

CAPITALIST CHAOS

by Daphne Liddle

THE WORLD of high finance rocked and reeled last week after Bear Stearns, one of America's biggest investment banks, collapsed and was bought out by rival JP Morgan for \$2-a-share – shares that had been valued at \$62 a few days before and over \$150 a few months ago.

Once again the subprime lending crisis was at the root of the crash, with the epidemic of foreclosures of mortgages spreading from working class borrowers to the middle classes.

Across the United States people who a few months ago felt safe and secure in their homes and jobs can no longer keep up with rising debt payments, are losing their homes and being forced to join the growing tent cities that are springing up outside major American cities. For them the American dream has turned into a living nightmare.

The collapse of Bear Stearns sent shock waves around the stock markets of the world, wiping billions off of stocks and shares. The FTSE 100 top shares index fell more than 200 points – around four per cent of the total. The Japanese Nikkei fell 3.7 per cent, the German Dax 4.2 per cent and the French CAC 3.5 per cent.

Investors around the world were mainly dumping shares in banks; in Britain the Royal Bank of Scotland shares fell 8.7 per cent, Barclay's lost 9.4 per cent and HSBC nearly 13 per cent.

The dollar fell to a record low against the euro and the pound also fell. American tourists in Europe complained that no one would take their worthless dollars any more.

The US and British governments, who have vaunted their belief in the power of the free market, unchecked capitalism and derided state intervention in the market as backdoor socialism, suddenly started intervening like mad.

The US Federal Reserve cut interest rates by three-quarters of a per cent – the second cut within a few weeks and the sixth cut since last summer and urged other governments to follow suit.

These measures were less than the banks had been asking for, but by Tuesday they seemed to have done the trick. Stock markets around the world rose again, dramatically, recovering nearly all of what had been lost.

tumbling

Wednesday they started tumbling again and there were accusations that some traders were not playing by the book but were deliberately circulating false rumours that certain banks were in trouble in order to make profits from sharply falling and rising shares. Police investigations were threatened.

By midday the Bank of

England's Monetary Policy Committee had met and voted by seven to two not to cut interest rates because of fears of inflation. Rates had already been cut from 5.5 to 5.25 per cent in February.

The capitalists are in an impossible position. If they cut interest rates it will allow some people to borrow and spend and keep the markets active. But that will quickly add to the already huge personal debt problem, with its long hours culture leading to exhausted, stressed and burnt out workers – who will collapse economically, physically and mentally – and be unable to repay the debts.

That will lead to more

foreclosures and repossessions and falling property prices – digging capitalism into a deeper hole.

If the capitalists raise interest rates fewer people will be able to buy, leading to a drying up of markets. Debt repayments will rise, driving more workers over the edge into collapse. Again, property prices will tumble.

pundits

The newspapers are full of finance pundits saying they can't understand how this is happening, what has caused it all and what can be done about it.

Karl Marx, who died exactly 125 years ago this week, explained it all per-

fectly clearly and showed that capitalism is inherently unstable. Booms and busts are inevitable.

The capitalists have staved off recession for a couple of decades now on the basis of promoting personal debt, getting workers to spend their future earnings to keep the markets going. But this had to crash in the end.

The capitalists will lose the value of their property, their stocks and their shares. The workers will lose their jobs, their homes and in some cases their minds. They will also lose all illusions about the capitalist system. Our job is to help them rediscover their fighting spirit.

Bush's empty words mask defeat

by our Arab Affairs Correspondent

PROTESTS and demonstrations around the world marked the fifth anniversary of the occupation of Iraq that George W Bush upholds as a "victory" to an increasingly sceptical American public. Speaking at the Pentagon Bush claimed the United States and the world were "safer" after the invasion and that his "surge" offensive had succeeded in promoting stability in the occupied Arab country.

But words have a different meaning in Iraq these days, like "stability" which simply means that the level of resistance attacks on American forces, which peaked last year, has gone down because some of the militias are on ceasefire and other Sunni forces have temporarily aligned themselves with the occupation. But when Bush's deputy, Dick Cheney, touched down in Baghdad for unannounced talks with his commanders and puppet leaders in Iraq he was greeted with the usual rocketing of the "Green Zone". While the US vice-president talked about the "phenomenal" and "spectacular" improvement recorded in the country since his last visit in May 2007, Kerbala – some 110 km south of the capital – was rocked by the biggest bomb blast it's seen for a year.

Earlier last week resistance fighters carried out a bold attack to liberate young captives being held at a puppet regime juvenile facility in Baghdad. The operation had been four months in planning and the prisoners were mostly teenagers related to known partisans, held in an



• Anti war protest in Seoul, south Korea.

effort to flush out their whereabouts.

Two partisans breached the prison security and freed the prisoners after a battle that left two wardens and four security officers dead. The partisans and 22 freed prisoners returned safely to base.

American casualties in Iraq are on the rise again, a pattern that has been repeated over and over as resistance fighters relocate, reorganise and re-engage American targets with concentrated attacks. The war has cost the United States more than \$400 billion, making it the most expensive conflict in history. But Bush has little to show for his "victory".

The occupation has destroyed Iraq, which would by

imperialist standards be described as a "failed state" if it wasn't for the fact that it's occupied by US imperialism. After five years of trying to conceal the truth from national and world public opinion, Washington is persisting in camouflaging the failure of its war on and occupation of Iraq.

Amnesty International says the current human rights situation in Iraq is "disastrous". In a new report, Amnesty said: "Hundreds of people are being killed every month in the pervasive violence, while countless lives are threatened every day by poverty, cuts to power and water supplies, food and medical shortages, and rising violence against women and girls."

The International Committee of the Red Cross warned on Monday that the humanitarian situation in Iraq remains among the most critical in the world. More than 27 million Iraqis have no functioning water or sanitation facilities. The Red Cross says Iraq's health care system is now in its worse shape ever.

Unemployment is running at 60 to 70 per cent according to the puppet government in Baghdad. This is nearly twice what it was in the period of the sanctions in the 1990s. Public services like water and electricity have yet to be fully restored, despite billions of dollars having been spent on often badly managed reconstruction projects.

FUND

Our fund this week is down again after last week's very good total – just £252.50. This brings our March total so far to £2,025.50 and leaves £974.50 to raise to meet our £3,000 monthly target.

We thank an Epsom comrade for £15, a Carlisle friend for two gifts totalling £9 and a Manchester supporter for £5. We also thank our Cumbrian bees for the regular £10, Southall NCP for £10 and another friend for £3.50.

All the rest came from bankers' orders and we thank the stalwart comrades who give regularly in this way.

Stocks and shares have been going up and down like yo-yos this week and some capitalists have been losing fortunes. We never had any fortunes or stocks and shares to lose and when the capitalists complain they have been ruined they are still far better off than we are.

We depend on contributions from readers and supporters and we know you are not wealthy either. But the capitalists are not going to fund us. Fighting capitalism is a way of life that requires dedication and real sacrifice but it's a war worth fighting. And this week the cracks in the enemy's edifice are showing.

Help us fight on by sending whatever you can to the *New Worker* fund, PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ.

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THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

The Dalai Lama plays his cards

IN LONDON Tibetan exiles and their dupes have been demonstrating outside the Chinese embassy in support of the separatist gangs that plunged parts of the Tibetan capital into violence last weekend. There can be no doubt that the London protests and similar demonstrations taking place across the world have been organised by the Dalai Lama clique and his "Free Tibet" movement and there are ample facts and plenty of evidence to prove that the recent riot in Lhasa was organised, premeditated, masterminded and incited by the Dalai Lama clique.

