

Britain out of Ireland!

HANDS OFF REPUBLICANS!

BY SIMON PIRANI

THE British working class movement must not stand by in silence as a new onslaught builds up against Irish nationalists. The fight to mobilise against British imperialism in Ireland must be intensified.

The pro-imperialist Labour leadership have long assured Thatcher of their full support for a renewed crackdown. Labour's Northern Ireland spokesman Merlyn Rees last week called on Ulster Unionists to publish lists of alleged IRA members, knowing that this will encourage loyalist death squads.

Such statements are to the shame of the British labour movement: action must be taken throughout the Labour Party and unions against those who make them.

Rees is actually expressing the plans of a section of the ruling class, which following the successful IRA actions on the army last week, believe that killing Republicans is 'the only answer.'

Some Tories of this opinion propose increased activity by SAS 'undercover' squads, i.e. murder gangs, rather than the reintroduction of internment.

The problem with internment, or the banning of Sinn Fein, which is also being discussed in British ruling class circles, is that such measures could provoke a large scale reaction from nationalist workers in the six counties.

This, above all, is what Thatcher, the army and the loyalists fear, consequently a series of more insidious attacks upon democratic rights is proposed.

- Scrapping the right of silence for 'suspected terrorists'. This would legalise confessions beaten out of young people in the barbarous police stations of the six counties.

- Facilities for witnesses in the no-jury Diplock courts to give evi-

ence incognito - a godsend for grasses;

- The introduction of an oath for local government councillors, promising not to assist or support illegal organisations. This could lead to the prosecution of Republican councillors.

According to the 'Daily Telegraph', Thatcher faces demands within the British army for more drastic military actions.

'Senior army officers' have 'expressed severe dissatisfaction' at the government's failure to license more violent repression, said the 'Telegraph' on 23 August.

These officers should use the funerals of the eight soldiers killed on an army bus last Saturday to apply for 'renewed pressure' on Thatcher.

The 'Telegraph' also reported a row between the army and the Royal Ulster Constabulary over anti-IRA operations along the Irish border.

On 1 July the new army border brigade began operations in a strip of territory between Newry and Strabane: but RUC chiefs were 'extremely unhappy' that 'police primacy' - the principle that local police should be in the front line as part of 'Ulsterisation' of the conflict - was dropped.

Such crises and disagreements within the state are welcome. But without working class action against the imperialist occupation, such crises will only lead to more savage repression.

The WRP unequivocally supports the right of those in Ireland fighting imperialism to use whatever methods they choose, and that includes the IRA military campaign, but as Trotskyists, we are opposed on principled grounds not to armed struggle in general (only liars and reformists pretend that imperialism can be defeated without violence) but to guerrilla-ism and a campaign of individual military attacks.

This method relies on the heroism and sacrifice of a few, rather than the fighting potential of the working class.

In the republican movement, such heroism is combined with a nationalist perspective of forcing

Britain to withdraw and a reformist programme which stops well short of expropriating capitalism.

But the victory of the Irish revolution and the defeat of British imperialism can be assured only by the strength of the working class - not in Ireland alone, but (as Workers Press pointed out last week) as part of the struggle of the working class across Europe as a whole.

That strength will only be fully mobilised behind a socialist programme, and it is a party with such a programme that the working class in Ireland and in Britain urgently needs.

- Hands off the republican movement!

- For British working class action against imperialism! Britain out now!

- For a socialist united Ireland!

Extradition Fight

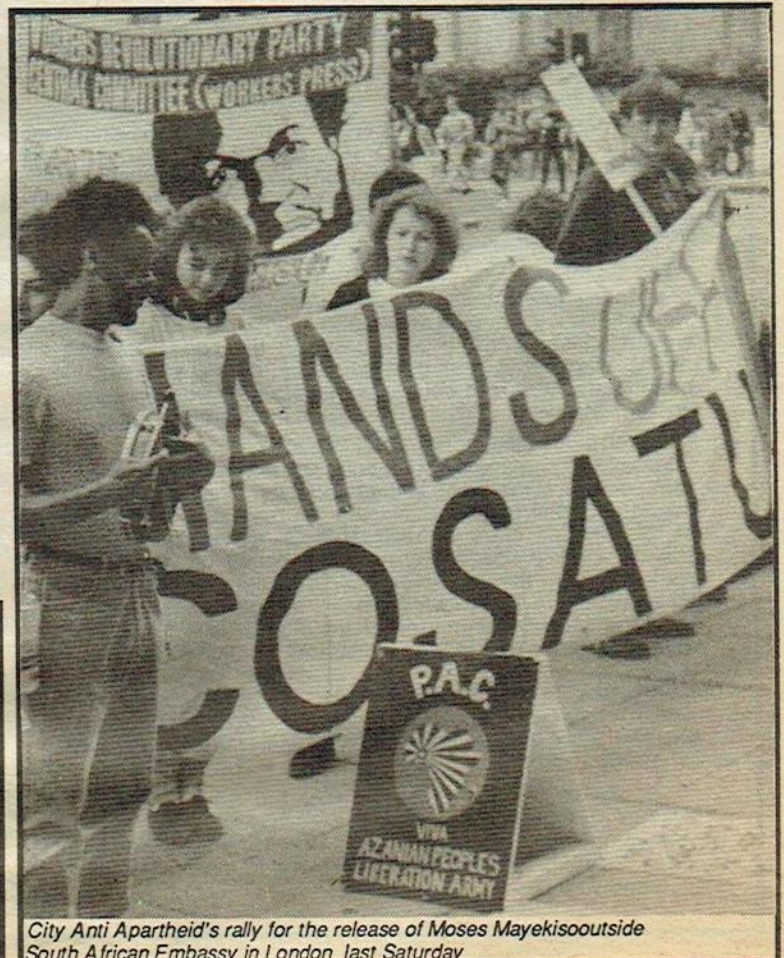
PRISONERS at Portlaoise jail in the 26 counties started protests last week as the extradition of republican Robert Russell drew nearer.

Russell, who was one of 38 prisoners to escape from Long Kesh prison camp near Belfast in 1983, is due to be handed over by the southern government to the British state today.

He will be the first prisoner to be handed over under the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Meanwhile in Long Kesh, prisoners have started a nonviolent protest against rules under which they have to be moved from one wing of the prison to another every three weeks.

