

## UNITE WITH THE HEALTH WORKERS *WE CAN DEFEND THE NHS!*

BY STUART CARTER

**NURSES in Manchester again took strike action last week over their re-grading. Calls for action are mounting in other areas too.**

Government statements that the nurses' clinical grading review would result in nurses being paid 15 per cent more on average according to their levels of skill and responsibility have been shown to be lies.

Nurses are angry because health authorities have been re-writing job descriptions, stripping nurses of responsibilities and duties which they have up to now assumed in an

effort to keep the wages bill within government imposed limits.

Government statements that the pay award would be fully funded are also lies. An extra £803 million has been allocated but health authorities are predicting they will not have enough and will have to make further cuts to fund the wage increases.

### Majority

The RCN (Royal College of Nursing), and the health service unions NUPE and COHSE last week walked out of talks with management when it emerged that the majority of ward sisters and charge nurses would get a pay rise of only 4.2 per cent.

The RCN have called a day of protest on 3 September and NUPE and COHSE leaders have threatened possible industrial action.

But what is needed is a campaign of strike action involving all health service workers against their appalling levels of pay.

### Third

For example nursing assistants, who make up a third of all nursing staff, will receive a pay rise of 7.6 per cent going onto a scale of £5000-£6,300 per annum.

Ancillary workers have been offered an increase of 5.4 per cent or £5 a week.

The basic rate for a hospital porter would be £86.13 a week.

Administrative and clerical staff have been given a £6 a week rise despite the fact that hundreds of medical secretaries' posts are unfilled because secretaries can earn twice as much in the private sector.

At the same time the number of

ancillary workers has declined dramatically as more cleaning, catering portering and laundering departments are privatised and handed over to the Tories' friends in big business.

The union leaders have avoided uniting all NHS workers in a campaign of industrial action to win their pay claims and stop privatisation.

Meanwhile the NHS is suffering continuous cutbacks because of deliberate government underfunding while the private sector is boosted.

### Evidence

All the evidence shows that the NHS is more efficient. While its spending since 1980 has increased by 11 per cent in real terms, premiums for private insurance with BUPA increased by 74 per cent.

Last Tuesday staff, patients and their relatives were about to begin a sit-in to prevent the closure of the Alcohol Treatment Unit at Withington hospital in Manchester when management backed down and announced a temporary reprieve.

### Whole

The response to their campaign and the strikes earlier this year prove that the whole working class could be mobilised to defend the NHS given decisive leadership.

The TUC and Labour leaders avoid this because they know it would escalate into a fight to bring down the Tory government and smash its anti-union laws.

A revolutionary socialist leadership must be built, and especially if you are a health worker, this means joining the Workers Revolutionary Party.

## TUC IN CRISIS - See page 3



# Workers Press

## 'Self-financing' bureaucrats in trouble

THE SOVIET journal 'Economic Gazette' has reported on the recent meeting in Moscow of the Communist Party Central Committee's Economic Section. The report reveals a little of the desperate crisis facing the bureaucracy today.

One of the tasks of the meeting was to review the outcome of the decree of January 1987, under which the 1.5 million Soviet enterprises were supposed to become 'self-financing'. Each enterprise was going to sell its products at 'real prices', and pay its workers 'real wages', in line with what they had produced.

It was reported, however, that the number of enterprises which had actually tried to carry out this scheme was exactly 172. And they hadn't quite made a success of it, either.

For they all found that, if the letter of the decree had been followed, the result would have been huge financial losses.

It is hardly surprising that some speakers at the Moscow meeting were worried about the failure of Soviet workers to greet the new style of management with enthusiasm. A trade union official spoke about the need to 'educate' them, if 'negative tendencies' - like strikes - were to be avoided.

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Gorbachev and his supporters have made clear that the old type of 'command management', with its inevitable accompaniment of fake statistics and industrial breakdown, had to go. But the alternatives they have proposed meet the resistance of the working class.

In fact, the problems they face have no solution. The bureaucracy which emerged in the 1920s and 1930s under Stalin expressed the contradiction of the attempt to impose state planning on a backward economy, cut off from world economy.

The relative advances of industry in the past few decades, do not lessen this crisis but exacerbate it. Without the spread of the October Revolution to the advanced industrialised countries, the Soviet economy is threatened by the economic and financial might of the capitalist powers, above all of the US.

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The two wings of the bureaucracy, Gorbachev's 'reformers' and Ligachev's 'conservatives', reflect different sides of this contradiction. Those who see Gorbachev merely as 'restoring capitalism' miss the point entirely.

Even if he wanted such a thing, it would hardly be a likely approach to resolve the Soviet crisis. After all, is capitalism proving such a great success in developing industry in the capitalist countries?

The answer cannot lie in opposing 'perestroika', in favour of the old style of bureaucratic management. Instead, we must see the way forward in the development of the political revolution, in which the Soviet working class will throw all sections of the bungling and corrupt bureaucrats out, and restore Soviet democracy.

This movement, which requires the building of the Soviet Section of the Fourth International, will link up with the struggle for the world overthrow of imperialism, and the establishment of socialist planning of world economy.

## WORKERS PRESS FIGHTING FUND

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WORKERS PRESS continues this week the discussion on the EETPU. Our contributor, T. Paterson, makes some important points about the role of Stalinism, the crisis in the whole TUC and the significance of the discussions which have been raging in the Workers Revolutionary Party since the expulsion of G. Healy and his clique in 1985.