Tibet became part of China in the 13th century and this was recognised by all the local Tibetan feudal leaders down the ages, including the current Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso. This was recognised by the Dalai Lama after China's liberation and the establishment of the people's republic in 1949. But in 1959 the feudal landlords and reactionary religious leaders fearful of democratic reforms launched an armed rebellion, backed by the CIA and India, to preserve the serf system. It was crushed and the "god-king" of Tibet fled to India where he still holds court in exile.

The Tibetan people swept the reactionaries and feudalists aside and established a people's government in Tibet. The million serfs and slaves stood up for themselves, no longer the property of their masters to be traded, transferred or used to pay a debt in kind or by labour.

But in India the Dalai Lama clique has constantly sought to sabotage and disrupt the forward march of the Tibet Autonomous Region. The Dalai Lama wants his throne back and the reactionaries want to restore the wretched feudal system that held the Tibetan people in thrall for centuries. Behind them are the sinister forces of imperialism working to undermine and destabilise the People's Republic of China, the economic giant of Asia.

The Dalai Lama is a hypocrite who claims he stands for the Buddhist teachings of peace and harmony. Last weekend's violence, led by his agents, has torn the mask from his face. But the days of serfdom and slavery are long gone in China and they will never come back. We stand with the Chinese and Tibetan people defending their people's government.

The capitalist crisis deepens

ANOTHER investment bank bit the dust last weekend. Shares prices tumbled across the world as the capitalists sold stock to cover themselves following the crash of Bear Stearns, one of the largest investment banks in the world. The US central bank, the Federal Reserve, staved off the collapse of Bear Stearns by providing \$30 billion in emergency support – the first government-led bail-out since the Great Slump of 1929 – and supporting a bargain-price buy-out by JP Morgan Chase by lending them \$30 billion to guarantee some of Bear Stearns mortgage investments.

The bubble-economy based on private housing is about to burst and global recession is looming. Some individual exploiters will go under but the burden of the crisis will be placed on the back of working people. We'll be told it's the fault of the unions for pushing up wages. We'll be expected to pay for the slump in pay cuts, lost jobs and slashed social services.

The entire wealth of the planet is produced by workers in factories and farmers in the fields. Our labour provides the wealth that enables a tiny fraction of the population – the industrialists, capitalists and land-owners – to live in ease and luxury. Our labour feeds them while only a tiny fraction of the wealth we produce is returned in wages to ensure that the work gets done.

The ruling class, as a whole, expect to carry on as if nothing has happened. As long as they're in control they will. The only way out of the capitalist crisis is to end the capitalist system itself.

Young criminals

In New York the families of two four-year-old boys were shocked to learn their sons were allegedly handcuffed and lectured by a man in a police-type uniform because they refused to settle for their afternoon nap. Now they are suing the school.

Lawyer Scott Agulnick, who is acting for the families, says Jaden Diaz and Christopher Brito were taken by a substitute teacher to an empty classroom.

Then, a uniformed school safety officer allegedly entered the room, cuffed the boys' wrists – and told them they would never see their parents again.

Agulnick said the families were seeking damages, adding: "Failure to comply with nap time is hardly an offence that warrants being handcuffed, or threatened, for that matter."

Christopher, now five, told his mother: "I wasn't shot, but my hands were tied."

Say no more

Super sheep

Police in the north German village of Guester are seeking the owner of a sheep that outran their patrol car and beat up a police dog.

They say the sheep ran through the village at more than 30mph, leapt over the bonnets of police cars assembled as a road block and turned and chased off police dogs by head butting them.

Officers eventually caught up with it after it jumped into a field and started tucking into the grass.

Reprieved

Reports from the Vatican City say that the Knights Templar – a mediaeval Christian military order that was excommunicated when it became too rich and powerful – is about to be partly rehabilitated when the Vatican publishes trial documents it had closely guarded for 700 years.

A reproduction of the minutes of trials against the Templars, Processus Contra

Templarios – Papal Inquiry into the Trial of the Templars is a massive work and much more than a book – costing £4,125 pounds.

"This is a milestone because it is the first time that these documents are being released by the Vatican, which gives a stamp of authority to the entire project," said Professor Barbara Frale, a medievalist at the Vatican's Secret Archives.

Magic specs

Japanese scientists have invented a pair of glasses that will help people remember where they put their car keys. The Smart Goggle records everything the wearer sees – and can recognise objects.

Owners can tell the glasses what they're looking for and the technology will show them when, and where, they last saw it.

Inventor Yasuo Kuniyoshi and his team at Tokyo University School of Information Science and Technology have created the

world's most advanced object recognition software.

If a user initially tells the glasses the name of everything he or she looks at, the glasses will remember. They can then locate the last time the object was seen if it is misplaced, and replay the footage.

In theory, the only question that the glasses will not be able to answer is: "Where have I put my glasses?"

Moated

The Arizona town of Yuma, close to the US-Mexican border plans to surround itself with a moat as an alternative to the controversial fences being built to keep out Mexican immigrants.

City officials say they intend to create a "security channel", reviving a two-mile stretch of the Colorado River.

"The moats that I've seen circled the castle and allowed you to protect yourself, and that's kind of what we're looking at here."

The high cost of ill health

by Caroline Colebrook

DAME Carol Black, national director for health and work, after lengthy research, last week proclaimed that poor health is costing the British economy over £100 billion a year – serious money by anyone's standards.

She then went on to propose that family doctors, instead of issuing sick notes for workers not fit to do their usual job, should issue "well notes" saying what they are fit to do and to encourage workers to make themselves – through exercises or courses – fit for different kinds of work.

Many readers will already be feeling a sense of déjà vu – ruling class complaints about the amount of profit lost through the alleged British sick-note culture surface with monotonous regularity.

Dame Black's figures are said to be based on estimates made by doctors and bosses of losses through the payment of benefits, loss of profits to employers and loss of taxes the workers would have paid.

One political commentator pondered: "Do these doctors imagine their average patient gets paid the same as they do when they come to do these sums?"

But older readers will also be aware of a different kind of déjà vu; a few decades ago it was the custom of Labour Exchanges (as job centres were known then) to issue special green cards to claimants of the dole who were unfit for heavy physical work. They were allowed to refuse jobs that required heavy work and were supposed to be offered only light or sedentary work.

But they were dropped because prospective employers, seeing a green card, would assume they were being sent a second-rate worker who was



• Employers need to reduce stressful workloads.

likely to spend a lot of time off sick. The TUC has welcomed aspects of Dame Black's proposals that call for early intervention to prevent short-term periods of sickness from deteriorating into long-term conditions, unemployment and life-long dependence on benefits.

She proposed trials of a new "Fit for Work" service to provide access to specialists such as physiotherapists and counsellors for all employees in the early stages of sickness.

The aim would be to take quick action to help these people stay at, or return to work. She said doctors did not wait until a cancer patient developed secondary tumours to offer treatment – but inaction in the workplace too often allowed easily treatable, minor problems to deteriorate into something more severe.

TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "There is currently insufficient support for people who are off work because they are ill or injured and the TUC agrees with Dame Carol that more needs to be done to encourage those on long term benefits back into the labour market.

"This is best done by doing more to prevent work-

place accidents and illnesses, and by giving ill or injured workers early access to rehabilitation.