A prisoner who was forcibly moved last week had his arm broken.



City Anti Apartheid's rally for the release of Moses Mayekiso outside South African Embassy in London last Saturday

Prague spring: 20 years on

LAST Sunday, Prague saw a demonstration to commemorate the Soviet invasion of 1968. Thousands of marchers clashed with police, shouting 'Dubcek! Dubcek! We want freedom!' and 'Russians go home!'

Most of the demonstrators were not born in 1968. That was when the Warsaw pact tanks rolled into the city, confronted by unarmed workers, and when Dubcek chose to capitulate to the Moscow leaders, fearful of the revolutionary developments emerging within the Czech working class.

The crushing of this movement by the Kremlin armies strengthened world imperialism, which was still reeling under the impact of the French general strike, also betrayed by Stalinism.

The hatred of the Prague teenagers for the bureaucracy, and their determination to fight to get rid of it, is clear. Their shouts for Dubcek merely reflect that, growing up under the shadow of the defeat of 1968, they have yet to find their way to the conceptions of Bolshevism.

The pretext for Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia was that Dubcek's reforms were in danger of restoring capitalism. But today, Gorbachev's perestroika policies are very similar to those of Dubcek 20 years back.

They also seek a solution to economic difficulties in the bureaucratic plan by turning towards market forces. And today, too, there are many and varied tendencies making similar assessments of changes in the Soviet Union.

But was the reaction of the Czech working class in 1968 also restorationist? On the contrary, moving independently of the bureaucracy, the forces beginning to show themselves at that time were precisely those which alone can take Eastern Europe forward on the road to socialism.

The arguments between Dubcek and the Kremlin were about the best way to meet this threat to bureaucratic rule.

The crisis of the bureaucracy - and it was described by Trotsky as a regime of crisis - inevitably opens the way for imperialist pressure to endanger all the gains of the working class. But this crisis is simultaneously the opportunity for the movement of the working class to break free of the bureaucratic counter-revolutionary stranglehold.

The content of this movement is the political revolution to get rid of the bureaucracy for good. That is how we must understand the Prague demonstration. It must spur us to greater efforts to re-found the Fourth International, especially in Eastern Europe.

In 1968, the International Committee of the Fourth International, to which the WRP's predecessor the Socialist Labour League was then affiliated, issued a statement on the Czech events. It explained the importance of the Czech working class as 'the link between the proletariats of East and West Europe.' This is how the statement ended:

'The Czech working class comes onto the scene of history once more, this time as part of an international working class which is taking the offensive, as in France and Britain. This working-class offensive coincides with the capitalists' necessity of destroying all past gains and organisations of the proletariat. But it also coincides, necessarily, with the acute crisis of Stalinism, of which the Czech intervention is part.

'Under these conditions, revolutionary parties of the Fourth International can and must be built, around the programme of the Fourth International, in every country. Only such a party can take on the tasks of ensuring the political independence of the working class through workers' councils, in Czechoslovakia. Only this will answer the needs of the Czech workers, not the compromises of any section of the bureaucracy. In Czechoslovakia, as in every other country, the International Committee of the Fourth International will take up this task, and it calls upon all advanced workers to join in the building of these revolutionary parties in each country and in the rebuilding of the Fourth International, for the destruction of Stalinism and the victory of the world socialist revolution, of which the political revolution in Eastern Europe and the USSR is an integral part.'

In the 1970s, the deep crisis of the Fourth International prevented us from accomplishing these tasks, but the teenagers of Prague, joined today by demonstrators in Moscow and a mass strike in Poland, show that the opportunity to resume that work is once more with us.

WORKERS PRESS FIGHTING FUND

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The political situation tells us that there are huge opportunities for the Fourth International. We are preparing plans to expand Workers Press and all our publications yet Workers Press is in danger of being closed down. Please do not take this lightly. We will not continue to produce the paper if we cannot sustain it financially. Our Fighting Fund figure of £10,000 by the end of September is the minimum required.

I am told that most people do not read this column - they merely look at the figure at the top of the page. To those who are reading it, I urge you to rally all the support you can to raise our Fighting Fund, and speak to all the others who do not read it to check whether it has 'sunk in' that Workers Press is in danger.

Meetings of WRP members and supporters must be called to make plans to ensure the success of our Fighting Fund. There are many 'old hands' who know how to raise finance - there are many old friends who have not been asked to make donations. Every reader must be asked to give something - whether it is small or large.

It is not just a question of raising the £4660.97 required to complete the Fighting Fund, we are asking you to join us to build the WRP to take up the fight for revolutionary leadership in the big battles today.

Dot Gibson

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Scabs' charter one step nearer

THE EMPLOYMENT BILL has completed its House of Commons and Committee stages and gone before the Lords. The government intends it to become law this autumn.

This scabs' charter:

- * gives strike-breakers the right to apply to a court for legal action against a union which is supporting industrial action which has not been agreed by a ballot. 'Supporting' in this context has already been defined by a judge as 'not condemning such action forcefully enough'.

- * gives individual scabs court backing to strike-break even where the action is agreed by a ballot.

- * bars unions from disciplining strike-breakers even where the strike has been lawfully

BY BERNARD FRANKS

called and conducted. Anyone so disciplined can sue the union for substantial damages.

- * provides for the appointment of a special commissioner, paid by the state, who will help scabs sue their union.

- * makes separate workplace ballots compulsory rather than a simple majority across the total of an employer's or an industry's workplaces.

- * extends the range of union officials required to stand for election by secret postal ballot.

As originally proposed, the Bill outlawed action to enforce the 100 per cent closed shop, demanded a new postal ballot with a view to abolishing the political levy (completely routed when put to workplace ballots) and a ban on unions using

their funds to pay court penalties incurred by individuals (for example in contempt cases).

The Bill was also planned to turn the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) more openly into a political arm of the government with a much higher level of employer representation and to enforce conscription to the Youth Training Scheme by stopping income support for 13 weeks.

Details of these measures are contained in the Labour Research Department pamphlet, 'Breaking Workplace Unity'.

