

WORKERS

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JANUARY 2007 £1

100TH ISSUE!



TIME TO BLOW THE WHISTLE ON TAKEOVERS



Cuba celebrates its freedom

06



From Mussolini to Blair

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Nepal: revolution on the roof of the world

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WORKERS

Privatisation prepares the way...

IT STARTED with Thatcher. She first privatised the steel industry and worked her way through a series of state industries including gas, electricity, telecoms, water, coal, shipbuilding, and rail and air transport. The objective was to breathe new life into a dying capitalism by letting it exploit and make profits from previous off limits industries and funded by the working class. In the process trade unions could be destroyed and all concepts of public ownership or enterprise with them.

After the privatisations, the new word became “outsourcing”. Starting with cleaning and ancillary services in industries she wouldn’t dare to privatise, such as health care and social services, private and privatised companies took up the idea of outsourcing to keep wages down by enforcing competition for functions of their businesses. Payroll, IT,

catering, management, – you name it, it can be outsourced.

Blair took this to new heights. Privatising and outsourcing services that Thatcher never dared to touch, he began to call it “contestability”. Was NHS Logistics privatised, outsourced or simply subject to contestability?

But why simply outsource a function, why not outsource the entire working class? This is behind the deliberate organisation of workers from low wage countries, especially Eastern Europe, to come to Britain, to work for less and replace British workers.

Capitalism knows exactly what it needs to do to destroy a working class. What a criminal shame that those who purport to be the leaders of our class in our trade unions don’t have the same perception to enable them to defend our class.

Season’s – and anniversary – greetings

WORKERS wishes all its readers a happy and combative new year. Not just better than the last one, but a real year for progress.

This issue is also a landmark for WORKERS – our 100th issue. We started publishing in the autumn of 1997, as the successor to almost 40 years of the newspaper

THE WORKER.

Capitalism may be fleeing Britain, but like the rest of the working class, we’re staying. Wait another year, and you will be able to celebrate with us the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of Britain. Until then, we hope you’ll enjoy reading us in



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Brown's capitalist vision

THE CHANCELLOR'S Pre Budget Report in December could have been entitled "10 more years". His recurrent themes were living with globalisation and free trade; the primacy of the market; and the importance of education and knowledge. There was no mention of a national culture or manufacturing in Britain.

Brown believes that growth and low inflation are due to balancing the books. Public spending is paid for out of current taxes, and investment is only made where it is affordable and provided by business investment. Recession is in the past and historically low public debt is good.

What's wrong with this wonderland? Why should workers, many of whom welcomed Brown in May 1997, now be concerned about the future? There are many reasons. Growth means more personal wealth, not social benefits. The economy is at the mercy of international capitalism, which wants control of both private and public sectors. The Bank of England and other independent bodies make key decisions about the economy. Knowledge and skills are supposed to develop without a manufacturing base. Future investment in services will be paid for by ruinously expensive PFI contracts.

Brown wants "efficiency" from the public sector. Wage caps and an aggressive reduction in the number of workers are linked to a so-called reduction in red tape. Any Tory Chancellor would have been proud of that. In fact, under Labour the hand of centrally imposed bureaucracy has increased in the public sector, not fallen.

Shortages of some skilled workers go with a lack of work for others. Excessive hours are rife, yet work is a rarity for young people in some cities. Casualisation, particularly for less skilled work, is growing. Yet there is little pressure for wage rises. Few of us have experienced working conditions like this before. A passive and impotent working class is what Labour and Brown want to see. It is not an unintended side effect.

Trade unions are bemused by this. They rightly recognise the threat to jobs inherent in Brown's spending plans; and they understand that handing public services to private speculators is not in the public interest. Action such as the TUC Speak Up for Public Services rally on 23 January is a start. So will specific action against job cuts, as long as the threats aren't empty. The greater task will be for the whole class to discuss the challenge laid out by Brown. What do we think we'll be doing in another 10 years' time?

BONUSES

Even fatter cats

AT LEAST £9 billion is expected to be paid out in City of London finance houses and banks bonuses by the end of December. Enough to fund Britain's daily bills for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq for seven months, or to write off the NHS debt of £600 million by 15 times? But no it will go into the troughs of Canary Wharf, the Square Mile and City institutions. Now, if £9 billion is being paid in bonuses, what profits are being generated for capital?

Wage settlements for full-time employees have been averaging between 2 and 3 per cent across the country during the past 12 months. Average settlements for chief executives, directors, and so on, have been 31 times as high!

In 1983 the ratio of a chief executive's pay to that of an ordinary worker was 9:1. In 2000 it was 39:1.

So it is one argument to have about work for equal pay or for work of equal value which the trade unions consistently pursue to ensure equality of wages on a gender basis. It is quite another to pursue the real inequality generated by the wages system of capitalist versus worker.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Oxford dons keep powers

AT THE END of November Oxford dons threw out a plan to give more power to outsiders – for which read industry – at the 800-year-old institution. The vote, by 730 votes to 456, was widely seen as a re-affirmation not just of the powers of the individual colleges, but of academic freedom as well.

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

EUROTRASH**The latest from Brussels****Ridicule? Surely not!**

THE GERMAN ambassador to Britain said that he expects Germany to introduce proposals for the future of the European Union constitution by the end of its presidency in June. A German Foreign Ministry spokesperson said, "We can bring this forward faster than anyone realises."

Germany has, however, rejected the idea of a mini-EU constitution. A diplomat said, "It is in our interest to try to preserve the maximum substance of the text. We are happy with it. We are not going to pick out the cherries. The 18 countries who ratified it do not want to look ridiculous!"

European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso has written to his fellow commissioners reaffirming his support for the EU Constitution and insisting, "We can find a way out and give Europe a second chance."

