

TRADE UNION CRISIS

Lefts have no answer

THE SECOND Socialist Conference, organised by Tony Benn and his friends, assembles in Chesterfield this weekend. It meets at a time when the British Labour and trade union movement is beset with unprecedented problems. However, it would be misleading to say that the Conference faces these problems, for many at Chesterfield will be resolutely turning away from them.

They will call loudly for a return to 'traditional socialist principles'. But they will try to ignore the utter failure of the Labour Party leaders - Left and Right - to answer a decade of Thatcherite onslaught on the gains of the working-class movement. They will have no answer to the attack of the Hammond-ite EETPU on the rest of the trade union movement.

The Kinnock-Hattersley-Willis leadership utters curses against Thatcherism. But this is just to cover their treachery. They have betrayed the seafarers, who are seeing their jobs and conditions crumble under the attacks of Thatcher and her judiciary, just as they betrayed the miners in 1984-1985 and the printers a year later.

But what more have Benn, or his friends in both wings of Stalinism, to offer? The prospect of a new Labour government, only with more radical-sounding policies? Does anyone really believe that such an administration - even if it could take office - would do more than soften the effects of the new phase of capitalism? Would it not be yet another and

BY CYRIL SMITH

still more futile attempt to make the system work a little more comfortably?

Underlying the crisis of the labour movement are fundamental changes in world capitalism:

The rise of transnational corporations to ever-increasing dominance over the economy.

The control of these giants by huge financial institutions.

The rocketing expansion of credit - i.e., of debt - exploding in global crisis, affecting every part of the world.

The decline of manufacturing industry in all the older centres of imperialism, above all in Britain, and its relocation in what used to be economically more backward areas.

Exploited

The formation of an international pool of millions of chronically unemployed.

The international division of the labour-force into a minority of high-tech jobs and a mass of poorly-paid, insecure and exploited workers.

The rapid rise in home work and part-time employment, especially among women and young people.

The 'privatisation' of industries, including some of the so-called 'service' industries, which had come to be regarded as the province of state control.

These are some of the features of a new world situation. They form the background to a situation in Britain where mass unemployment and the return to vicious anti-union laws are rendering old-style trade unionism and reformist Labourism increasingly dangerous for the working class.

**continued
on back page**



Battle of Orgreave, miners' strike 1984-85

BEHIND THE MOSCOW FILM-SET

ONLY one thing might be learnt from the press and TV ballyhoo surrounding the Moscow Summit talks: that it must have been hiding the real story.

Clearly, Reagan and Thatcher were delighted with something, but it certainly couldn't have been the meagre outcome of the meeting, as reported in the official communiques. So what was it?

Amidst the torrent of self-congratulation, there was no agreement on long-range nuclear weapons. No-one spoke a word about Reagan's 'Star Wars' SDI project. Mikhail Gorbachev, who not long ago was noisily demanding the withdrawal of this menace, was certainly not tactless enough to mention it.

And when Reagan, leader of the country responsible for sustaining the most corrupt and brutal dictatorships in Latin America and in Asia, read his lines about 'human rights', he was merely engaging in some cynical electioneering.

So the real-unreported - subject of the Summit must be sought elsewhere. Two places to look are Southern Africa and the Middle East.

In each of these areas, world imperialism, with the US at its head, faces the upsurge of masses fighting for real human rights. It is the determination and heroism of these struggles which forces Washington to seek support from Moscow. This is the common ground where the leader of imperialism meets the leader of the Soviet bureaucracy.

Huge changes are indeed taking place in the Soviet Union. But they can only be truly understood if they are seen in the context of the history of the bureaucratic degeneration of the first workers' state.

Since the days of the late Josef Stalin, head of the bureaucratic regime which Gorbachev has inherited, counter-revolution has been the foundation of all agreements with capitalism. In the face of the danger of revolution, the imperialist powers, maintaining the bitterest hostility to the October Revolution, have found themselves allied with its betrayers.

At Yalta, Teheran and Potsdam in 1943-1945, Stalin met the leaders of Britain and the US to carve up the world, and to knife the post-war revolutionary wave. In 1948, it was Stalin's backing which ensured the formation of the Zionist state of Israel, beginning forty years of oppression of the Palestinian people.