The Bill is still open to amendment in the Lords but all Labour's pathetic attempts to change it in the Commons - for example to allow workplace ballots in certain circumstances and to reduce the sector of union officials that have to stand for election - were easily swept aside.

Ford unions resist electronic clocking

THE Dagenham 'Panel' of union officials and Ford plant convenors have called on the workforce to resist Ford's plans to introduce electronic photo-identity cards for use in computerised clocking.

Ford unions have long been calling for the abolition of clocking altogether, in line with Ford of Germany, as part of their campaign for 'harmonisation' with Ford staff conditions.

Ford had tried to present a fait accompli to the unions and secretly spent 5 million dollars on the new system before informing the unions.

The proposals are another case where new technology is being introduced to worsen the conditions of Ford's 30,000 manual workers.



Defend the Holloway Road 30!

AN appeal has been launched for funds to defend over 30 demonstrators arrested after being provoked and attacked by police and fascist thugs on the Irish Freedom Movement's annual anti-internment march in north London on 6 August. The arrests took place as the well-disciplined 3,000-strong march arrived at Whittington Park for a rally. Hundreds of police used riot vans to hem in the demonstrators, enabling a small group of Union Jack-waving fascists to get close enough to hit the marchers with beer cans and bottles. Demonstrators trying to defend themselves were charged by police who piled in and arrested indiscriminately (above).

Donations to: Holloway Road 30 Fund, BM IFM, London WC1N 3XX

News briefs . . .

Pay award

THE Argentinian metal workers union (UOM), the country's most powerful union, has won a 47.4 per cent pay increase on basic wages.

The rising tide of monthly inflation rates was said to have peaked in July at 25 per cent, but the predicted figure of 30 per cent for August, to be announced in mid-September, will see a further pay claim by the UOM.

The union has a membership of 320,000 and sets the pace for other unions' wage demands.

No more reminders

DEBT collecting in the UK is ripe for development, claims a company said to be the biggest such operation in Europe.

In a survey which it carried out in Britain last month, Justitia International discovered that only a quarter of the contracts to be paid within the 30 day agreement period were actually settled by that date.

Upstick

THE term 'user friendly' took on an extra dimension last week when a high street cash dispenser discharged nearly 3,000. The card holder had only tapped in a request for 30. Banks and building societies throughout the country are hurriedly investigating the possibility of a design fault.

Saatchi's life

THE brothers Charles and Maurice, who already run the world's biggest advertising agency, are said to be bidding for sovereignty over all media - a move which could turn them into the IBM of the industry. An extract from their soon to be published biography claims that Charles Saatchi and Mrs Thatcher have never met personally. When she first called on the agency who won the Tory Party contract in 1978, he 'chose to be somewhere else'.

Reagan

A REPORT states that the outgoing President of the United States is undergoing routine tests by ear, eye, nose and throat specialists during a visit to Los Angeles.

No reference was made to his brain. Perhaps doctors will start looking for that once he finally vacates the White House.

Dead dictator's son

PRESIDENT Zia's eldest son has been quick to retract his earlier statement that he believed the USSR was behind the assassination of his father. Despite the unequivocal statement made to that effect during a television interview, Ijaz ul-Haq is now claiming he was 'quoted out of context'. He is also hotly denying that he will step into General Zia's blood-stained shoes.

WRITE TO WORKERS PRESS

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Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW9 7QS

THE British state represses and terrorises Irish people with plastic bullets, shoot-to-kill, strip-searching, anti-Irish racism, and the Prevention of Terrorism Act. These methods are examined in the final publication from the London Strategic Policy Unity (LSPU), reviewed here by BERNARD FRANKS

Terrorising the Irish community

'POLICING the Irish Community' begins with a reference to Britain's 800-year role as colonial oppressor and exploiter of the Irish.

The death in the 1840s of a million people (one eighth of Ireland's population) and the subsequent mass emigration were the direct result, not of a 'natural' disaster but of an economy sucked dry by its colonial masters.

Today, thousands of young people are forced to leave the 26-county Republic, its economy distorted by the enforced separation from the industrial centres of Belfast and Derry, maintained by the subjugating methods of the British army and police.

Plastic bullets

'THE plastic bullet is a lethal weapon which has killed 13 Irish people and been responsible for hundreds of serious injuries.'

In use in the north of Ireland since 1975 (replacing the rubber bullet) it is a solid plastic cylinder, four inches long by one and a half inches in diameter, weighing four and three quarter ounces and fired with a muzzle velocity of 130-170 miles an hour.

By July 1981 the rate of fatalities was running at one for every 4,000 fired as against one for every 18,000 rubber bullets previously.

All deaths have been from head and chest injuries despite the claim that the policy is to aim low.

Injuries from plastic bullets include skull fractures, blindings, brain damage, bone fractures, wounds needing up to 40 stitches and severe damage to lungs, liver, throat, groin etc.

Many of those injured are permanently disabled and terribly disfigured. The report cites the case of Emma Groves who was shot standing in her own living room and needed to have her face rebuilt with plastic surgery including fitting with artificial eyes.

Dominic Marron and Sean Tumelty are now both paralysed down one side. Both suffer epileptic fits.

Strip-searching

IN prisons, at Customs and Immigration posts and anywhere in police custody, strip-searching is a state system of degrading, demoralising and terrorising individuals, particularly women, with a view to breaking their spirit and destroying their will to fight.

'The justification for strip-searching lies not only in the fact that staff discover items . . . but also in the deterrent effects which such searching undoubtedly has.' (Hansard, 23 April 1986)

Use of the system was massively escalated in 1982 in the north of Ireland against Republican women prisoners in Armagh jail.

From June 1985, during their eleven-month remand in Brixton top security wing, Martina Anderson was strip-searched 381 times and Ella O'Dwyer 388 times.

Jacqueline Moore was strip-searched throughout her pregnancy and shortly after the birth; Dolores O'Neill, on her return from hospital after an operation for the removal of a cyst, and Denise Whitla after a miscarriage.

'Menstruating women are ordered to remove their tampons or pads. If a prisoner refuses, their sanitary protection is forcibly removed and examined.'

Such methods amount to torture of the individuals concerned with a view to inducing stress before court appearances.

The report quotes a professor of psychiatry:

'Strip-searching is a rather violent procedure and a tremendous intrusion on a human being. It is a violent act and I think, in this sense, rapacious.'