Consulates creep in

IN A first step towards establishing a full EU diplomatic corps, the European Commission is to set up EU consulates around the world, an idea floated in the rejected EU Constitution. With a diplomatic corps in place, national representatives could then be usurped.

Pope's Turkey hope

THE POPE has backed Turkey's unpopular bid for EU membership. Speaking during his visit to Turkey, the Pope told the Turkish prime minister, "We are not political but we wish for Turkey to join the EU."

Is there a doctor in the east?

THE EU provides trained health personnel with the easy option of emigration westwards, instead of staying and fighting for better pay and conditions at home. In 2004, almost 500 Polish doctors registered in Britain, 30 times as many as in 2003.

Kent moved across the Channel

PUBLIC information maps in Kent are being replaced with a new Regional title, "Kent – Pas du Calais Nord". New maps are being rolled out twinning Belgium, Northern France, Southern and South West Britain as new regional administrative areas. These new regions seemingly have no electoral basis – they are just for administration!



Re-elected: Hugo Chavez supporters celebrate in the streets surrounding Miraflores Palace as news of the sweeping election victory comes through on 4 December.

Photo © Jess Hurd/reportdigital.co.uk

EU blackmails Belarus

ON THE PRETEXT of a report from the International Labour Organisation supposedly critical of Belarus' trade unions, the EU has threatened to withdraw from the Republic of Belarus economic trading agreements under its Generalised System of Preferences. The threat has come as something of a surprise to Belarus, which has trade union density in the region of 90 per cent – even by the CIA's World Fact Book analysis. Belarus and the ILO seemingly have continued discussion about the ILO report into trade unionism without acrimony.

What is the EU threat about? Perhaps it is because Belarus shows no intention of applying for EU membership. Could it be because Belarus has resisted siren calls to allow mass migration to the West? Could it be because Belarus has refused to privatise its oil and manufacturing industries in line with EU dictat? Unemployment in Belarus is quoted at 1.6 per cent (again CIA World Fact Book) as compared with 17 per cent in Poland, whose industrial base is now almost solely in British and EU hands.

While Poland's population is falling, with migration being the major option for many young Poles under 25, Belarus is increasing investment in education and health. The CIA World Fact Book bemoans Belarus' pursuit of "market socialism" with a wide range of redistributive economic policies helping those at the bottom of the income ladder.

The government has renationalised a number of private companies, expanded the role of the state to intervene in private company management and even outrageously "arrested disruptive businessmen and factory owners"! No wonder the EU is sulking.

The EU first threatened these economic sanctions in September 2006. At the time the idea was rejected by EU countries which find purchasing Belarus oil of more value than listening to Brussels commissioners rattling sabres.

PRIVACY**Snoop on pupils, teachers told**

FOR MANY years, schools have recorded statistics about their school population, staffing levels and so on, and reported them to their local authority and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). This year, our centralist and intrusive government has given the data trawl a new dimension.

One of the demands of the DfES, withdrawn temporarily at the last moment, was for teachers to measure the Body Mass Index of their pupils. This

information was to be attached to each child's "Unique Person Number" (used to be "pupil number") and thus entered into the central government database.

Presumably, any child not conforming to the state's ideal weight and figure would be targeted for treatment. That one is being reconfigured, no doubt to arise again in a modified form.

Schools also have to produce "travel plans for their staff and students". For 2007, they are expected to collect and collate data from parents and staff on how they travel and what type of vehicle they use – 4x4, diesel, etc. Again, this information will be attached to the pupil.

MOTOR INDUSTRY

Anybody there?

PORSCHE, the luxury car manufacturer, has bought nearly 28 per cent of Volkswagen. It is forecast that 20,000 jobs are now at risk – 1 in 5 – in VW's German factories. Meanwhile in the US, fully half of Ford employees, over 38,000 workers, have sought redundancy.

Ford has accepted that anyone who wants to go can. Such is the level of debt in Ford – the September quarterly losses were \$5.8 billion – that to reduce costs the company is chopping itself to pieces. Ironically temporary workers are being

employed to keep production going.

Ford production in Britain now rests on engine production at Dagenham and Bridgend, vans at Southampton, Jaguar and Land Rover brand names in the Midlands and North West, with Aston Martin cars already up for sale. In addition to the Ford bail-out a further 34,400 General Motors workers took voluntary redundancy from GM earlier in 2006.

While Japanese and other Far Eastern car production continues to grow – in Europe, in Britain and in the US – the traditional industries are in terminal decline. Tens of thousands of workers seem to have voted with their feet.

Bankrupting the NHS

IN THE FIRST week of December Patricia Hewitt, Secretary of State for Health, boasted that she would resign if NHS trusts did not balance their books by the end of the financial year. Seven days later the Chief Executive of the NHS admitted that flawed accounting practices associated with the deficits, cuts and the present crisis made it impossible for the NHS to balance its books. Hewitt won't be resigning.

At least 13 trusts are heading for bankruptcy and the £600 million in the red will be there next year and the year after that. Are these two announcements linked? Does the left hand not know what the right hand is doing? Or is this government by the cretinous for those with an attention span of less than a week? This would be one compulsory redundancy that NHS workers will cheer in the aisles, so come on Hewitt – go now!

Blair also announced, from behind the Downing Street gates, that the present deficits, cuts, closures, redundancies, scrapping of training and so on are to save lives. He said that the reconfiguration of health is about establishing new super regional health care provision and has nothing to do with handing the NHS over to private companies and profiteers. At the same time NHS trusts were told to gear themselves up to advertise their services and at least one London NHS Human Resources Director is talking of profit-related pay as part of the "cafeteria of benefits" he intends to offer staff. Staff, presumably, is anybody left in direct employment who hasn't been outsourced, offshored or subcontracted.