The 1988 Moscow Summit was in this infamous tradition. The negotiations now in progress between the Angolan government and the Apartheid regime will imply a change of direction of Stalinism in Southern Africa as a whole, and South Africa in particular.

Soon we shall see the attempt to stifle the revolutionary upsurge of the South African workers, perhaps to turn the movement towards compromise with some mythical 'progressive' sections of the ruling class.

The nauseating mutual admiration of Reagan and Gorbachev holds the greatest dangers for the USSR itself. In struggling with its severe economic problems, the bureaucracy looks for relief to international finance-capital. Fearing any independent movement of the working class, at home and abroad, it turns to the worst enemies of the Soviet Union.

Like a crooked union boss negotiating a single-union, no-strike deal, Gorbachev's actions menace the conquests of 1917. While the Soviet workers will take every advantage they can of his reforms, they will also learn that the bureaucracy which stands at the head of the regime will never voluntarily give up its power and its privileges.

WORKERS PRESS FIGHTING FUND

£10,000 by 30 September 1988

In so far: £1,870.83

TWO months without Workers Press has been two months too long. Now we are delighted to resume publication.

But we need regular financial support to guarantee production. Our fund - £10,000 by the end of September - is needed, and no less.

We are not immune from the pressures of the Tory attacks. Costs are soaring and it is a constant struggle to keep our heads above water financially.

The Thatcher regime sets out to smash the trade unions and every basic right to health care, education housing and social benefits. They pay off their financial backers with juicy pickings from the sale of nationalised industries and social services, whilst millions are reduced to the breadline and below.

But the Tories and the capitalist state have a problem. The 1984-85 miners' strike showed that, despite the weak-kneed anti-socialist leadership of the Labour Party and the TUC, the working class will not give up its organisations. Thatcher, backed by thousands of policemen, could not smash the National Union of Mineworkers. Only the treachery of the TUC was able to prevent the miners from securing victory.

The lesson of the miners'

strike and every struggle since is that the main problem to be overcome to defeat Thatcher and smash the capitalist state is the crisis of working class revolutionary leadership. This is an international question. Every struggle - 'glasnost' in the Soviet Union, the miners' strike in South Africa, the shipyard strikes in Poland, the student struggles in Korea, Wapping, the Health Service and Seafarers' strikes - all reveal the same crisis.

The working class and youth will do battle but the Stalinist, 'left' and right wing leaders betray.

Workers Press is the only paper in Britain which is based on the rebuilding of the Fourth International as the continuation of Bolshevism against Stalinism and the reformist Labour Party and trade union leaders. The 1917 Russian Revolution proved that only such a Bolshevik leadership, founded on Marxism, can lead these struggles to victory.

Workers Press and the Workers Revolutionary Party fights to build that international leadership. Our fighting fund is for that purpose. We invite you to join us.

Dot Gibson

Send all donations to:

Workers Press Fighting Fund
PO Box 735, London SW9 7QS

Welcome to new Trotskyist paper

A new Trotskyist paper in France has now put out two issues. Called 'Reconstruct the Fourth International' it is published by French members of the 'GOCQI' (Opposition Group for the continuity of the Fourth International). GOCQI participate with the WRP and others in the Preparatory Committee for an International Conference of Trotskyists.

This monthly paper is a big advance. Like Workers Press, it comes out of a hard struggle

it comes out of a hard struggle against groups like those of Lambert and Mandel, in France and internationally.

The April issue includes an editorial statement and article on the French presidential elections, several articles on workers' struggles in France, and an interview on trade union struggles with Patrick Carre.

● Issues of the paper obtainable from the Workers Revolutionary Party, 21-25 Beehive Place, Brixton SW2.

GEORGE LORMIN IN THE USA

Religion and capitalism in America

A GOOD title for a weighty study rather than for a brief survey, to be sure, but a fascinating subject to which Marxists should devote more attention.

The United States, the stronghold of capitalism, the most materialistic and money-conscious society in the world, though with a distinct whiff of decadence in the air, also has a degree of religious observance probably higher than in any major country outside the Islamic world.

