

WAKE UP!! IT'S YER SEEKING SANCTUARY...

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SHAC TAKES THE FLAK

FLIMSY PRETEXT FOR COUNTRY-WIDE ARRESTS OF ANIMAL RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

In yet another hammerblow aimed at the animal rights movement, police made 32 arrests across the UK in the early hours of Tuesday morning in 'Operation Achilles'. Assistant Chief Constable Adrian Leppard of Kent Police says the arrests are "one of the largest, if not the largest, police operation that has targeted animal extremism in the UK." Three properties were also searched in Belgium and the Netherlands.

700 police were involved as homes and animal sanctuaries were raided, with police seizing computers, mobile phones and cash. The whole operation was designed with maximum publicity in mind – the press were tipped off in advance and dutifully reported on the latest crackdown on animal rights 'extremism'. Almost all those arrested had some connection with the SHAC campaign

Of course what didn't hit the headlines was the number of properties raided without arrests being made and the fact that 24 hours later only nine of those arrested had been charged - two with blackmail and the other seven with 'conspiracy to blackmail'. Twenty were released on bail and one without charge. Two of those nicked, main organisers in the SHAC campaign, have been held for further questioning.

Crucially, the police investigation - in a nod to corporate martial law - used intelligence and forensic support from the private sector. The pharmaceutical and biotechnology industry greeted news of the raids with glee: "News of today's operation will act as a great fillip to the medical research community across Europe," said a statement issued by Aisling Burnand, chief executive of Britain's BioIndustry Association.

One source close to SHAC told SchNEWS, "This has all the hallmarks of a fishing expedition, designed to cause massive disruption to animal rights campaigns and show Big Pharma here and abroad that the police are making strides against the animal rights movement."

NETCU CLOSES IN

As details emerged of the botched raid on Freshfields Animal Sanctuary in Liverpool, sanctuary head Dave Callendar told SchNEWS, "At 5.30 they kicked in the door and seized three staff members. At 6.20 they seized two others as they turned up for work. There were about sixty coppers - they set up a cordon and refused access to anyone. Those seized were held in vans but not arrested. My farm manager had his collarbone broken after he was grabbed by three police when he climbed the back wall to check on our pigs. He was held in a van for three

hours and refused access to medical attention. Although the police brought an RSPCA inspector with them it was clear that when we regained access to the site that nothing had been done for the animals. Also they allowed animals to escape, which we're still looking for. They took every single piece of hardware, mobile phones, photocopiers, you name it - but they didn't take a single piece of paperwork. It's difficult to see it as anything other than deliberate intimidation and disruption – nobody here is involved with the Huntingdon campaign. We're a pro-active community organisation and we're not going to let them walk all over us."

The raids come against a backdrop of

a decline in criminal incidents related to animal rights and demonstrate that the National Extremism Tactical Co-ordinating Unit's (see www.netcu.org.uk) efforts are now aimed firmly at the 'legitimate' above ground animal rights movement. With SHAC once again able to conduct demos outside HLS (see SchNEWS 581) and activism spreading across Europe, Britain's political police seem intent on decapitating the A.R. movement, by any means necessary.

* See www.shac.net for more

* Freshfields Animal Sanctuary see www.freshfieldsrescue.org.uk

ROUT OF AFRICA

AS US PROXY REGIME LEADS TO CHAOS AND DISASTER (AGAIN)

Can you remember back to the heady days of last summer? Do you remember when, under instructions from the US a client government (Israel) bombed a poor neighbour killing hundreds of civilians and destroyed much of the country before being fought to a standstill and being forced into a humiliating retreat. The US / Israeli actions in Lebanon caused massive outcry around the world, leading to massive street protests and direct actions (see SchNEWS 555) at airports and bases delivering weapons (Prestwick, Mildenhall), and arms manufacturers, including several at Brighton's own EDO-MBM.

