

# WORKERS

www.workers.org.uk

JULY 2006 £1

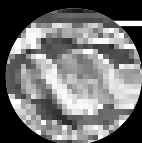


## IRAQ: THE ILLEGAL WAR CONTINUES



Vote seals Ryton's fate

03



UCU fight: victories and challenges

08



With the Maoists in Nepal

11

# WORKERS

## “Privatise first, then sell abroad

THE AIRPORT operator BAA, privatised in 1987 for £1.2 billion, is to be taken over by Spanish construction firm Ferrovial in a deal worth £10.3 billion. Ferrovial has already indicated it intends to outsource and reduce overheads. BAA controls 92% of travellers passing through London and 86% of those passing through Scotland so Ferrovial's monopoly position and transfer of work out of London and Scotland can only damage those local economies.

In the same week that BAA went abroad, Associated British Ports looked set to succumb to a US banking consortium led by Goldman Sachs for £2.4 billion. ABP, once the British Transport Docks Board, was privatised in the early 1980s. The ABP buy-out follows the sale of P&O's docks and shipping interests to Dubai Ports World (DPW) for £3.9 billion. The USA is

resisting the attempt by DPW to gain P&O shipping interests in the US as being against the USA's national interest.

Utilities and energy companies in the UK – Thames Water, Sutton and Cheam Water, London Energy, Centrica, British Gas, UK Coal – are all attracting high-powered foreign banking interest. And the saga as to which foreign banking conglomerate will take over the London Stock Exchange rumbles on.

Britain's financial and industrial contours are being redrawn. Blair abandoned the government's 'Golden Share' option, the right to block overseas takeovers, in 2003, after recognising the supremacy of EU law over UK law. Thatcher sold the 'family silver'. Blair is ensuring that foreign capital is now buying up the infrastructure of UK PLC.

## Make them pay for outsourcing

POWERGEN, the utilities company, is to close its outsourced call centres in India and relocate them back to Britain, where 980 staff will be recruited. Its decision to locate in India was economic – workers could be employed at a small fraction of the wages paid in Britain. So is its decision to relocate to the UK – relocation is costing too much in complaints and reparation to its 6 million customers in Britain.

The argument that reducing costs drives

such decisions is clearly flawed. Costs can always be driven up if workers in Britain complain.

So use the technology installed to reduce costs and boost profits against the companies: write and demand a response in writing; boycott the call centres and their push button options; boycott their websites; if you ring in, demand to speak to a British-based employee; make Customer Services really work for you.



WORKERS is published by the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist),  
78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB  
ISSN 0266-8580

www.workers.org.uk  
Issue 95, July 2006



## Contents – July 2006

### News

Vote seals Ryton's fate, p3; Northern Ireland unions fight education cuts, p4; East London NHS battle, p5; News Analysis: the planned regionalisation of Britain's police forces, p6.

03

### Features

Iraq: the illegal war continues, p6; Victories and challenges as academics ponder pay offer, p8; With the Maoists in Nepal – eyewitness account, p11.

06

### Life and Soul

Communism – I'm lovin' it, p14.

14



<b>MOTORS</b>	Vote seals Ryton's fate
<b>ROLLS-ROYCE</b>	Importing labour
<b>FOOD</b>	Heinz outsources sauces
<b>EDUCATION</b>	Northern Ireland protests
<b>TRANSPORT</b>	DLR wage cut fight
<b>HEALTH</b>	East London battle
<b>RETAIL</b>	Taking on ASDA/Wal-Mart
<b>EUROTRASH</b>	The latest from Brussels
<b>WHAT'S ON</b>	Coming soon
<b>NEWS ANALYSIS</b>	Regionalising the police

## Vote seals Ryton's fate

THE REJECTION by the Peugeot workers at Ryton in Coventry of a campaign to defend their jobs by 847 votes to 640 votes, in a high return of 72% of the workforce, effectively sees the closure of the Ryton plant in Coventry.

The transfer of work to Slovakia, where weekly wages will average £75, will ensure that cheap labour replaces the skilled labour of Ryton. Ryton, and the 206 range produced there, was profitable for Peugeot; all that the transfer ensures is that the profits on the 207 will be greater. Amicus and the TGWU are to campaign during the World Cup period for British goods to be made in Britain by British workers. A boycott of Peugeot Citroen vehicles is similarly called for. But a consumer boycott requires a high level of awareness of the issue and what is to be achieved. Workers voting to sell their own jobs give a negative message to those from whom they seek support.

The critical issue of defending British manufacturing industry and the continued refusal to link it to withdrawal from the EU is the greatest weakness the trade unions have. Stay in the EU and industry will die. To blame government anti-trade union legislation for the unwillingness to fight has a ring of truth, but ignores the suicidal vote of the Ryton workers themselves. It probably ignores the deeper ideological weakness in that workers appear no longer to believe in themselves or manufacturing.

Built in Britain by British workers needs to be the new strategy that the manufacturing trade unions must hammer out – not a lobbying campaign hat in hand at the EU court, but an imaginative strategy to seize the minds of workers from a defeatist strategy of closure to one of identity through skill, pride in our work and unity at the point of production.

- One million manufacturing jobs were lost under the Tories in the 18 years from 1979 to 1997. And, according to figures from Ernst & Young Item Club, business consultants, one million more have now been lost under Labour in the nine years from 1997 to 2006. Ernst & Young are quick to place the blame for this doubling of the rate of destruction: rising wage costs.

It is the same litany capitalists have rolled out for the past 250 years. They ignore that Blair and Brown have pursued the anti-manufacturing policies of Thatcherism. They ignore the transfer of industry into the Far East and the EU. They ignore the deliberate government policy of the last 30 years, wave after wave of imports, which have destroyed swathes of industry. They ignore the non-investment in British industry. They blame interest rates, though they are the lowest in 30 years. They blame everybody other than the capitalist system, which just doesn't work!

**If you have news from your industry, trade or profession we want to hear from you. Call us or fax on 020 8801 9543 or e-mail to [rebuilding@workers.org.uk](mailto:rebuilding@workers.org.uk)**

### ROLLS-ROYCE Importing labour into Britain

SINCE MAY 2004, according to official figures, 392,000 people from the Eastern European member countries of the EU have applied to move to Britain. The numbers are rising: 45,660 applied in the first quarter of this year, up 6% on 2005's first quarter figure. The Bank of England noted approvingly, "[The] rise in labour supply has probably helped to hold down the rate of wage growth and inflation."

Rolls-Royce has been hiring engineers from Eastern Europe, Germany, Spain, France and the USA, because of the domestic skills shortage. And the company now gets 10% of its supplies from low-wage economies like the Czech Republic, Romania, India, China and Mexico, up from none in 2002.

Rolls-Royce is also planning to cut the number of its British workers, to have more than 50% of its workers based outside Britain. Currently, 60% of its 35,000 workers are based in Britain.

### FOOD MANUFACTURE Heinz outsources sauces

OVER 125 JOBS at the Heinz sauce factory in Birmingham are set to be axed as production is shifted to Heinz's Holland factories. The Birmingham factory has been in production for over 100 years. Heinz's latest advertising campaign boasts "every Heinz tomato knows where it comes from". Trade unionists campaigning to save the factory are demanding that every customer knows where every Heinz sauce bottle comes from and if it is not made and bottled in the UK – boycott it.