"In the UK millions of ill or injured workers are being dumped on benefits when they have treatable medical conditions, but often no access to treatment. Ministers need to come up with practical solutions based on prevention, early access to rehabilitation, and universal occupational health coverage.

"The Government must also look at how it can transform work into a more rewarding and less harmful experience, especially for the 2.2 million people who are currently suffering from an illness that was caused or made worse by their work.

"The TUC also recognises the need for 'good work' as emphasised in the report. But this will only happen if the Government clamps down hard on employers who exploit their staff through bad conditions, long hours, or stressful workloads.

"That means more resources for the Health and Safety Executive, local authorities and other enforcement agencies, and stronger legal protection for agency, temporary and other vulnerable workers.

"The TUC is pleased to see Dame Carol's report recognising the importance of union safety representatives in delivering on occupational health issues in the workplace."

Meeting Dame Black's calls for an army of specialists, physiotherapists and counsellors will also require an enormous Government investment. The large numbers of civil servants required to interview and direct the long-term sick into the sort of employment they might be able to cope with are no longer there after scything cuts in Department of work and pensions jobs.

And at the end of it all employers, given a number of applicants for every job, are still as unlikely as ever to pick those who come with known health problems.

A new study by the GMB general union shows that in the British labour market able bodied and fully fit workers get jobs ahead of those disabled and not fully fit.

New rules announced in last week's Budget will mean that a total of 2,517,988 people on incapacity benefit in Britain, amounting to 6.7 per cent of the population of working age, must attend work capability assessments.

GMB general secretary Paul Kenny GMB said: "The Government policy that those on incapacity benefit must attend work capability assessments is based on the false notion that the high levels of claimants in some areas is due to the fact that these people do not want work...."

"The unpalatable truth is that the problem lies with the lack of demand from employers for these workers.

"The Government needs to face up to the fact that in today's labour market able bodied and fully fit workers get jobs ahead of those who are disabled and those not fully fit."

DWP two-day strike success

THE CIVIL service union PCS proclaimed its two-day strike by members employed at the Department of Work and Pensions on Monday and Tuesday this week a resounding success.

They were protesting at a below-inflation pay package that is effectively a pay cut.

Around 80,000 DWP workers came out on strike, affecting job centres, benefits offices, the pension service and Child Support Agency.

It led to the closure of some offices with those re-

maining open offering little or no service to the public. The public experienced difficulty getting through to call centres with recorded messages telling people to call back at a later date.

This was the second two-day strike in this dispute; the first took place in December last year against a backdrop of worsening industrial unrest across the civil service, as the government seeks to cap pay to below inflation across the civil and public services.

The strike continued to receive strong support on its

final day, as members continued to show their anger by staying away from work as they protested over the imposition of a three-year pay offer averaging just one per cent a year.

The imposed pay offer also sees 40 per cent of staff receiving nothing this year and the lowest paid receiving increases that take their wage to only 24 pence above the minimum wage.

With figures out on Tuesday showing inflation on the rise, the union accused the government and DWP man-

agement of actively seeking to drive down wages and warned that further industrial action could follow if they continued with their refusal to find a negotiated outcome which ensured fair and just pay.

Below inflation pay as a result of the Government's pay cap has also prompted strongly supported strike action in the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), the Department for Transport, Driving Standards Agency (DSA), the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA),

Highways Agency, Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) and Vehicle Certification Agency.

PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka commented: "The fact that inflation is continuing to rise in the midst of the Government's cap on public sector pay is further evidence that public servants are not the cause of inflation, they are the victims."

"The strong support for the strike demonstrates that staff who have been battered and bruised by job cuts will not tolerate low pay increases

that will result in cuts in living standards for many hard working staff. DWP managers and Government ministers must not be allowed to get away with pay levels that are so low some full-time staff will receive increases which will take their pay to only 24 pence above the national minimum wage.

"Instead of squandering millions on private consultants, contractors and divisive bonus schemes, ministers and DWP managers should negotiate seriously with PCS about reaching a fair settlement that will protect living standards and end low pay."

Tanya Walker, North Yorkshire PCS DWP branch secretary, said the strike had caused severe disruption, affecting job centres and DWP offices throughout York and North Yorkshire.

She said: "Members of the public have been severely affected which is something we do regret. Because job centres are currently being staffed with such minimal levels of staffing anyone going in will experience long waiting times or they may find specialist officers are unavailable."

MoD seeks to rewrite history for schools

THE NATIONAL Union of Teachers has accused the Ministry of Defence of trying to interfere in the way in which the history of the Iraq War is to be taught in schools.

The union claims the MoD's prepared information sheets are heavily biased, lack balance and are inaccurate. Furthermore they are in breach of the 1996 Education Act that aims to ensure all political issues are treated in a balanced way.

NUT general secretary Steve Sinnott said: "It is propaganda; it does not present a balanced position."

"When you are dealing with something as controversial as Iraq and the different events which led up to the invasion, teachers are under an enormous duty to present material that is balanced."

One worksheet supplied by the MoD and designed by a private marketing company, Kids Connections, describes the work of British forces in Iraq as mainly targeted at "helping the Iraqis to rebuild

their country after the years of neglect" – with no mention of the decade of strict sanctions that caused that neglect.

It describes the work done by the armed forces in security and reconstruction and notes the 2005 elections but fails to mention the US-led invasion, Iraqi civilian deaths and the fact that no weapons of mass destruction were ever found.

Passages from the sheets say: "Iraq was invaded early in 2003 by a United States coalition. Twenty-nine other countries including Britain also supplied troops [no mention of the failure to get UN backing] ... Iraq had not abandoned its nuclear and chemical weapons development program [American spelling of programme] ... Iraq did not honour the ceasefire agreement by surrendering weapons of mass destruction."

The lies and distortions continue throughout.

The MoD described the information sheets as "valuable and fun resources for applied learning".

ATL warns of Big Brother

JULIA Neal, president of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, last week warned that education in England is becoming increasingly "Orwellian", under a regime of targets, testing, inspections and observation.

She was speaking at the union's annual conference in Torquay and accused the Government of employing "Big Brother-style" tactics to crack down on assaults on staff and fellow children.

Neal, a history teacher in Torquay Grammar School for Girls, claimed that the current reality is of "over-measured, over monitored education". She predicted a sinister future with CCTV surveillance in every classroom, where children are tested on a rolling basis and take regular mock tests to make sure they are ready for the real ones.

"Failure to demonstrate a year-on-year improvement in pass rates would be just too embarrassing," she said.

Neal warned that the CCTV cameras now being introduced into classrooms across the country were also there to monitor the teachers, saving school inspectors the effort of actually visiting the schools.

Meanwhile a senior Scotland Yard officer has called for primary school children to be put on the national DNA database if their behaviour suggests they may become criminal.

Gary Pugh, director of forensic science and the new DNA spokesperson for the Association of Chief Police Officers, called for a debate on measures required to identify future offenders.

"If we have a primary means of identifying people before they offend, then in the long term the benefits of targeting younger people are extremely large."

"We have to find who are possibly going to be the biggest threat to society," he argued.

And Children's Secretary Ed Balls has announced a £218 million expansion of Family Intervention Projects and plans to issue Anti-Social Behaviour Orders to children as young as 10.

These will take the form of good behaviour contracts to be issued to about 1,000 of the country's worst behaved children. Breach of contract could lead to a criminal record for children still below the official age of criminal responsibility.