The Editorial Board hopes that you will continue to send in contributions to this discussion, and also on other questions - like the NHS struggle. We also urge you to send in donations for our Fighting Fund so that we can continue to publish Workers Press with your letters and carry out our plans to return to a tabloid Workers Press as soon as possible.

To respond positively to T. Paterson - to fight Stalinism, struggle against trade union consciousness in the working class and build on the theoretical gains made in the WRP since 1985, we must continue to publish Workers Press. Please respond to this appeal for donations to our Fighting Fund. We must reach £10,000 by the end of September.

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# Tory visa racism

BY BERNARD FRANKS

A YEAR ago, visas were made compulsory for visitors to Britain from the Indian subcontinent and West Africa on a blatantly racist basis.

A report, 'Out of Sight', from the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) is based on first hand experience of the visa system.

It finds that in some cases the refusal rate has doubled since the decision-making process was transferred from Heathrow to British embassies, High Commissions and consulates overseas.

When the government decided in September 1986 to impose visas for citizens of four Commonwealth countries (India, Bangladesh, Ghana and Nigeria) and Pakistan, they alleged it was because of an 'unmanageable' increase in the number of visitors from these countries.

Entry from all five had already been made more difficult and refusals were up by 68 per cent from the previous year, but the government was concerned at the public emotional battles at Heathrow to prevent the instant deportation of black and Asian visitors, which had sometimes involved MPs.

They resolved to shift the process overseas, out of sight.

In this the new system proved largely successful.

Just before the Cabinet decided on the new visas, Tory ministers had been lobbied for stronger entry restrictions by the Immigration Service Union, a non-TUC union which broke from the Society of Public and Civil Servants in 1981.

Visits to all five countries were organised by the JCWI during the first six months of the scheme's existence.

The researchers found delays, abuse, recall for second interviews, brusqueness, arrogance and 'suspicion in place of compassion' so that hundreds of applicants who received visas arrived too late to attend a wedding or see a dying relative. Hundreds more were refused point blank.

Political considerations are obviously involved in the huge differences in refusal rates: one person in 84 is turned down in Calcutta and Madras, one in ten in Karachi, and one in four in Bangladesh and one in three in Ghana.

The £20 visa fee is also a huge sum in these countries.

No other nationals are treated in this way; this is a racist system applied by a racist government.

## News briefs...

### Open the cage!

A MOVE to offer an honorary fellowship to Mrs Thatcher at Oxford University has been revived by a group of dons at St Catherine's College. In protest against the government's education cuts, a similar proposal was turned down three years ago. But the introduction of a business administration degree at the college is thought to be an appropriate moment to resurrect the idea. A Dr Gearin-Tosh, described as an enthusiastic Thatcher admirer and active Tory, is among those canvassing support.

### That's entertainment?

PUBLIC interest in politics in the US is at an all-time low, according to Curtis Gans, director of the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate. He said he wouldn't be surprised if the turnout of voters in November 'fell

below 50 per cent for the first time in presidential elections'.

Although the media, portraying the contest between Dukakis and Bush as "a race between a shrimp and a wimp", is partly to blame, he says, Gans, along with other commentators, suggests there are deeper roots for the widespread lack of interest. Such as, stop the (bourgeois democratic) show, they want to get off?

### A better life?

A TOTAL of 200,000 ethnic Germans, mainly from Poland, Romania and the Soviet Union, will have arrived in West Germany by the end of the year. Obviously such an enormous influx of anti-communist potential receives its warmest support from the likes of Chancellor Helmut Kohl who has described as "shameful" any suggestion that it is less than wise to encourage so many emigrants.

'It is our duty to welcome them,' he has stated.

But what has 'one of the richest countries in the world' to offer? From among the 100,000 who have already arrived, there are many complaints about the 'degrading' conditions they are being forced to accept.

### Nuclear safety inadequate

WHO would take the decision to evacuate an affected area should there be a nuclear accident in Britain?

Outside the site itself, no one had any executive authority for co-ordinating emergency action, it was claimed recently by a member of the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate.

Such an evacuation would fall on the police and, ultimately, the Home Office. But the Home Office at present carries no such responsibility and voluntary arrangements which exist are considered to be inconsistent and unsatisfactory.

## No platform for fascists - no platform for the Orange Order

BY RICHARD KNOTT

THIS SUMMER Devon is playing host to a number of events marking the 300th anniversary of the landing of William of Orange at Brixham.

Exeter's Labour-led city council decided to promote these 'celebrations' to the tune of £60,000 to benefit the local tourist industry.

In response, a local Anti Fascist Action group was set up, pointing out that it would be impossible to divorce 'King Billy' as the leader of the supposed Glorious Revolution in 1688 from 'King Billy' as the symbol of protestant supremacy in the north of Ireland today.

Countless organisations in the labour movement here and in Holland and Ireland have condemned Exeter city council. Virtually all the Labour Party branches in the area oppose the council's policy.

One forthcoming event in particular is likely to land the city with a massive police bill.

On 17 September, the Orange Order plans to march through the centre of Exeter. Exeter AFA will be holding a counter-demonstration.

The council has banned the Orange Order from using any of its property - but they have now also banned the AFA from assembling on any of its parks.

Now a Labour-led council reduces itself to impartiality between a march of the labour movement and the Orange Order!

The Orange Order has formed the backbone of the opposition to a united Ireland free from British rule. Although not a political party it has enormous influence in the six counties of the north of Ireland. It is an exclusively male, protestant organisation, viciously anti-Catholic and utterly opposed to the independence of the labour movement or any unity between protestant and Catholic workers.