## EUROTRASH

### The latest from Brussels

#### EU Constitution – dead or alive?

EUROPEAN UNION leaders will try to resurrect the Constitution in the next two years. Blair's spokesman said that the UK government is "perfectly happy" with this: it is also planning to break its promise to hold a referendum on the Constitution.

French and Dutch voters voted to reject the EU constitution last year. Since then opposition has increased. According to a recent poll 55.5% of French people would reject the constitution today: 1% more than last year. In Holland 65% would reject it, up from the 61.5% No vote. About 75% of the people in each country believe that no parts of the Constitution should be implemented without fresh referendums.

But former EU Commissioner Michel Barnier wants to avoid more embarrassment. He said that the Constitution should be ratified by national parliaments, not by referendum. Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende explained that referendums are "risky affairs".

Parliaments are more persuadable. Estonia's Parliament has just ratified the Constitution, with only one member voting against. Polls showed that 80% of Estonians opposed it.

#### Euro finance calling....

A EUROPEAN Parliament working group is looking at the idea of taxing e-mails and mobile phone text messages. At present the EU raises money from import duties; value added tax and contributions from member states.

The EU has now decided that the way in which it is funded should change, with new proposals expected by 2008/2009.

One idea from the European Parliament would tax electronic transactions: 1.5 cents (0.8p) for every text and 0.00001 cents for every email. "This... could still raise an immense income," said French MEP Alain Lamassoure. He added, "Exchanges between countries have ballooned, so everyone would understand that the money to finance the EU should come from the benefits engendered by the EU."

So now you know, it was the EU that gave us texting and email! The popular response is that the proposal is more likely to help to sink the EU than any-thing else.



Northern Ireland union members fight education cuts – see story below.

## NI unions fight school cuts

YET AGAIN unions in Northern Ireland have acted to fight cuts in education provision. In the latest action, hundreds of workers joined a mass lobby of the South Eastern Education and Library Board at the start of June as it was meeting to discuss proposed cuts to many services for pupils with special needs.

The lobby was organised by NIPSA, the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance, Unison and the NAS/UWT. Board members were shocked at the number of workers who turned out. The chant of "No ifs, no buts, no cuts" made it hard for them to hear themselves speak, and when many of the protesters decided to go into the meeting they first threatened to call the police – and then abandoned the meeting.

The board says the cuts are necessary to balance its books – or government commissioners will be sent in. But the board has been shown to be financially incompetent and workers in the education sector are determined that children shouldn't have to suffer to put the books straight!

An article in the local paper, the *NEWTOWNARDS CHRONICLE*, gives a clue as to where it should be looking for savings: £700,000 had been spent in three months last year on consultancy fees and 4 posts have been advertised on high salaries for its PPP (public private partnership) schemes. One of the proposed cuts is the closure of a summer scheme for children with severe learning difficulties in order to save a mere £30,000.

NIPSA representative Brian Booth said, "This is shocking. There is no money for children and services, yet the Department of Education can throw almost £200,000 per year at these posts to try to shore up a service that is totally discredited."

NIPSA has also pointed out that handing control over to private companies could leave staff open to poorer job conditions than they have under public control. Kitchen staff and cleaners could face their jobs being contracted out to private companies, and the destruction of the high-quality service they offer.

## TRANSPORT

### DLR wage cut fight

SOME 250 Docklands Light Railway RMT members in London are balloting against wage cuts. DLR is planning to reduce junior station staff wages from £28,000 to £25,500.

DLR says these cuts are essential to the improvement of services. Most users of the DLR, with its many trains without any

guards, or limited staff at stations, must regard such arguments as nonsense. The Greater London Authority and Mayor's Office are campaigning for more staff to be employed on trains and stations to enhance public safety.

The extension of the DLR into new stations in Docklands and Woolwich will increase the number of DLR Company passengers and ticket sales. The proposed cut in wages is DLR trying to have the cream on its cake.

**BREWING...****...or is it now just property?**

YOUNG'S HAS announced the closure of the Wandsworth Brewery, London, to take effect next year. The production of its Bitter, Special Ale and other bottled beers is to be transferred to the Charles Wells Brewery in Bedford and a new company, Wells and Young's, is to be created.

Young's has operated from the same site for 175 years, and a brewery has existed there since the 16th century. The brewery, which also incorporates a brewing

museum, is to be turned into the usual mix of shops and flats that nearly every former factory in Britain seems to be destined to become – particularly in central London, where property speculation makes land more profitable than production.

Young's made over £900,000 profit last year from the production of beer. It expects to make at least £11 million from the sale of the site and the merger.

One of the catalysts for the sale was the Mayor of London's Area Plan, which designated Wandsworth High Street as an area for residential development. When are we going to see plans that protect industry?

## East London NHS battle

AROUND 250 cleaning and domestic UNISON members at Whipps Cross NHS Trust, North East London, are balloting for strike action after both the private contractors, Initial Cleaning and the trust reneged on a 2003 agreement over pay and conditions.

In 2003, after a series of strikes, Whipps Cross, the Homerton and Tower Hamlets NHS trusts and the privatised cleaning contractors agreed to lift wages and work towards implementing NHS Agenda for Change terms and conditions. The 2003 dispute was settled with an agreement that by April 2006 there would be new wage levels comparable with non-privatised health staff. That has happened in the Homerton and Tower Hamlets, but Initial, blaming the trust and lack of funding, is refusing to pay – and introducing additional cuts in hours, wages and staffing levels. Initial's refusal to negotiate locally or nationally and its cavalier attempt to ignore the contractors' agreement has pushed the issue into dispute.

A lunchtime demonstration of over 300 Whipps Cross staff has given a clear indication of the mood of members. Whipps Cross, which has a £5.8 million deficit, has seen three board directors "leave" in as many weeks – with a "rescue consultant" appointed on a reputed £1,200 a day fee!

Other groups of privatised domestic and cleaning staff in London, including other Initial workers, are closely watching the dispute at Whipps Cross. The reluctance of contractors to meet the terms of the 2005 National Agreement – brokered by the trade unions, the Department of Health and CBI to deliver Agenda for Change and do away with the two-tier workforce – with contractors blaming Trusts and vice versa, may well see industrial action ballots spread across London.

**RETAIL****ASDA/Wal-Mart under attack**

THE 4300 GMB members employed by ASDA are moving closer to action after a 3 to 1 vote for strikes at depots and distribution centres across Britain as ASDA continues to refuse recognition and negotiating rights. As WORKERS went to press, the Shop Stewards National Council, meeting in Manchester, set the first strike days for 30 June to 4 July.

The GMB successfully took ASDA to an Employment Tribunal in February 2006, costing ASDA £850,000 in fines for anti-union activity. Similar legal action is planned under 2004 legislation, which makes it illegal for an employer to hire agency staff to undermine industrial action.

The union is monitoring the agency

staff that ASDA is employing in the run up to the strike. If it acts illegally again, ASDA and the agencies would face punitive fines and official investigations.

Wal-Mart, the giant US retailer and ASDA's parent company, is facing protests and opposition elsewhere in the world. Attempts to unionise Wal-Mart in the USA and Canada have been brutally refused by Wal-Mart, leading the Norwegian government to withdraw investing its £130 billion pension fund in Wal-Mart for "serious and systematic violations of human rights and labour rights".

These included employing minors, breaching international labour conventions, hostility to unions, hazardous health and safety working conditions, enforced overtime and discriminatory working practices especially against women. Wal-Mart's share price subsequently fell.