Iraq: protest at 5 years of occupation

AROUND 40,000 people gathered in Trafalgar Square, London, last Saturday to protest at Britain's continuing involvement in the illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq.

The event was organised jointly by the Stop the War Coalition, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the British Muslim Initiative and was supported by trade

unions, left political parties and groups, community groups, religious groups and thousands of other progressives.

After a rally in the square, the demonstrators marched down Whitehall, across Westminster Bridge, along the Albert Embankment, crossed the river again by Lambeth Bridge and ended with another rally in Parliament Square.

Marchers demanded the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, and end to plans to invade Iraq and justice for the people of Palestine.

A similar march took place in Glasgow and in cities all around the world, in a global World Against the War Day, marking the fifth anniversary of the illegal invasion of Iraq.

Unite calls for Howells' resignation

THE GIANT union Unite last Monday condemned comments made by Foreign Office Minister Kim Howells as "utterly unfounded" and say he has put trade unionists and human rights defenders working in Colombia at risk.

Responding to comments made by Kim Howells that the trade union-backed organisation, "Justice for Colombia (JFC)" supports the FARC (a Colombian Marxist guerrilla group fighting a war against the government), Unite say Kim Howells has endangered people's lives in Colombia and should either withdraw his comments or be sacked.

Unite and other trade unions in Britain provide finance for JFC which supports trade unionists and human rights campaigners on the

ground in Colombia who live with the very real threat of assassination by the brutal regime.

Since 2002, more than 550 trade unionists have been assassinated in Colombia by the army and paramilitary death squads that work with them, yet the British government continues to give military aid to the Colombian Army.

Tony Woodley, Joint General Secretary of Unite, said: "The Minister's comments put in severe danger the brave trade union activists and human rights defenders in Colombia who already live with the very real and daily danger of assassination."

"Unite is also very concerned about the safety of its own members and officers and those of other international trade unions who take

part in solidarity delegations organised by JFC.

"It is clear that when senior politicians in Colombia make such comments, assassinations and threats against trade unionists and human rights activists increase and for those reasons we are astonished that a UK Minister would make such dangerous and unfounded comments."

"Instead of responding to the legitimate concerns raised about British policy in Colombia, Kim Howells is engaging in the same tactics that the Colombian regime uses to silence and intimidate its critics. He clearly has little understanding of the situation in Colombia and we call on him to immediately and publicly withdraw his comments. Should he not do so, we call on the Prime Minister to remove him from office."

Britain to get a security council

PRIME Minister Gordon Brown is due to announce this week the setting up of a US-style security council, charged with protecting Britain from diverse threats, ranging from terrorism to climate change.

A list of threats has been identified, including water and energy shortages, cyber-terrorism, human and animal diseases and other natural disasters.

It will be modelled on the US presidential national security council and staffed by senior politicians from all leading parties, military chiefs and scientific experts. It will also include senior officials from the Home Office, Foreign Office, Ministry of Defence and Department for International Development.

complement

The council will complement rather than replace the existing Cobra emergency committee.

Meanwhile MI5 has surprised many MPs by seeking access to records relating to Oyster and other travel smart cards used by 17 million people in Britain. These cards leave an electronic trail wherever the user travels.

Police and security services can already ask for travel details relating to individual suspects but do not yet have routine access to the entire database.

The security service says it needs the access under new counter-terrorism measures.

Features

by Ann Rogers

IN MARCH 2007 the Government put a resolution before the House of Commons calling for “the necessary steps to maintain the United Kingdom’s strategic nuclear deterrent beyond the life of the existing system”. In short the Government was calling for a new generation of Trident nuclear weapons.

The resolution was passed after pressure on both Tory and Labour MPs. But it was still opposed by 161 MPs – including 89 Labour MPs – the biggest revolt by Labour backbenchers on a domestic issue since Tony Blair came to office.

The rebel MPs were in step with the public as a whole. A majority (59 per cent), polled by ICM in July 2006, opposed replacing Trident.

In January 2008, as reported in the *New Worker*, armed forces chiefs from the United States, Britain, Germany, France and the Netherlands gave a statement insisting that a “first strike” nuclear option remains an “indispensable option” since there is “simply no realistic prospect of a nuclear-free world”. It is thought this manifesto will be discussed at the Nato summit in April.

Of course armed forces chiefs are not necessarily speaking for their respective governments. But since governments have not spoken against these views we must conclude that this does reflect the thinking of the imperialist leaders.

It means that objecting to these policies needs to happen now – ahead of the Nato summit.

The armed forces chiefs’ statement also needs to be seen alongside arguments put by Tony Blair when he was striving to get the new Trident resolution through the Commons. According to Blair it would be “unwise and dangerous” for Britain to give up its nuclear weapons. He alleged that the consequences of misjudgement about the country’s security would be “potentially catastrophic”.

He alleged that new threats were posed by states like the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea. This outrageous slur against the DPRK, a country that has issued no threats to anyone at all and which vigorously supports peace and working class solidarity internationally, shows the utter emptiness and weakness of the Government’s case. It also shows that the Cold War is not ended outside Europe – at least in the minds of the imperialist powers.

But Blair’s words will come as no surprise after backing Bush’s war on Iraq on the basis of a lie about weapons of mass destruction, which Iraq did not have.

The whole issue of Trident

No Trident! No nuclear holocaust!

“Trident is unacceptably expensive, economically wasteful and militarily unsound.” – Gordon Brown (1984).

is presented by the biggest lie of all – that these weapons protect our country and that they are a means of “defence”.

We do not need to second guess the thinking of the ruling class here and in the United States – we only need to see the specification for Trident to know that it is, and always was, an offensive weapon of mass destruction. Much more exposure needs to be given to this since there is now a generation of young adults who were born after the Cold War in Europe and after the intense campaigning against Trident in the 1980s.

Briefly: The current Trident fleet consists of four Ballistic submarines – *HMS Vengeance*, *HMS Victorious*, *HMS Vigilant* and *HMS Vanguard*. At any time three of these can be at sea. Each 150-metre submarine has 16 missile tubes capable of firing Trident D5 missiles and four tubes for Spearfish torpedoes. D5 is a MERV-type missile, which can fire 12 nuclear-armed warheads.

Each submarine’s range is over 4,000 nautical miles and, according to Royal navy information, claims an accuracy of a few metres. This is laughable, since a single warhead would totally devastate an area of many square miles – being accurate to a few yards is utterly irrelevant.

Just one Trident warhead has eight times the explosive power of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. A warhead aimed at a city would kill, sooner or later, over a million people, destroy the entire infrastructure and contaminate the whole area for decades to come.

The range of Trident means it could do this to any country in the world.

This is military nonsense –



a fact acknowledged by many military pundits. If Trident were ever used it would amount to a crime of genocidal proportions – and it is obviously not inconceivable that it could be used, given the first-strike talk of the Nato war chiefs.

Does Trident defend our country? Of course not. It only increases the danger of nuclear catastrophe.

Only the US has a comparable system to Trident. Britain does not face a threat from others – we are the threat. In fact in July 1998 a Ministry of Defence review stated: “There is today no military threat to the United Kingdom or Western Europe. Nor do we foresee the re-emergence of such a threat.”

That statement did not deter former Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon from indicating in 2002 that Trident might be used in a first strike capacity as a pre-emptive attack against a proportionate threat and that this could be against a non-nuclear weapon state.

