

Weekly SchNEWS

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GAME, OSSETIA, MATCH

AS CIVILIANS PAY THE PRICE FOR IMPERIAL RIVALRIES IN GEORGIA

Despite the Olympics, you had probably noticed there's another war on, this time in the mountainous region of the Caucasus, in a previously little mentioned place called South Ossetia.

Whether or not Georgia's president Mikheil Saakashvili went it alone, or if he was given a nod and a wink from the crazies in the White House, we won't know until Dubya writes his memoirs (but don't hold your breath - he'll have to learn to write first).

The question many people are asking is, of course, "what the fack was the Georgian president doing taking on Russia in the first place?" Did he hope that no-one would notice 'cos everyone's watching Beijing? Or, more likely, was it a calculated move based on a naive view of US / NATO support?

Saakashvili has been promised NATO membership for some time now, ever since he hosted Dubya in '05. As a potential member (other former USSR states, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have already joined), he probably thought he was invincible. It's kind of like Don Corleone saying he wants to be the godfather of your next son. And with that and

a string of corruption allegations dogging him, he decided to play the nationalist card. The plan: whip up a bit of righteous fury against the pro-Russian separatists and then send in the boys to take back South Ossetia with NATO blessing.

Unfortunately for the Georgian president, it was a calculation that was way, way out.

You see, the Russia of today is not the Russia of the '90s. Partly due to some old-fashioned state intervention, but mostly due to its control of so much of the world's precious oil and gas, Russia is once again a very big and powerful player in the new great game of world power.

Russia's military has been growing and growing under the leadership of Vladimir Putin, but it's not really this that the West is afraid of. It's the Russian energy weapon that strikes fear into the hearts of US / EU capitalists. When Ukraine started kissing western backsides a few years ago, all Russia had to do was turn off the gas (in the wintertime-brrr!) and wait for an apology. And Russia could easily do the same to Europe.

As US political economist F William

ALL THE KINGSNORTH'S MEN

Reports coming in from the Camp for Climate Action (see SchNEWS 641) Day of Mass Action on Saturday 9th August suggest that the day was more successful than many mainstream media sources made out. Despite coverage claiming E.ON continued their coal-chugging business as usual, arrestee charge sheets tell a different story. One of four people arrested inside Kingsnorth reveals they shut down the plant's cooling system and disrupted the running of the station.

Activists set about besieging the coal-powered giant by land, sea and air. Four contingents were deployed.

The Blue Group was the highly organised Great Rebel Raft Regatta (GRRR), which set out to sail the high seas (well, the river Medway) and sneak into the power station via the jetty that carries coal to the plant. Members of 'Operation Ikea' set sail on rafts made from pallets and oil drums; 'Operation Treasure Island' on inflatable dinghies previously stashed away in the woods and located using elaborately hand-drawn treasure maps.

All treasure came with its own paddles, inflating pump and small bottle of rum. Several affinity groups were seen rummaging around in the woods, some having spent the night avoiding the helicopter that circled overhead searching for pirates.

A total of 29 vessels made it onto the water, including 8 kayaks and a currach (made

in the woods overnight). Despite police interceptions (termed 'rescues' in the press), at least one vessel made it all the way and the crew dropped a banner reading "COAL: Starter Gun For Climate Chaos" - before collapsing from sheer exhaustion having paddled hard for an hour. The other pirates succeeded in tying up plenty of police vessels with cheeky water-bound cat and mouse antics. The Jolly Roger was later seen flying from a police boat and an officer wearing a pirate hat - a convert perhaps?

The green group made their way over land to the coal-powered colossus. They used the outer Harris fence - a temporary extra security measure - as a ladder to scale the tall spiky middle fence, before the cunning use of a warning sign thrown at the final electric fence established that it was in fact turned off. A small number of triumphant activists made it into the plant to be immediately jumped on by riot cops just as the first raft appeared on the horizon.

The silver group aimed to storm Kingsnorth by air using fighter jets, I mean, erm, balloons and kites. At least one parachute was seized by police while making its way onto site - pushing the definition on seizing offensive weapons just a bit!. Unfortunately weather conditions were not quite right and



CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For Trying to Avoid Scurvy...

Just one of many stop'n'searches at the entrance of the Camp For Climate Action last week at Kingsnorth, Kent: Protester Matt Wootton was swiftly in trouble after Police found a few 'Gary Abletts' on him during a search, and nicked him for 'alleged possession of a controlled substance'. He was held in a cell in Gillingham for over five hours, fingerprinted, DNA swabbed, put in a windowless cell and denied his legal right to a phone call before police got around the testing the pills...which turned out to be Vitamin C, just as Matt had been claiming all along.

Enghadhl put it, "Saakashvili made a colossal miscalculation in that he would have the immediate backup of NATO - but all he has are a few harsh words from a lame duck president in Washington."

This is why of course the West has been trying so hard to build an alternative route for Asian gas to reach European consumers. They even recently built a pipeline - the second largest in the world - to bypass Russia via, er... Georgia (called the Baku-Tbilisi-

Continued overleaf...