**WHAT'S ON****Coming soon****JULY**

**Saturday 8 July, Durham, all day**

**Durham Miners' Gala**

The mines and the miners have gone from the North East, but the pride lives on. Last year up to 70,000 people came to the Durham Miners' Gala, and more are expected this year, the 122nd Gala. Music all day. The highlight is the traditional march with banners through the city.

**Monday 10 July, for four weeks**

**"A better world is possible", Gateshead Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead, NE8 1HH**

A photographic exhibition illustrating the work of the Cuban Medical Brigades in Honduras, Haiti and Venezuela by Gateshead photographer Ailie Hodgson. A Salud International production. For more information about the exhibition, email [info@salud.org.uk](mailto:info@salud.org.uk).



**Weekend of 14/16 July, Tolpuddle**

**Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival, Tolpuddle, Dorset. The annual celebration of the farm labourers' fight for union rights.**

The Martyrs' Festival goes from strength to strength. The event kicks off on Friday night, with plenty of music. Sessions on Saturday on "Unions and Climate Change" and "Latin America turns left". The grand procession sets off at 2pm on Sunday, followed by speeches, including from Brendan Barber, Shami Shakrabarti and Tony Benn. For more information, email [southwest@tuc.org.uk](mailto:southwest@tuc.org.uk) or visit [www.tuc.org.uk/tolpuddle](http://www.tuc.org.uk/tolpuddle)

**Saturday 15 July, London, 1pm**

**International Brigade Memorial Trust**

The annual commemoration takes place at Jubilee Gardens, South Bank, SE1.

## Defeat for attempted regionalisation of Britain's police forces

GOVERNMENT ATTEMPTS to reduce 43 area police forces into 17 large regions have been put on hold. In the face of hostility from senior police officers, police authorities, councils, and local people in referendums, Home Secretary John Reid had to announce the climbdown after a "confidential" report leaked to the DAILY TELEGRAPH exposed the costs of mergers.

The report, written by Tim Brain, Chief Constable of Gloucestershire and chairman of the finance and resource committee of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), said that the mergers could cost as much as £600 million and 25,000 officers' jobs, and "destroy any realistic hope of developing neighbourhood policing".

### United

The entire police establishment appears to have united against the home secretary. At the end of June, the Association of Police Authorities and ACPO protested to the Lords that Reid was trying to "take more and more powers" to impose central government control over policing. The Police and Justice Bill was an attack on the British tradition of the police having local accountability, they said.



Peers proceeded to approve an amendment to the 1996 Police Act to give police authorities the right to veto future amalgamations.

These events follow an extraordinary period of open revolt by some Chief Constables over the home secretary's plans to merge their area forces. His only argument is that there is a need to "meet the new challenges of the 21st century", and larger units would be more

effective in fighting terrorism. The police cannot see how this could be, when locally police know their areas so well and larger forces would not.

The government's real reason is the drive to regionalise everything that moves. The EU wants a "Europe of Regions" (forget nations with their silly old traditional ways of organising) with all regions run along similar lines throughout in an EU-wide police force. Reorganisation of the fire service is already being pushed through on this model, against all logic and arguments by fire services that they will become less, not more, effective when local expertise is dissipated.

### Extra cash

Police force leaders were originally offered extra money if they agreed to merge forces by 23rd December 2005. A major problem arose for Reid – they didn't.

Only Lancashire and Cumbria police forces have so far agreed to the changes. Sussex police strongly resisted the attempt to merge them with Surrey, saying "we have . . . declined the Home Secretary's invitation to volunteer for the merger". Gloucestershire pointed out that the proposal to create a South West Region was illogical: "parts of north Gloucestershire are nearer to Carlisle than they are to Cornwall". They are keen to cooperate with Wiltshire and Dorset, but oppose a merger. Dyfed-Powys Chief Constable Terry Grange said Reid's plan was "Alice Through the Looking Glass stuff".

### Midlands

The attempt to create a gigantic police service by merging West Midlands, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and West Mercia was stymied when West Mercia Chief Constable Paul West appeared on TV to condemn the Home Office proposals.

Such open opposition by serving senior police officers is almost unprecedented. For now, it has achieved a breather, with Reid announcing the reorganisation will be put off until autumn at the earliest. No doubt it will be back in some form, but at present Reid has been seen off.

## Running out of support and Blair have an amp

## The illegal war

IN THE FACE of increasing losses on the ground in Iraq and opposition to the war at home, the Bush and Blair governments are stepping up their campaign of misinformation.

Bush and Blair's war in Iraq is a war of choice, not necessity, and therefore illegal in international law. It is now abundantly clear that it is also a war against the Iraqi people, aimed to divide and destroy them as a nation, not a war against a regime and its army. Hence the need on the aggressors' part to confuse the issue.

The USA played up the role of the terrorist Abu Masad al-Zarqawi to divide and demonise the Iraqi resistance. US Brigadier General Kimmit said, "The Zarqawi psy-op program is the most successful information campaign to date."

It's all about lies. Colin Powell lied to the UN Security Council that Zarqawi's meeting with bin Laden proved that Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda were linked. US government sources lied that Zarqawi's Jordanian origins proved that foreigners not Iraqis led the resistance.

But even US commanders say that only 6% of the insurgents are foreign. Of the 10,000 detainees held by US and British forces, without trial or charge, only 350 are non-Iraqi, 3.5%.

### Attacking the US

US government sources claimed that most insurgent attacks were against civilians. But the US Defense Intelligence Agency reported that from March 2003 to March 2005 the vast majority of insurgent attacks were against US military forces.

The insurgency is increasing in intensity. From April 2003 to April 2004, 601 US soldiers were killed, from April 2004 to April 2005, 847, from April 2005 to April 2006, 848.

US officials said that the growing number of attacks was a measure of progress. Vice President Dick Cheney said this June, as he had said last year, that the insurgency was "in its last throes".

As of 23 June, 2,510 US soldiers, and 113 British, had been killed. Reported Iraqi civilian deaths are between 38,475 and 42,889. And more occupation troops are being killed in Afghanistan: 58 in 2004, 129 in 2005 and 47 so far this year.

# ...t and soldiers, Bush ...le supply of lies...

## ... continues

Before the attack on Iraq, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said it was ludicrous to think that it would take more troops to secure the peace than to win the war. He counted on Iraqi troops to help run the occupation. And he said that the occupation would last three months and would pay for itself. But the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan cost the USA \$166 billion in 2003-04. The US Congress estimated that they would cost the USA another \$285 billion in the next five years.

### They need more soldiers

Generally, more troops are needed to control cities than countryside, and Iraq is 75% urbanised, compared with Bosnia and Kosovo's 50% and Afghanistan's 18%. The smaller the occupation force, the higher the civilian casualties, because smaller forces rely more on firepower (particularly on air strikes) to make up for their lack of manpower. The occupation forces have proved too small to seal Iraq's borders, guard its munitions, establish security, detain prisoners of war properly, rebuild Iraq or enforce "democracy".

This is not to argue for more troops – the USA has not got them anyway and has no allies to provide them, apart from ever-servile Labour – but to point out that the occupation has no chance of achieving its stated aims of "rebuilding Iraq" or of establishing "democracy".

In any case, the US governor overruled Iraqi proposals to elect the constitution-making body, local authorities and the transitional government. All the talk about planting democracy in Iraq and the Middle East was just to fool liberals into backing the war. The first democratic wish of the people of Iraq is that the occupiers leave.

