



DIRECT ACTION STATIONS

“If you go to one demonstration and then go home, that’s something, but the people in power can live with that. What they can’t live with is sustained pressure that keeps building, organisations that keep doing things, people that keep learning lessons from the last time and doing it better the next time.” - Noam Chomsky

Last Saturday around 50 people attended a meeting about taking direct action against the war. Hosted by SchNEWS it followed the Stop the War Coalition conference and there was general agreement that while large marches are important they are not enough and that direct action must form a major part of our activities if we are to be successful in stopping this war. People talked about a whole host of activities from disrupting cabinet ministers meetings, getting into American bases to becoming human shields in Iraq to try and protect essential services like water and sewage plants. One of those places where it was felt we could really make our presence felt was at RAF Fairford in Gloucestershire.

Fairford has just had a brand spanking new £100 million pound refit so it can house the new bunker busting nuclear weapons firing B-2 bombers. This is the only airbase in Europe that these bombers can take off from to murder Iraqi civilians and so will play a crucial military role in the bombing and invasion of Iraq. Already two citizens weapons inspections have taken place with some people managing to break into the base briefly – so could Fairford become the next Greenham Common?

FIGHT FAIRFORD

In 1981 Ann Pettitt organised a march from Cardiff to Greenham Common to protest against the siting of 96 cruise missiles at the US-controlled airbase and decided to stay. Within a few months the women’s peace camp became a focus for hundreds of thousands of peace activists across Britain. One mass demonstration there in December 1982 attracted 30,000 women. They repeatedly made a mockery of the high security by cutting through fences and stopping the movement of the missiles, and Greenham inspired similar actions took place up and down the country.

This year, on Sunday January 26th Ann Pettitt and many of the Greenham women will be joining Gloucestershire Weapons Inspectors for another mass citizens weapons inspection at Fairford. “There are remarkable parallels between then and now and that’s what caught my imagination,” says Ann “Contemplating the use of weapons of

mass destruction in a war that’s supposed to be about eliminating such weapons is absurd... In 1981 we were told that theatre nuclear weapons, cruise missiles, at Greenham would make the world safer but we felt they edged us nearer to crossing the nuclear threshold. It took years to pull back from the threshold back then and yet we now find ourselves, once more, on the brink.”

As that wise old owl Jo Makepeace said at the meeting “Marches every few months, however big, will not in themselves worry the warmongers - they are a start, not an end in themselves. We need to step things up, both locally and nationally. We need to turn people’s anger into action by involving tens of thousands of people in blockading city centres, shutting military airbases, stopping ‘normal’ government activity and, well, you get the picture.”

BATTLE PLAN

If war breaks out – check the SchNEWS website to find out what’s happening in your area.

* Les Gibbons, wearing a shirt displaying the words “Dissent without civil disobedience is consent” pleaded guilty in court this week to “high quality intrusion” (whatever that means!). Les a former British marine, had attempted to blockade the gates to Portsmouth naval base on the day the Ark Royal left for the Gulf.

* Five citizens weapons inspectors from Cambridge Students Against the War entered RAF Feltwell last week to confirm reports that the base forms part of a US Weapons of Mass Destruction development programme. They were eventually nicked but released without charge. www.camsaw.org.uk

* Get along to RAF Northwood in London this weekend for some direct action against the war. Northwood will play a key role in directing British forces in any attack on Iraq. Operation Internal Look (OIL) – coincides with the anniversary of the 1991 Gulf bombing and will include a tour of the base, a mass blockade, mass breaching of the Official Secrets Act, non-violence training and autonomous affinity group actions. To find out more 0845 458 2564. www.northwood.cjb.net. Transport from Brighton: 9am at St Peters Church.

* Join the regular Menwith Women’s Peace Camp this weekend 01943-468593 e-mail helenmenwith@yahoo.co.uk to arrange lifts from Harrogate. And don’t forget the regular demonstrations every Tuesday 7-9pm. 01943 466405 www.caab.org.uk

* Sussex Action for Peace meeting this Tuesday 7.30pm, at the Brighthelm Centre, North Road, Brighton.

* January 26th is the day before Hans Blix reports to the UN Security Council. To mark

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For taking a photo of a building!

After taking some snaps, amateur photographer Mike Maginnis was putting his camera away when he was approached by a Denver cop demanding his camera and film. He had unwittingly taken a picture of the hotel Vice President Cheney was staying in, so after refusing to hand over his kit Mike was pushed to the ground and arrested as a suspect terrorist under the USA Patriot act. After several hours interrogation by the secret service he used his one phone call to call the Denver Post - oops the phone was cut off and he was dragged off to a holding cell for a few more hours.

the day thousands of citizens weapons inspectors are expected at Fairford. Meet noon in the village 07768 418960 www.gwi.org.uk

* Fancy going to Iraq as part of the Human Shield Convoy? It’s leaving 25th January from London. 07799 650 791 www.uksociety.org

* A women’s peace camp has been set up outside Shannon Airport, County Clare, Ireland to protest at it being used as a refueling point for the US military. More info, email: shannonpeacecamp@hotmail.com

* February 1st: Peace march/pedal for peace 2pm outside Bath Abbey.