Every week a new interpretation of the NHS crisis is invented by Downing Street. Next week it will be NHS workers are paid too much. The following week that the NHS employs too many doctors, nurses, bureaucrats, but not enough cleaners! And will the EU rumour that health care provision is to be related to population density, e.g. one major regional centre to xx number of possible patients, come to fruition?

The TUC and the NHS Together trade unions are now looking to either regional demonstrations or one national event in early March 2007. Though the debate in the trade unions has not been settled over exactly where or when, there are weekly marches, rallies and demonstrations across England over the threat to the NHS. Remember, devolution has splintered off Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland from uniting against these attacks on the NHS.

But as with the recent lobby of Parliament, a regional or national demonstration on its own is not going to resolve the issue of saving public health care provision. That can only be achieved by a fundamentally new political direction.

HEALTH

Blood service haemorrhages

THE CONTINUING separation of the NHS Blood Service from the NHS continues. The NHS Blood and Transplant Service is to close seven out of ten regional centres, leaving only Bristol, Manchester and London.

The North East and the Midlands will be dependent on a motorway supply line. Some 700 jobs are at risk, including highly skilled scientific, clinical and technical workers. The job cuts are planned over the next four years.

The two core unions – Unison and Amicus, supported by the RCN, GMB and TGWU – are preparing indicative ballots for strike action to defend jobs.

WHAT'S ON

Coming soon

JANUARY

Tuesday 23 January, Central Hall, Westminster, London.

Speak up for Public Services.

The TUC and 28 unions with members across the public sector are holding a rally followed by a lobby of Parliament. Workers will be telling their MPs that while they believe there is always going to be room for improvement in Britain's vital public services, any advances must come about as a result of increased investment and working with staff, not the involvement of the private sector.

AA

Breaking up, breaking down

THE AA advertises itself as the "Fourth Emergency Service" to motorists. The AA is now in need of some emergency assistance itself as it is being broken up after being recently put up for sale.

The £3 billion price tag has been inflated by redundancies among dozens of highly skilled mechanics and technicians. The separation of fleet contracts covered by the AA, e.g. Volkswagen, and their sale to competitors, such as the RAC, is part of this disintegration.

The AA is trying to prevent staff being transferred along with the contract because so many jobs have gone that it cannot function properly. So the venture capitalist deal to acquire and asset strip the AA by 1 April 2007 may have another effect as the fourth emergency service simply vanishes on the foggy road where it advertises its repair skills.

CLOTHING

Burberry campaign continues

GMB MEMBERS employed at Burberry clothing factory in South Wales are continuing their campaign to prevent the factory relocating to China with the loss of 300 jobs. Burberry, which describes its products as "quintessentially British", seems to think that production in China is acceptable and desirable.

Ironically, Charles, Prince of Wales, has raised concerns with the government, as has the local MP, Peter Hain – but he would as he also could lose his job!

The GMB is trying to get the fashion and celebrity conscious to support the members and keep the famous name and design in Britain.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Russia: counter-revolution, disease and death

THE ECONOMIC destruction following the counter-revolutions in Russia and Eastern Europe over the past 20 years has increased poverty, unemployment and inequality, all of which take their toll on workers' health. The capitalist governments have imposed large cuts in health and welfare spending, hospital closures and a drastic decline in the numbers of preventive check-ups and home visits.

Russia's gross investment fell by more than three-quarters between 1989 and 1996, while net fixed investment has been negative since 1995. The new capitalists have looted Russia's natural wealth, exported its commodities and energy, stripped its assets and exported their takings. There has been no investment in health, education, science, industry or agriculture. Just 1 per cent of GNP is spent on health.

There are epidemics of tuberculosis and HIV. From the 1950s, infant mortality was consistently reduced and immunisation rates were high. But now in Ukraine, for instance, only a third of infants are vaccinated.

Life expectancy has fallen in almost all of the countries of Eastern and Central Europe. In Russia, it is just 58 years for men (down from 63.5 in 1991). Russia's population has fallen by six million since 1992. Birth rates slumped, from 10.9 per 1,000 in 1992 to 8.8 per 1,000 in 1996 – just four years. Death rates soared, from 12.2 per 1,000 in 1992 to 15.7 per 1,000 in 1994, only two years. The suicide rate rose from 26.5 per 100,000 in 1991 to 45 per 100,000 in 1995.

Catastrophe

These catastrophic death and disease rates are unprecedented in a developed country in peacetime. Articles in the *BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL* and *THE LANCET* analysed the statistics, but did not mention the huge rise in unemployment, the fall in living standards and the consequent huge increase in social stress. Two-thirds of the population are worse off; 40 per cent have been forced below the poverty line.

Family breakdown, divorce and drugs put more and more children at risk. There are growing numbers of homeless children. Only 30 per cent of newborn children are healthy; 50 die every day because of poor equipment and training in maternity hospitals. Russia's infant mortality rate rose from 17.4 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 19.9 per 1,000 in 1993. The number of disabled children has doubled since 1995, while the number of paediatricians has shrunk by 10,000. The government is adding to the problem by retraining paediatricians as GPs and cutting spending for family planning advice.

Leonid Roshal, Russia's foremost paediatrician, says, "For a decade the World Bank has been paying out hundreds of millions of dollars to reform the health system, but it's just destroying it. Western specialists come here, they analyse the system, get money for it, they give recommendations, then they conduct seminars – more money – they live on this money for Russia, and then Russia has to pay for them. If they had just given all that money we could have equipped every maternity hospital in the country, built some new labs, bought new ambulances. Instead that cash has just run into the sand."