A CND briefing of May 2007 said: “The UK is enhancing the Trident system and making it more flexible and therefore more usable. For example in 2003 new computers were installed on Trident submarines so that the missiles can now be rapidly retargeted and £28.4 million has been spent on acquiring a new fire-control system (to be deployed in 2010) which will improve their targeting. An upgrade to the nuclear warheads has also been scheduled. The Government describe this as a “relatively minor upgrading and refurbishment during the first half of the next decade. This will enable Trident warheads to remain in service until at least the 2020s.”

The Ministry of Defence and Foreign Office have produced a fact sheet giving a potted history of Britain’s nuclear weapons programme (incidentally, though this goes back to 1941 and the 1943 Manhattan Project, agreed between Churchill and Roosevelt, it never bothers to mention the US bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945).

However it does mention the signing in 1958 of the Mutual Defence Agreement (MDA) as the basis for *Agreement and Co-operation on Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defence Purposes*. This, it says, “became, and remains, the cornerstone of UK-US co-operation on nuclear defence issues. It was renewed in 2004 for a further period of 10 years.”

It underlines the fact that the US Trident missile system that Britain deploys always has to be seen as a component of the wider US war strategy.

In the 1980s Trident was to have been an integrated part of the US Star Wars programme and today it remains an arm of US strategy. Trident is not an independent

Features

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UK weapons system and it is inconceivable that Britain would ever use its Trident weapons if the US did not sanction it.

While British ministers always speak of trident as "our nuclear deterrent" – it is actually more closely tied to Washington than other weapons systems that Britain has. This is because the US will not let Trident be subjected to any collective decision-making by its allies.

It is not just the constraints of the MDA that make Trident not an independent weapons system. A report prepared for Scottish CND revealed that Trident is technically dependent on the US in many important ways. It says: "The [Trident] warhead is a Dutch copy of the US W76.... Several key components are produced in America.... The MC2989 Neutron Generators, initially deployed on British warheads were overhauled in the US in 1999. This implies that they were built there. A replacement Neutron Generator, the MC4380, was manufactured in America and supplied to Britain in 2002 The gas reservoirs on British warheads are filled with tritium in the US. These are difficult components to build. This suggests that the reservoirs are manufactured in America.

"The arming, fusing and firing system triggers the warhead. The model used on British warheads was designed by Sandia Laboratory and almost certainly procured off-the-shelf from America.... And there is a substantial American presence at the Northwood headquarters from where British submarine operations are controlled.

"Successive governments have withheld information to conceal dependence This is consistent with the policy of uncertainty that lies at the heart of British nuclear policy."

Blair's statement to the House of Commons that "it would be unwise and dangerous for Britain to give up its nuclear weapons" is utterly bogus. The vast majority of countries in the world do not have nuclear weapons at all. And since the end of the Cold war in Europe Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus have got rid of their nuclear weapons.

For Britain to opt for Trident replacement is not going to deter countries from trying to acquire nuclear weapons – it will have the opposite effect of making non-nuclear states feel threatened and therefore in need of seeking a nuclear option.

Furthermore it is contrary to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) that Britain has signed.

The NPT was signed by the US, Britain, the Soviet Union and 59 other countries on 1st July 1968. Since then China and France have also signed. By 2000, 187 states were party to the NPT.



Though Blair denied that Trident replacement is in breach of the NPT, the words of Article VI of the treaty show that he is wrong. It says: "Each of the parties to the treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to

cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to pursue nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

Britain and the US have never paid more than lip ser-

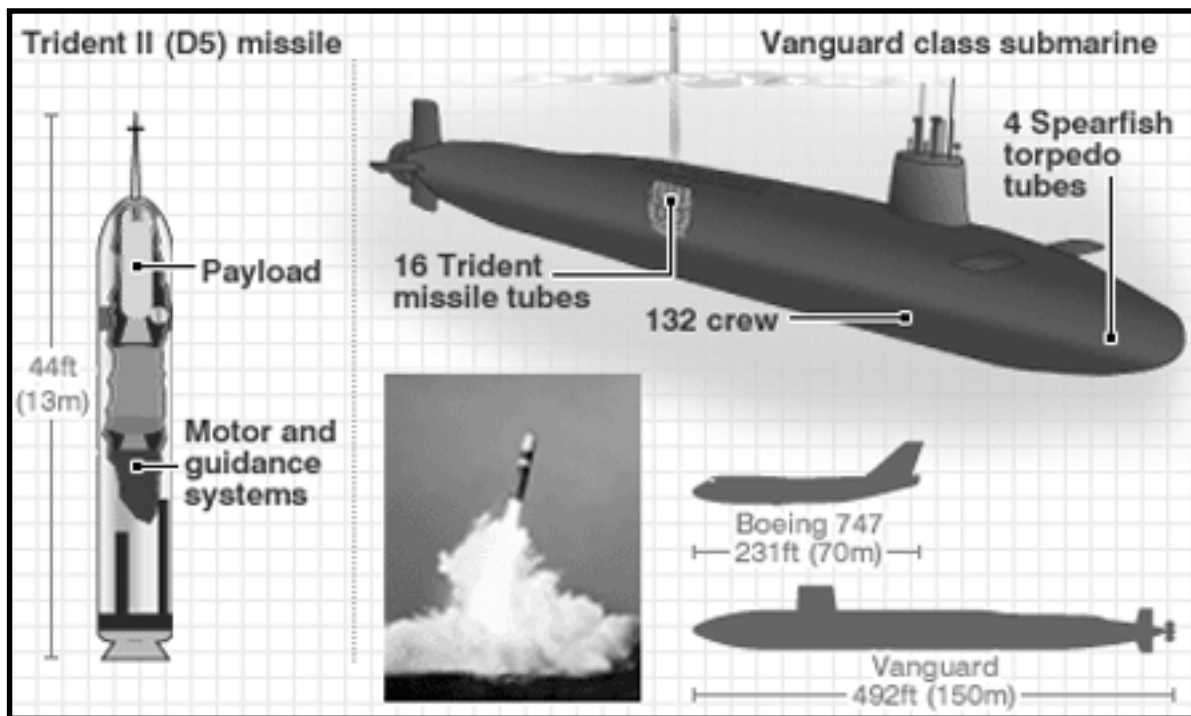
vice to this and by upgrading their nuclear weapons they are clearly in breach. But that sort of thing has never worried either state. The imperialist powers never thought of the NPT as a call for nuclear weapons' reduction by themselves – but only as a means of constraining all other states to create as near to a nuclear weapons monopoly as possible.

Since the counter-revolution in the Soviet Union this pressure has built up so that now states the US regards as unfriendly are bullied to abandon nuclear power generation altogether.

If the Government's stated reasons for wanting to keep Trident are spurious, what are the true reasons?

One of these can be summed up by the words of Aneurin Bevan when he addressed the Labour Party Conference in 1957 and insisted that Britain retain nuclear weapons "lest she go naked into the conference chamber".

Maintaining nuclear status has and is a ruling class objective for British capitalism's



international prestige and to keep its permanent seat on the Security Council of the United Nations.

It is also part of the wider strategy of Anglo-US relations. Britain is no longer a big colonial power but a section of the British ruling class hopes to bask in the reflection of the new sun in the sky – the US.

It is timely that this Easter CND plans to mark its 50th anniversary with a demonstration at the Atomic weapons Establishment (AWE) at Aldermaston. This is where a new laser facility is being built to test and develop a new generation of nuclear weapons.