The occupation has brought increased crime, 60% unemployment, doubled infant mortality, undrinkable water and intermittent electrical power. The United Nations Children's Fund says that since the invasion acute malnutrition among children has more than doubled. Some 1.3 million Iraqi children between eight and sixteen are working long hours for low or no pay.

A third of all primary schools have no water supplies and half have no sanitation. Since May 2003, bombing has damaged 700 more primary schools. A UN study last



Baghdad: "extracting" soldiers from an abandoned housing site.

Photo: DOD

year revealed that 84% of Iraq's higher education establishments have been "destroyed, damaged and robbed".

Blair and Bush are lying about the extent of rebuilding. This pattern is repeated in Afghanistan, where there is also no economic progress; the government controls only a quarter of the budget and the country produces 87% of the world's heroin.

The occupation forces have worsened sectarian strife in Iraq. They discriminated against Sunni Muslims, but then, to stop Shia Muslim candidates winning the promised local elections, they aborted the elections, thus alienating the Shia too.

The US is guilty of war crimes in Iraq, including its assaults on the city of Fallujah, its refusal to do "body counts" (in breach of Article 16 of the First Geneva Convention), and its torture and killings of POWs. But the torture in Iraq and Afghanistan is nothing new. It has long been standard CIA practice in Vietnam and Latin America, not to forget the British

army's record across the Empire from Ireland to Kenya. In Guatemala, the CIA trained the army's torturers, and told the White House about this army's torture and killing of all POWs. Now the CIA has set up Special Police Commandos, death squads, in Iraq. Some states, like the USA and Britain, allow their agents to torture and to assist torturers; some, like Cuba, do not.

The invasion and occupation have followed the advice that US General Charles Horner gave to the commander of US forces in Iraq: "In the end, if we are going to lead then we must be considered the madmen of the world, capable of any action, willing to risk anything to achieve our national interests... If we are to achieve noble purposes we must be prepared to act in the most ignoble manner."

UN Resolution 1483 explicitly recognised the USA and Britain as "occupying powers" in Iraq, and it set no

*Continued on page 8*

*Continued from page 7*

exit date. The USA is building four huge military bases there, as well as the biggest embassy in the world. They intend to stay permanently, or at least until the oil runs out. Are we going to allow British troops to be consumed in this destructive, imperialist war?

### Terrorism in Britain

What can we do in Britain? The government lies to us that war abroad is necessary to defeat terrorism. But the fight against terrorism is at home, not in Iraq or Afghanistan. We need to protect our citizens against terrorists here, and our priority must be to defend, or rather assert, democracy here, not abroad.

But we cannot defend democratic rights unless we assert them here in Britain, including habeas corpus and the right to a fair trial. The Labour government secretly incarcerates people without trial and connives at kidnapping and torture via the US state's "extraordinary renditions".

Nor can we uphold democracy without an educated, industrial working class, working in a range of modern industries and benefiting from an advanced education system. Labour destroys industries and opens our universities to anybody but the British working class.

We cannot defend democracy unless we defend secular thinking, women's rights and science. In the name of being nice to "faith groups", Labour encourages

those who revile secularism, women's rights and scientific thinking.

We cannot fight terrorism unless we control our borders to prevent the import of terrorists. Labour sacks customs officers and leaves our shores wide open.

Madrassas in Britain, funded by the Saudi state, teach a fundamentalist version of Islam. We should not permit anyone to indoctrinate children here in Britain to believe, for example, that Darwin is the devil, or that murdering innocent people is justified. We need no madrassas in Britain.

This is not "Islamophobic": British workers are not scared of any religion, but we are at least suspicious of them all. We do not define ourselves with reference to imagined gods or archaic texts.

We cannot fight terrorism unless we support legitimate efforts to defeat terrorists here. After the Forest Gate raid, some accused the police of repressing all Muslims and persecuting them for their religious beliefs. But if the police do not act at all in response to a claim that another terrorist atrocity was being prepared, they will be failing in their primary duty of protecting the public.

Contrary to leftists and Islamists, to oppose terrorism is not to condone Bush and Blair. Contrary to Bush and Blair, to oppose the US and British governments is not to condone terrorism. We oppose state terrorism and Islamist terrorism, because they are the same thing: anti-people and anti-life.

## Running out of soldiers...

THE SHORTFALL in recruitment to the British Army has risen by 300%, leaving over 2,000 vacancies for the 2005-2006 recruitment plans.

Iraq undoubtedly is the major factor in this situation. The Territorial Army has likewise seen over 16,000 resignations since the invasion of Iraq. Reservists who can be called up by law for the Regular Army are getting out as soon as they legally can.

TA membership has dropped from 81,000 in 1985 to 32,000 in 2005. Desertions from the Regular Army are apparently running at unprecedented levels. The number of Regular Army Officers resigning their commissions is apparently disproportionately high with over 1,280 resigning their commissions.

British troops are militarily active in over 25 countries of the world – Ireland, the Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq, Africa, South America etc. The collapse of support for the Army is unprecedented and must be complemented by the increased demand to Bring the Troops Home – from wherever they are stationed.

After effective but den...  
latest offer. They now...  
battle – and they can't

## Victories and ch

THE PROTRACTED pay campaign in the universities which began last summer and escalated into an industrial dispute three months ago with a national one-day strike followed by a boycott of exam marking, finished its first phase on 6 June.

Union negotiators accepted an offer which, slightly improving on those made on 8 and 30 May, will give cash increases amounting to 3.5% during the first year, 4.5% in the second and at least 2.5% in the third, with a joint review of finances. Now members will vote on the offer.

The total "uplift" on salaries after the first two years amounts to 10.33%. The major difference and improvement in this latest offer is the "opening of the books" in the third year, leading to a joint review of university finances.

### Victories

This was a dispute marked by several victories for the unions and some lessons learned for the newly formed UCU – the University and College Union. One victory of the dispute is the increase in recruitment to the union, measured in thousands, over the past few months.

The two unions Natfhe, representing academics in the newer post-1992 universities, and AUT mainly representing staff in the older pre-1992 universities, merged on 1 June to form UCU. This merger has been a long time in the making and will need patience over the next year to bring together some differences in style and culture of trade unionism in further and higher education. It becomes the biggest trade union in post-16 education anywhere in the world, representing lecturers, researchers and academic related staff in universities and further education colleges throughout Britain.

### Lessons learned

Small differences in tactics by Natfhe and the AUT in this single struggle to win fair pay may have made some contribution to the need to call off the action when it seemed to many that it was just becoming truly effective. A lesson learned, perhaps. But next time, when the joint, open review of HE finances agreed to by the employers takes place in 2008, the union should be fully integrated and ready. For now, there



manding action, university teachers are set to vote over the need to think hard about how to conduct the next phase of the t wait another 20 years for it to happen...

## challenges as academics ponder pay offer



Photo: Workers

1 June, London: university teachers march to rally outside the employers' offices.

was no alternative but to call off the action in the face of the most intransigent, ruthless set of managers higher education has ever seen.

The potential impact on students of the refusal to mark and the degree to which the employers exploited this, cheered on occasionally by the government and the media, should not be underestimated. To carry forward this sort of sanction, which inevitably means acting individually, often on different timescales to those in other institutions or even colleagues teaching on different courses, is as tough as it gets. Many were faced with punitive ongoing pay deductions. Compared with this, a one-day strike picketing in the freezing rain could be seen as "a walk in the park".