As Cuba celebrates half a century head of the movement against the

Cuba: independent, and

THE DAYS FROM 2 December to 10 December this year were a significant time for the working class of Cuba. The first date was the 50th anniversary of the landing of the Granma, the launch containing around one hundred Cuban revolutionaries, to start the armed struggle against the Batista regime. It effectively marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) and it was appropriate therefore that the event was marked by military parades and flypasts.

Earlier in the week was the 50th anniversary of the uprising in Santiago de Cuba, intended to coincide with the landing. This year, the celebrations were shared with the delayed 80th birthday celebrations for Cuban President and Commander in Chief of the FAR, Fidel Castro. Meanwhile, 3 December also marked the Latin American Day of Medicine, and 9 and 10 December were National Days of Defence. So the period was full of significance, and some events were attended by world leaders and friends of Cuba.

Today Cuba finds itself at the head of the movement against the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), the US equivalent of the European Union, a fact lost on the many who cheer what is happening in the Americas because it is easier than facing our own problems in Britain, the EU and NATO.

Six more years for Chavez

President Hugo Chavez in Venezuela secured six more years in the recent presidential election, when he won around 62 per cent of the vote on a 75 per cent turnout. This despite the opposition's control of most of the media, its funding by the US government, threats of armed counter-revolution and death threats to Cuban doctors and teachers in the country. (Compare this election result to the Labour Party's 35 per cent on a 60 per cent turnout – with Murdoch on their side.)

At the same time, new presidents in Ecuador and Nicaragua add to the growing list of opponents to the FTAA, from Bolivia, Argentina, Venezuela, Uruguay and Brazil to Haiti and Jamaica. Meanwhile, Mexico is in turmoil after rigged elections denied power to those opposed to the FTAA.

But despite being stuck in the quagmire of its own creation in Iraq, the US is laying plans to stem the loss of its "empire" in Latin America and the Caribbean. It tried to influence the outcomes of elections in Venezuela, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Mexico, and now plans to take advantage of the ill health of Cuba's President Fidel Castro. It has poured £50 million into Cuban counterrevolutionary groups inside and outside the country, and has plans to overthrow the Cuban government in the event of Fidel's death, by any means including military action.

This is an open secret. But the US plans fail to take account of many factors. The first is the unity of the Cuban working class, the party and the army. This was the theme that was emphasised in speeches by the new leadership at the military parades and at the Latin American Day of Medicine centred on Cienfuegos Province.

The second factor is that Cuba is no longer isolated. A record 184 nations voted against the US blockade of Cuba at the UN General Assembly, while only Israel and a couple of US Pacific

... since the uprising that brought freedom, it finds itself at the
 ... the American version of the European Union...

... and proud of it



Photo: Workers

3 December, Cienfuegos, Cuba: Minister of Health Jose Ramon Balaguer speaking to health workers on Latin American Medicine Day.

dependencies voted with the US. And each new anti-FTAA president elected in Latin America first visits Cuba to strengthen its relationship with the island. President Chavez of Venezuela has dedicated the electoral victory of the Venezuelan working class to Cuban workers and their leadership, knowing full well what is planned by the US against both Cuba and Venezuela.

Cuban Health Minister Jose Ramon Balaguer spoke to thousands of health workers in Cienfuegos on Latin American Day of Medicine on 3 December. He told them that their revolutionary and professional commitment in both providing free health care to the poor of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean,

(there are now over 30,000 volunteer Cuban doctors in 66 countries), while finding ways to maintain the existing high level of health care to the Cuban population, was an example to the world, but especially to the US, that the entire Cuban working class is one. Only by the combined effort of the whole population could these successes have been achieved.

In Britain, this would have been an issue of “productivity” and outsourcing to the private sector. But in Cuba it’s an issue of “organisation and love”, said one speaker. Agreeing with this comment, the minister said, “It is all a question of class”.

Meanwhile, the EU, our equivalent to the FTAA with an added ingredient – NATO

– is turning its attention to Belarus by threatening sanctions. Belarus is a country that has not complied with the wishes of the EU and the US, and wants to maintain its sovereignty and independence, and does not want to go down the road of rampant free market capitalism by opening up its industries and services to foreign capitalists. Its president and government were elected overwhelmingly earlier this year on a platform of continuing its economic policies, and not joining NATO or the EU.

Will all those in Britain who sing and dance about a new dawn in Latin America now turn their attention to the EU and its coming attacks on Belarus? It is, after all, simply a question of class.

The fascist pipedream was obliterated in the victories of the Soviet Red Army. The corporate state and a united Europe have remained...

The corporate state and a united Europe – the



Mussolini and Hitler: their legacy lives on in the European Union.

IT IS NOW commonly said that Blair's policies and legislation continue Thatcherism. This is to ignore, at our peril, the much longer and more sinister capitalist tradition in politics which he represents.

In 1970 when Edward Heath became Tory Prime Minister his intention was to introduce a radical reformation of British politics. His remit was to do away with the consensus politics dating back to 1945 and introduce a greater submerging of Britain into the then forerunner of the European Union. Heath, dating back to

before the Second World War when he met Nazi leaders in Germany, was a loyal supporter of the fascist concept of a united Europe. Hitler, Mussolini, Mosley, Franco – all were adherents of a united Europe – united against the working class and at that time the Soviet Union.

Like the wretched Mosley, who was beaten by the British working class, all three fascist dictators were adherents of, in slightly differing forms, the Corporate State. All opposition was to be submerged in one unifying state to serve capitalism, ignoring national boundaries.

The fascism's answer to working class opposition was to physically destroy or emasculate all centres of opposition, independence, aspiration and assertion of class power.