On the Home Office's own admission nothing constituting a security risk has ever been found on any Irish woman prisoner.

Shoot-to-kill

ON 11 November 1982, Gervaise McKerr, Eugene Toman and Sean Burns, all unarmed, were shot at what police claimed was a road block in County Armagh.

The stationary vehicle was riddled with 109 bullets. Toman was shot in the back as he tried to leave the car.

Witnesses said there was no road block.

Two weeks later, Michael Tighe was shot dead at point blank range and Martin McAuley was injured in a barn in County Armagh by an M15 'surveillance' squad. Only antique weapons without ammunition were discovered.

Eighteen days later, on 12 December 1982, Roddy Carroll and Seamus Grew, both unarmed, were killed in Armagh city. Fifteen bullets had been fired at Carroll and Grew was killed from a range of three feet.

Police subsequently admitted that the story of them bursting through a road block was untrue.

The following Stalker inquiry was derailed by obstruction from

senior officers of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and a smear campaign to discredit Stalker himself (claiming that he had socialised with people with criminal records) when he appeared to be unearthing at least some of the truth.

It is believed that Stalker's report had reached as far as recommending charges of 'conspiracy to pervert the course of justice' and 'conspiracy to murder' against RUC officers when wound up.

Stalker was eventually reinstated as deputy chief constable for Manchester (August 1986), long enough to retire (March 1987), since when 'the enquiry appears to have disappeared from public view'.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA)

GIVEN royal assent in November 1974, the Prevention of Terrorism Act follows a line of anti-Irish laws going back to the Treason Act of 1848.

The PTA seeks not only to apply exclusion orders but to screen and collect information on a large section of the Irish community - over half a million in the past 13 years.

The PTA:

- * bans the Irish Republican Army and the Irish National Liberation Army and any support for them.

- * enables the police on their own authority to detain people without charge for up to 48 hours and without allowing them to contact family, friends or legal advice.

- * enables police to hold a person for a further five days if the Home Secretary approves.

- * allows the Home Secretary to exclude a person from any part of Britain without right of appeal or of knowing the reason for exclusion.

- * requires detainees to give information about others to determine if they are involved with Irish or international liberation struggles.

- * is renewable every year by parliament which receives an annual report on its operation before the debate.

Anti-Irish racism

CRUDE anti-Irish diatribes, jokes and cartoons have been churned out over hundreds of years by friends of the British state to instil prejudice and justify the suppression and control of what has then been adjudged an ignorant and barbarous people.

In this context the LPSU report is right to refer to the action of the Camden council in planning to send back all Irish people applying for housing assistance on the ground that they had made themselves intentionally homeless by leaving Ireland, also Islington council's uncompromising hostility to travellers, many of whom are Irish.

'Miscarriages of justice'

THE report refers to the cases of the Birmingham Six, Judith Ward, the Maguire family, the Guildford Four and Danny McNamee as those serving long sentences on the basis of circumstantial evidence, dubious forensic evidence or repudiated confessions.

'Miscarriage of justice' is the wrong term. Many states deliberately arrest and condemn arbitrarily chosen people to intimidate and terrorise an entire community.

Ireland - testing ground for British state repression

THE report makes the point that repressive methods in use in the north of Ireland are clearly on test for operations in Britain.

In 1977 snatch squads used by soldiers in the north of Ireland were used by police against Grunwick strikers. Riot shields were first used in London the same year at an anti-National Front march in Lewisham.

CS gas was used by police in Toxteth in 1981.

In the 1980s para-military units specialising in riot control were set up along lines developed in the north of Ireland: the Special Patrol Group, Instant Response Unit, District Support Unit and Territorial Support Group.

By June 1982 the British police had an estimated 5,000 plastic bullets.

In July 1986 Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, announced that he had given permission for the police to buy 24 bullet-proof vehicles, 80 armoured personnel carriers and 1,500 long truncheons, to be used by officers carrying riot shields (Hansard 3.7.86).

'Policing the Irish Community' can be obtained from: Green Ink Bookshop, 8 Archway Mall, London N19 5RG, price £1.50..

General strike sweeps Poland

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

POLAND came close to a revolutionary situation last week, as the working class confronted the Stalinist military regime.

General Kiszczak, the Interior Minister, came on television on Monday night claiming the country was facing 'the spectre of anarchy', and announced curfews in three provinces. He said troops had been ordered to guard all big industrial plants.

Poland is an indication of the impact which the struggles of the Soviet working class are now exerting on their Polish brothers and sisters.

Thousands

What began a fortnight ago as a wages strike in one colliery in the south had spread through the Silesian coalfields, with thousands of miners demanding recognition for the independent union Solidarnosc.

The Stalinist bureaucracy has been frightened by the overtly political nature of the struggle. The central demand of the strike

movement is for an independent trade union movement.

The Polish Stalinists have indicated that they will discuss any demand but this one.

The entry of the miners is itself a powerful factor. The miners are the most feared group, and one the Stalinist bureaucracy has been desperate in the past to buy off with special privileges.

Occupied

Dockers came out in the port of Szczecin, and were joined by transport workers. In Gdansk, at the Lenin shipyards where Solidarnosc was born almost a decade ago, striking workers occupied two of the yards.

On Monday night in Szczecin, riot police stormed three bus depots occupied by strikers, making about 180 arrests. 'They were throwing them into police vans like pigs,' said strike committee chairman Romuald Ziolkowski.

Curfews

Curfews were announced in the Katowice mining area, in Szczecin, and in Gdansk.

As summary courts were authorised to jail strikers, reports came from several parts of the country of more workers joining the strikes.

It is significant that those in the forefront of this new militant class movement are young workers, rather than those who began Solidarnosc.

This new generation of fighters, who have grown up under Jaruzelski's military regime, are angry over low pay, lack of housing, and a government 'reform' policy that means soaring prices.

Coal, Poland's main export industry and source of foreign currency, has been given an important place in the bureaucracy's attempts to reduce the huge foreign debt and meet the demands of the capitalist world's bankers.

Safety

Competing in a cut-throat world market has meant speed-up, and worsening safety and conditions for miners.

This new upsurge of the working class, pushing Solidarnosc to the front after years when many commentators had written it off as finished, has also exposed a crisis of leadership for the Polish working class.