The leaders of the National Union of Students and, in particular, its president, Kat Fletcher, backed the industrial action despite severe pressure from some student groups in parts of the country.

The Universities and Colleges Employers Association adopted bullying and underhand tactics from the start – and were even hauled in front of the Commons Select Committee for Education and Skills to be admonished for misrepresenting the dispute to the press after a previous committee hearing when both sides in this bitter dispute were questioned.

This in itself was at the very least a moral victory for the unions, which were able to make their case to the government and the wider world (the admonishment is available on the Parliament Live website).

Locally, the threat by vice chancellors to deduct 30% and even 100% pay from the point that marks were not submitted was punitive and probably illegal. But that didn't stop them. Some will be reluctant to pay back deductions made when marks are released, causing further unnecessary disruption over the next few weeks. And those who refuse to allow an agreed orderly return to work without undue pressure to hand over marks on unrealistic timescales could also cause further local problems.

No one can be in any doubt now that carrying out a boycott of exam and coursework marking can have a serious, possibly permanent effect on students' lives, where securing future employment or training depends on knowing their degree results at the right time. Overseas students with visas running out cannot go home empty handed. The effect this has on the ordinary lecturer who had to continue tutoring and engaging with their students daily over the last few months should not be underestimated.

Union leaders have learned how

determined and courageous ordinary and, indeed, new members can be. All this will help build the case and determine the form of action that will be needed for a decent increase from 2008. It will not be easy with Gordon Brown's recent promise to freeze public sector pay rises. In that respect the increase secured already may prove to be more of a victory than it currently appears.

The pay settlement does seem meagre compared with the claim of 23% over three years to make good some of the shortfall in university pay over the past 20 years. There will be a campaign to vote No to the offer – people are understandably disappointed and angry after such a bitter dispute – but the action has been called off, the negotiators have accepted it, and it will be agreed by ordinary members. One lesson learned is how effective but also how demanding action can be.

### Twenty wasted years

Those complaining that the offer falls far short of the claim for 23% must reflect on why the claim needed to be so high in the first place: a significant lack of fight on pay for nearly 20 years.

That period saw a major government-commissioned report on Higher Education, the Bett report. Bett recommended much enhanced pay and conditions for staff, but unsurprisingly the government never acted on his recommendations. Academics thought that as a report which supported some of the trade union viewpoint had been produced, change would follow. Moral of the tale: there is no substitute for a wage fight, no alternative easier route.

So the newly formed UCU has to think hard about how to fight the next phase. Lesson one would seem to be that making up a 20-year deficit in one pay round is unlikely. Lesson two is that waiting another 20 years would be disastrous.

As the union regroups, it also needs to consider how are the employers preparing to regroup and how their attack will develop. One development is already evident at Leeds (see next page).

Vice chancellors forced into a corner by this dispute have already lashed out to say

*Continued on page 10*

## Struggle looms at Leeds Met

UNIONS AT Leeds Metropolitan University, UCU and UNISON, are gearing up for more local action this summer. About 25 academic redundancies have been declared in two separate parts of the university, which is faced with so called financial shortages. One of these areas, the School of Languages, is set to shed half of its English Language staff.

One woman in the redundancy pool is Sue Birch, who recently won a landmark case against Leeds Met for failing to take her on as full time even though she had spent 7 years as an hourly paid part-timer doing more teaching and course organisation, and working longer hours, than a full time post requires.

Just before the final ruling in January of this year, Leeds Met settled out of court and offered her a full-time job and £25,000 compensation. Now, it appears, they want to take revenge and ruin the lives of many of her colleagues as well. The campaign to fight these vindictive moves and block what would be the first ever compulsory redundancies at Leeds Met is under way.

The unions are also battling against a ban on leave, set without negotiation by the vice chancellor, during his "Staff Development Festival" fortnight, which begins in August Bank Holiday week.

His strange daily reflections on the university website have the occasional threatening innuendo among the constant heralding of yet another partnership or triumph of sporting or artistic achievement. References are made to those who disapprove of his ideas being "helped to find other settings". An odd letter to staff during the pay dispute talked of unprofessionalism and of people being dismissed for vaguely referred-to misdemeanours.

There are now proposals to introduce a new calendar, with limited consultation, which would reduce even further the staff's ability to take annual leave by reducing Christmas and Easter vacation time – and most worryingly by bringing in summer teaching and two-year degrees.

Management like this is becoming more common throughout higher and further education – where the ability to question or argue against ideas in the organisation would seem to be fundamental to a notion of academic freedom.

At Leeds Met people are now wary of any form of protest. The VC's "A to Z of Shared Expectations" sees to that. E is for email etiquette – which basically means do not share your ideas or thoughts on the email because if they are at all critical of his plans then you could be disciplined or worse.

An air of intimidation now prevails as people try to express concern about the riotous spending of this VC. Fancy new buildings, smart residences for the VC, promotional image-making through an endless stream of sponsorships for rugby league and union, cricket, football, all use the Carnegie name of the old college that forms part of the new university, and all come at the expense of retaining and rewarding its employees.

Not content with £3 million for a stand incorporating teaching facilities in the Headingley rugby stadium and £100,000 spent at the adjoining Headingley cricket ground (now called the Headingley Carnegie Stadium) to surround it with Leeds Met logos and slogans, a new pavilion is to be built in the cricket ground and festooned with the Leeds Met name in time for the next visit here by Australia for the Ashes series in 2009.

None of this spending ever involves consultation with the staff affected. Indeed, to challenge it brings more threats on his daily 200-word reflection. Sometimes, though, threats bring opportunities. Leeds Met is an "Investor in People" and this summer it is being reassessed for the award. An independent assessor will be interviewing a selection of staff who will be asked to give, anonymously, their views on the management's leadership and development style. The opportunity will not be missed.

*Continued from page 9*

that this level of expenditure on staff pay is "unsustainable".

Sustainability is the big word in higher education. All sorts of things are "unsustainable", from individual modules to whole programmes of study, to whole departments (eg, Chemistry at Sussex). Not one engineering department in the land is "sustainable" without foreign students.

The latest thing on vice chancellors' lists of the "unsustainable" is staffing. The current model of subject experts teaching and researching a subject is "unsustainable", and while a few such people can be maintained (human equivalent of a rare breeds farm) the curriculum and teaching materials will be designed to be delivered by post graduate students or teaching assistants at a fraction of the pay of qualified staff.

### Pretence

This is justified by pointing out that PhD students in some institutions have always contributed to undergraduate teaching. The pretence will be that there is "nothing new" in this and it is "good practice". Neither students nor their parents (who will be paying the fees) will be fooled by the new model. And so the alliance between teachers and students forged in this dispute must be nurtured.

The new union, UCU, suspends this dispute for now with some internal bridges to build. The battle for pay in Further Education begins again. It needs to create a firm base and take on the mantle as the guardian of higher and further education for the future.

The employers continue to show that they are not up to it. The commodification and globalisation of higher education are becoming ever more apparent. The only way these greedy vice chancellors, with their 25% pay rise over the past three years, can achieve these aims is by bullying their workforce. What is needed is a collaborative, collegiate approach where managers and unions work together in the interests of the students they teach and the society they ultimately serve.