The Ayatollahs are renowned and powerful figures. 'In God we trust' figures on every dollar bill, though the temple is the Federal Reserve Board.

The expectation that the advance of science and the nature of life in an advanced industrial society would inevitably produce secularisation and the decline of religion, held by some materialists, has not been realised. While there has been secularisation sufficient to alarm religious bigots who claim that an ideology called 'secular humanism' is taught in the public (state) schools, the nature of capitalist social relations and the alienation which they create for many people constantly re-create the conditions for a flight into religious belief.

The breakdown of community living, the impersonality of city life, the instant struggle to find and keep a job, to deal with the strains of everyday life, create a desire for some certainty, some assurance that there is a supreme being who has everything under control. Call it a need for consolation, relief, hope, something which the accumulation of material goods cannot provide. Millions of Americans remain as addicted to religion as people in primitive society.

Undoubtedly secularisation has made progress, but it has mainly taken its toll of the old mainline religions: the Episcopalian, Methodist, Presbyterian and even the Roman Catholic Church are stagnating or in decline. They have largely been taken over by the liberal middle class and have little appeal to young people.

Teaching

Of these churches the Catholic has fared best, largely because of its special relationship with ethnic communities, such as the Irish, the Italians and the Poles. Even so, it has great difficulty in recruiting priests and more and more nominal Catholics refuse to follow the church's teaching on such matters as birth control and abortion. Its social teaching, recently re-emphasised in John Paul's encyclical, 'The Social Concern of the Church', with its mild criticism of capitalism, cuts little ice even among its traditional supporters. The State Department finds it convenient to support the Vatican on some questions, but not on matters of social reform.

While the traditional churches have been losing members and many of their nominal adherents

have little sense of commitment, newer churches or sects have been gaining ground. In particular there has been a growth of the Baptists and other evangelical sects which have in common both certain religious tenets and an extreme right-wing political position. There are also various autonomous groups or sects which are a product of free enterprise by individual preachers.

The religious right early seized upon the possibilities of television which has enabled them to reach out to an enormous audience of people who perhaps never attend a church. Using the highly emotional, 'charismatic' style of the old-time evangelist, they turn religious preaching into an emotional experience using all the most modern techniques of mass persuasion and suggestion. From a theological point of view, the distinguishing feature of the brand of religion represented by the religious right is its fundamentalism. That is to say, the bible is taken as revealed truth and is interpreted in the most literal way. Inevitably, interpretation of biblical texts gives rise to differences of opinion which are expressed in a variety of sects with an overall fundamentalist category.

Some fundamentalists are also pentecostals, who believe that God can speak through them in gospel services during the climax of the highly-charged and emotional proceedings. They also believe that people can be possessed by fiends and devils and some preachers claim to have miracle-working powers which enable them to cure sick people.

Soapbox

All these sects, in the Baptist and similar traditions, believe that to avoid eternal damnation they have to be born again, or 'saved'. These 'born again' Christians include President Ronald Reagan and former President Jimmy Carter. Vice-President Bush would probably like to forget one of his few witty remarks when he quipped that he was the only Republican who had only been born once!

The modern preacher, especially if he belongs to the religious right, no longer operates from a soapbox (though some of these can be still seen), or from a church of wooden planks with a tin roof. He has to have a huge and impressive auditorium of the most modern design seating thousands. But he addresses himself not so much to the live audience, who are really actors in the performance, but to a vast unseen audience of television viewers who may number millions.

Instead of going round with a plate for the audience's small change, the tele-evangelist has a battery of telephone-operators waiting to receive phone-in pledges, while he calls on the congregation to sign and send up the largest cheques possible. The success of the preacher is measured very much by the amount of money he can raise. The collection is the

high point of the service. It is a kind of test for the 'born again'. The size of the donation is a measure of commitment, and an emotional climate has to be created which favours the maximum amount of giving. The appeal may be backed up by pleas on behalf of starving children in some far-off country or other good works sponsored by the church. It may be for ammunition to fight Satan, depicted as a versatile and formidable opponent, constantly defeated but always coming back like a soap opera villain.