Well, imagine an alternative version of events. What if not only did the Israelis bomb Lebanon, but the US pitched in with a two-week bombing spree of their own. Imagine if Hezbollah and the Lebanese resistance didn't fight off the invaders but were defeated in under a week, and a corrupt and brutal puppet government was installed.

Well, you don't need to exercise too much imagination as this is exactly what has happened in the horn of Africa lately (see SchNEWS 575). Replace 'Lebanon' with 'Somalia' and 'Israel' with 'Ethiopia' and you've got the story.

LOW RESOLUTION

After the Somali Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) came to power in July 2006, bringing peace and stability to a country that had known 15 years of civil war, the international community was swift to act (see SchNEWS 567). Not by applauding the new government of course, but by bending over backwards to accommodate US wishes for regime change in Somalia. Having secured a UN resolution designed to deny the UIC international recognition (breaking the UN's own Charter in the process) the US then persuaded Ethiopia to invade in order to oust the Islamists. Not only did they advise the Ethiopians to invade on Christmas Eve (while the press is on holiday / concerned citizens are distracted by repeats of Star Wars

and family arguments) but they set up a deal allowing Ethiopia to buy weapons from... North Korea. Yes, the very same mad-nuclear-menace-axis-of-evil (oh, sorry now newly rehabilitated) North Korea.

Having briefly swapped civil war for a peaceful (if intolerant) Islamism, Somalis are now enjoying the democratic transition to foreign occupation and full blown nationalist / Islamist insurgency. The last three months have seen thousands killed (mostly civilians) as the new Transitional Federal Government (TFG) tries to prove its legitimacy by bombing hospitals, conducting mass rapes and shelling residential areas from the presidential palace.

The last week in April saw eight days of constant fighting in the capital, described by local journalists as some of the worst violence in the war-torn country's history. Fully one third of the capital, Mogadishu, has fled, and, relative to the size of the population the refugee crisis in Somalia is worse even than Darfur or Iraq.

And the UN has been severely compromised by its complicity in Somalia. They pushed through a resolution in late 2006 that said that the UIC constituted a grave threat to the international community, despite the fact they had brought peace to a war torn region. At no point since the invasion has the UN called the Ethiopians 'occupiers' and Ban Ki Moon (the UN's new Kofi Annan) has said that he wishes a UN stabilisation force be put into Somalia, essentially to use the UN to do what the US and Ethiopia have failed to do - create a client state that is able to tame the population.

Even as chaos reigns and bodies lie in the streets, US interests are quick to step in. It almost goes without saying that it's not about self-determination for Somalia - after all, the new 'government' has just signed oil exploration contracts with Shell and Chevron...

* For some real Somali news check www.shabelle.net/news/english.htm

INFORMATION FOR ACTION

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IS IT A BIRD? IS IT A WARPLANE?

It was a crap day in the latest legal battle between Brighton arms manufacturer EDO-MBM and members of the public outraged by the manufacture of components for bomb racks used by the Israeli military in an innocuous industrial estate near Moulsecoomb. All went to court for a new trial of people accused of aggravated trespass with the intention to disrupt lawful activity - arising from the defendants securing themselves to barrels of concrete outside the gates of the factory on the 17th July 2006, five days after Israel began their aerial assault of Lebanon (See SchNEWS 552)

If things aren't tough enough already for citizens attempting to take on the mighty bureaucratic beast of a legal system, it seems that they're no just up against the beaks but some of the birds too.

It happened outside Brighton and Hove Magistrates court last week when a seagull whisked the defense's skeleton argument out of the barrister's hand just before it was about to be handed to the man on high. Whisperings of 'conspiracy' grew louder as the bird shat on the carefully constructed document before scattering it around the front of the court building. (And "a seagull stole my defense, sir" just sounds so-o lame!) Maybe it was moonlighting as a police stool pigeon...?

Still, it wouldn't be the first case of conspiracy involving the police and EDO. Collusion and corruption scandals reached their peak in March

2006 when the Queen's Prosecution Service dropped 24 criminal cases against protesters after the police were ordered to produce documents relating to a meeting they had with EDO and their former lawyers (See SchNEWS 531).