It took its name from William of Orange, King of England from 1688, who, after victory at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, reasserted British domination of Ireland and brought in penal laws which excluded the majority of the population, the Catholics, from political or public office and the legal profession.

Even putting aside today's Orange connection, the so-called glorious revolution of 1688 had nothing to do with the toiling masses. Yet the Labour councillors promote this ruling class coup as the beginning of democracy.

In fact, despite almost universal condemnation from the labour movement, the Labour councillors have hardened their attitudes and they claim that those opposed to the celebrations who have warned about the link between the Orange Order and the fascists are 'stirring up trouble.'

When the 'New Statesman' asked Chester Long, leader of the council, for his view of the AFA, he described them as 'students', 'five stupid bastards' and 'the national association of headbangers'.

Exeter city council has handed an opportunity to the Orange Order to flaunt its repugnant views along with fascist groups here.

Exeter city council's Labourites have proved their total saturation with British imperialist ideology.

AFA is campaigning for a national mobilisation for the counter-demonstration on 17 September. Bring the issue up at your political and trade union meetings and mobilise people to attend and send messages of support.

**No platform for fascists!  
No platform for the Orange Order!  
Britain out of Ireland!  
For a united socialist Ireland!**

Exeter Anti Fascist Action can be contacted at: Box No. 176, c/o The Flying Post, 1 Parliament Street, Exeter, Devon.

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## Personal Column

Peter Fryer

### The sex life of Jesus Christ

ONE of this column's most candid critics took me to task for commenting last week on the 'Royal Britain' exhibition at the Barbican without actually having seen it. To this charge I had no alternative but to plead guilty.

'And this week, I suppose,' my critic went on remorselessly, 'you will be having a dig at Mrs Mary Whitehouse and her friends for attacking Martin Scorsese's film 'The Last Temptation of Christ' without having seen it?'

I had to admit that some such thought had crossed my mind.

My critic seemed to feel that she had scored a palpable hit. But there is an important difference between the two cases.

I have no desire whatever to see 'Royal Britain' banned. Far from it. Not only do I look forward to visiting it myself - though I'm sure the lengthy radio programme on it gave a pretty comprehensive idea of both its contents and its omissions - but I would recommend it, sight unseen, to all young history students.

Indeed, if I had my way, far from discouraging them I would insist on their visiting it, discussing it, and writing essays on the ideological and methodological assumptions that underpin such a venture.

And even when the British royal family is put out of business, this exhibition and similar exercises in mystification will have to be kept on as valuable museums, to show young people precisely how the bourgeoisie presented the past.

But Mrs Whitehouse and her chums don't want anybody to see 'The Last Temptation of

Christ'. They want it banned, and they are considering using Britain's archaic blasphemy laws to bring this about.

It was Mrs Whitehouse who last invoked these laws, when she inspired the prosecution of 'Gay News' for a poem associating homosexual behaviour with Jesus Christ.

Why should the Christians' god be granted special protection against the suggestion that he once, during his years on earth, entertained a heterosexual fantasy? The Hindu pantheon, revellers all, wouldn't see anything remotely ungodly in that.

It's worth remembering, by the way, that the chief use made by the ruling class of these self-same blasphemy laws in the early nineteenth century was as a device to silence working-class radicals.

### A deafening silence

TWO books in the field of British black history that have appeared in the past nine months have had the inestimable compliment paid them of being totally ignored by the press.

One is Graham Smith's 'When Jim Crow Met John Bull: Black American Soldiers in World War II Britain', published by I. B. Tauris last December. The other is my own 'Black People in the British Empire: An Introduction', published by Pluto in June.

I predict that the same honourable fate awaits a book to be published by Tauris next month. This is Edward Pilkington's 'Beyond the Mother Country: West Indians and the Notting Hill White Riots', which is due to appear on 1 September, to coincide with the thirtieth anniversary of the events it graphically describes.

### More about words

A READER writes to say he liked my piece 'Words in season' (6 August), but adds:

'However, I don't think you should leave the question where you left it, as, otherwise, readers may think you are of the "anything goes" party, which I'm sure you are not.'

'Misuses of words which can cause confusion and impoverish the language ought to be opposed. I am thinking of the now widespread tendency to write "disinterested" where what is meant is "uninterested", and "refute" as though it were a synonym for "deny".'

I completely agree with both the general and the specific points my correspondent is making, but can't help feeling that this is an area where an ounce of example is worth a ton of precept.

### The 'Bomb Shop' again

A YEAR or so ago (8 August and 12 September 1987) I referred here a couple of times to the 'Bomb Shop' in London's Charing Cross Road. Now I've chanced upon an interesting reference to it, and to its proprietor Henderson, in Victor Gollancz's autobiographical 'More for Timothy' (Gollancz, 1953).

This appalling book is now forgotten, and most of it no doubt deserves to be. But students of British communist history will appreciate the amusing portrait of Hewlett Johnson, the 'red' Dean of Canterbury, and the thinly-disguised portraits of the leading Stalinists Harry Pollitt and R. Palme Dutt, and of Sheila Lynd, who was features editor of the 'Daily Worker' during my time there.

## Philip Guston at the Saatchi Gallery

IF PHILIP GUSTON had never painted another picture after 1966, his reputation in the post-war American art movement would have been assured. In the 1950s he had become a leading member of the Abstract Expressionist school, alongside such names as Willem de Kooning, Mark Rothko, Franz Kline and Jackson Pollock. But by the mid-1960s Guston was regarded as something of a secondary figure; someone who had already made a lasting contribution to contemporary art and would continue to consolidate that estimate but not transcend it.