This site produced and maintains nuclear warheads and has always been the business end of Trident in Britain.

The decision to replace Trident has led to an increase in the workforce at Aldermaston and capital costs have risen by £278 million in the last five years. According to a House of Commons written statement £1 billion extra funding has been earmarked for Aldermaston from 2005 to 2008.

This brings us to the cost of Trident. According to CND replacement for Trident could cost at least £25 billion. Running costs will be £1.5 billion-a-year and over a 30-year lifespan this would bring the cost to £76 billion. The Stop the War Coalition believes the cost will be £50 billion and a Defence white paper says the running costs of Trident are five to six per cent of the annual defence budget.

Of course the figures all depend on what is counted in. For example there would be extra costs for decommissioning the old system and the huge costs of running AWE Aldermaston.

Whatever measure we use it is colossally expensive and represents money that could be better spent on health, education, housing, pensions, public transport, local authorities and so on.

Clearly British taxpayers – the majority of whom are working class people on pay-as-you-earn tax (PAYE) – are helping to pay for US nuclear war plans and "defence" strategy. None of this is in the interests of the working class.

Quote: "Trident is unacceptably expensive, economically wasteful and militarily unsound." – Gordon Brown (1984).

• Opposite page – top: marching against Trident. Bottom: modern Trident missiles carry far more powerful warheads than this bomb at Nagasaki which murdered so many. This page – top: CND demo depicting the wide range of people against Trident. Middle: accidents are also a danger – Trident goes into a spin.

Home News

LETTERS

Dear Comrades

So the very Attorney General who hoodwinked Parliament by stating that the Iraq War was legal, at a cost to the taxpayer of billions and billions of pounds - to the detriment of our health service and local government - has now come up with the harebrained idea of a compulsory oath of loyalty to the Queen for those applying for British citizenship.

What utter, stupid nonsense!! Love and respect for one's country does not come from silly pledges. It stems from what a country means to its people.

A long tradition of fairness and justice moulded the culture of Britain and Wales; from the Chartists, who shed their blood to achieve democracy for working people, to the Suffragettes who won the vote for women, the Tolpuddle Martyrs who helped create the greatest trade union the world has

ever known, and those brave poets, writers and miners who fought and died in Spain to defend democracy. It is they who made our country what it is today.

This Government is slowly strangling those hard-won democratic rights.

I plead with Gordon Brown's government to tell the Attorney General to stuff his half-baked ideas on citizenship. We must regain the world's respect, which we lost on the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Yours sincerely, Ray Davies, Caerphilly.

Dear Comrades

The New Labour government, the disciples of privatisation via the European Union, agree with the "new" proposal by the local authorities to take over their local post offices.

They would, of course, as this will mean denationalising the services and fragmenting the Royal Mail monopoly, to save the face of the Government when the "new" scheme fails through fragmentation.

The local authorities, who are constantly privatising as many social services as quickly as they can, who are reducing the wages and conditions of the workers and blackmailing the public to agree, to keep down the council taxes, when postal workers defend their rights and conditions.

So do not be fooled by the "new" proposals to "save" the post offices that they will be run by your democratically elected rulers, for it is only the smile on the face of the privatised tiger, trying to end the national collective bargaining of the trade union of the postal workers (CWU), so

beware and keep the Royal mail national, as a public service.

Yours, George Marsh, Surrey.

Dear Comrades

I see Foreign Office Minister Kim Howells has finally been stripped of Unite union sponsorship after being photographed with a Colombian death squad - murderers of trade unionists.

Howells is a former NUM official. Has not naiveté been the problem on the left rather than paranoia? Mick Kenny, Yorkshire.

Lobby to save Bridlington Hospital

MEMBERS of the union Unite and local campaigners from Bridlington last Tuesday travelled to Westminster to lobby their MPs to keep vital services operating at Bridlington Hospital.

They handed a petition with 37,000 signatures to Downing Street and then went to the Houses of Parliament to meet their MPs as part of the campaign opposing the closure of the cardiac monitoring unit and two acute medical wards at the hospital. Unite has consistently said

the trust's plans will put patient's lives at risk.

Local Unite activist Stephen Holiday said: "Unite has been campaigning with local residents to defend the vital services at Bridlington Hospital. The petition we are delivering is a clear demonstration of local strength of feeling around these essential services the hospital provides.

"The 'Save Bridlington Hospital Campaign' and every signatory on this petition are urging a rethink on the closure plans."

BA pilots protest

MORE than 1,000 airline pilots employed by British Airways and members of the pilots' union Balpa last week staged a protest march to BA's headquarters at Heathrow.

They are in dispute over BA plans to use non-BA pilots is a subsidiary company - on reduced wages and conditions.

British Airways plans to fly to the US direct from other European cities using the new BA "Open Skies" service following an EU-US agreement. Pilots had voted for industrial action, but BA applied for a legal injunction to prevent it going ahead.

British Airways says the new airline would not be viable if all its pilots were employed under existing terms.

Speaking for Balpa, Captain Dave Smith said: "This shows that we are determined that our jobs and our security and our family lives will be defended."

A spokesperson for Balpa said given that roughly 2,000 of BA's 3,000 pilots are usually either on duty or resting before or after flights, the turnout was very high.

Legal fight for asbestos victims

THE CONSTRUCTION union Ucat is backing a campaign to overturn a Law Lords' ruling that prevents the victims of asbestos-related illnesses from claiming thousands of pounds in compensation.

The campaign is also backed by Dagenham MP Jon Cruddas, who attended an event at Barking Town Hall, along with union activists last week to launch a campaign to restore payments to workers exposed to dust from the Cape Asbestos factory in Harts Lane, Barking, which closed in 1968.

The campaign involves people sending postcards to justice secretary Jack Straw asking him to reintroduce payments to people suffering from scarring of the lungs, known as pleural plaques,

caused by exposure to asbestos. Their protest follows a legal ruling last year that pleural plaques would no longer be a compensatable illness.

Cruddas said: "This is vital for this area. The local incidence of asbestos-related diseases is the highest in London. Mesothelioma is the highest for women in the country and in the top 10 for men. That's why it's so important.

"The Law Lords' decision has saved billions for insurance companies. It's a working class disease of which people sitting in the Lords know very little about."

Health statistics reveal Barking and Dagenham has one of the highest rates of asbestos-related diseases in the country, and up to 25 people die from diseases associated with exposure to it every year.

Diary

MONDAY 24 March Aldermaston 2008. Surround the base. 12 noon. CND 020 7700 2393.

THURSDAY 27 March Looming economic & environmental crisis: is there an alternative? 7.30pm, Vida Welsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Road, Brixton, London. Southwark & Lambeth Labour Representation Cttee.

FRIDAY 28 March - Saturday 29 March. Conference: Peace history. Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Rd, London SE1. Both days £30, one day £25. www.abolishwar.org.uk

Friday 28 March 12.30pm, the Colchester Labour Representation Committee, which includes New Communist Party, Labour Party members and Unison's North East Essex Mental Health branch, will be supporting workers Memorial Day outside

the Memorial Plaque and tree, speakers from the trade union and labour movement, all welcome. Details from Mike Fletcher, c/o NCP Party Centre.

SATURDAY 29 March Socialist Youth Network conference. 10am-4pm, ULU, Malet St, London.