The defendants are arguing that the company's business is unlawful, and their defense team demanded that the company must produce the license agreements to prove otherwise. The judge rejected the disclosure request with such panache that the defense lawyers described it as the worst ruling they had ever seen. Consequently the defendants are left in a classic catch 22: without disclosure it is difficult to prove illegal activity, but without concrete proof of illegal activity it is not possible to get a disclosure request granted - even though the company have publicly advertised that they make the components and a former director admitted it in court. All in all it's probably just easier to fight them at the factory gates... For more see www.smashedo.org.uk

* May 23 (Weds) sees a public meeting of local and national activists fighting the arms trade. Speakers include: Jo Wilding (Activist, writer and Circus2Iraq performer), Milan Rai (anti-war activist and author), Beccie D'Cunha (Local campaigns co-ordinator for Campaign Against the Arms Trade) and Andrew "bringing up the rear" Beckett from Smash EDO. 7.30-9.30pm at the Brighthelm Centre, North Street. Brighton

HOLD THAT FORT

More monumental events near the Hills of Tara this week, following on from last issue's story about the construction of a new motorway through the ancient seat of the Kings of Ireland (See SchNEWS 585). On Monday, the Irish transport minister turned the first shovel on the huge construction project (although presumably he intended to leave the rest of the dirty work to poorly paid contractors) - but good news came just one day later when work had to be halted when workers stumbled upon the ruins of an ancient enclosure many thousands of years old.

The discovery of this archaeologically important ancient ruin, most likely an iron or bronze-age wooden henge site, means the scheme has to be stop for now, pushing the road plans back and buying some time for the Save Tara protest groups. Unfortunately, under the recent National Monuments (Amendment) Act 2004, the government are now free to decide on which ancient pieces of national heritage they wish to desecrate in the name of 'progress' - as long as they 'consult' with the director of the National Museum.

The reports are that Minister for the Environment Dick 'Cock' Roche has already issued draft directions that would allow for the destruction of the henge - consulting (i.e. telling) the National Museum to preserve the henge "by record", meaning some photographs and written records being made before the bulldozing and concreting continues... It seems the protest campers may not be redundant just yet (there's real job security in protesting). For more see www.savetara.com

POSITIVE SchNEWS

Whiney songman-of-the-people Billy Bragg has launched an initiative to provide musical equipment for people banged up in prison. With a name taken from a Clash b-side, "Jail Guitar Doors" was born after a drug and alcohol counsellor working at HMP Guy's Marsh in Dorset, Malcolm Dudley, wrote to Billy asking if he would donate some guitars and percussion to use in his weekly workshops for prisoner 'rehabilitation' (or possibly recreation?).

The Bragger was moved to fund some axes and he's now looking to expand the scheme and get other musicians to cough up for the inmates.

* See www.jailguitardoors.org.uk

...and finally...

Remember "Sack Parliament", the ill-fated anarchist's day out in October where politicians were issued with P45s and told that their services were no longer required? (See SchNEWS 564)

Those that were there (or have watched the SchMOVIE enough times to pretend they were) may recall how the couple of hundred protesters were penned in by some 800 police surrounding Parliament Square.

Baroness Miller recently asked the Home Office for the cost of the OTT policing the October 9th demo and it turns out that the total cost of the day was some £300,000.

This works out at over £1000 per protester - or a few months Income Support come to think of it.

It's not every day that SchNEWS issues advice to coppers, but on this occasion there seems to be an obvious way to keep policing costs down and keep the black block from menacing our streets at the same time. Bring the free market into it - we could think of a quite a few protesters who would have stayed at home for much less than a grand. How about persistent system smashers be paid half of the policing cost, say 500 quid, to stay at home and watch daytime TV during Sack Parliament 2?

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers: don't take their bait - one day they might come fishing for you. Honest!