**As the struggle against the Nepalese monarchy hit a high point in April, an international group of volunteers arrived to build a stretch of the Martyrs Road. This is their story...**

## **With the Maoists in Nepal**

AS THE NEPALESE people's struggle against the autocratic feudal monarchy to establish a democratic republic hit a high point during the month of April, volunteers arrived to help build a 91-kilometre stretch of road known as the Martyrs Road. The Second International Road Building Brigade, drawing its members from Afghanistan, Iran, Scotland and England, gathered with the aim of journeying to Rolpa during April to work on this road.

While the old regime was being attacked and dismantled in the country's towns and cities, the challenge of building the new people's republic was continuing in the liberated zones of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). Mass organisations set up by the elected Magarat Autonomous People's Republican Government in the main base area have been engaged in building a motorable road, helping to create the infrastructure of the new people's society.

As the group met up in Nepalgunj, Nepal saw nation-wide, anti-monarchist protests and a bandh (general strike) that not only closed all the shops and commercial outlets but also cleared all motor vehicles from the roads. Trapped in Nepalgunj, therefore, across the border from India, we were ideally placed to witness one of the many anti-monarchist protests outside of Kathmandu.

### **Mass anger**

A major focus for mass anger was Gyanendra Square, the central monument dedicated to the king. As we approached the monument a crowd of around 100 people had gathered and more police had arrived on the scene. Four piles of tires had been set on fire around the monument. We were all amazed at the audacity of the action, especially while the April Movement was only days old. Indeed, there was more to come for the monument to King Gyanendra!

As well as the fires, there were numerous demonstrations throughout the day, every day. Containing large numbers

**This article is an edited and shortened version of the Report from the Second International Road Building Brigade to Nepal (Britain and Ireland representatives).**



**Workers on the Martyrs Road who have taken up tools in their own hands where no government or outside force has ever helped them.**

of women, these protests drew many from the Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities. As well as workers, peasants and students, civil servants, including doctors, lawyers, teachers and bank officials, marched through the streets. At most of the intersections were the remains of burning tyres, with new fires breaking out at regular intervals. A major focus for mass anger was Gyanendra Square, the central monument dedicated to the king, that was frequently surrounded by such fires in spite of having been given 24-hour paramilitary police protection.

The slogans chanted by the protesters left little room for reconciliation. As one of these marches approached the statue of Gyanendra's deeply unpopular grandfather, Tribhuvan, a man with a loudhailer called out, "What does Arayghat want?" the crowd responding with, "Arayghat wants Gyanendra". (Arayghat is the royal cemetery.) Also popular was the call to "Hang Paras from a tree". Gyanendra's son, Prince Paras is also much hated as a man who has committed both rape and murder but who has proved

immune from legal action.

As the crowds became increasingly antagonistic, these minor protests rose in both numbers and militancy as the campaign intensified. After our work brigade had left, we were told on returning to the town by people who had been there, that a child had been shot dead and a woman had died after having first been beaten and then having a tear gas canister explode next to her. This occurred during a large protest that saw both the Gyanendra monument and the statue of Tribhuvan destroyed with lump hammers.

This People's Movement (often referred to in the media as the popular movement) was distinctly anti-monarchy, and against the Congress Party which is perceived as too close to the monarchy. Congress is renowned for its corruption and its inefficiency in previous governments. Most of the protesters by far appeared to be in favour of a republic, this being recognised as a more modern form of government

*Continued on page 12*

*Continued from page 11*

than the existing feudal autocracy. Many spoke of achieving a British-style constitutional monarchy, although the cultivation of a constituent assembly and a republic were infinitely more popular. There was, however, also some concern among the protesters that the Seven Party Alliance leadership would compromise with the monarchy allowing the people's demand for a democratic republic to fall short. Within these protesting crowds, it was acknowledged that the Maoists were very much a part of the peoples' struggle and therefore part of the democratic agenda. The CPN(M) strategy at this time was to mobilise people in the villages around the major towns, organising them to swell the protests in the urban centres. In this way, the protests in the towns and cities tended to increase by tens of thousands as the campaign escalated.

The general strike looked set to prevent our group from reaching the liberated zones, and indeed to the Martyrs Road. Because of this, there appeared to be no alternative but to cross the border into India to buy bicycles so that three of

**'When we stopped in small villages, someone would invariably walk out to offer us water. Right away, it seemed like a different world...'**

us could push on. The others, due to their tighter schedule, were forced to remain behind.

Cycling out onto the Mahendra Highway our first stop as night was approaching was the village of Agaiya, around 50 km from where we had set off. A Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninists) stronghold, the people appeared to be preparing to walk to Nepalgunj the following day to join the protests there. As darkness fell, the village children, sitting in a ring singing songs, suddenly decided to play a different game, that of protesters. Influenced by the events that were going on around them, a knot of children marched around the houses

chanting, "Gyanendra is a thief, he must leave the country!"

After two days of cycling, covering 150 kilometres, we eventually reached Gorahi, the last city garrisoned by the RNA (Royal Nepal Army) before Rolpa, where our group encountered more large protests. Again villagers were coming in from Maoist areas to increase the protesters' numbers, playing a decisive role in the successes of the people's movement.

From Gorahi, cycling was impossible due to the mountain roads and we were forced to trek on up into the mountains. On the way, we met groups of people going to Gorahi, some taking breaks at the side of the road so women with children could breast feed.

We were made to feel very welcome by the locals, some of whom walked with us on our journey. When we stopped in small villages, someone would invariably walk out to offer us water. Right away, it seemed like a different world.

It was a journey of about 60 kilometres, the RNA and police influence ending immediately outside the northern exit from the city. Along the way, our group encountered the village of Holeri. A former police outpost, Holeri had been given up as too dangerous to man at night. The PLA, however, broke with its more common tactic of attacking at night to strike in the morning, destroying the outpost and any police that didn't flee. Now the village walls were decorated with slogans, posters and red flags as the CPN(M) stamped its territory.

Reaching Tilla Bazaar, nine days after we had been due to rendezvous there, the District Secretary of Rolpa, Comrade Kamal, on hearing of our arrival, walked for two hours across the mountain roads (on flip flops) to meet with us. Announcing that he would remain with us throughout our stay in the liberated zone, he was to accompany us to the Martyrs Road, introducing us to Comrade Surya, the co-ordinator of the road-building project.

In the short time that we were there, we spent much time in the company of these two men. Out on the Martyrs Road itself, at the group's welcoming ceremony, each member had a mark, or tika, symbolising the blood of the martyrs, put



**A protest meeting against the brutal and corrupt monarchy.**

on our foreheads.

When the CPN(M) seized control of the Rolpa District from the monarchist regime, it drove out the local tyrants and carried out widespread land reform. In more recent times, experimental cooperatives and communes have been implemented and new co-operative banks have replaced usurers. At one point we were introduced to Comrade Birat, the head of the People's Cooperative Bank in the Rapti Zone, who proudly showed us the bank's documents and talked to us of the oppression of people during the old pre-liberation era.

In areas like Rolpa, road distances tend not to be measured in kilometres, but in the numbers of hours needed to walk. The Martyrs Road, planned to link the town of Nuwagaon to Thawang and Chunwang, and to connect many of the villages in the interior of Rolpa with the main district capital of Dang, Gorahi. Once complete, it is believed that the road will greatly improve travel within the district, making it easier for young people to access higher education and enable better access to medical treatment and the like. We were impressed by the general enthusiasm of the majority of the road workers and spoke to two volunteers who told us that they had come to work on the road, "for the development of the region and the country".