It was in 1968, after a two-year period of intensive drawing and self re-examination, that Guston began to exhibit work which was to send shock-waves through the art world which are still being felt today.

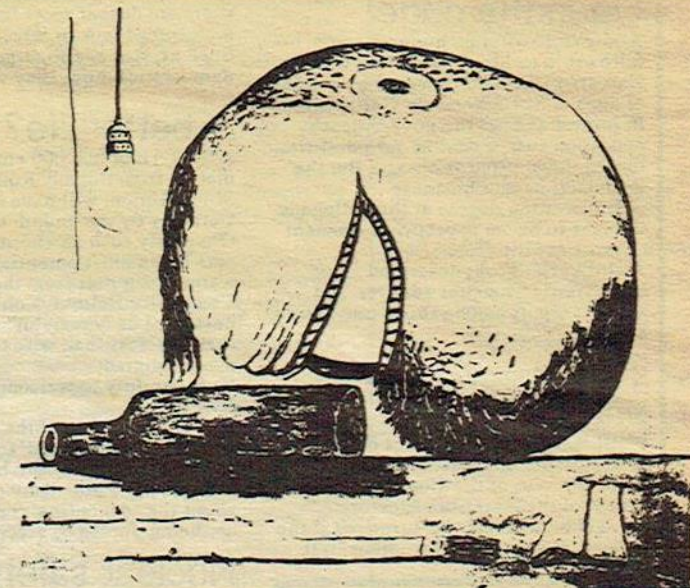
Only someone with Guston's artistic and intellectual integrity could have accomplished such a feat. It was not the first time he had changed course or, in the process, lost some of his friends and admirers. His career began as a political muralist. Born in 1913, in Montreal; his Russian emigre parents had moved there in the hope of finding economic stability. He was the youngest of seven children.

A selection of the last works of Philip Guston, who died in 1980, is currently on show at the Saatchi Gallery, Swiss Cottage, north west London. The gallery is open to the public on Friday and Saturday afternoons.

In 1920, shortly after the family moved to Los Angeles, Guston's father committed suicide. At the age of 12, with his mother's encouragement, he took up drawing seriously. He received very little formal training, preferring to study on his own. In the early 1930s he was attending meetings of the Marxist John Reed Club. A mural he was working on with other members of the club to commemorate the racist trial of the Scottsboro Boys was destroyed in a 'Red Squad' police raid assisted by a gang of fascist American Legionnaires.

Such experiences and other working class struggles he recorded in an allegorical style, reflecting his admiration for the Renaissance masters whose work at the time he only knew from reproductions.

One of Guston's mural commissions included a trip to Mexico. He had met Jose Orozco and David Siqueiros when they were



Head and Bottle 1975

working and lecturing in California.

On his return to the US, Guston joined the Works Progress Administration Federal Art Project (WPA/FAP) set up under the Roosevelt New Deal Programme. Here he was to meet many of the people who were to play such a big part in establishing American art as a major force after the Second World War: Stuart Davis, Robert Motherwell, Arshile Gorky, as well as those mentioned above.

Although he had finished his last figurative work around 1947, the abstract style he undertook thereafter was slow to evolve. He

had completed only three such paintings by 1950.

The next ten years were to witness the emergence of Guston as the most lyrical of all the New York school. But just as the art world at large was becoming accustomed to taking his work for granted, he was to provide it with a rude awakening.

What is so extraordinary about these last paintings, with their deliberately brutal, strip-cartoon imagery, is the sheer intensity with which they come across. It is not simply a question of their illustrative quality.

They certainly evoke a bleak vision. The social upheavals

• Turn to page 7

# TUC CRISIS TUC CRISIS TUC CRISIS

THIS week's contribution to the discussion on the EETPU is by T. PATERSON, an ETU member since 1956. Workers Press invites all its readers to send in their views on the crisis of the trade union movement. Please limit your contributions to 500 words or less.

I CANNOT take part in this discussion on the basis of the 'black and white', over-simplified question: should electricians' union (EETPU) members stay in the union or form a new union?

The problem is a much deeper than that. It is not merely an EETPU question, but a problem facing the entire working class. The whole TUC is in crisis. It is not just a question of throwing one cook out of the kitchen.

My experience goes back to the purge of Stalinists in the ETU. At that time many members saw people like Foulkes and Haxell as good class fighters, and lots of ETU members joined the Communist Party under their influence. The Stalinist hacks with their ballot-rigging methods were left with two roads to choose - either become full-time officials, take jobs - like Lou Britz (who is now firmly entrenched in the union bureaucracy), or find themselves hounded out of the union.

## Demoralised

But their demise meant that many good rank-and-file members were also either hounded out or became demoralised. They left the union, left the industry - all sorts of things happened to them.

The methods of the Stalinists left the ETU at the mercy of the right wing, but I am not aware that there is an organised grouping within the EETPU that would be a viable opposition to Hammond at the moment.

So the question for me is: from whence is this alternative membership of the union going to come?

To suggest that there should be an alternative union based on non-existent resistance to the leadership would be an adventure, (and a political adventure for various reasons within the groupings that would leave).

## Stay

It is difficult to take the decision to stay within the EETPU knowing what has happened to the union and what the leadership is, but my position at the moment is that the bulk of the membership of the EETPU must not be deserted and left to the exploits of the present leadership.