It is reported that former Solidarnosc chairman Lech Walesa, hero of the struggles that brought down the Gierek regime, was reluctant to see the Gdansk

shipyard workers joining this strike.

Some of the well-known dissident intellectuals have also been cautious, if not decidedly cool to the strike wave.

In the hope of some Gorbachev-style reforms accompanying closer links to the West, those under Catholic and reformist influences have sought an accommodation with the bureaucracy.

Creditors

In Poland, however, the pressing need for the bureaucracy to satisfy their capitalist creditors abroad has meant a 'reform' policy immediately attacking the already poor living standards of the working class, and brutal police repression as they resist.

As a new generation of workers enters the struggle, demanding independent organisation, the spectre haunting the Stalinist bureaucracy is not of anarchy but of the workers' political revolution.

In rebuilding the Fourth International, we aim to make this a reality.

BOTHA RUSHING THROUGH ANTI-UNION LAWS

BY WAYNE POULSEN

THE Botha government has decided to bring forward by two weeks the implementation of its anti-union Labour Relations Amendment Bill. This breaks a promise that the Bill would not come into force until 1 September in order to allow time for representations from unions and employers.

The Council of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU) have issued a joint statement criticising the government for its lack of good faith.

COSATU's Western Cape region staged a week of protests including go-slows, demonstrations and overtime bans.

The much vaunted alliance between the unions and big business has stalled completely, even before first gear was selected.

In June, 2.5 million workers staged a 'stop the bill' stay away, the biggest in the country's

history. Since then the two major black trade union federations have sought a negotiated settlement aimed at winning the support of big business for rewriting some sections of the Bill in exchange for acceptance of the rest.

The three day stay away or 'protest' as it has been called was the outcome of the special Congress held by COSATU in May to meet two grave challenges.

* The regime's 24 February restrictions confining COSATU activity to shop floor unionism.

* The Labour Relations Amendment Bill.

'Taken together, the Bill and the restrictions effectively ban COSATU' said general secretary Jay Naidoo on 25 February.

The congress was preceded by three months of heated struggles over the assessment of the situation, the balance of forces and the way forward.

The congress was emphatic that there should be no retreat but less emphatic on planning an offensive. It was decided to step up factory

demonstrations against the bill and for a COSATU organised conference to establish a broad front of anti-apartheid forces.

Fortunately the enthusiasm of black workers was greater than that of their leaders' and although COSATU and NACTU number less than one million members, 2.5 million responded to the call.

Naidoo noted that big business had moved back to Pretoria after its brief flirtation with the African National Congress with most business executives supporting the government's intention of 'restoring the balance'.

The 'revised' freedom charter: 'Consultative Guidelines For a Democratic South Africa' which represents a codification of the right-wing movement of the African National Congress, also appeared last week.

Gone is any trace of 'socialist ambiguity' in the charter, to be replaced by explicit guarantees to monopoly capitalism.

The ANC and the South African Communist Party more and more

openly stand for a 'democratic' capitalist South Africa.

Unless the black working class establishes its independence from the capitalism of the apartheid state as well as from the ANC/SACP's aspiring black capitalism its most basic needs and desires cannot be won.

The Labour Relations Act can only be defeated by the united revolutionary action of the working class and defeat will be the beginning of the end for apartheid capitalism itself.

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STORM AND DREAM

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE was one of Marx's three favourite poets; but it was as a creator of great theatre that he came centre-stage at the 42nd Edinburgh Festival last week.

The speaking of some of the greatest verse in the English language was not what mattered most in the Royal Exchange Theatre's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' (running until 3 September, and then at home in Manchester); nor (for more obvious linguistic reasons) in the Ninagawa Company of Japan's 'The Tempest'.

Both productions divided opinion sharply. But one thing they had in common was their conviction that Shakespeare's work is the occasion for contemporary theatre, which lives for, grips, amuses and excites an audience today not just through the power of the playwright's verbal imagination, but because of what actually happens on the stage.

The Manchester 'Dream', directed by Gregory Hersov, is not listed under Festival director Frank Dunlop's third world theatre season, but appears in a part of the brochure devoted to British-based productions. Maybe this helps keep the ticket-buying public straight, but it creates the odd impression that England is not part of the world.

Indeed, it might be argued that it is because some English critics think that English theatre isn't, shouldn't, or doesn't need to have much

to do with the rest of the world, that Hersov's production has had what might be called a 'mixed' reception. This 'Dream' is certainly no fairy frolic, no midsummer diversion from the cares and responsibilities of those whose daily business - in the Thatcher view of history - was to make England 'merrie' and great.

It is a dark, almost nightmarish, though by no means unfunny, piece in which the King of the Fairies (a super Oberon, like a sort of gothic space invader, by Kenneth Cranham) upsets the 'natural' order of things on a whim that would have certainly brought him into conflict with Clause 28.

And Peter Lindford's richly modern Puck, a spiky, animalistic demon rather than a playful sprite - orchestrates the proceedings in which players and audience alike are forced to think about - as well as to laugh at - their own inner selves, before the outer moral and social order is allowed to be restored.

Although conceived for Manchester, this production looks as though it had been done specially for the Church of Scotland's Assembly Hall, a theatrically eccentric space from which, in the late 1940s, Sir Tyrone Guthrie launched a new phase in Western theatre design.

If the 'Dream', first seen in the late 1590s, was unambiguously an erotic comedy (perhaps with a dark interior), Shakespeare's last play,

'The Tempest' (1611-12), is arguably his most serious, most intellectually powerful dramatic statement.

In it the grand themes of moral order and capricious power, the dangers as well as the liberating powers of science, the impossibility of a humanity which does not recognise that human beings are also animals, are all rehearsed in a way which - contrary to some interpretations - offers no easy answers.

Yukio Ninagawa's Tokyo-based company has earned a marvellous reputation in Edinburgh over the last few years for reworkings of classical drama in an emotional, audacious and profoundly Japanese style.

But if Hersov has stressed the black and heavy sides of the usually colourful and light-weight 'Dream', Ninagawa seems to me, on this occasion, to make the more serious and stormy play into too superficial an examination of the relationship between Western theatrical tradition and the Japanese Noh plays.