The funds extracted from the faithful become the basis for building up the resources of 'the ministry'. Around the mother church all sorts of facilities will be set up, from Disneyland-type reconstructions of biblical scenes to 'universities' for passing on theological doctrine and awarding degrees. A successful 'ministry' will have investments in real estate, commercial businesses and even the stock market. Books, tapes and a variety of religious objects are also sold to the faithful to provide a further source of income. No wonder that Presidential candidate Pat Robertson, one of the most successful preachers, prefers to be called, not a tele-evangelist, but 'a Christian businessman'.

As a capitalist business, like any other, that of evangelism is subject to the declining rate of profit. The number of faithful ceases to increase as fast as before. They cannot constantly increase the size of their donations. But the enterprise has to push ahead or fall into the red (that evil colour preferred by Satan, and the communists!). But evangelists have overreaching ambitions and expenditure tends constantly to outpace receipts. The slogan is 'God will provide'. The chief evangelist takes on the character of the chief executive officer of a capitalist business, second only to God. His success is measured not only by the size of his flock but by the material assets accumulated to the glory of God. He and his family also have to enjoy the lifestyle of the successful business executive; after all, would God expect him to settle for less? Humility, poverty (chastity?) would not take him far in America. So the evangelist lives in the way the faithful expect from someone who is both blessed and successful. The evangelist travels by executive jet, drives a Rolls-Royce or some domestic luxury car, with an identical model for his wife. He lives in a mansion, has town houses and rural retreats.

Evidence

All this sounds very much like the unbridled pursuit of material wealth and success for which American society is notorious and has very little to do with a literal interpretation of the New Testament. The actual practice of these 'ministries' and the teaching upon which they are supposedly based appear to be in complete opposition. How far can they be consi-

dered simply as rogues and swindlers, present-day medicine-men?

The question remains open, but let us look at some of the evidence. Certainly the tele-evangelists have been so successful that their churches are (or were) awash with dollars, and with no income tax to pay as religious institutions.

Jimmy Swaggart, one of the most famous - now notorious - operating from Louisiana, expressed some doubts himself only recently. 'I suspect that from 50 to 75 per cent of all monies donated to 'religious' activities are totally wasted', he wrote in the equivalent of his parish magazine. 'Not only are they misdirected, but in many cases they actually go to aid and abet the work of Satan'. No doubt he was thinking of the activities of rival evangelists, unaware that before long his own activities would come under scrutiny and make titillating headlines nationwide. Anyone who hadn't heard about Swaggart before knows about him now.

Meanwhile, another right-wing evangelist, Pat Robertson, was making a bid for the Republican presidential nomination, backed by his band of tight-knit and dedicated supporters. Robertson stands on the far right of the Republican Party, with which he has in common extreme anti-communism, anti-secularism as well as other reactionary positions. However, Robertson is regarded as a crack-pot by orthodox Republicans and Wall Street for his 'populist'-type economic theories and policies (such as the proposal that all debts should be cancelled every 50 years).

Strangely, for people professing Christianity, Robertson and other right-wing evangelists, are politically extreme nationalists, 100 per cent American. He wants to see American society 'reconstructed' along the lines of the Old Testament, where there will be no room for abortion, homosexuality, womens' rights or liberals - all the things that the right hates. Whether that will mean that adulterous women will be liable to lapidation as specified in the good book and actually practised in some Islamic countries remains to be seen. Rule by Robertson and his like would resemble that of the Ayatollahs.

Purge

Preparations for this can be seen in the drive against so-called 'secular humanism' (scientific and rational ideas) in the public schools and the substitution of Genesis for Darwin in the teaching of science. It means setting the clock back with a vengeance. A purge is now going on in some Baptist seminaries to drive out any remaining teaching that conflicts with a literal interpretation of the bible. Baptists still have a majority support among white southerners and number about 20 million. This was the reservoir of support upon which

LETTERS

Workers Press carried a series of articles during December and January, about the political discussion taking place among Irish Republican prisoners of war in the British imperialist jails. This included three articles by Simon Pirani, reviewing the book 'Questions of History' which was written by Irish political prisoners and published by Sinn Fein.

In May, during the period when Workers Press stopped publication, we received a letter from a Republican prisoner, taking up some of the points in these articles. We thank the comrade for the letter, and publish it at this first opportunity, inviting further discussion from readers.