Betsy the helium balloon pig never made her giant leap to the skies. Keep a look out above Kingsnorth for future piggy action.

The orange pod was the fluffy contingent, made up of kids, locals and non-arrestables - and seems to have suffered the largest number of arrests. Having been told by loudspeaker from a police helicopter that if they did not disperse immediately at the agreed finish time then police dogs, horses and long batons would be deployed, a mere 19 protesters decided to stand their ground in defence of the right to protest. All were promptly arrested.

The camp might be over, but the campaign against Kingsnorth and other polluters continues, with other actions taking place including: ** Protesters scaled an electricity pylon and unfurled a 'Shut Down Kingsnorth' banner. ** Campers occupied the roof of Smithfield Meat Market and dropped a 'Stop Climate Change: Go Vegan' banner. ** 15 campers descended on Mildenhall US Air Based in Suffolk, some dressed as planes to highlight military CO2 emissions. ** 9 campers invaded offices of coal-mining giant BHP Billiton, some gluing themselves to the doors, others scattering coal in the lobby and educating staff. ** SEPT 26-28th: The first Post-Climate Camp National Gathering, to be held in Manchester. Crash Space available. More details to be released soon.

Visit www.climatecamp.org.uk

INFORMATION FOR ACTION Copyleft
Published in Brighton since 1994

Ceyhan Pipeline – see SchNEWS 555). That pipeline is now about a 20-minute tank drive from the Russian army. BP, seeing which way the wind blows, have pre-emptively shut down their bit of the pipeline. And that's not been the only problem for the BTC Pipeline. Only last week the Kurdish separatists, the PKK, bombed it, and there are reports that the Rooskies have had a go since then. So its back to the drawing board, and it's back to Russia if you want to boil your spuds.

So one in the eye for NATO and the US of A then. Hurrah. Only the problem with Caucasus politics is that whichever Empire gains, the people lose - Russia's brutality in Chechnya is at least as bad as the US's in Iraq, only colder.

Another way of looking at the carnage in the Caucasus is that it's the chickens of Kosovo rapidly coming home to roost. In February this year, Kosovo declared independence, supported by 90% of the population, following a referendum on the region's future. Bush, in his guise as hero of democracy, said that the world must respect the will of the people and recognise Kosovo as the 193rd member of the UN, effectively partitioning Serbia and further dividing the Balkan states that used to be known as Yugoslavia. Cool! - the rights of nations, independence, freedom fries and all that.

Russia, meanwhile, points out that South Ossetia also had a referendum, in which 90% of South Ossetia voted for union with North Ossetia (and Russia). If, so the Russian logic goes, Kosovo can leave Serbia, then South Ossetia (as well as Abkhazia) can leave Georgia.

But this rank hypocrisy of the USA is also equaled by Russia, who didn't exactly respect the people's wishes when it came to that other Caucasian republic of Chechnya. After declaring their independence straight after the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russia has fought two bloody wars, flattened the capital, Grozny, and exterminated perhaps one tenth of Chechnya's population, all in a bid to keep it part of Russia.

In Central Asia at least, the new shape of the world is now clear. From post-Cold War / New World Order, it's back to the 19th century and the era of the Great Game between rival empires - with the inhabitants stuck between a Russian rock and an American (OK, it used to be British) hard place.

Currently about 2,000 civilians have been murdered for the crime of living in a geopolitical fault line, and around 100,000 people have been displaced. The Russians bombed - then occupied - the Georgian town of Gori, outside of Ossetia and deep in Georgia proper, barely 20 miles from the Georgian capital, Tbilisi. As it so happens, Gori is

the birthplace of a certain Joseph Stalin. He would be proud of what they've done to his town - bombed the shit out of it for defying Russia.

What's been most illuminating about this war is just how quickly and how far the US / West / NATO have distanced themselves from the Georgian president following his disastrous military 'reintegration' of South Ossetia.

Both America and their every willing allies, Israel, have been deeply involved in Georgian affairs for many years now. In fact, President Saakashvili owes his job to the USA, courtesy of the National Endowment for Democracy.

The NED, part of the US State Department, is the first choice for pro-American regime change around the world. All of the various 'colour revolutions' that have brought pro-US regimes to power (Rose Revolution in Georgia - see SchNEWS 433, Orange in Ukraine, Cedar in Lebanon, and Saffron in Burma) have the NED's fingerprints all over them. They sent some thousand US special forces to train the Georgian military. In fact, the 'Georgia-US Immediate Response Military Exercise 2008' had ended just one week before the Ossetia invasion. Since the rout of the Georgian army, those advisors and any hint of US military involvement have been nowhere to be seen. As the separatist leader of Abkhazia put it, Georgian forces had received "American training in running away."