The point is that the Hammond leadership only reflects the lack of political leadership within the class as a whole. Therefore to shift position just because a group of workers are not politically aware they've got rotten leaders who are very close to the bourgeoisie would be a mistake. Not just a tactical mistake either. I think it would be a profound mistake at this stage.

The point is that the bulk of the working class within that trade union either did not vote, or voted to retain their membership within the EETPU notwithstanding the leadership they've got. This should not be misinterpreted to say 'a scab move'.

## Class

This has to be understood. Subconsciously, unconsciously, this class feeling has kept them within the union - kept them within their organisation - even if they're not aware at this stage why they want to remain as an organised group.

Lots and lots of people I've spoken to voted to stay within the EETPU, even if they are going to be expelled from the Trades Union Congress. Their decision was based on the fact that they did not want to break up their organisation. They paid scant attention to what the leadership of the EETPU were up to - recruiting, no-strike deals etc. All sorts of really narrow arguments have come up, but the priority for them was that it was their organisation, it was their working class organisation, their craft organisation, and they did not want it to be broken up.

## Recruit

It has been common gossip for the last couple of months that other unions are out to recruit EETPU members. I have had discussions with a full-time official of the transport workers' union (T&GWU) and they are certainly looking forward to recruiting the 'dissidents' of the EETPU.

They don't see it as a struggle over the wages and conditions of electricians. It is a struggle amongst the bureaucracies within the TUC to grab bodies in order to strengthen their own sagging membership numbers. For them the expulsion of the EETPU is a chance to do exactly what Hammond is doing - grab membership. It looks like a principled stand, but really it is a smoke-screen.

Trade unions have always been guilty of poaching members, but this decision by the TUC has legalised it. This situation is the logical outcome of the fact that the leaders of the other unions have never been serious about assisting the membership of the EETPU.

They have carried out a sham fight at the TUC and have made the task of struggling in the EETPU much harder. They have not set about helping the EETPU members to break out of the Hammond leadership. It is a question of 'nicking' members, not a



'They paid scant attention to what the leadership of the EETPU were up to...' Here police batter striking printworkers outside Murdoch's Wapping printworks where EETPU-organised scabs did jobs formerly performed by NGA and SOGAT members in Fleet Street

principled fight.

I am certain there are very serious problems in the EETPU, but I also know there are serious problems in all the other unions. The point is that this is not a trade union question, but a class question, and it is no good looking at the EETPU problem in isolation. The whole TUC is in a crisis.

## Alliance

The priority for Trotskyists is to direct our attention to building an alternative leadership, and that is not just an EETPU question. I think we should build an all trades unions alliance.

You can't start tackling the individual trade unions by picking them off one at a time as the problems arise. Of course, it is necessary to struggle in the individual unions, but don't get bogged down. The first job is to build the All Trades Union Alliance to encompass all workers and the middle class within all the unions. That would be the touchstone for serious work in the trade unions to carry out a politically clear fight.

## Leadership

That is where the question comes in: where does the alternative leadership come from. Things have been extremely difficult for the WRP and that there has been a very serious and deep political discussion and analysis of the last decade, and rightly so.

We needed to discuss what

really happened to our Party. But I believe that these important lessons have as much importance for the trade union struggle as for our Party.

We now need to introduce into the trade union movement through the ATUA all the lessons we have learned (over the recent past especially). I am sure we would see the fruits of the political clarity built up in our Party by helping to lay the basis for the trade union movement within the Trotskyist Party.

It would be the first time for a long long time, because the ATUA was a charade in the past. Now we must work seriously in the trade unions.

A new union will not resolve the matter. It appears to be what we must do, but it cannot resolve the problem. Nothing can replace the building of a revolutionary, class conscious trade union.

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## No way forward

IN SPITE of good intentions, Cyril Smith's lead article last week does little to advance Marxist theory, or the claims of the Fourth International, as a leadership for the working class and oppressed peoples of the world. Cyril refers to Cuban troops having 'helped to defeat Portuguese imperialism in 1976'.

In fact, of course, Portuguese colonialism had collapsed and the Angolans gained independence in 1975. The new MPLA government invited Cuban help in 1976, to defeat CIA-backed forces and South African intervention.

A small point, maybe, but mistakes like this do not inspire confidence in our analysis. The defeat of colonialism in Angola and Mozambique had its impact inside South Africa in 1976 with the youth rising in Soweto. By all accounts, the South African armed forces have recently received a bloody nose at the hands of the Cubans and Angolans, and that is why they were willing to try and cut their losses at the negotiating table.

Whatever the undoubted secret deals made by US imperialism and the Kremlin, and bearing in mind that Cuba is not a global power able to sustain an overseas armed force indefinitely, is it true to say that Angola has been left 'at the mercy of South Africa'?

For the first time, African pilots have brought down white South Africa's planes and attacked its troops.

I'd hazard a guess that the masses in Namibia and South Africa, rejoicing at this, will attach more importance to the way the racists were forced to back off than to any pieces of paper signed in Geneva or Moscow.

Therefore, Cyril's comment, that 'the racist state will be strengthened in the face of the upsurge of the South African masses' needs to be qualified, at least. The use which Stalinism makes of militant advances the better to bargain with imperialism, the secret deals that may have been struck, and the reflection of these in Stalinist-led or influenced bodies are one thing. But the laws of history are stronger than the desires of the bureaucracy!