The fascist pipedream was obliterated in the victories of the Soviet Red Army during the Second World War. But the concepts of the corporate state and a united Europe remained.

The creation of the forerunners of the European Union from the early 1950s, originally funded by US interests, was a 50-year programme to gradually return to

viet Red Army during the Second World War. But the concepts of

The line from fascism to Thatcher, and Blair

the basic fascist ideals: one capitalist Europe – not destroying themselves by war and competition, capital to be in unfettered power, the working class to be in its place.

Heath, originally elected on a “no U turning” manifesto, was shattered within four years by working class resistance. Enter Thatcher, who took up Heath’s gauntlet and set about brutally ending the consensus politics of Britain that had lasted from 1945 to 1979. If the Thatcherite years 1979 to 1997 were one phase of a counter-revolution against the working class, then the Blair years have been a second phase.

During both phases all roads have led to and from Brussels and the EU. The opposition to the concept of a united Europe – so strongly rooted in the British working class and trade unions – had therefore to be destroyed. An ideological fight ensued within the trade unions, spearheaded by the TUC under the years of Thatcher. “There is an alternative – it rests in the Social Charter of Euroland,” was the siren call to the trade unions. So Thatcher and her creatures were dumped. Enter Blair.

The blueprint for Thatcherism was made up of the myriad EU directives promoting privatisation, break-up of the public sector, industrial zoning across Europe – not for the interests of the nations of Europe but for the interests of capital in Europe, free movement of goods and trade, free movement of capital, free movement of people (mass migration).

What Thatcher and Blair and their governments – irrespective of the personnel changes – have done has been to implement the EU blueprint first and unswervingly in Britain in comparison with other EU countries. The mistake made by the working class in Britain was to think Thatcherism was an aberration. It wasn’t: it was and is a policy pushed through the EU from here and back on to us.

To betray Britain’s sovereignty and national interests has meant a fundamental breaking up of 1,000 years

of British history and society. What is being put in its place is a regionalised, de-industrialised, section of the wider corporate state of the European Union.

To prevent opposition to a strategy which has deliberately overseen the destruction of Britain, a systematic, piecemeal and secretive reformation of its structures and institutions has been under way. The first stage of this process was the attack on manufacturing industry, started under the Tories and exacerbated under Blair.

The destruction of traditional core industries – coal, steel, engineering, shipbuilding, textiles, agriculture, fishing etc – all undermined identity, community and collectivity. The destruction of social institutions – such as civic pride, civic responsibility, local and national democratic institutions, community, housing, health, education, pensions etc – was a second step in trying to replace belonging, purpose, aspiration and expectation with cynicism, corruption, deceit and one false mantra: the market and only the market is the answer. The rules of the jungle and barbarism are elevated as the only acceptable norm.

Repression

The third step, which has always been inherent to capital since capitalism first successfully emerged in Britain over three centuries ago, is repression. There has been a long series of repressive and punitive laws against trade unionism – the working class’s only answer so far to capitalism – and against working class interests.

The legislation and legal precedents are in the history books: Master and Servant Act, Combination Acts, Taff Vale, In Place of Strife, Industrial Relations Act – all codified in the Tory legislation of the 80s and 90s – and then the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992, which has been strengthened under the Labour government, making it almost impossible to hold a “legal” strike.

A torrent of employment-related industrial legislation has followed, strengthening the most draconian anti-

“The Thatcherite years were one phase of a counter-revolution against the working class. The Blair years have been a second phase...”

worker legislation in Europe but also setting an agenda which has further emasculated trade unionism.

A further 16 Acts and proscriptive laws have been enacted or proposed since 1997 by this government (including the Terrorism Act 2000, Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, Criminal Justice Act 2003, Extradition Act 2003, Civil Contingencies Act 2004, Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005, Inquiries Bill 2005, Racial & Religious Hatred Act 2006, Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2006, European Arrest Warrant, Identity Card Bill, Police and Justice Bill, etc).

Much of this legislation, under the guise of tackling terrorism, limits free speech, limits the right to protest, limits freedom of association, removes the right to silence, removes the right to trial by jury, undermines the presumption of innocence until proven guilty, and undermines parliamentary supervision and sovereignty.

On a day-to-day basis this legislation underlines the fear this government has of the people of Britain. CCTV, ID cards, DNA registers, ASBOs, eye-scanning, fingerprinting, computerised NHS records, vehicle registration plate scanning, all embracing criminal records and non-criminal records – a constant monitoring. Now the government is proposing in London to link Oyster card usage (for travel on public transport), congestion

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zone charging and withdrawals from individuals' bank accounts of all sums over £200 to police databases – all to spy on movement, communication, behaviour.

All this reflects a deep paranoia. What is being trialled in London and Britain is to be rolled out across Europe, and is leading to a European-wide police state. Such is the fear of the people of Britain by this government. Not a fear of criminals or terrorists but a fear of every single citizen: even babes in arms are to be monitored from the day they are born.

In addition to the undermining of economic and political institutions and the continuous expansion of repressive legislation, goes the falsification of history and language. The history of Britain is that of the people who have made Britain. It is not the history of wealth, MPs, kings and queens, foreign billionaires et al. The use of mass migration to expunge the history of Britain by ghettoisation and division in the name of freedom, equality and diversity will have to be resisted by unity, class and nation.

The double-speak and spin of the government (both aberrations to the English language) need to be understood

“Division in the name of freedom, equality and diversity will have to be resisted by unity, class and nation...”

and resisted. When they speak of freedom it is freedom to exploit and it is freedom to suffer the longest working hours in Europe on some of the lowest wages. When they talk of skill they mean generations of debt for students trying to gain said skills. When they talk of health they mean Dickensian privatised squalor unless you have wealth. When they talk of education they mean medievalism.