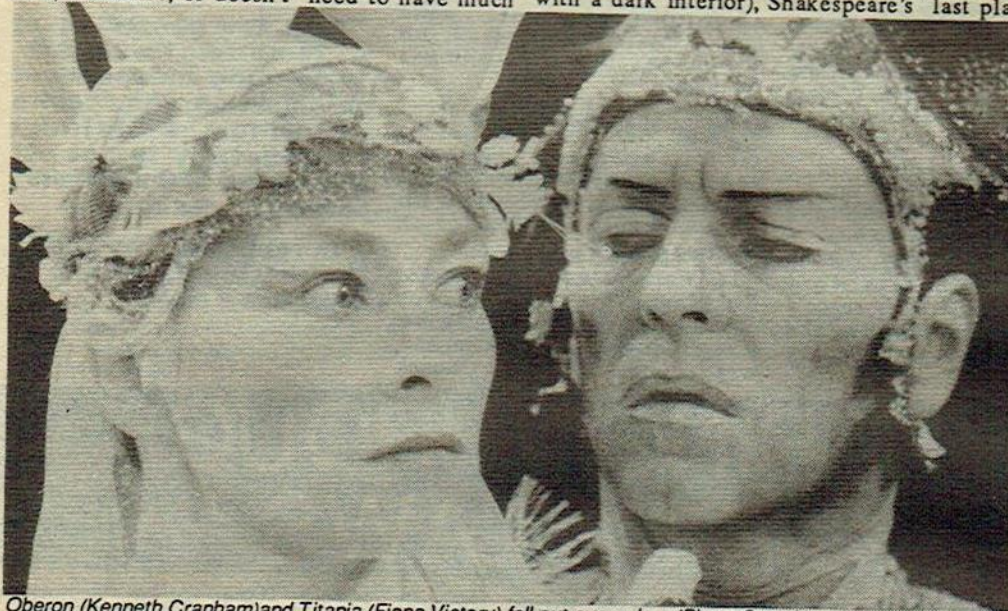
Only at the beginning (an excitingly done symbolic storm and shipwreck) and the very end, when the play is seeking for its resolution, did I feel myself gripped and eager to make some study of Japanese theatre, in order to get more out of such productions if I get a chance to see one again.

The contrast between this dark 'Dream' and the bright, island lights of this 'Tempest', however, was stimulating in itself, and this sort of juxtaposition is what festivals should be about.

As if in counterpoint to Shakespeare's Puck and Ariel (the supernatural agent in 'The Tempest'), a Canadian company, also in Edinburgh last week, presented Nanabush 'the Trickster', a sort of Christ-figure from North American Indian tradition, much more pucky, scatological and, to me, more attractive than his New Testament equivalent.

Maybe 'The Rez Sisters' (the title refers to women from an Indian reservation near Toronto) is not the greatest play which will be seen in Edinburgh this year, but Tomson Highway's piece took audiences into a cultural world most would otherwise have known almost nothing about. After a dangerously 'folk culture' sort of beginning, it did so through some acting, by a cast including both Indians and non-Indians, which achieved real distinction. I could have done without the audience-participation bingo game.

Terry Brotherstone



Oberon (Kenneth Cranham) and Titania (Fiona Victory) fall out over a boy (Photo: Sean Hudson)

Edinburgh Film Festival

DEAR AMERICA: LETTERS HOME FROM VIETNAM, directed and produced by Bill Couturie in association with the Vietnam Veterans Association Theatre Company, is the US film industry's latest attempt to exorcise the 'continuing pain' of the war, as a bereaved mother calls it in the film. Using letters from GIs, interviews in the field, documentary footage and videos by the soldiers themselves, it charts the progression from the nervousness of the first embeekes to the utter demoralisation of the US troops in the last years of the war.

'The whole thing stinks', says one platoon commander frankly to the camera, in front of which no one is smiling any more. Bitterness about the death of close friends predominates: 'The biggest mistake you can make here is to get too attached to one person,' writes one soldier. 'They say he died for his country,

keeping it free. Negative.'

Even Bob Hope has to adjust his jingoistic show to match the mood of his audience - he brings the house down when he jokes wryly: 'If this is Vietnam, who needs it?'

'We're all scared - all the time,' writes a soldier to his girlfriend, expressing the primary source of demoralisation - the inability to beat or even to find the 'enemy', except by wiping out whole communities.

A company commander is filmed - shakily - while medics are preparing to work on his shattered leg. He can't stop repeating: 'I knew they were there, but I didn't call napalm on them. I couldn't do it ... all those women and children ...'

Vietnam is also a touchy subject for the Rambo-like American jewel thief, Otto, played

by Kevin Kline in 'A Fish Called Wanda', written by John Cleese and directed by Ealing comedy veteran Charles Crichton. Cleese, also starring in the film as a stuffed-shirt English barrister, succeeds in distracting Otto with a taunt about the US defeat just as Otto is about to finish him off.

In an exceptionally well-crafted comedy, some audacious swipes are taken at both the American macho mentality and the emotional repression and sentimentality of the English. 'Do you have any idea of what it is to be English? We're all terrified of embarrassment - that's why we're so dead,' says an anguished Cleese to Wanda, Otto's aggressively attractive partner in crime. She (Jamie Lee Curtis) is intent on seducing him to obtain information - itself a hilarious operation and moving, too, as she and Cleese gradually plumb each other's hidden depths.

'It's not the sixties - no-one gives a shit any more,' complains a disillusioned radical journalist in Robert Redford's second film as a

Turn to page 5

Personal Column

Peter Fryer

The politics of Carnival

IT looks very much as if the police are hoping to settle some old scores at this year's Notting Hill Carnival.

That is the reality behind the orchestrated press campaign predicting trouble there.

It was the British capitalist state, enthusiastically aided and abetted by a servile press, that fabricated and manipulated the category 'black youth' and then made use of demonstrably bogus statistics, alleging disproportionate involvement of 'black youth' in 'crime', in an effort to criminalise the black communities.

To this end, police and media joined to make less than one per cent of crime in London more important than the other 99 per cent of crime there, and more important than all crime committed elsewhere in the country.

To this end, they jointly imported from the USA in the late 1960s the term 'mugging', as a headline-grabbing device for presenting black people as disproportionately involved in 'bestial' crimes menacing 'society'.