* February 8th: Mass die-in 1pm Bourne-mouth Square. Dress in military uniform or white protective suits and gas masks. 07743 537043 www.alternativeanswer.co.uk/stopwar.htm

* February 8th, 1pm, anti-war gathering in Montague Place, Worthing. worthingagainstar@yahoo.co.uk

* People from Faslane peace camp blockaded British Aerospace in Edinburgh for 4 ½ hours and on Wednesday one of them locked onto the gates at Glen Douglas Europe’s largest weapons store for a few hours. Earlier in the day people used a car to block the gates to try and stop the Gulf-bound aircraft carrier Ark Royal loading munitions. Last week two train drivers refused to drive a freight train destined for there.

The peace camp have organised ‘make love not war’ actions from 14-18 February. This includes action against Labour Party war conference in Glasgow on the 15th. Tel 01436 820901 faslanepeacecamp@hotmail.com

* February 15th Massive demo against the war Assemble 12 noon at Embankment, London 020 7053 2155 www.stopwar.org.uk

* Sign the pledge of resistance to the “war on terrorism” 0207 607 2302 www.j-n-v.org

* There’s a new direct action anti war email group <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/directactionagainstar>

* Recommended reading ‘Greenham Women are Everywhere’ by Alice Cook, Gwyn Kirk, Pluto Press.

OIL SEE YOU IN HELL

Last week, police stations throughout Caracas, Venezuela's capital, had their sub machine guns and other weapons confiscated. Complaining of the dawn raids, the police chief told Caracas' Union radio, "This leaves us at a tremendous disadvantage against criminals... It's outrageous." Hugo Chavez the President of Venezuela took over control of the Caracas Metropolitan Police from Caracas mayor Alfredo Pena of the opposition last November. Following reports of continued police violence against pro-Chavez protestors and poor folk, Chavez ordered that their weapons be taken last week too.

After six weeks of big business strikes, Venezuela is starting to feel the pinch as the battle continues between the elected socialist president Hugo Chavez and the right-wing opposition. On top of this the state oil company Petroleos de Venezuela, nationalised since the 1970s, is actually run by managers closely linked to the multinationals and the former governing party Acción Democrática. On December 4th these managers declared their support for the big business strike and were joined by the captains of Venezuelan oil tankers who dropped anchor and refused to move. Owners of fleets of road tankers also shut down and the result was the spectacle of a major oil-producing country paralysed through lack of petrol. The military were sent in to keep the oil refineries running, ship captains were dismissed and the navy took control. Fines were imposed on striking road hauliers and the top management of Petroleos de Venezuela was dismissed. Chavez also used the military to set up 'popular markets' to distribute cheap food in lower-class areas of the cities.

In a coup led by the opposition and assisted by the US last April (SchNEWS 345) 20 people were shot dead and as yet no-one has been tried for the deaths. The opposition hope that by destabilising the economy the US will step in again. As always the media propaganda wars are making it incredibly difficult for anyone to know exactly who or what to believe.

Chavez's government has a centralised socialist structure, while the main opposition group wants more links with big business and multinational corporations, aka the 'free' market. Both parties represent elitist capitalist or communist groups that haven't been able to attain social justice and freedom in any other country yet. Despite his dictatorial militant handling of opposition, Chavez does win points for some of his reforms. Since coming to power in 1999 he has been shouting about participatory democracy, trying to use popular assemblies, social movements and continuous referendums. He also set up the provision of free healthcare and education up to university level and positively restructured the courts and legal system.

Venezuela is the fifth largest oil producing country in the world yet 80% of its population live in poverty. Chavez sought to redress the balance by imposing a 30% tax paid on oil exports and by changing the law so that the government would have to have a 51% stake in all oil ventures. His government also passed a land reform bill which makes it possible for the government to seize land that has been unproductive for two years and redistribute it to the poor and landless.

