

FROM CRADLE TO GRAVES

AS THE WEST CAUSE MORE PROBLEMS IN EAST AFRICA THAN THE DROUGHTS

East Africa is currently experiencing one of the worst famines in recent history, with most of Somalia and large parts of Ethiopia experiencing severe food shortages. The west has been quick to offer the solution – more aid, more trade and flying in David Cameron (although he left early to try and save his job back home). This approach of aid, trade and sending rich white men to point at the locals has been the standard response to African disasters for the past 25 years and yet little progress seems to have been made.

It is true that the region is in the midst of an extreme drought and as a result pasture is parched and water sources for livestock have dried up. Unfortunately this means that if you bought an Ethiopian farmer a goat for Christmas, it's probably already dead. However, this famine was far from unavoidable. Whether or not the drought itself can be blamed on human activity is debatable, yet the impact of western "foreign policy objectives" is far clearer and, conversely, much less reported.

Africa is relatively sparsely populated and contains 50% of the world's uncultivated arable land – more than enough to feed its populace. On top of this many of the currently in-vogue resources (including gold, diamond,

platinum, oil and uranium) can be found in the region, so even in the worst drought the East Africans ought to be able to buy themselves out of trouble - yet this clearly isn't the case.

Recently the US has compounded the situation in Somalia with the use of drones to bomb the country (see SchNEWS 780). Of course this kind of western intervention in Africa is nothing new – events like the French bombing of the Central African Republic to British support for Morocco's occupation of Western Sahara barely even register in the mainstream press. Recent ideologically- framed coverage of Libya has been a notable and predictable exception to this (see SchNEWS 777).

Western media tends to ignore most events in Africa's poorer nations, only turning their attention to them to moralise when the situation reaches breaking point. They usually point the finger at local corruption, socialist governments, civil war, and "anarchy" for turning droughts into famines, but in reality it is outside intervention, not internal mismanagement, that is largely responsible for fuelling the catastrophes in the region.

In the 1980s, when Bob Geldof set out to single-handedly save Africa, Europe stockpiled food from bumper harvests; meanwhile aid



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organisations were forced to purchase grain on the open market, further subsidising European agriculture. The system is much the same today. Developing nations have been forced to adopt neoliberal policies, opening up their markets to western multinationals while banning subsidies for their own producers.

A trite solution to the 'African problem' would be to spend the money currently devoted to bombing the region on aid (UK has offered £52 million to relieve famine while the bombing of Libya has cost at least £200 million). Yet this view reinforces the idea that Africa is dependent on the west and ignores the root cause of the majority of the region's troubles. Western countries have spent decades propping up dictators, imposing free market 'reforms', bombing rebels, bribing officials and flogging military equipment. The aim of these policies wasn't to support rebuilding a continent ravaged by colonial powers and proxy wars, but merely to protect and further western 'interests' whether they be preferential access to resources, securing lucrative defence and infrastructure contracts, promoting stability (predictability) or holding back development. If these rich countries simply stopped enforcing foreign policy goals on Africa, the continent may stand a chance of healing itself.

The west is just as instrumental in the oppression of ordinary Africans as it was in the days of colonies and empires, just in a less overtly racist manner.

IS IT THE END OF THE LINE FOR SHELL?

We mentioned activists' continued dogged resistance against Shell's extraction of gas off the coast of Rosport, Ireland last week (see SchNEWS 781). Here's a fuller round up:

Shell were due to start work on the final phase of the pipeline construction project on Monday (25th). Protesters were up early - and then up a tripod – stopping trucks reaching the compound all morning. People on bikes and on foot then caused mayhem throughout the afternoon, with only ten vehicles getting into the refinery in total and police being forced to seize bicycles to stop the iron-horse blockaders.

Tuesday and Wednesday saw lock-ons to the gates of the compound, and by this time the police presence had really stepped up a notch. As many as 6 vehicles carrying a variety of security forces. The Gardai, Shell's hired goons: IRMS and a cutting team were all deployed to protect the tractors heading for Shell's premises. With more Gardai jogging alongside the convoy, activists still managed to jump on top of the supply vehicles, causing more delays.