The trade unions in partnership are to be absorbed into the state. “Social enterprise” is needed because capitalism couldn't run a wheel stall, they need our brains and expertise but they steal the takings. Equality means institutionalised division. Participation means state funding for dead political parties. Reform agenda means counter-revolution – world-wide. The list is endless: when a capitalist politician speaks the sewer spews forth.

The collapse of bourgeois democracy in Britain – the Tweedledum and Tweedledee, Box and Cox of parliamentarianism, the collapse of illusions that capital can be reformed through elections, the disillusionment, the distrust and shunning of MPs, councillors and ‘community leaders’ is not accidental. It is not going to produce a turning to the Tories, or wannabe Tories called Liberal Democrats, or fascist and Nazi parties.

The charade which has existed in Britain for the last 100 years, that capitalism always wins the election and continues under a new hue, is no longer enough for them.

Capitalism on its last legs cannot brook any opposition or dissent. In extremis it turns to authoritarian and repressive measures – the corporate state. For example it is illegal to oppose the European Union – how long before prosecutions follow?

Capitalism continuing on its present road will mean the death of working class aspirations and hopes. Aspirations to build a society free from exploitation, to create employment for all, housing, health, education and dignity for all. Something has to give and it cannot be the 60 million people who constitute the creators of wealth in Britain – the working

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As it stands, if the winter of 06/07 has the same low rainfall in the South East as it did last year, then by next summer much of South East England will be using

standpipes.

Severn Water, for example, has seen an 18 per cent rise in profits as complaints against the company rose by 55 per cent and it was investigated for providing false data to OFWAT. And since it acquired Thames Water in 2000, RWE (its German parent company) has extracted around £1 billion in dividends to shareholders!

FIGHT BACK with a Nationalise Water! badge, available from Bellman Books, 78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 8EB, price 50p each, or £4 for 10. Please make



Communists are leading the way towards establishing a republic in Nepal, and ousting the hated monarchy...

Revolution on the roof of the world



Demonstration early in 2006 against royal rule in Nepal.

LED BY communists, Nepal is taking historic steps to abolish the hated monarchy and set up a republic. At midnight on 21 November an agreement between the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) was signed which will ultimately result in elections to a Constituent Assembly by June 2007 at the latest. It was agreed that the first session of this assembly will then vote, needing just a simple majority, to end the centuries-old monarchy which has strangled the development of the country and acted in collusion with imperialism, and which, under King Gyanendra, has been brutal and murderous towards the people in city and countryside alike.

Before those elections, the CPN(M)

will take part in an interim government and both the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and Nepalese Army (formerly Royal Nepalese Army) will be encamped in certain areas, with their arms locked away and under supervision. Questions cry out to be answered. Why has the CPN(M) seemingly called a halt to the 11-year People's War which has seen them grow from a small isolated party to being in control of 85 per cent of the country? What's more, how will US imperialism, its loyal lapdog Britain and also Indian expansionists react?

In the past few weeks the international media have covered the historic peace agreements in Nepal, focusing on the success in drawing the CPN(M) to the supposed "political

mainstream." But it doesn't require a long look to see that in fact, the Maoists, covering about 80 per cent of the population and 85 per cent of the territory of Nepal, have long occupied the "mainstream" in Nepalese politics. This striking situation has developed since 1996, when the CPN(M) started a People's War armed with the ideas of Marx, Lenin and Mao and aimed against the evils of feudalism, imperialism and bureaucratic capitalism. The CPN(M) established base areas and formed a PLA, and by 2003 it was able to announce that the People's War was passing into the stage of strategic offensive.

In April 2006 a mass movement

Continued on page 12

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sparked by a three-day shutdown of the country developed into a 19-day general strike and forced King Gyanendra, from whom even the imperialists were beginning to distance themselves, to recall parliament. During these 19 days of strike and peaceful civil disobedience the security forces killed over 20 people, who became martyrs in the struggle. During the April Movement, protesters loyal to the main parties in the SPA warned their own leaders “do not betray us” by reconciliation with the monarchy. It is clear that although this heroic struggle forced the king to retreat, the principal aspect of the process culminating in this achievement has been the successful development of People’s War.

Uniting all who can be united

Since 2001 the CPN(M) has understood that the various Nepalese bourgeois parliamentary parties were in contradiction to the feudal monarchy, even though on the surface they were in many ways very close. This contradiction was heightened after the massacre of the royal family in 2001 and the ascension of the “regicidal, fratricidal and genocidal” King Gyanendra (as he’s known to the Nepalese), and reached even greater heights after Gyanendra dissolved parliament and took autocratic powers in February 2005. Since then, a series of agreements between the CPN(M) and the SPA laid the basis for the April Movement and for elections to a Constituent Assembly which would decide the fate of

the monarchy.

So why is the CPN(M) making agreements with the SPA, which is nominally much weaker, which does not control any part of Nepal and which has no loyal army? The CPN(M) has pursued this policy for a number of reasons, despite its undoubted dominance through most of Nepal.

Firstly, the People’s War has already reached the stage of liberating the vast majority of the countryside but needs to penetrate more deeply into the urban areas. For this reason, the tactics of isolating the monarchy and creating a United Front with the SPA allows them greater influence at a time when simply resorting to armed struggle would alienate large swathes of the urban Nepalese.

Secondly, the party has analysed the international situation and seen that the revolution in Nepal is at present isolated, even with the growing Maoist insurgency in India, and it is important to maintain as broad a unity as possible, while remaining unswervingly fixed in political line and strategic goals.