In the Middle East, likewise, King Hussein's announcement that he was washing his (bloody) hands of the West Bank is in immediate terms a ploy to weaken the Palestinians. But it is also a defeat, inflicted by the Palestinian masses, on British, US, and Israeli policies relying

on the 'Jordanian option'. This may bring forward the PLO's declaration of a government-in-exile, which some would see as the logical next stage in the unfolding of the *intifada*.

But Cyril is wrong either to credit Gorbachev's diplomacy with such importance in these developments, or to express such shock-horror at the PLO's proposals. As I'm sure Cyril knows, Soviet recognition of the Zionist state is hardly new. Stalin and Gromyko were among its godparents, so to speak, and arms from Eastern Europe helped create the Palestinian refugee problem.

It is Soviet recognition of the Palestinians, for what it's worth, that is more recent. In the 1950s the Soviet Union sought to join the imperialists' Tripartite pact guaranteeing Middle East borders. In 1967, they continued to treat the conflict as a territorial one between states.

Only in recent years were pro-Moscow Palestinians permitted to organise a Palestinian Communist Party again, after being for decades expected to join either the Israeli or Jordanian parties.

The change reflected the rise of the PLO as a relatively independent force with which the masses identified, so the Stalinists decided they'd better open shop there.

Stalinism has played a hypocritical double-game, sometimes doing all kinds of shady deals with the Zionists, while backing Arab 'Rejectionist' attacks on the PLO's willingness to compromise.

Like the Arab regimes, what the Kremlin bureaucrats resent is the Palestinians' independent decision-making.

Insofar as the International Committee of the Fourth International and the WRP understood and supported the PLO's obstinate insistence on that, it is nothing to be ashamed of.

The Soviet government announced about five years ago its Middle East peace proposals, calling for a UN international conference, mutual recognition, guaranteed 'secure borders', etc.

The PLO more or less went along with it.

The Israeli Labour Party also decided it favoured an 'international conference', but without the PLO, of course..

The Palestinian masses, having come into action themselves, have both ensured the PLO's rightful place in any conference and pushed the conference proposal itself into the background! But this does not mean that the masses can now be counterposed to the PLO, with which they still identify,

nor that we can ignore the material limitations on this movement.

Unlike South Africa, where the black proletariat confronts giant white capitalist corporations, the Palestinian workers are not an overwhelming majority in their homeland anymore, they do not have the same industrial strength, and there are differences in social development and political tradition.

The Palestinian *intifada* cannot of itself bring down the Zionist state. It can create conditions where the military, economic, and political cost of occupation and repression is more than that state can bear.

Whatever way the Zionists then sought to get out of this, by a military adventure or a negotiated withdrawal, their days of supremacy would be numbered, and they know it.

To denounce in advance as 'betrayal' any partial advance, compromise, or peace proposal that the PLO comes up with, is not really to side with the masses, but to condemn their struggle to futility, and leads back to passively awaiting some 'socialist' Messiah!

While purporting only to 'criticise' the PLO's 'policies' and 'methods', and saying the International Committee in the past 'abdicated this responsibility' by backing 'every turn' of PLO policy, Cyril does not say which turns should be supported. He does not fulfil his responsibility to put forward any programme for the Palestinian struggle.

What you need is 'the world socialist revolution,' he says! Great. I've been telling my fellow-workers that for years, but that does not amount by itself to revolutionary leadership.

The nearest Cyril comes to a programmatic demand is when he says 'The way forward lies in the establishment of the Socialist United States of the Middle East'.

I'm all for making that one of our aims, so are lots of Palestinians and even some Israelis. (Of course, some of the existing Arab bourgeois regimes already call themselves 'socialist' states, and some of the Palestinian forces used to look to them for unity, which is why we may initially confront some cynicism towards such phrases.

Conversely, we may find Palestinian cadres more sophisticated than European Marxists realise, and with their own experiences to contribute to Marxism).

The way Cyril puts it however, as 'the way forward', is like somebody has asked the way to Birmingham, and you reply by telling them, what they need is to take the road to Birmingham. Logical, I agree, but not very helpful.

Charlie Pottins

Workers Press welcomes letters on these issues.

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# Soviet themes on the Edinburgh Fringe

**W**HEN THE Sergel Eisenstein museum opens in Moscow about a year from now - glasnost permitting - will the great Soviet film-maker's copy of John Reed's 'Ten Days That Shook The World' be a central exhibit?

It should be, since this was the text from which Eisenstein worked on his masterpiece of the 1920s, 'October', which used the relatively new art of the cinema to present the essential dynamics of the Bolshevik Revolution to a mass audience.

But this may depend on the committee established by Gorbachev's leading academics to discuss the most contentious of all the historical questions confronting the reformers: what are they to say and do about Lenin's co-leader in the Revolution, Trotsky?

For, in Eisenstein's working copy of Reed's book - which we know exists - every reference to Trotsky has been blocked out in black ink.

And this was done in the mid-1920s, when, as the Gorbachev version of Soviet history has it, Stalin and his supporters were engaged in a necessary defence of the Revolution against Trotskyism.

The way in which Eisenstein's talent was used to distort history - in what, on its own terms, was still one of the most stunning films ever made - therefore raises questions about the nature of the bureaucracy which betrayed October going far beyond the now ritualistic condemnation of Stalin's personality cult.