More information see: www.squall.co.uk, www.nodo50.org/ellibertario

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SchNEWS in brief

The Manchester office of **Environmental Resource Management (ERM)** was occupied for over four hours this week as part of a campaign against their involvement in the green washing of the **Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan** oil pipeline (last weeks SchNEWS). The protesters got to talk to ERM's Director and BP's Regional Affairs Director for the Pipeline project who agreed to a meeting. Manchester Earth First! 0161-226 6814, www.risingtide.org.uk ** **Space Invaders a Festival of Arts and Resistance** will appear somewhere in Brighton from the 23rd. It aims to inspire and excite with arts, live music, film, and space for direct action and campaigning workshops. 01273 672186 or speakerpeople@hotmail.com ** The threat of **identity cards** hasn't gone away, the government are consulting the public on the issue. **Privacy International** have set up two local rate numbers, and they will pass your opinions to the government. If you're against the ID Card call 0845 330 7246, or if you're in favour 0845 330 7245. Read about the issues at www.stand.org.uk ** **The Aspire collective in Leeds** whose house was raided and illegally evicted in November are looking to pursue complaints and claims of damage against the police. If you were there and want to join in, contact info@a-spire.org.uk. www.a-spire.org.uk ** **Earth First! Winter Moot** takes place in Nottingham 7-9 Feb. Discussions on how EF! operates - actions, tactics, gatherings, communication, and strategy. Open to anyone who identifies with the EF! Network. 07763 552627 efmoot03@hotmail.com ** On Monday **Greenpeace** activists strolled past lax security at **Sizewell B nuclear powerstation** and occupied one of the sensitive control rooms. www.greenpeace.org.uk

LICENCE TO KILLJOY

If you're planning a few celebratory late night drinks when the new Licensing Bill comes into effect just be careful you and your mates don't burst into song cos you might end up with six months in the nick and a £20 000 fine - the maximum penalty for performing "unlicensed live music".

The Licensing Bill, deregulates pub opening times but brings in draconian measures to clamp down on live music. Any music performed live in public will require a license to be obtained two weeks in advance by the proprietor of the venue. It's not only pubs and clubs that will be affected - also covered are buskers and a bunch of obvious threats to family values: carol singers, Morris men, bell-ringers and someone singing at a wedding. This is supposedly to tackle "anti-social behaviour" in the form of "noise", but is another crack down on civil liberties. The license won't be easy to get and will require approval from the police, environmental health (i.e. noise abatement) and local residents. Most complaints are about noise OUTSIDE pubs and clubs but rather than tackle the problem, the government are targeting musicians as an easy soft target.

But guess what? A suggestion that satellite TV (eg. MTV) being broadcast in public places should be similarly licensable was instantly thrown out with Kim Howells stating that such a move would be "resisted robustly by the Industry." That's alright then.

* Meeting regarding action against the Public Entertainment Licence this Friday (17) 8pm @ Charles Dickens, Worthing 01903 522787 dickensclub@aol.com

* 27 Jan Demo against License Bill Reforms 1pm Parliament Square, London.

* Join the guerilla music action cell seferner@macmail.com.

* To read the Bill see www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/pabills.htm

MON-SATAN

If you worry about things like world hunger, habitat destruction or declining wildlife - chill out its all being sorted out by everyone's favourite agrigrib multinational Monsanto.

On Wednesday a report published by the Royal Society said GM crops could be good for the environment! And guess who funded this research? Like a hyperactive superhero, one day they're solving world hunger by forcing their transgenic products on desperate African countries, and the next Monsanto are worried about starving wildlife. Their "scientific" experiment had two different management systems for conventional and GM crops, with the system for GM crops being impractical on a commercial basis. With these results they claimed GM crops were better for birds. But considering the two systems were different and the trial only ran for half a year the results are meaningless.

Friends of the Earth campaigner Pete Riley said "Sugar beet farmers were sold the idea of GM crops in the mid 1990s on the basis of that they were good for weed control. The techniques proposed are likely to be more costly and more trouble, it is hard to see what the appeal would be for the majority of farmers." Friends of the Earth: 02074901555 www.foe.co.uk

* The Nelson family from North Dakota, America are currently fighting Monsanto through the courts after their corn cross-pollinated with GM RoundupReady thereby making it Monsanto property. This is similar to the case of Percy Schmeiser (see SchNEWS 346) a farmer from Canada who was fined £150,000 after his canola crops became contaminated by neighbours GM crops. www.percyschmeiser.com

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Inside SchNEWS

Aliane Ahmed has been on remand for over a year on charges of arson relating to the fire at the Yarls Wood detention centre has had his charges dropped, and his supporters hope he will soon be released from prison. Two men however are still on remand for charges relating to the incident, one Klodjian Gaba would appreciate letters of support or visits, Klodjian Gaba EM9676 - HMP Wormwood Scrubs, PO Box 757, Du Cane Road, Acton, London, W12 0AE.

...and finally...

Colombian Guerrillas who have been fighting for 40 years for a socialist state have been spared from a planned devastating air-strike - Operation Bikini. The government was gonna bombard them with a different kind of bombshell - pocket sized photos of busty bikini-clad women. Despite 30% of the rebels being female, the Latin American tempresses were supposed to seduce the rebels to defection as they stretched provocatively next to slogans such as "DESERT! and "Obtain Benefits". Colombian models refused to be drafted in to pose for the photos so the army instead got the images from an internet porn site. The war torn nations first female Defence Minister supported the feminist protests and said she was cancelling the campaign

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers to stay at home and build a weapon of mass destruction before the neighbours do. Honest.