The CPN(M) does not claim that democratic elections are an end in themselves, or simply a tactic for this stage of the revolution, or replacement for the dictatorship of the proletariat. But it reckons they will promote more debate within society and along with vigorous party struggle and rectification, serve in future as a mechanism to prevent capitalist restoration.

In November, Comrade Suresh, a CPN(M) Central Committee member and one of their top negotiators in the current

“The CPN(M) will have to keep a watchful eye on the role being played by US and British imperialism....”

agreements, visited London and gave an inside perspective. In a series of public meetings he was questioned especially hard on the role of elections, the surrendering of arms and the acceptance of the UN as a so-called impartial observer. Suresh was keen to relay to people that “the Constituent Assembly is just a resting place on the way to revolution”, and that they have not lost sight of their strategic goals.

He recognised that up to now the enemies of the revolution have aimed to strangle it with violence, as in Peru. Now that the CPN(M) has instigated elections, enemies will aim to strangle it by other means, as in Nicaragua. It is certain that the SPA will benefit from financial support from the imperialists, who will do all they can to prevent the formation of a Maoist dominated government. However, Suresh explained, by sticking to their firm principles, they will be able to analyse the situation correctly and maintain their strategy that has brought them to this point now, within sight of abolishing the monarchy.

A People’s Army

Comrade Suresh was also questioned on the decision to place the PLA in cantonments and their weapons under lock and UN supervision. While it is true that the PLA’s arms are now locked away, the agreement clearly states that it is under a “single-lock” system, the key to which is with the PLA. This is the same procedure as with the formerly royal Nepalese Army. In the event of being attacked, or in an emergency such as a coup, the PLA would be quick to take up their weapons again.

Bring out your badges

Do you have any old labour movement and political badges in odd containers and drawers? Put them to good use and send them to the CPBML – we’ll sell them at labour movement events during the year to raise money for the Party. Please send them to:

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But they are clear that they will only do this if forced to. What about the question of UN supervision, which might be used by imperialism to intervene directly in Nepal?

However, the CPN(M) is keen to exploit the present contradiction between US and British imperialism on the one hand, with its direct murder and oppression such as in Afghanistan and Iraq, and a more restrained view which places more importance on “multilateralism” and “diplomacy” on the other. It is thus not the case that the CPN(M) is giving up armed struggle and joining “mainstream politics”. Instead, it is working along a process towards New Democratic Revolution, and uniting with all who can be united with.

Beacon

The Nepalese revolution is a beacon for those around the globe who yearn to throw off the chains of oppression. And indeed the revolution is not developing in Nepal separately from the global struggle. The imperialists will do all they can to ensure the Nepalese are never allowed to smash their own chains. The Indian expansionists are watching events closely, and indeed the true nature of the system prevalent in China since the death of Mao is laid bare by the Chinese refusal to even call the Nepalese “Maoists” but simply “guerrillas.”

In fact, as Suresh joked, “the Chinese Communist Party is worried about the export of Maoism from Nepal!” The CPN(M) will have to manage the contradiction inherent in a country locked between two giants, and will also have to keep a watchful eye on the role being played by the US and British governments.

While these momentous events were taking place, people from Europe, North America and Asia joined the 3rd International Road-Building Brigade to Nepal, successfully reached the district of Rolpa and worked side-by-side in internationalist solidarity with the Nepalese masses in the construction of the Martyrs Road, a 91-kilometre road in an area where government after



Crowds in Nepalgunj, just across the border from India, earlier this year demonstrating against King Gayendra. Shortly after this picture was taken, the effigy of the king (centre of picture, top) was burnt.

government, NGO after NGO, have promised to help the people but have never put their words into action. Under the leadership of the Maoists, the people are picking up the tools in their own hands and working collectively to build a new future (see www.roadtothefuture.org for more info on the brigades as well as how to volunteer).

This solidarity can be contrasted with the solidarity the British imperialist government has shown towards the Nepalese royal government, “gifting” so-called “non-lethal” helicopters to the royal government of Nepal, which were then customised and used to attack Nepalese villagers (see article in the *GUARDIAN* 11/04/2006 by Isabel Hilton).

Comrade Suresh began the public meetings by expressing his happiness at being in Britain, a visit he never thought he would be able to make because up until May he had been locked away in a royal prison. However, while there he said that one of the prison officials had asked him why he is so “famous” in Europe, at

which he showed Suresh newspaper reports of the protests in Europe against his and other leading cadres’ detention. Just a small example, but while we work to build a movement in this country to threaten imperialism it is testament to how working people here can make a difference by supporting the revolution in Nepal.

While Nepal is at present in a possibly lasting state of peace with the Maoists entering an interim government, the British and American governments are still watching to see how the Nepalese revolution develops, waiting for an opportunity to intervene. While this remains a possibility the people of Britain should unite together to oppose imperialist intervention in Nepal, as well as anywhere else in the world.

This article was contributed by comrades who went to Nepal as part of the International Road-Building Brigades to Nepal. For more information, see www.roadtothefuture.org.

Another piece of our social fabric is being torn apart as Premier turn into baubles for foreign billionaires...

Time to blow the whistle on takeovers

OF ENGLAND'S elite football clubs a considerable number are now in foreign hands. Chelsea and Portsmouth have Russian owners; Aston Villa and Manchester United are American-owned and a Dubai-based company hopes to grab Liverpool.

West Ham United has just become the property of an Icelandic group. This means that half of London's Premiership clubs have overseas owners (if one includes al Fayed's Fulham). Why England

and why now?

Capital is always looking for a quick buck and a handy bolt hole.

For some, the property boom in London has made football stadia in the capital an attractive proposition. Should Abramovich ever encounter problems extracting his wealth from Russia, he has the "Chelsea Village" to fall back on. Similarly with Pompey's backers who have issues of their own in both Russia and France.

