush officials have met with Hollywood representatives, who have committed themselves to 'initiatives to support the war on terrorism', and "Black Hawk Down" had to be OK'd by the White House. Already the US has closed down international banking channels into Somalia, cut off the internet from the country and restricted its phone communications. New York group AN-SWER say "The Pentagon has unfinished business, they have a "black eye" and must return with a vengeance. This is the goal of Black Hawk Down." www.internationalanswer.org.

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SchNEWS in brief

People disrupted an **Air Defence Systems Conference** at the Hutton in London on Wednesday. Armed with stinkbombs the protesters managed to ruin the nice suited men's £350 buffet. The chair of the meeting, Gordon "Come on lads lets get 'em!" Wilson joined army types and govt. ministers in trying to assault some of the protestors. The boys in blue appeared, did their usual dithering and false arrest thing, charged no-one and the talks were disrupted! ** **Anti-GM protesters** this week blockaded chemical giant Bayer's UK headquarters on the day the company floated on the New York Stock Exchange. Bayer need to raise capital on Wall Street to take over Aventis Cropscience, who run most of the UK field trials. Bayer's share price has plummeted following revelations their anti-cholesterol drug Baycol had been linked to almost 100 deaths. www.bayerhazard.com ** Wanna get clued up on climate change? **Rising Tide** have a weekend course, Feb 22-24, Ruskin College, Oxford – everything is free, but only if you never went to college 01865 241097 soaringskywards@yahoo.co.uk ** There's a **Fun-Raiser** benefit gig with DJs and SchMovies for the Centre for Alternative Technology Weds 30th at the Volks, Brighton 9pm till late. Next day is **180 Degrees at the Volks** (Thur 31st), psychedelic techno/ trance DJs, 10pm-3am, £2. All money goes to the Indonesian rainforest project. ** **Esso-bashing** resumes this Saturday (25) at the Dyke Road Esso station (Brighton) from 12 noon. www.stopesso.com ** A Seminar '**Crisis in Nigeria's Niger Delta**' Organised by the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) and the Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) in London, Sat 26th. Presentations by authors and activists on terrorism and corporate violence, with a focus on Shell. 1-3 pm at the RCS Club, 18 Northumberland Ave, London, WC2. morten@cdd.org.uk www.corporatewatch.org.uk/profiles/profiles.html ** An **underground explosion of art** in a squat in London, 13-15 Feb. Gallery plus extra events - film night on the 14th - Live music and performance on the 15th with refreshments, crafts, clothing and a book swapping stall throughout. Artists should contact in advance to ensure showcase space. Artist line: 07092 012299 or Email: randomartists@whoever.com ** Check out the excellent **Space Hijackers** website for anarchists, London-based pranksters, bloggers guide and general funny business www.spacehijackers.co.uk

Positive SchNEWS

Refugees from Nicaragua and El Salvador fleeing war and persecution in their own countries set up a model village in Finca Sonador, Costa Rica in 1978. The community now has 350 members who've been living a sustainable lifestyle surrounded by swathes of beautiful rainforest. Now though they're facing the prospect of their surroundings being ruined by the Man from Del Monte who wants to cut the trees down and replace them with pineapple trees. They need to raise money urgently and are looking for people to buy their own bit of the forest. 100 euros will buy you 400sq metres. www.dieschwelle.de

Inside SchNEWS

Dave Blenkinsop, recently jailed for 18 months for the 'crime' of liberating 600 guinea pigs has been moved to HMP Bullingdon, Patrick Haugh Rd, Arncott, Nr Bicester, Oxon, OX6 0PZ – prison number EM 7899

Sab Hunt

Hunting has resumed countrywide now that the foot and mouth fiasco has been declared over. Hunts are up to their usual tricks again, hunting not just foxes, deer and hares, but anti-hunt protestors as well.

In Cornwall a hunt sab was hit by a horsebox trailer which was driven straight at him. At the Chiddingfold Hunt in Sussex huntsman Jonathan Broise shouted "Let's sort this out once and for all", grabbed a hunt sab, dragged him in front of the horse of the 'whipper-in' who then roved over him. Simon was lucky to escape with bruises.

In Sussex cops are conspiring with hunts to prevent effective action by sabs, but despite 40 cops on Saturday a few sabs managed to slip through the net and disrupt the Southdowns hunt, who made no kills. This extra effort in Sussex is probably due to the new Sussex Chief Constable who has previously said that he doesn't like sabs.

In Northants the police arrested a hunt steward (hired thug) for kicking and punching a sab. Later the sabs managed to stop a fox being dug out of an earth and the hunt packed up two hours early.

So don't let all the bad stories get you down, most sabs don't get beaten up and they do save the lives of foxes, deer and hares, more than the Neo-Labour government have done despite all their election pledges. Hunt Saboteurs Association: 0845-4500727 www.huntsabs.org.uk

Refugee Roundup

About midnight on Monday five Romanian refugees escaped unjust imprisonment at Campsfield Immigration Detention Centre. Unfortunately that leaves nearly 180 wrongfully imprisoned refugees and other migrants still imprisoned in the Centre.

*130 refugees detained at Yarl's Wood detention centre went on a 24 hour hunger strike last week in protest at their conditions. Their grievences were inflamed when a Daily Mail report described their conditions at Yarlswood as luxurious.

*Theres a demonstration outside Campsfield this Saturday (26) 12pm – 2pm to give support to the detainees imprisoned inside. Bring kites/balloons/music! Campsfield House Immigration Detention Centre, Langford Lane, Kiddlington, Oxford www.closecampsfield.org.uk

* Last Saturday more than 150,000 people took to the streets of Rome to protest against proposed new immigration laws in a massive grassroots demonstration organised by SenzaConfine (No Borders). Find out more at www.noborder.org

...and finally...

SchNEWS would like to give the Most Undeserving of Charity Award Ever to... US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who has just accepted over \$10,000 towards the rebuilding of the Pentagon, from the children of Moorefield Middle School, West Virginia! All part of the unbelievable-but-true, brand spanking new 'Show Pride in Your Military Act' created by a lunatic West Virginian congresswoman Shelley Capito. Congress attached Capito's legislation to the 2002 Defense Authorization Bill, which became law when President Bush signed late last year. "We decided on donating to the Pentagon because a lot of us have been to Washington, not too many of us have been to New York." said a student. Apparently the students felt the attack on the Pentagon was "sort of in their backyard" and wanted to help.

disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers here at SchNEWS Towers Inc 'we never water down our puns so they tower above the rest. Honest.