The Israelis' response has been just as telling. As soon as events turned sour, they froze all high tech arms sales to Georgia - fearful of Russians wrath if they're seen as supporting Georgia. But supporting Georgia is exactly what they've been doing for years. Not only have the Israelis provided weapons and training, but over a thousand advisors - mostly ex-officers freshly retired out of the Israeli Defense Force - found employment in Georgia's military. The Georgians should have looked a bit closer. A lot of these officers left the IDF in disgrace after Israel's own lost war of '06 against Hezbollah. Fresh from one defeat, they appear to have taught the Georgians how to lose another war.

This conflict (well, war really) is possibly the most dangerous on the planet at the moment. If Georgia ever gets to join NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty states that an attack on one country is an attack on all NATO members. Were round three of this conflict to kick off with Georgia as a full NATO member, NATO could be forced by its own logic into full scale war with Russia - with South Ossetia occupying the place in history that Sarajevo held in 1914 just before the start of World War One, only this time round both sides are nuclear armed...

And just when you thought that they couldn't get any eviler... the Bush Junta is now attempting to rush through changes to the law to remove thousands of animals off the endangered species list so the US Inc. can keep on buildin' those roads and drillin' for oil.

Under the proposals, federal agencies will have the power to decide for themselves whether construction projects like mines would or would not harm endangered animals and plants. At the moment the government is legally obliged to listen to the views of independent scientists as to whether a new project will have an adverse impact on wildlife. Such consultations take place thousands of times every year, annoyingly holding up lucrative exploitation of natural resources.

But it's not all just about pandering to the oil firms and dam-builders (and the projects of developing Alaska where many an endangered animal is to be found). The real underlying reason for the changes are an attempt to see off likely challenges that will arise when activists and supportive scientists start to argue that particular developments harm the environment generally, and then try to use the existing laws to block projects by linking the increased carbon emissions with global warming generally - and the potential extinction of millions of species.

Dirk Kempthorne, the US interior secretary said the new proposals would ensure that the US "avoids misusing its species laws to regulate global climate changes". Showing that he's no scientist himself, Dirk goes on to say that "It is not possible to draw a link between greenhouse gas emissions and distant observations of impact affecting species."

And don't expect other US politicians to come to the rescue. It's a presidential power to change these laws, which means Bush doesn't need to speak to Congress about the measures. Once in place, it would take much time and effort to repeal, even with the necessary political will.

The chief Democrat on the Senate environment committee said that "If this proposed regulation had been in place, it would have undermined our ability to protect the bald eagle, the grizzly bear and the grey whale." SchNEWS wonders whether the species *homo sapiens* appears anywhere on the list, or whether Bush and Co have decided to toss that particular breed into the dustbin of history too.

...and finally...

Sussex police did a recent leaflet drop in the county with advice on neighbourhood watch and community police issues, but the thin blue line became a thin blue movie when they mis-spelt their webname in it.

Instead of giving their own www.sussex.police.uk address, someone in the PR editorial team - with their eyes very much on-the-balls it seems - accidentally put www.sussexpolice.co.uk.

Oops! This was actually a website selling mostly jobs in the sex industry as well as porn films, gay strippers and other kinky paraphernalia (sadly all you wannabee-customers, the page is now cleaned up - but it's still available on Google's cache, should you not believe us!)

And it was not the first time Sussex Plod have spelt their web name like this on their literature - so who knows how many curtain twitchers have gone online looking for the cops' hotline numbers only to have been tempted away from duty by other, more exciting promises of handcuffs and truncheons...

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers - we keep an eagle eye on the US but we can't bear Russia either...Honest!

FIVE GO UP BEFORE THE JURY

Five Smash EDO protesters on trial for 'Conspiracy to Cause Criminal Damage' were found not guilty by a jury this Wednesday in Brighton Crown Court. After an eleven day trial the jury took four hours (and part of that was the lunch break) before delivering a unanimous 'not guilty' verdict.

The protesters were arrested after some of them locked-onto the doors of the EDO-MBM factory in Moulsecoomb during a demo last October (see SchNEWS xx). After being arrested for minor charges, these charges were then raised to 'Conspiracy to Cause Criminal Damage' which carries a maximum of ten years imprisonment, and requires a trial in a Crown Court before a jury. Some EDO factory locks were superglued during the demo, and the prosecution tried to claim that the five were part of a conspiracy to stick up the locks.

But the cops' gamble for heavy sentences didn't pay off and the victory was celebrated with a spontaneous demo at the factory yesterday (14th).

* **Smash EDO continue to protest every Wednesday** outside EDO-MBM/ITT, Home Farm Rd, Brighton. On Oct 15th another mass demonstration is planned. See www.smashedo.org.uk

* **On August 20th Smash EDO will be holding a musical protest against EDO.** Back in July a Judge at Hove Crown court upheld the conviction of a protester for using a sound system convicted under a council byelaw outlawing amplified noise. The judge said that if the music had been directly relevant to the protest it would have been unlawful to use the byelaw - so Smash EDO are calling on people to bring their collections of protest songs to the factory...

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