The "Iceman" cometh to West Ham because once the Olympics are upon us, the Boleyn Ground is going to become a sought after chunk of the East End – only a mile for two from the new Olympic park and Stratford East, which will become Stratford International rail link.

Liverpool's Anfield home is adjacent to one of the government's Pathfinder regeneration areas and is set to become a prime site. Dubai International Capital are not merely buying into the Liverpool tradition. They want the brand and the land.

Across Stanley Park, Everton's Goodison Park is planned to become a Tesco. A new stadium, presumably with attendant subsidies, is planned in Kirkby. No wonder Thailand's erstwhile prime minister wanted to slot some of his dodgy money into the scheme before he was ousted by the military.

As for the Americans, they love leverage; buying chunks of Manchester and Birmingham with money they don't really have and forcing the debt onto the clubs they've bought. Furthermore, they hanker after merchandising tie-ups with their own NFL American Football clubs. Should soccer franchises match the enthusiasm for the amateur game in the States, Lerner and Glazer will have a head start in branded merchandise.

Newcastle United and Manchester City are mooted to be next so virtually half the premiership will be foreign-owned before the next season starts.

Chelsea fans probably don't care overmuch as long as the owner continues

...and now the EU p

THE PREMIER League has hit out at EU plans to give the EU and UEFA ultimate control over UK football. The proposals were agreed at a meeting in Brussels of the 25 European sports ministers. Richard Scudamore, Chief Executive of the English Premier League, argued, "UEFA is not and should not be the governing body of European football - they have their own competitions to run and should be free to do so, as we have



Fans at Old Trafford, now in American hands.

League football clubs

to bankroll the club. No doubt it's the same with most of the others although Everton supporters don't want to move and some Manchester United fans were so opposed to the Glazer takeover they set up their own club, F.C. United.

Wenger's warning

It does matter, because clubs run by overseas interests are always vulnerable to external factors, especially where the genesis of the cash is unclear. Somewhat ironically, it has taken Arsenal's French manager, Arsène Wenger, to sound a warning. He has pointed out the way in which foreign owners do not generally have an organic link to their club. They're not fans and they have no loyalties. It's business and they'll behave accordingly. They will cut and run if and when things go sour – a smaller-scale version of what's happening to our water, power generation, airports and steel.

In Spain, where many clubs have a large membership and a form of democratic executive as with Real Madrid and Barcelona, they are not such an attractive target. They can't be bought and sold in the same way as English clubs, especially those that have plc status. Nowhere else in Europe, even in Italy, are there so many clubs with a large support base.

Here, it seems, we'll have anybody as long as they can pay and with the new relaxation and removal of planning laws, this government is encouraging the break-up of yet another piece of our national fabric.

uts the boot in

ours... The idea that the rest of European football can decide what is best for the English game is a nonsense, just as it should be down to the Germans, French, Italians, Spanish, Dutch, etc, as to how they run their leagues. ... There is no need for a pseudo-European Sports Minister pushing an agenda that runs counter to continued success for the Premier League."

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.

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Back to Front – It's all gone wrong

'It is not surprising that Bush thought Iraq would be a pushover – but others have learned the lesson...'

THE INVOLVEMENT of the "axis of evil" in the search for peace in Iraq must be the ultimate humiliation for the American architects of war. It all started so well, an apparently swift victory in Afghanistan led to grand designs to reform the middle east on the American model.

After a shock and awe war a grateful people would embrace western democracy and set up an American client state which would be a beacon of freedom to surrounding regimes. Popular movements would be emboldened to install similar regimes in Syria and Iran. Hard to believe now, but all this was said with a straight face by administration leaders most of whom had never even visited the Middle East except on arms sales missions.

Now a mere three years later such imperial ambitions have crumbled to dust and US military might is a laughing stock throughout the world.

The Iraqi nationalist insurgents have already won, and Iraq, the Middle East, Britain and the world will be safer when the troops have left Iraq. The war in Iraq was always a diversion from the fight against al-Qaeda, and as an al-Qaeda leader said, "prolonging the war is in our interest."

The US Iraq Study Group has reported that there is little evidence that the long-term deployment of US troops "has led or will lead to fundamental improvements in the security situation" which they call "grave and deteriorating". More realistically, Sir Richard Dannatt, Chief of the General Staff, said that we should "get ourselves out sometime soon because our presence exacerbates the security problems."

Parallels with Vietnam are obvious

but post cold war when the US is supposedly the one remaining superpower the lasting effects are bound to be more profound. US forces were driven out of Vietnam after ten hard fought years by tough, well organised combined forces well supported with supplies by the USSR and China.

The message to other countries on America's hit list is now that even an irregular army of insurgents can do the job in less than five years. Anyone suffering invasion now has only to refuse to lie down for a relatively short time and US imperialism will either lose interest or try to run away.

While the Pentagon rattled its sabre smaller countries previously trembled. But now it has drawn the sword it proves to be blunt.

Of course regimes like those of the Taleban or Saddam may make tempting targets. Saddam's economy was weakened by sanctions. He was unable to stop the US enforcing a no-fly zone over Iraqi airspace. And as the US and Britain knew, Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction. It is not surprising that Bush thought Iraq would be a pushover – but others have learned the lesson.

North Korea and Iran know that their best defence against US imperialist aggression is to be defiantly well armed. Hence their threat to develop atomic weapons. Insistence on self determination is the order of the day now that American imperialism is on its knees. Even in South America US capitalists are shown the door.

This is surely a watershed moment in international relations. Our enemies are being weakened. Time for workers in Britain to stand up and cut the cord with imperialism.

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