And, to this end, they ignored the findings of the 1981 Home Office inquiry that Asians were 50 times more likely to be attacked on the streets, Afro-Caribbeans over 36 times more likely to be attacked on the streets, than white people.

They ignored, too, the 1971-72 Report on Police-Immigrant Relations published by the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, which stated that 'coloured immigrants are no more involved in

crime than others; nor are they generally more concerned in violence, prostitution and drugs. The West Indian crime rate is much the same as that of the indigenous population'.

Now 'steaming' has been added to 'mugging' as a handy headline term for another variety of 'black crime'.

The 1988 pre-Carnival propaganda campaign has had one essential aim: to prepare public opinion for the heavy-handed and aggressive policing of the Carnival by a militarised and racist police force.

Then, when the youngsters under attack resist, they can be stereotyped as 'muggers' and 'steamers' who deserve no sympathy.

Getting it right

COMPREHENSIVE school pupils, according to a recent survey, find it impossible to say what class they are from and difficult to name the classes in British society.

These findings, writes Judith Judd, education correspondent of the 'Observer', 'will be a bitter blow to the followers of Karl Marx'. For they show that 'the class struggle is dead - at least as far as the workers are concerned. They neither think about class nor have any intention of uniting to throw off their chains'.

It's hard to say which is more contemptible here: the education correspondent's fallacious logic or her bovine ignorance of what 'the followers of Karl Marx' really think and teach about class, class consciousness, and the class struggle.

How one might begin to educate so shoddy an education correspondent I really don't

know. Her presumption exactly matches that of the ex-editor and TV star Derek Jameson, who is quoted on another page of the same newspaper as saying 'imperturbably': 'When I like a quote I always attribute it to Marx.'

Marx and Marxists, it seems, are fair game. You can attribute to them whatever nonsense comes into your head.

The same cavalier disregard for accuracy distinguishes the 'Observer's' attitude to British black history. The Notting Hill antiblack riots of August 1958 are described on yet another page of last Sunday's 'Observer' as 'Britain's first race riots'.

This wipes out of history with the stroke of a pen the race riots of 1919 in Barry, Cardiff (where a young Arab named Mahommed Abdullah was lynched), Glasgow, Liverpool (where a 24-year-old black sailor named Charles Wotten was lynched), east London, Newport, and South Shields. It wipes out the race riot in Hull in 1920. And it wipes out the race riot in Liverpool in 1948.

Journalists of my generation were brought up to double-check our facts and correct our mistakes. The 'Observer' nowadays does neither.

Not that there isn't room for some improvement here at Workers Press. I see with dismay that, in the otherwise excellent collection of reprints from this paper entitled 'Politics from the Prisons, the IWW is identified in a caption as 'International Workers of the World'.

This is all the more regrettable since, in the text on the facing page, that organisation is given its correct title: Industrial Workers of the World.

One of the major duties of a workers' paper is to get its facts right. That's one of the ways in which it wins its readers' confidence.

Edinburgh

from page 4

director, 'The Milagro Beanfield War'. He is proved wrong, as a New Mexican community bands together to stop the rape of their land by a leisure consortium. But it's done in the most naive and unconvincing fashion - reflecting, perhaps, both Redford's own liberal politics and the lapse in time since the film rights of the original novel were first taken up in the early seventies, when compromises did look more possible than they do now.

The main flaw in the film is that it takes the relative differences between the local police and the state forces as an absolute: when the community lawmen finally take the side of the poor villagers the state backs down and the land is relieved.

The confrontation for which the villagers have armed themselves - after much agitation by Ruby, the inappropriately gorgeous garage owner - is averted, in a scenario which perhaps Redford wishes he could apply to the world as a whole.

Although the local detail looks authentic, the film is badly marred by a whimsical, sentimental attitude towards its subject. A long-dead village elder, visible only to the oldest inhabitant, takes a prominent part in the proceedings, and elaborate offerings to plaster saints are not just quaint customs but actually play a material role in the plot. Worst of all, a pig appears in a starring role. Beware of films which resort to using animals for effect!

Hilary Horrocks

The Non-Objective World Revisited

A splendid collection of non-objective art; over 80 works in all, ranging from the very earliest days of abstraction in combination with more recent examples, is now on at the Annelly Juda Gallery in central London.

The exhibition has been running since 1 July and will continue until mid-October.

This is the third such 'Non-Objective' exhibition the gallery has put together since 1970 and, like all their shows without exception, it is to be warmly applauded.

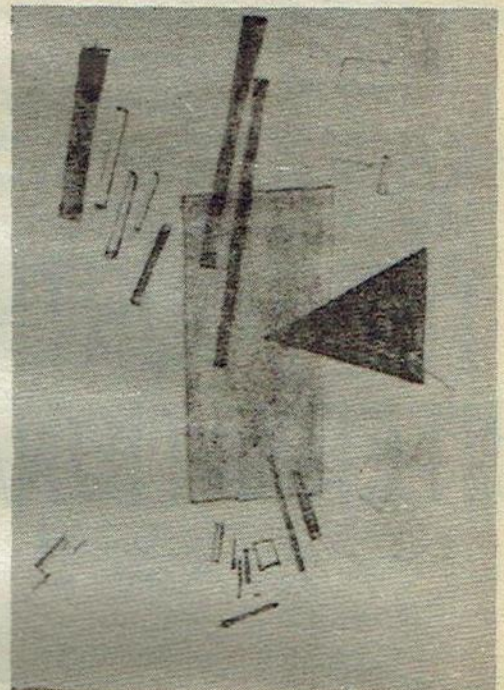
The term non-objective art was first coined by the Russian artist, Alexander Rodchenko, to describe certain of his geometrical abstract drawings and constructions.

It was later adopted by his compatriot, Kasimir Malevich, in 1927, for the title of his book, 'The Non-Objective World'.

Four Suprematist compositions by Malevich from the period 1916 are included in the exhibition.

Whereas the expression had quite specific origins, it will be seen from a list of some of the contributors given below that it came to encompass pretty well all forms of non-representational and non-figurative work.