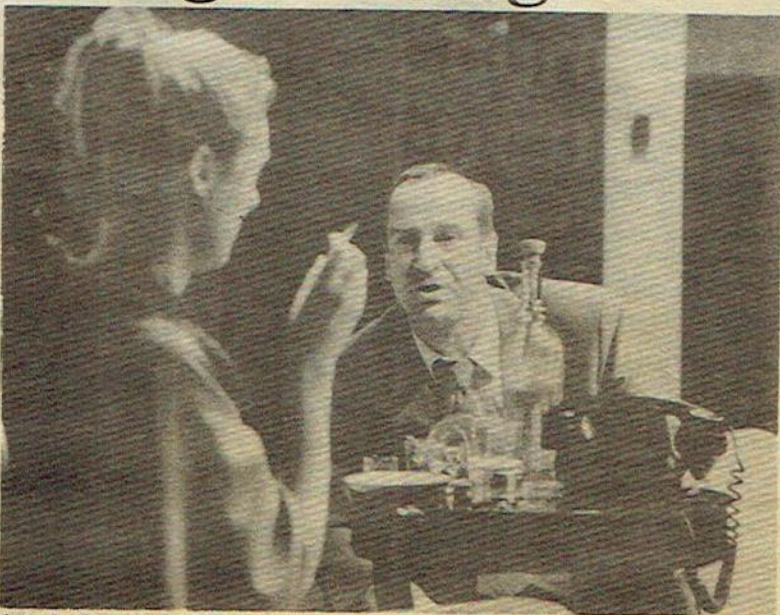
This is the aspect of the bitter contradictions torturing Eisenstein (as they did every other serious artist caught up in the October dawn and the Stalinist nightmare) dealt with least satisfactorily in Richard Crane's brilliant new play, 'Red Magic', premiered last week at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, and running at the Assembly Rooms until 27 August.

But real insights about Eisenstein come from this intense, tightly constructed piece, which requires - but rewards - serious concentration.

The Hollywood film industry had the resources and technique to which Eisenstein was drawn, but it raped great literature and drama to make what he condemned as 'the entertainment film, lulling audiences to sleep and sucking in the dollars.'

Crane, and director Fyenia Williams, give the great film-maker a platform from which, as it were, to take creative revenge, using images drawn from the cinema to create original theatre.

The form of the play deliberately challenges any expectations one might have of conventional narrative theatre, precisely in order to present a profoundly contradictory content.



Marty Cruickshank and Bill Patterson in 'A Man with Connections' (photo Sean Hudson)

From a camera-operator's trolley, four Eisensteins (Crane, Geoff Costley, Lucy Popescu, and one of Crane's young sons) create a brilliant montage covering three phases of the director's life.

They are seen as analogous to the three stages of alchemy, the first (reduction) deals with youthful influences and Eisenstein's meeting with Meyerhold. The second (cleansing) centres on his most famous films and the transition to Hollywood.

The third (unity of creation and destruction), grapples with Eisenstein's denunciation by Stalin and his outward compromise with the dictator.

At the same time, Eisenstein was trying - unsuccessfully - to expose Stalin by comparing him on film with the brutal Tsar, Ivan the Terrible.

The alchemical analogy - besides providing structure - serves the purposes of linking Eisenstein's work in film (the supremely twentieth century art) with the achievements of the painters and inventors of the Renaissance, and of portraying him as a scientific magician turning base celluloid to gold.

**T**WO productions of major interest and distinction at the Traverse Theatre are Alexander Gelman's 'A Man With Connections' and Manfred Karge's 'The Conquest of the South Pole'.

Born a Ukrainian Jew in 1933, Gelman lost his family in Nazi concentration camps. A manual worker until the early 1970s, he is now a popular play-

wright in the Soviet Union and, as the Traverse playbill enthusiastically informs us, is a personal friend of Gorbachev.

As Andrei Gladkov, a provincial building-site manager blamed by his wife for the accident in which their son has lost both his hands, Bill Patterson has some supremely Russian moments, although it remains difficult not to think of him as the sort of middle class Scot he frequently plays so well.

Marty Cruickshank conveys the inner torment of his wife, Natasha, through a most effectively observed outer dignity.

There are insights into the psychology of the perestroika generation to be gained from this beautifully designed and intelligently directed production of Gelman's work. In purely theatrical terms, however, 'The Conquest of the South Pole' is the more original play.

An East German now living in Vienna, Karge scored a great hit at the Traverse last year with 'Man to Man' in which Tilda Swinton underwent a sex-change to explore the mentality of divided Germany. 'The Conquest of the South Pole' takes us firmly into the crisis of West German capitalism, in particular youth unemployment.

Directed with terrific verve by Stephen Unwin, the Scottishness of the eight-strong cast is, for this theme, a positive advantage, and it is no comment on his fellow actors' contribution to single out Alan Cumming's Slupianek (or 'Sloopy Anick' as it comes over) as one of the undying memories of this year's Festival.

Terry Brotherstone

Guston from page 6

which were going on: the Nixon era, Vietnam, Chile, provoked in Guston a drastic change, whereas contemporary art in general remained completely indifferent to what was taking place. It was an irony which did not escape him.

He was above all an artist whose work personified a deep concern for the human condition. Whilst these late paintings speak of Guston's own private suffering: his wife's illness, his own frailty, they document too one more stage in the collapse of the so-called

American dream.

'What kind of man am I,' he asked, 'sitting at home, reading magazines, going into a frustrated fury about everything - and then going into my studio to adjust a red to a blue.'

'I thought there must be some

way I could do something about it. I knew ahead of me a road was laying. A very crude, inchoate road. I wanted to be complete again, as I was when I was a kid ...Wanted to be whole between what I thought and what I felt.'