On Thursday, a clever decoy was planned with demonstrators pretending to try and get on to one of the tractors whilst further down the road a tripod was set up without any police hassle. More protesters blockaded the scaffolding firm the Gardai are using to reach people on top of tripods. Only two trucks managed to gain access to the compound that day, and one ended up reversing back inside after failing to get through a rolling blockade of stubbornly limp-limbed activists.

Shell had obviously had enough by Friday and cancelled work for the whole day. Protesters still made their way to the refinery; several getting inside and pulling down fences. There were some injuries during these activities, but the majority chilled out on the road, listening to music and celebrating the distinct lack of vehicle movements.

So in the first week, just two arrests, and only 40 trucks going into the compound out of the 159 Shell had aimed for. See www.rossportsolidaritycamp.org for up to date news, or get over t'Eire!

SAFE TO GO BACK INTO WATER?

The ship they can't kill: Sea Shepherd's notorious Steve Irwin vessel was detained on July 15th - with a little help from the British judiciary system (See SchNEWS 781) - but just over a fortnight later, on Tuesday (2nd), the sea-faring group amazingly managed to raise the £520,000 bond needed to get the ship back in the water.

The battle has been won but the war between Sea Shepherd and the Maltese company Fish and Fish is not over. A court date is imminent, but not yet set, for a confrontation on land between the marine wildlife conservationists and the bluefin tuna poachers. Watch this space.

* Meanwhile next on the agenda are the Faroes Islands and the protection of the endangered Pilot Whales. The slaughter of around 950 whales per annum is known as the Grindadrap, or Grind for short. For more info and updates check www.seashepherd.org

BRUTALITY IN A CHINA SHOP

In China, over the last few months, ever greater dissent has been raising its balaclava'd head - to the consternation of the authoritarian rulers. They continue to respond with swift retribution and brutality. But will they will continue to be able to contain it? Despite their attempts to maintain the 'bamboo curtain' of internet control, dissent finds its way around and news of the masses' resistance continues to leak out.

Last week, hundreds of people rioted in the streets of the southwest Guizhou province over the death of a disabled street vendor. Three *chengguan* officers, two men and a woman, reportedly beat the one-legged fruit seller to death over an issue to do with his unlicensed stall.

The *chengguan* are a municipal security force charged with enforcing local laws; everything from sanitation and pollution control to work safety, planning, and 'city appearance'. It's their treatment of street vendors however that have earned them an infamous reputation. Beatings have become so commonplace that a new turn of phrase has been coined in Mandarin; to say 'Don't be too *chengguan*' is an admonishment for bullying or terrorising someone.

The most recent unrest in Guizhou saw crowds of people throwing stones at the police and attacking *chengguan* vehicles. The authorities deployed teargas and water cannons to break up the protest, and images of bloodied and bruised demonstrators have spread all over the internet. The riot continued late into the evening of Tuesday 26th July and reportedly left 30 protesters and 10 police officers injured. Six *chengguan* officers have apparently been taken in for questioning over the death.

Two months ago, on 10th June, a three day riot exploded in Zenchang, an industrial city in the southern Guangdong province. Another dispute sparked by the *chengguan*, who wrestled a street vendor and his pregnant wife to the ground. The area has a huge migrant worker population, who usually get the

blunt end of the law enforcement's truncheons and the thinnest wedge of China's economic boom. Thousands of them took the streets, attacking police with bottles, bricks and stones, and torching police and fire vehicles. Over 1,000 troops were deployed with teargas and water cannons. Many protesters were arrested, and six were given jail sentences in early July for their part in the demonstration.

In April, more migrant workers in Guangdong clashed with police during a protest over unpaid wages, and in Lichuan, Hubei, thousands stormed government headquarters after a local politician who had spoken out against police corruption died in custody. Mongolia has also seen its largest street protests in 20 years after a herder was killed by authorities whilst trying to stop coal trucks trespassing on pastoral grasslands.

Although accurate data over the extent of civil dissent and its severity is hard to come by, even conservative state estimates counted more than 90,000 mass incidents in 2006 alone, with increases in following years. The Chinese domestic security budget was raised to 624.4bn yuan (£60bn) in 2011, an increase of nearly 14% from the previous year.

While supporting the so-called Arab Spring is all the rage for the western powers, with intervention in countries where ideological capital or control of resources seems up for grabs, it's all self-interest - they have no such desire to do or even say anything about China.