It is widely recognised, even among non-Maoists, that the road is an important step in this development. Built purely by the people with no outside help, using pickaxes, spades and dynamite, the road-building project avoids most of the main developmental problems including over-reliance on capital-intensive techniques, and overcomes the mindset of giving up if modern technology is unavailable.

As a country swamped by 'foreign aid', the Nepalese are well placed to recognise the problems inherent in such solutions. Given that under such a scheme labour would normally be paid to build the road, it would be open to wide-scale corruption that would ultimately drain away finance. There is, however, no room for corruption in the Maoist project, where the people see the immediate results of their labour.

As for the frequent accusations by western media that the road-building



**The hammer and sickle flag flies over a destroyed monument to the hated king.**

project depends on forced labour, workers are required to work no more than 15-20 days, once a year. Carried out during the slack agricultural seasons, people work for three hours a day, a fact confirmed by people we spoke to who were working on the road itself. There were also frequent breaks, the working days broken up by occasional cultural activities. Party leaders, cadres and PLA members also do voluntary work on the road throughout the year.

### **'Our development, our effort'**

The CPN(M)'s attempts to develop the country without depending on international imperialism arise from their clash of interests. The Nepali people want to develop the country for all, while the imperialist agenda is to keep countries that they call "developing" underdeveloped and dependent on foreign aid, loans, technology and expertise.

Using its own strengths to develop its own methods, as in Mao's China, the CPN(M) has utilised the road-building project to raise consciousness among the masses. Working under the slogan, "Our Development, Our Effort", they find what can be achieved collectively, increasing the self-confidence of the people, as their own techniques develop to overcome problems as they emerge.

Walking back to Gorahi, we met many groups of people on the road, again in loose knots, that gave us the lal salaam (red salute) as they returned homewards following the previous day's protests in the city. These greeted Kamal and Surya, who travelled with us the first part of the way, in a warm and enthusiastic manner, exchanging news. Among many of these

groups, some carried transistor radios, tuned into news reports and playing as they walked. In fact, that very evening King Gyanendra announced that he would recall parliament with immediate effect.

The endeavour to send a work brigade to the liberated zones during this time, while being in the final analysis somewhat impractical, proved to be a great education for those of us involved. In deepening our understanding of the revolutionary process as it unfolds in Nepal, we are now better equipped to help build a solidarity movement in our countries to counter foreign interference and media lies about the revolution.

As our group said goodbye, Comrade Surya gave a speech as part of our farewell ceremony. Telling all that were assembled, that we were there to counter the lies and misinformation that journalists had been spreading in the west, he explained that the Martyrs Road was not just a road for Dang, but for the whole world.

As we left the gathering, with lines of Nepalese clapping, we carried with us Kamal's message: "We from our party request heartily to the people, to democrats from foreign countries, to come here and see the ground reality here with their own eyes, and to describe it materially, and expose such illusions and propagandas, false sayings. We give our solidarity to the people and request their solidarity to our movement here. Now we are fighting to establish a democracy here and we request you all to convey our red salutes to all the people, to our beloved people, to democratic people, and the people who are supporters of the WPRM. Lal Salaam!"

Did they have to set up a museum of communism in Prague right next to McDonald's and a casino? An intrigued visitor describes the attempt to turn the anti-capitalist era into a free-market commodity...

## Communism – I'm lovin' it

IN THE TOURIST centre of Prague, just off Wenceslas Square with its moneychangers and trinket stalls, the Museum of Communism is to be found. Though not found easily. On a sombre poster Joseph Stalin points the way, between the rather more garish McDonald's and a Black Light theatre, through the arch to the Casino in the Palace Savarin. Having ascended red-carpeted stairs the tourist must make a choice (that's democracy for you); either right to the casino or left for the museum.

At £4.50, admission seems a little expensive, but this is commerce, a celebration of the victory of private enterprise. The museum is sited in what was a ballroom, sub-let from McDonald's.

Any doubts as to the intentions behind the exhibition are dispelled even before entry by the very name, "Museum of Communism": this is a past time displayed, with a frisson of the good fortune of being able to look then leave it behind. The museum is organised in three themes; "Dream", "Reality" and "Nightmare" – to "bring back the era of Communism in all its dreariness and puffed up glory". That last quotation is taken from their advertising leaflet that also carries in facsimile an article published by NEWSWEEK in February 2002.

### American businessman

Despite the tiny print, it is worth the effort to read, as it reveals that the museum is not the product of the efforts of disgruntled Czechs, but of an American businessman, Glen Spicker, who just happened to find himself in Czechoslovakia when the "Velvet Revolution" was taking place. He decided to take the opportunity to set up a number of restaurants and bars that prospered enough to leave him a surplus of \$28,000 dollars to invest in the museum. He claimed to be fascinated by communism, "... just how outdated it is." (NEWSWEEK, 11 February 2002). He did recruit Czech assistance: Jan Kaplan, a documentary filmmaker who left Prague for London after the upheavals of 1968, designed the museum on his behalf.



Freedom of choice: Big Mac, a spin on the roulette tables, or anti-communist propaganda?

Kate Connolly, writing for GUARDIAN UNLIMITED (6 March, 2002, the year the museum opened), found it was "...mainly tourists rather than Czechs who have deigned to visit, despite positive reviews in the local press." She goes on to identify a possible reason for this lack of local interest. "The Communist Party is the third strongest bloc in the Czech parliament, and a recent survey found that 50% of Czechs hanker for the past." This is remarkable considering it was written so soon after the "Velvet Revolution" and the collapse of the Soviet Union, when people supposedly had just emerged from the "Nightmare".

Indeed, during the pre-eminence of the Communist Party, 10% of the population were members. And in the General Election held in May the Communist Party won 12.8% of the vote. Connolly clearly identified the museum's purpose: "...a Czech filmmaker and an American entrepreneur have managed to turn the anti-capitalist era into a free market commodity."

There is no pretence in the museum at objective assessment or critique - everything communist is tainted. Even the

"Dream" is fatally flawed, as Marx and Lenin were "utterly wedded to force and terror". So, whatever the good intent of individual Communists, the harsh "Reality" and grim "Nightmare" were inevitable.

### Myth

There is no mention of the external and internal forces against the Soviet Union from its very inception, or that those forces gave rise to the Nazis who occupied Czechoslovakia and then continued their malign purpose after 1945 through other means. The "Museum of Communism" propagates the myth that Lenin, Stalin and subsequent Soviet leaders sat in the Kremlin acting on the merest whim to dispatch the innocent to prison and keep the shelves emptied of groceries. They were assisted in their machinations by weak puppet ministers who did what they could to thwart the wishes of the Czechoslovak people.

The NEWSWEEK article has a quotation from Jiri Pehe, head of New York University's Prague campus (good to see the Velvet Revolution" succeeded in getting rid of foreign influence in the

t between a  
 tempt to turn an anti-

country), "Ninety-nine percent of the (Czechoslovak) population were involved with the system and have a bad conscience that they were forced to collaborate, so it is difficult for most to be objective about what went on," he wrote.

However, as the Americans and British are finding in Iraq, it is woefully difficult to force a population that refuses to collaborate. That there was discontent with good reasons in Czechoslovakia and other socialist countries is undeniable. The Soviet system was cracking as consumer capitalism raged around its borders. It would take over twenty years from Jan Pallach's self-immolation in 1969, to the eventual triumph of those forces which the Soviet tanks tried to suppress. After the maelstrom of the Cold War it is difficult to be objective for people trying to make the best of what now is. It is also difficult to believe that what Jan Pallach had in mind was the ubiquity of McDonald's throughout his city.