Longkesh

IT WAS with profound interest that I read your series of reviews on the book 'Questions of History'. To my mind it reflected a clear willingness on the part of the Workers Revolutionary Party leadership to consider Republican ideas and to facilitate the spread of such ideas. Nevertheless, I do feel that despite the extensive coverage given to the book by Simon Pirani, the response via the letters column was virtually non-existent. This has led to fears on the part of some Republicans that WRP grass-roots activists view Ireland as if it was situated in the Caribbean — America's problem, not Britain's.

As to the review itself, Mr Pirani must be complimented on the amount of work he put into the project, and on his background knowledge which is clearly admirable. At the same time I feel there are a number of points raised by Simon Pirani which merit further comment and exploration.

In his first article (Workers Press number 105) Simon Pirani takes the line that imperialism and unionism are in 'mortal crisis', and because of this he argues that the protestant working class will be forced 'into united struggles against their will and expectations'. As such he feels Reed's view (1) that the working class (protestant and catholic) in the north cannot be united until imperialism is defeated, must be rejected. The problem with this view however, is that it reduces sectarianism to a simple combination of state manipulation and the existence of a labour aristocracy. This overlooks the relatively autonomous phenomenon of 'popular sectarianism', so usefully described by Munck and Rolston in their book 'Belfast in the thirties: an oral history'.

'Questions of History' admittedly does not give enough consideration to popular sectarianism but the subject has not been entirely overlooked (see for example page 101 'Questions of History'). While it is true that David Reed does open the door to a 'stage-ist' interpretation, the general thrust of 'Questions of History' and subsequent work as yet unpublished, has been to reject stage-ism while generally accepting Reed's argument. There has been a history of independent working class activity on the part of protestants but this has never at any time reduced, let alone negated, their sense of Orangeism. There is no evidence to

suggest that imperialist and unionist decline will produce any different effects. And if it did produce different effects, Republicans would welcome it—our task would be made that much easier.

In his third article (Workers Press number 107) Simon Pirani expresses the opinion that 'there are no grounds for believing that the Republican movement can become a revolutionary party of a Bolshevik type...'. Firstly this presupposes the need for such a party in modern conditions and, secondly, it views Republicanism as being in a historical trap out of which it cannot break free.

In relation to the first point, it may well be so that a Bolshevik-type party is required, but it seems to me that the left in general, and the Republican left in particular, treat the issue of vanguard parties without due regard to historical and geographical specificity. The concept is presented as if it were a given truth—as if it possessed a timeless, ahistorical and universal logic. How Marxian is such an approach? It would seem to me that Marxists, when advocating the need for a revolutionary party of a Bolshevik type, will need to do so in terms of what its purpose is in the present day rather than to attempt to transplant its usefulness in one context across time and space to what may be a totally different context. It is no longer good enough for the left in the Western world to explain away their marginalisation in terms of reformism, Stalinism, false consciousness etc. The inability of the left to persuade others of their right to serve as a vanguard party is a factor of tremendous importance.

As for Republicanism being in a historical trap, apart from the mechanistic nature of this belief, it also overlooks significant developments within Republicanism. The move from tradition to modernity expressed at the 1986 Ard Fheis (2) was undoubtedly a much more difficult move to make, than from radical nationalism to revolutionary socialism. The Republican movement may never take such a step and indeed this would be regrettable and self-defeating, but to predict in a mechanistic fashion is, in my opinion, not the best means of applying Marxist knowledge.

A Republican prisoner.

(1) This refers to David Reed of the Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG), whose book 'Ireland: the key to the British Revolution' takes the line that British imperialism has to be defeated in Ireland before the working class there can be united. This is referred to in 'Questions of History'. Simon Pirani's article attacked this position of Reed's.

(2) This was the Ard Fheis which—in opposition to a group led by Ruari O'Bradaigh who walked out to form Republican Sinn Fein—changed the movement's policy of refusing to take seats in the twenty-six county parliament at Leinster House. Sinn Fein candidates if elected to Leinster House will now take their seats, but a policy of abstention from the British parliament at Westminster remains.

Not serious?

Can we afford to waste a whole page of Workers Press on trivia? How can any serious party member think of the purchase of fine wines when our paper is starved of money?