To provide a taste of what to expect, here are a few of the artists represented: El Lissitzky, an untitled painting and a design for a book-cover from the early 1920s; two works by Liubov Popova from around the same time; a gouache (1920-1925) by Frantisek Kupka; half a dozen Naum Gabos, including a construction dated 1937 and another from 20 years later.



Malevich: Suprematist (pencil on paper) c.1916

Among the more contemporary artists featured are Sam Francis, a charming water-colour by him; two small oils by Nicholas de Stael; a black and white canvas by John McLaughlin from 1975, and a spectacular space-age painting by New Yorker Al Held; the largest piece in the show.

The address of the gallery is: 11 Tottenham Mews, off Tottenham Street, W1. It is just around the corner from Index Bookcentre in Charlotte Street.

Jeff Jackson

TUC CRISIS TUC CRISIS TUC CRISIS

WORKERS PRESS has begun as discussion on the crisis in the TUC. This week PAUL BURROWS, an EETPU member and a member of the Workers Revolutionary Party in Swansea, takes up issues raised by Bernard Franks in Workers Press on 16 July.

IN THE discussion of our policies regarding the EETPU, an issue is arising similar to previous discussions, notably the debate between Norah Wilde and Dave Temple (in Workers Press in January and February 1988) and, in my opinion, the discussion begun last week by Charlie Pottins on the Palestinian question.

This issue is: how do we carry out Marxist policies in the working class and in particular its organisations?

Do we have a fixed, idealist and sectarian method like Bernard Franks, or do we test out our theories and learn in concrete practical struggles?

Hopefully, the days are gone where we walked into large working class struggles with a tablet of commandments, be they community councils, general strikes or any others.

Bernard's position is clear - there is to be some kind of pre-arranged historical rendezvous between the WRP and the working class, as he says: 'only this week we saw an upsurge of London

tenants . . . sooner or later the chickens will come home to roost in regard to the contempt for theory of the British working class.'

In the EETPU, however, the chickens have been home to roost for some time, and I would like to spell out clearly what it would be like fighting for Bernard's policy in that union (not in the Workers Press columns).

The question of breakaway unions has been discussed for many years in the EETPU (as it has in other unions and in the Workers Revolutionary Party). The correct argument has been - not to abandon 'our' unions to the right wing.

Because of the union's increasingly undemocratic nature, its activities at Wapping etc., and its willingness to act as a Thatcher and Tebbit tool to smash up trade unions, this discussion has become more and more intense.

There are many sections (independently of Flashlight) who have had enough.

What has stopped these

sections (some very powerful) from leaving the EETPU has been a right wing agreement called Bridlington, which prevents dissatisfied workers going from one union to another, no matter how right wing their existing union.

For example, in the mid 1980s, the London Press (Fleet Street) branch, a powerful section of the union, decided (against the advice of Flashlight and a large minority of their own members) to leave the EETPU and join the print union SOGAT.

The EETPU appealed to the TUC who ordered SOGAT to give up the electricians or be expelled. SOGAT complied.

Thus many militant and aware sections of EETPU members have been trapped inside.

The Wapping and Orion affairs not only bring about qualitative changes in trade union struggles, i.e. the drive towards corporate and scab unions, but also bring about the first opportunity for dissatisfied EETPU members to leave.

Surely we must support Flashlight on this issue, the right of trade unionists to belong to a union of their choice.

In a membership war, which is already underway, Hammond will use every weapon at his disposal.

An organised alternative will not only be a huge blow to him, but also create favourable conditions for revolutionaries to show their worth.

Those who don't support it will become the electricians' jailers.

Bernard talks of handing workers 'over to the right wing in perpetuity.'

Let me assure him I am not talking about walking away from struggles, but preparing the biggest war in EETPU history.

I cannot go into details of such fights, but major inroads are being made into Hammond's bases, including power stations, shipbuilding, car manufacturing and others.

Who is leading this fight? Undoubtedly, and like it or not, it is Flashlight, as they have done for years in the absence of the Workers Revolutionary Party, Socialist Workers Party, Militant etc.

It is about time we redressed the balance.

Readers' views are invited on the crisis of the trade union movement. Please limit your contributions to 500 words or less.

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New CP crisis

BY GEOFF PILLING

STALINISM in Britain came a stage nearer to complete disintegration when public dissent broke out following the appearance last week of the Communist Party of Great Britain's first draft of a new version of its programme 'The British Road to Socialism'.

'Facing up to the Future' was written by a committee of eight Party members including Monty Johnstone. But at the launch of the document Johnstone declared that he would not be identified with it.

Party general secretary Gordon McLennan said he also would need to be convinced by many of the draft's formulations.

Class

Johnstone rejected the definition of class proposed by the committee. A section said: 'Class in modern capitalism is not the product of a single polarisation between a ruling class which owns the means of production.'

Other points are ones Neil Kinnock would give his right arm to see included in the Labour Party's programme. They include:

Dropping any proposals for nationalisation. The CPGB should instead call for big companies to place 10-15 per cent of their shares into workers' trusts. A 'social capital' market should be created which would allow workers to buy and sell these shares.

Unilateralism is pushed into the background. From now on it should go hand

in hand with multilateralism, 'Gorbachev's willingness to negotiate means there is no longer any excuse for Western multilateralists not to press ahead with disarmament,' it says.

Mike Hicks, leader of the British Communist Party that recently broke away from the CPGB, said: 'I think it's the final abandonment of the Marxist-Leninist principles on which the party's programme, the British Road to Socialism, is based'

But the proposals contained in 'Facing up to the Future' are not a departure from the old programme but a logical extension of it.

Perhaps Hicks has forgotten, but 'The British Road to Socialism' was drafted for the CPGB in 1951 by none other than Joseph Stalin, butcher of the Russian Revolution and the person who spear-headed the struggle against the ideas and practice of Lenin in the years following the latter's death in 1924.

It was Stalin's programme that made explicit the British party's acceptance of the peaceful road to socialism through parliament. While the CPGB continued to make formal noises about the role of the working class, it had long rejected the notion that the task of the working class was to smash the capitalist state machine and establish its dictatorship. In other words it had rejected the essence of Marxist revolutionary politics.

But the bitterness of the disputes now threatening to tear Stalinism apart provide the Trotskyist movement with great opportunities for rebuilding the Fourth International.