Jeff Jackson

# A call to the international working class: defend the South African trade unions

BY SARAH HASSEN

**SOUTH AFRICAN trade unions are under severe attack from state and employers, but the gravest dangers come from the positions of the union leaders.**

Political activity has been curtailed by emergency declarations. The Labour Relations Amendment Bill threatens to curtail the right to strike; rights of representation by majority unions and a host of other rights gained in the past decade are endangered. The latest economic package includes a wage freeze in the massive public sector, public expenditure cuts and privatisation. Deregulation aims at freeing more employers from adhering to minimum wages and working conditions.

In line with the state's declaration of war, employers are now taking a far more overtly hostile attitude towards workers and unions.

The union movement, headed by COSATU and NACTU, the major union federations, has been slow to respond.

Initial responses included appeals to employers and the 'liberal' ILO.

Collective action by workers (the three-day strike last month) was taken up very late and without the necessary co-ordination which led to an uneven response to the call.

Nonetheless, the strike was well supported under the circumstances, indicating how seriously the rank and file view these latest attacks.

The Bill at the centre of the state's new package of attacks has been passed, but implementation has been delayed until 1 September. Union leaders, however, have continued to woo employers.

At a recent meeting, NACTU, COSATU and UDF leaders, and a major employers' organisation, SACCOLA, (the South African Consultative Committee on Labour Affairs), agreed to create a new joint association and to ask the government to delay the passage of the Bill until this association redrafts its most contentious clauses.

Many employers, including the tough SEIFSA federation and mining boss Gavin Reilly (friend of the ANC), initially rejected

COSATU's invitation to fight the Bill. Why have employers who hailed the Bill changed their minds?

If employers' and workers' interests are diametrically opposed to one another, why are bosses prepared to delay a bill which will smash the greatest threat to them, the organised black proletariat?

The answers might lie in the juxtaposition of some recent developments:

1. The rise to power in COSATU of a leadership which supports the Freedom Charter, heavily influenced by the direction taken by the petty bourgeois ANC and Stalinist South African Communist Party.

2. The rightward turn of the ANC/SACP towards 'peaceful coexistence' with the bourgeoisie.

3. A statement made a few months ago by influential National Union of Mineworkers' general secretary, Cyril Ramaphosa, that if employers joined in the fight against the Bill, unions would curb their members' actions.

4. The push from the influential petty-bourgeois labour lawyers and academics to accept the system and bargain for adjustments to it.

Despite COSATU's threat to call out all its members on strike in support of those fired or disciplined after the three-day strike, the union leaders continue to appeal to the employers. The about-turn of hardline South African employers indicates that since the state has beaten the democratic organisations into submission and is threatening to sue the unions, employers are setting the trap of co-opting union leaders which has successfully turned many unions elsewhere into 'the sergeant majors of capital in the ranks of the working class'.

This must be avoided at all costs. The black trade union movement in South Africa has fought a bitter and heroic battle for independence. This must be defended against both state repression and deals between employers and union leaders.

## METAL STRIKE CHALLENGE

BY WAYNE POULSEN

ALL eyes are on the current South African metalworkers' strike.

Over 30,000 Transvaal workers belonging to the four International Metalworkers Federation (IMF) affiliated unions are mounting the biggest industrial action this year.

The employers are led by the powerful Steel Engineering and Industries association (SEIFSA) and include the Metal Box company where 4,000 workers are striking in a separate dispute.

The unions are led by the hardened National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), which is the only one of the four affiliated to the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). The other three are affiliated to the rival National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU).

The common IMF front represents an important step forward for the black trade union movement, currently facing legal challenges that threaten its very existence. While current South African laws are the envy of employers the world over, the passing of the new Labour Relations Act marks a new era in South Africa.

The IMF has as a tactic started to strike in its strongest areas and

plans to extend the action from these. It reports that already over 90 companies are prepared to break SEIFSA ranks and negotiate a higher offer.

The unions are claiming a minimum rate of R3.21 an hour, while the employers' offer is R3.02 (about 67 pence) an hour.

### Rally for Mayekiso

CITY of London Anti-Apartheid Group are holding a rally for the release of Moses Mayekiso and four other leaders of the Alexandra Action Committee.

The rally is part of an on-going campaign for the release of the five, who face the death penalty for charges of treason, sedition and subversion. The trial has begun and it is vital that these champions of socialism receive the full support of the international working class movement.

**RALLY**  
**Saturday 20 August**  
**3pm**  
**outside the South African**  
**Embassy, Trafalgar Square,**  
**London.**  
**Bring banners!**

## BTR-Dunlop victimise shop stewards' leader

BANGANI MKHUNGO, a senior shop steward and national chairman of the Tyre and Rubber Council, has been dismissed by the British-based British Tyre and Rubber company (BTR).

Workers at the BTR-Sarmcol plant in Howick have faced sackings, violence and the murder of their leaders in their struggle over the last three and half years.

Mkhungo and fellow members of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) attended the recent shareholders meeting in London to

protest against BTR's handling of the BTR-Sarmcol dispute.

The success of this protest and the recognition by the parent company of Mkhungo's status as national chairman of the shop stewards' council are held by union members to be the real reason he was fired.

Union members are discussing a national strike to halt production at BTR's eight South African plants unless Mkhungo is reinstated; there is already widespread bitterness at BTR's refusal to reinstate the sacked Sarmcol workers.

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