### Secret police

One element in the museum requires consideration: the secret police. The exhibits actually reveal not "...the nightmare of a state controlled by the secret police through surveillance, censorship and imprisonment," as Jan Kaplan claims in the NEWSWEEK article. Rather it seems the secret police used those methods to operate independently of the state, on its own behalf. The Czech Communist Party, and the state as a whole, failed to exercise control of the secret services, who directly employed 200,000 civilians. Such a secret state within the state serving its own ends could easily shift from one ideological camp to another. There, at least, must be a lesson worth remembering.

For now, the "dreariness and puffed up glory" of Communism has been supplanted by the monotony of pop music and garish neon of the catchpennies. A foreign-owned stock market casino runs the Czech economy, where, as in Britain, people's lives are used as chips on the gaming tables.

# WHAT'S THE PARTY?

**We in the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist), and others who want to see a change in the social system we live under, aspire to a society run in such a way as to provide for the needs, and the desires, of working people, not the needs and desires of those who live by the work of others. These latter people we call capitalists and the system they have created we call capitalism. We don't just aspire to change it, we work to achieve that change.**

We object to capitalism not because it is unfair and unkind, although it has taken those vices and made virtues out of them. We object because it does not work. It cannot feed everyone, or house them, or provide work for them. We need, and will work to create a system that can.

We object to capitalism not because it is opposed to terrorism; in fact it helped create it. We object because it cannot, or will not, get rid of it. To destroy terrorism you'd have to destroy capitalism, the supporter of the anti-progress forces which lean on terror to survive. We'd have to wait a long time for that.

We object to capitalism not because it says it opposes division in society; it creates both. We object because it has assiduously created immigration to divide workers here, and now wants to take that a dangerous step further, by institutionalising religious difference into division via 'faith' schools (actually a contradiction in terms).

Capitalism may be all the nasty things well-meaning citizens say it is. But that's not why we workers must destroy it. We must destroy it because it cannot provide for our futures, our children's futures. We must build our own future, and stop complaining about the mess created in our name.

Time will pass, and just as certainly, change will come. The only constant thing in life is change. Just as new growth replaces decay in the natural world, this foreign body in our lives, the foreign body we call capitalism, will have to be replaced by the new, by the forces of the future, building for themselves and theirs, and not for the few. We can work together to make the time for that oh-so-overdue change come all the closer, all the quicker.

Step aside capital. It's our turn now.

### How to get in touch

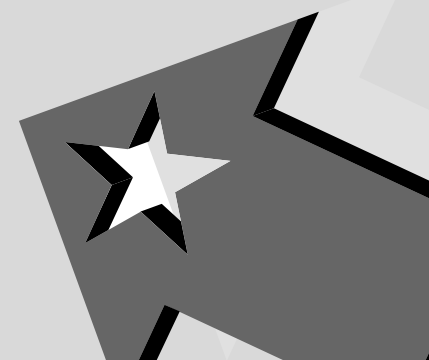
\* You can get list of our publications by sending an A5 s.a.e. to the address below.

- Subscribe to WORKERS, our monthly magazine, by sending £12 for a year's issues (cheques payable to WORKERS) to the address below.
- Go along to meetings in your part of the country, or join in study to help push forward the thinking of our class.
- You can ask to be put in touch by writing or sending a fax to the address below.

### WORKERS

78 Seymour Avenue  
 London N17 9EB

[www.workers.org.uk](http://www.workers.org.uk)  
 phone/fax 020 8801 9543  
 e-mail [info@workers.org.uk](mailto:info@workers.org.uk)



# Back to Front – Political economics

**‘MRSA was not a natural disaster that swept through hospitals. It was directly linked with a reduction of more than 50% in cleaning staff...’**

THE NATIONAL Health Service, according to government figures, now has a deficit of £1.3 billion. London has a deficit of £213 million.

The economic crisis stems solely from the government’s policies: its pursuit of the market economy in health, its tariffs for operations and health provision, payments by results, the artificial transfer of service provision into the grossly inflated and expensive private sector, the fallacy of patients’ choice, its pursuit of targets over NHS professionalism, the so-called modernising agenda intended to establish Foundation Trust status as the norm by 2008 solely to advance the cause of privatisation.

This is to leave aside the bickering between Blair and Brown, both trying to use the NHS as their personal vehicle of vendetta. It is also to leave aside the £2 billions creamed off in private consultancy (non-medical) fees. It is also to leave aside the estimated £43 billion disappearing in Private Finance Initiative schemes (in plain English, scams). It also leaves aside the millions wasted in contracting out, out sourcing and off-shoring of NHS non-medical services, and the £700 million wasted in agency staff.

Meanwhile, the NHS enters something like its 21st national reorganisation in as many years with the Commission for a Patient Led NHS – which will see Strategic Health Authorities slashed. One result: London will go from five of these authorities to one, and from 600 jobs to 150.

Primary Care Trusts are slashed from 303 to 152, all in the name of ‘modernisation’. This modernisation will continue to see wards closed, jobs cut,

services cut.

MRSA was not a natural disaster that swept through hospitals. It was directly linked with a reduction of more than 50% in hospital cleaning staff and privatisation of hospital cleaning leading to hospitals becoming unsafe, dirty and unprofessional. The modernisation agenda, the re-profiling of services, the re-defining of provision will result in a disaster of a greater scale.

In the midst of all this, NHS Logistics is to be sold off. NHS Logistics is the body that helps supply all parts of the NHS with items crucial for the day-to-day running of the service, particularly in supplying medical and other items to hospital wards. It has six depots across the country and employs more than 1,300 staff. No complaint has been made against this organisation, its work is of a high standard, and last year alone it returned £3 million to NHS Trusts as a result of its operations. None of this has saved it from the mad rush to privatise.

Worse, the government has decided to sell the company to a consortium including an American firm, Novation. While this is bad enough – virtually nothing about the American healthcare system recommends itself – Novation is under active investigation by the American Senate, and has been for four years.

A Senate sub-committee is examining the case for introducing legislation in America to tackle allegations of anti-competitive practices among American group purchasing organisations, of which Novation is one of the most powerful.

So in the name of introducing “competition” unnecessarily into the NHS, Blair is seeking to bring in an anti-competitive company from America!

## Subscriptions

Take a regular copy of WORKERS. The cost for a year’s issues (no issue in August) delivered direct to you every month, including postage, is £12.

Name

Address

Postcode

Cheques payable to “WORKERS”. Send along with completed subscriptions form (or photocopy) to WORKERS 78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB

## Publications

WHERE’S THE PARTY?

“If you have preconceived ideas of what a communist is, forget them and read this booklet. You may find yourself agreeing with our views.” Free of jargon and instructions on how to think, this entertaining and thought-provoking pamphlet is an ideal introduction to communist politics. (send an A5 sae)

BRITAIN AND THE EU

Refutes some of the main arguments in favour of Britain’s membership of the EU and proposes an independent future for our country. (50p plus an A5 sae)

## To order...

Copies of these pamphlets and a fuller list of material can be obtained from CPBML PUBLICATIONS 78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB. Prices include postage. Please make all cheques payable to “WORKERS”.

## WORKERS over the summer

There will be no issue in August. The next issue of WORKERS will be published at the beginning of September. In the meantime, see [www.workers.org.uk](http://www.workers.org.uk).