How could they, when they know they'll soon be queuing up, caps in hand, to beg them to bailout their bankrupt system. We're moving to a world where the largest, richest superpower props up and de-facto owns increasingly huge chunks of the world's assets - rather like America in the 20th century, only one notch up on the police state, overt censorship and complete indifference to what anyone else thinks about it stakes...

WHAT NOT TO MALWARE

Great news for mobile 'smart' phone users; a new app to hit the shelves from Google Inc. records all your calls and has minimum security protection for any prying hackers out there. (See News of the World). Security researcher Dinesh Venkatesan described it as "a trojan piece of malware that spies on users' conversations". The fear is the files can be easily accessed by hackers. The app saves details of all incoming/outgoing calls and call duration. The advanced version records calls in a full speech-recording format. The application stores the recordings on the phone's memory.

Before it is downloaded the user has to give their permission to 'intercept outgoing calls, read phone status and identity' but no mention is made that whole calls are actually recorded - it must be buried in that really small, almost-invisible-to-the-naked-eye print that no one ever reads. Trying downloading the 'Sleep-walk into an Orwellian nightmare' app... or iTunes in, i-turn off and iDrop off the map...

SchNEWS in Brief

Get yerself to **Notre Dame des Landes**, France to defend a two year old protest camp set up against proposed new airport. Activists occupying the land and abandoned buildings have been served with papers to appear in court and are bracing themselves for eviction. See www.zad.nadir.org for a tat wish list, directions, and how to help.

** **Dale Farm** in Essex is also busy preparing for their eviction (anytime from Aug 31st) and the resistance - Camp Constant - from Aug 27th. This Saturday (6th) is a day for building and planning with briefings on the latest happenings. See <http://dalefarm.wordpress.com/activity> for up to date info.

PARTY & PROTEST

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

CIA: WE DO WHATEVER WE HAFTAR...

The Arab spring continues apace this week, although with mixed results. In Egypt Mubarak and his sons were wheeled out (literally in Mubarak's case) for the first day of a trial for corruption and ordering the killing of protesters. As all eyes were on Cairo for a glimpse of the former dictator pleading not guilty, Syrian tanks were crushing dissent in Hama. Obviously President Bashar al-Assad had decided it would be a good day to bury bad news. William Hague, Foreign Secretary, showed his grasp of the facts explaining there would be no Libyan style intervention because "Syria is not Libya".

The latest twist in the Libyan war is the death of the former leader of the rebel army, Abdul Fatah Younis. According to the mainstream press Younis was killed on Thursday 28th July. He and two of his officers had been shot and their bodies burned, and the identity of the assailants is still debatable. However Jordan based Al Bawaba News (<http://www.albawaba.com>) had reported his death four days earlier, stating that he had

been killed in "mysterious circumstances" around 14th July.

Whoever is behind the killing (Gaddafi, the CIA, Al-Qaeda and the Transitional National Council are amongst the suspects) one man who has certainly gained from it is General Khalifa Belqasim Haftar. Younis and Haftar had been swapping the title of leader of the rebels for several months before Younis's death and the men were believed to have a mutual distrust and dislike for each other. With Younis out of the way, Haftar is likely to be unchallenged as the head of the army.

While General Younis was a long-time ally of Gaddafi, helping him come to power in 1969 and remaining at his side right up to 2011 when he switched to the NATO backed rebels, General Haftar's background is much murkier (see SchNEWS 777). The US cannot be at all upset that the CIA's man is now secure as the head of the rebel army - just what they want as they seek to benefit from their active role in determining the conflict's outcome...

...and finally...

"Anarchism is a political philosophy which considers the state undesirable, unnecessary and harmful, and instead promotes a stateless society, or anarchy. Any information relating to anarchists should be reported to your local Police." - counter-terrorist focus desk, Metropolitan Police.

As part of Project Griffin - the Met's attempt to get shopkeepers to tackle terrorists - police released a leaflet asking locals to be on the lookout for Al-Qaeda and anarchists. Police were later forced to back down (slightly) saying the appeal "could have been better worded" and that they do "not seek to stigmatise those people with legitimate political views". Although they didn't state whether it was Islamic fundamentalism or anarchism that they felt was legitimate.

So, if your neighbour wears a Sex Pistols t-shirt, you think you might've seen Noam Chomsky on the Circle Line or you just want to get your copy of Days of War, Nights of Love seized - you know who to call.

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