SATURDAY 12 April Celebration in memory of Kim Il Sung. Speakers include: Andy Brooks NCP, Chris Coleman RCPB(ML) and a representative from the DPRK embassy. 3pm, Marx House, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU

MONDAY 28 April International Workers Memorial Day. March, assemble 10.30, Holland St, London SE1. WEDNESDAY 30 April Hope not Hate 2008. Carling Academy Brixton, Stockwell Rd, London SW9. £20/£16. www.hopenothate.org.uk

On the Web...

New Worker National - www.newworker.org

NCP Central - www.geocities.com/ncpcentral

London District NCP - http://londoncommunists.blogspot.com/

Brighton NCP - http://brightoncommunists.blogspot.com/

NCP-PCS - www.geocities.ncppcs/pcs1.html

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No to the Lisbon Treaty!

EUROPEAN communist parties called for a mass campaign for a strong No vote against the "Lisbon Treaty" in Ireland and throughout the European Union at a conference in Athens last weekend. Twenty-three communist and workers' parties, including the New Communist Party of Britain, took part in the conference called to develop joint and co-ordinated initiatives to mobilise the working class against the bourgeois drive to build the capitalist super-state in Europe.

There was broad unanimity amongst the communist representatives from 20 EU member-states and accession countries on the true nature of the European Union. They stressed that the development of the Common Market and the EU that followed was the choice of European imperialism and western European monopoly capital.

It promotes neo-liberal measures favouring the monopolies and the concentration and accumulation of capi-

tal. It cannot represent a genuine counterweight to the United States in favour of the people. With the Lisbon Treaty, new steps are being taken towards the configuration of the EU as an imperialist, economic, political and military bloc contrary to the interests of the workers and the people.

The sovereignty and independence of peoples and countries are being further undermined. The attack on labour and trade union rights throughout the EU is escalating in the name of "modernisation"; "competitiveness"; "flexicurity", and in order to ensure the profits of capital. The participants vehemently denounced the adoption of the Treaty without consulting the people.

The unilateral secession of Kosovo from Serbia was condemned and concern was expressed about its consequences.

Leading members of the revisionist and left social-

democratic "European Party of the Left" bloc, like the French Communist Party and the Italian Communist Refoundation Party, did not take part in the conference though others including the Communist Party of Spain (PCE) fully participated in support of the communist initiative.

The guest of honour was the Cuban ambassador to Greece and two anti-European Marxist-Leninist movements, the Pole of Communist Renaissance in France (PRCF) and the *L'Ernesto* magazine from Italy attended as observers.

NCP leader Andy Brooks and Theo Russell from the Central Committee represented the Party in Athens. In his speech Andy Brooks called for mass support for a No vote in Ireland, the only country that is putting the Lisbon Treaty to referendum. He said: "Communists must also use the opportunity of the public debate that will no doubt take place prior to the



• Aleka Pappariga, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) opening the conference.

vote to make the principled stand against the European Union and the Treaty of

Rome altogether...the European Union cannot be reformed except by tearing up

the Treaty of Rome, which established the Common Market in the first place".



• Robert Laurie lays flowers on behalf of the NCP.

Honouring Marx

THE PROMISED rain held off last Friday as a large group of people from all corners of the world gathered in Highgate Cemetery, north London, to mark the 125th anniversary of the death of Karl Marx.

Those gathered included ambassadors and diplomats from People's China, Vietnam, South Africa and Cuba together with Danish and German communists, a large party of Chinese students from Westminster College and the regular London-based communist stalwarts of the struggle.

Flowers were laid at

the base of the huge tomb, including red roses laid by New Communist Party central committee member Robert Laurie.

Professor John Callow gave a short speech, in which he mentioned the recently published book *Marx in London* that he has co-authored.

He said his work was an attempt to rescue the real Marx from a welter of tradition and ritual and promote the content of Marx's writings. "Marxism is not a rigid dogma but a living way of interpreting the political, social and economic processes that are happening all around us," he said.

Tibet — police exercised 'great restraint'

by Wu Jiao

POLICE SHOWED great restraint and used no lethal force in dealing with the riots in Lhasa last Friday, the chairman of the Tibet autonomous regional government said on Monday.

"The riots caused heavy loss of life and property, and seriously disturbed social order," Qiangba Puncog told a news briefing in Beijing.

On Friday violence involving physical assault, destruction of property, looting and arson broke out in urban Lhasa. Rioters set fires at more than 300 locations, including 214 homes and shops, and smashed and burned 56 vehicles.

In one case, a civilian was doused with petrol and burned to death by rioters.

Sixty-one members of the armed police were injured, including six critically. Rioters beat a police officer into a coma and cut a fist-size piece of flesh out of his buttock, he said.

Yet "public security personnel and police showed maximum restraint during law enforcement" and "throughout the process, (security forces) did not carry or use any destructive weapons. Only tear gas and water cannons were employed," Qiangba Puncog said.

The regional government immediately organised task forces to put out the fires, rescue the injured and protected hospitals, schools, banks and government offices.

The military was not involved in quelling the riots, but participated in rescue work, he said.

In a notice issued over the weekend, law enforcement agencies promised leniency to rioters who turned themselves in.

Qiangba Puncog underscored the terms of the notice, saying: "If these people provide further information about others involved in crimes, they will be treated even more leniently."

"Those who committed serious crimes in the riots will face the full force of the law."

He said he did not know if anyone had surrendered so far.

Qiangba Puncog said that the riots were the



• Qiangba Puncog.

result of a conspiracy hatched by domestic and overseas separatists advocating "Tibetan independence".

It was "premeditated, organised and masterminded" by the Dalai Lama clique, he said.

"A tiny handful of separatists and lawless elements engaged in extreme acts with the goal of generating publicity to wreck stability during this crucial period of the Olympic Games," he said.

Qiangba Puncog also said he was indignant that some Westerners and the Dalai Lama group had spread a distorted version of the unrest by describing the riots as a "peaceful demonstration".

He said no democratic country would tolerate the brutality shown by the

rioters in Lhasa.

Yet he expressed confidence in maintaining social stability and order under the leadership of the central government.

"Any plot to destroy social stability or to mastermind the secession of Tibet are against the will of the people in Tibet and doomed to failure," he said.

Meanwhile, the Chinese Foreign Ministry condemned the attacks against Chinese embassies and consulates in Europe and the United States by Tibetans linked to the Dalai Lama.

Rioters smashed doors and windows at China's embassies and consulates, said spokesman Liu Jiancohao. He urged foreign governments to increase security at Chinese missions.

"The atrocities of the 'Tibetan independence' forces showed again the divisive nature of the Dalai clique and the hypocrisy and deceit of its peace and non-violence propaganda," Liu said.

China Daily

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International News

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Policeman dies of wounds in Kosovo

A UNITED NATIONS policeman who was badly wounded in clashes with ethnic Serbs in the northern Kosovo town of Mitrovica died on Tuesday, police said.

"I can confirm the death of a UN policeman from Ukraine," said Kosovo Police Service (KPS) spokesman Veton Elshani. Elshani did not give the identity of the policeman or specify the hospital in which the Ukrainian had died.

Riots erupted in the northern part of the flashpoint town of Mitrovica on Monday morning after several hundred UN special police backed by French Nato peacekeepers stormed the Municipal and District Court in the town and arrested dozens of Serbs, former court employees, who had been protesting in the building for several days, demanding their jobs back nine years after they were left jobless in 1999.