CASHEW AND CARRY ON

Breaking news as Guinea-Bissau, a West African country of some 1.4 million that sometimes holds the rarely sought after title of 'World's Poorest Nation', announced that it would drop the official price of cashew nuts last week. International traders who export the nuts to first world consumers had been refusing to buy cashews at the extortionate price of 35p per kilo of cashews, causing much of the country's main crop to rot unsold in warehouses.

The government has been forced by the markets to sell the nuts for 25p a kilo. A kilo of cashews bought in British shops then cost up to £10 per kilo (more if you want organic), making a clean 5,000% mark-up. Had the government got its way, international commodity brokers would have had to settle for a paltry 3500% - obviously not on.

During the six months of stand off farmers were left with the choice of selling them on the black market for 10p a kilo or not at all.

Cashews (which account for 85% of G-B's exports) are bought by Indian traders who exchange 1kg of cashews for 1kg rice. The collapse in prices that the Guinea Bissau government vainly tried to avert has meant that now a poor G-B farmer must exchange 4 kilos of nuts for 1 kilo of rice.

G-B suffered from floods last year that ruined over three quarters of their rice paddies. Twenty years ago, G-B was self sufficient in food but now, thanks to good ol' IMF structural adjustment policies, they are forced to swap cash crops for rice for survival. The collapse of cashew nut prices (put down to nut allergies and fickle western dietary fads) has meant that they cannot sell their crops for the minimum price needed to subsist.

The UN World Food Program said that as a result of the crisis "We can confirm that there was a deterioration of the nutritional situation especially among children under five" - almost enough to make you choke on your nut roast?

SchNEWS in brief

MAY: 6 - Beltane at Thornborough Henge 2007 - Celebrate the ancient festival at one of Britain's most important pre-historic Sacred Sites! At the central Henge, near Ripon in North Yorkshire. From 12pm. Free! www.sacredbriggantia.com or email: info@sacredbriggantia.com ** 6

- Vegan Benefit Roast Dinner - Brighton animal defenders are planning up a lipsmakin' roast dinner (and pud). All profits to the vegan prisoners support group and friends. 1-5pm at The Cowley Club, London Rd, Brighton. Cost £5, £2.50 for children. Contact 07931 747122 or email: deniseandasher@yahoo.co.uk ** 7

- Saving Iceland talk and new films from the campaign to save Europe's last great wilderness (SchNEWS 555). 8pm at the Cowley Club, London Rd, Brighton (also talk at Sussex uni - Mandela hall 2pm) ** 8

- Saving Iceland are in Bristol at Kebele Community Space, 14 Robertson Road, Easton 7.30pm. ** 9

- Protest at BAE System's AGM with Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT). Some CAAT members have token shares and will be inside the meeting. 9.30am, outside the QEII Conference Centre, Broad Sanctuary, Westminster, London, SW1P. For more call 020 7281 0297, email anna@caat.org.uk web www.caat.org.uk/events/bae-agm-2007.php ** 15

- Tell Shell - Hands Off Iraqi Oil! Protest at Shell's AGM, 8.30am-12noon, Novotel London-West Hotel and Convention Centre, 1 Shortlands, London, W6 8DR. (tube: Hammer-smith.) Email: handsoffiraqoil@googlemail.com web: www.handsoffiraqoil.org ** 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). Tel: 020 7837 1688 or email: defendasylumseekers@yahoo.co.uk



M For Media Malarkey SchNEWS Alternative Media Gathering
May 11-13th, Cowley Club, 12 London Rd, Brighton. * Video production * Newsheets/Zines/Newsprint * Webcasting * Radio * Photography * Research Methods * Screenings * Stalls * Promoting Campaigns and Mobilising Communities * Free entry. Accommodation available but contact us asap. HELP STILL NEEDED: If you can help with accommodation, cooking, creche contact us now. * For more info see <http://www.schnews.org.uk/schmovies/malarkey-intro.htm>

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