The riots escalated into open clashes in which firearms, teargas and shock bombs were used. Around 70 Serbs were injured, of whom 15 seriously injured were hospitalized, while two persons who had received life-threatening injuries were transported to Kragujevac and Belgrade.

Regional KPS spokesman Besim Hoti said on Monday that more than 100 UN police officers and Nato-led peacekeeping forces (KFOR) were injured in Monday's clashes including 14 Ukrainians, 13 Poles and eight French soldiers.

KFOR spokesman Etienne du Fayet de la Tour confirmed late on Monday that KFOR units had used automatic weapons in the riots, but they fired only warning shots.

The spokesman said the soldiers had sustained injuries from "grenades, stones and Molotov cocktails".

The bridge on the river Ibar which separates Mitrovica into northern Serbian and southern Albanian parts was closed to traffic on Tuesday.

The building of the district and municipal court is encircled with barbed wire, and in its courtyard members of the French and Belgian contingent of KFOR were stationed in full battle kit with armoured vehicles.

Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic has sent a protest note to UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon because, as he cited the absolutely unacceptable and excessive use of force by international forces in the northern part of Mitrovica, and demanded an investigation into how the incident had taken place.

Jeremic also wrote a letter to the UN Security Council chairman, Russian Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, in which he demanded that the most influential world body discuss the security situation in the region.

Xinhua news agency

Anti-war protests sweep America

AS PART of actions across the United States to mark the fifth anniversary of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, ten "Grandmothers for Peace" — ranging in age from 57 to 80 — were arrested in Atlanta while trying to enlist in the United States Army. Acts of civil disobedience are planned all this week in at least 17 other American cities.

According to eyewitnesses, the Grandmothers for Peace entered the Army Recruiting Station at the Midtown Place Shopping Centre in Atlanta, Georgia at around 9:30 am, Monday morning. The women broke up into three groups, each approaching a different recruiter's desk to engage them in questions.

Some of the grandmothers asked about getting bonuses and insisted on being able to join the Army so that their grandchildren and other young people don't have to go to Iraq. Meanwhile, dozens of activists were outside of the recruitment centre, beating drums and chanting under a banner that read: "Take us, not our grandchildren!"

Finally, Atlanta police officers were called in and the



• Anti war protesters in California.

activists were given 10 seconds to leave the army recruiting station or face arrest. The Atlanta Police Department confirmed the arrest of ten Grandmothers for Peace. The women were charged with criminal trespassing and taken to a local jail. The charge, a

misdemeanor, could carry a maximum of one year in jail, although a judge could use his or her discretion.

Grandmothers for Peace International was founded in 1981 when Barbara Wiender, the first Grandmother for Peace, was arrested protest-

ing at the presence of nuclear weapons near her home in Sacramento, California. Today the group conducts a variety of protests and other actions, including civil disobedience, around issues of nuclear disarmament, peace and justice. *Radio Havana Cuba*

Pakistan's coalition parties agree on power-sharing

PAKISTAN'S coalition parties have finally agreed on a unanimous power-sharing formula based on their proportionate strength in both houses of parliament.

The incoming prime minister would announce the portfolio after consultations with the parties, including Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Awami National Party (ANP), and the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F).

"The formula has been agreed unanimously. The composition of the cabinet would be based on the strength of the parties in the National Assembly and the Senate," PML-N leader Nisar Ali Khan said.

Khan said that around 20 members would be inducted in the first phase of the cabi-

net formation and its size would be reduced as compared to the previous cabinet.

He said the prime minister would decide on the distribution of key ministries such as Foreign Affairs and Finance.

The PPP won most votes in the parliamentary elections and agreed to form a coalition government with the PML-N led by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, which came the second.

According to the declaration signed by the two major parties, the candidates for prime minister, parliament speaker and deputy speaker will be from the PPP of the assassinated former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. But the PPP has not nominated any person for premiership so far. *Xinhua news agency*

US motor giant in deep trouble

A MAJOR American car manufacturer is planning to save money by shutting down its plants for several weeks in this summer. Chrysler, which is restructuring a troubled business under private ownership, told its workers by email that almost all of the company will shut down for two weeks in July to save money.

Chrysler's CEO, Robert L Nardelli, wrote to the carmaker's 71,500 employees: "This year, in order to create better alignment and efficiency across organisational lines and boost productivity, Chrysler will use a corporate-wide vacation shutdown for the weeks of 7th and 14th of July."

Sales of new cars are down 5.4 per cent this year, as the economy flags and the national average price of petrol tops \$3 per gallon. Chrysler's sales are down 13 per cent for the first two months of this year compared with last year. Toyota Motor has said that it would cut production of its Tundra pickup trucks at plants in Texas and Indiana.

Carmakers in recent years have selectively shut down plants or entire manufacturing units, usually during the summer, to save money. General Motors and Ford plan two-week plant shutdowns this summer. During the tech-

nology crash of 2001, several Silicon Valley companies, such as Adobe Systems and Sun Microsystems, ordered employees to take a week off to save money.

But Chrysler's shutdown is notable for two reasons: It will include all of Chrysler's employees except for minimal staff needed for what Nardelli called "business critical operations". It's also notable because of the company's current state of play — executing tough cuts in a turbulent economy to prepare it for sale, likely to another carmaker.

Cerberus Capital Management bought an 80 per cent stake in Chrysler from Daimler for \$7.4 billion last May. Cerberus has been paring the company down to make it attractive to a buyer, possibly Volkswagen or the Nissan-Renault alliance, according to experts.

Last year, Chrysler negotiated a contract with the United Auto Workers that changes the benefits structure for the company's employees, significantly lessening Chrysler's long-term obligations. Also, the company announced last year that it would lay off as many as 12,000 workers and discontinue several slow-selling vehicles, including the Crossfire sports coupe and Magnum Muscle saloon. *Radio Havana Cuba*

My Lai massacre survivors remember

Survivors of the My Lai massacre gathered in the small Vietnamese village along with American veterans of the war of aggression to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the infamous event.

One US veteran, Lawrence Colburn, was reunited with the person he rescued from the rampaging members of Charlie Company, the US troops who slaughtered up to 500 unarmed Vietnamese villagers in one of the most notorious chapters of the Vietnam War.

On 16th March 1968, Colburn found eight-year-old Do Ba clinging to his mother's corpse in a ditch with the bodies of more than 100 people who had been mowed down. Nearly all the victims were women, children and the elderly.

Colburn, a member of a three-man helicopter crew who intervened to stop the killing, said that Do Ba is now married and has a little baby girl. He said that he is "a perfect example of the human spirit, of the will to survive."

Hundreds of Vietnamese from the village gathered this weekend to remember the My Lai massacre. The 40th anniversary of the event that shocked the world and undermined Americans' support for the war was commemorated at a time when the US is getting ready to mark the fifth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq.

Buddhist monks led the mourners in prayer at My Lai on Saturday, outside a museum that has been erected to remember the dead. Among those praying was 83-year-old Ha Thi Quy, a My Lai survivor who still struggles with anger and depression four decades after the slaughter. Members of Charlie Company shot her in the leg and killed her mother, her 16-year-old daughter and her six-year-old son. Her husband later died of his injuries and another son had to have an arm and a leg amputated after suffering gunshot wounds that day. She survived only because she was shielded beneath a pile of dead bodies.



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u
b
H
c
2

a
t
u
b
H
v
l

A
t
Y
v
c
s
i
i