Surely Comrade Pottins' articles on foreign news are more valuable than reviews of trivial literature or the choice of fine wine. We should not give space for such scribbling.

K.Ainsworth

Lecture Success

I write as one who has attended the first two of Peter Fryer's lectures on 'Aspects of British Black History'.

I would like to comment on the high quality of these lectures. Peter Fryer is to be congratulated both on the considerable amount of research which he has obviously undertaken on this important subject and on the clear and succinct manner in which his lectures were delivered.

Likewise Workers Press is to be commended for organising the lectures. I express the hope that Peter will be able at some future date to lecture on this topic outside London.

I feel sure that most of the audience were, like myself, previously unacquainted with much of the subject matter of the lectures. How many of us knew, for example, that the transformation of nineteenth century Britain into the 'workshop of the world' would not have been possible without the immense profits made by British slave traders? The suffering of the unfortunate negro slaves is a subject not usually mentioned during history lessons in British schools.

How many of us knew that at least a third of those transported from Africa to serve as slaves in the West Indies died during the voyage? Or that the expectation of life of what were previously fit and healthy men and women was only three or four years in the British-owned West Indian sugar plantations?

Another important fact to emerge was the wholesale destruc-

tion of native industries in India during and as a result of the subjugation of that country.

In our schools the building of the British Empire has usually been portrayed as something of benefit to 'backward' countries, yet in India, for example, previously unknown large scale famines occurred as a result of the deliberate policy of the profit-hungry British ruling class.

An objective evaluation of many aspects of history is an essential part of our struggle to build a new leadership for the international working class. The initiative taken by Workers Press in organising these lectures represents an important step towards this end.

A London reader

No offence

I am writing to express opinions on the new Workers Press.

My major criticism is that the front page used blatantly sexist language. The use of the term 'spokesman' serves to strengthen the 'male' image of revolutionaries.

Worse though, describing Jo Richardson as 'spokesMAN on WOMEN'S rights' sounds like a joke. The cause of paper-sellers is hindered by this sort of language. There is already concern about our lack of female supporters. Language like this alienates them further.

My other main criticism is of the absence of several important news items, namely the PLO struggle, the Alton Bill, Clause 28/29, the P & O workers' strike and the airline hijack.

Finally I have two smaller criticisms. Meaning no offence to any particular writers, the language of articles lacked dynamic. A revolutionary paper needs a lively front page and plenty of punch. Look at 'Socialist Worker' etc.

My other criticism is that Workers Press needs to be in a newspaper form: if we are to sell it on demos, picket lines, high streets, council estates etc.

I hope these criticisms are accepted in the spirit of comradeship.

*Neil March
Teignmouth, Devon*

RSG6 FOR SALE

An extensive — and expensive — property set in six-and-a-half acres of Berkshire countryside, that many old CNDers will remember as 'RSG 6', has come on the market.

Warren Row, comprising 20,000 feet of tunnels and underground chambers that were supposed to house military, government and police headquarters in the event of nuclear or civil war, is now surplus to requirements, the Defence Ministry says.

The existence of this secret bunker for top bureaucrats, one of a chain of Regional Seats of Government (RSGs) was exposed in 1963 by a group of anarchists who styled themselves Spies for Peace. Many

of the Aldermaston marchers that Easter broke off the main march on the A4 to demonstrate at the gates of Warren Row.

Altogether, the Spies for Peace pamphlet listed 12 RSGs sited strategically around Britain and one in occupied Northern Ireland as part of government war plans. Police and M15 tried to hunt down the authors, who also disclosed names of top civil servants picked to man the bunkers.

The last time RSG6 was used was two years ago by the Army during the Brave Defender exercises.

Now Henley estate agents Simmons and Lawrence are asking just £50,000 for Warren Row, a bargain at current Home Counties property prices! They suggest helpfully that it could be used as security vaults, a wine store, or even a night club or mortuary!

Marxist fundamentals in the 1980s

'Re-establishing Marxist Fundamentals for the 1980s' is the title of a school to be organised by the Workers Revolutionary Party in London on 8, 9 and 10 July.

Three main courses will be offered: an 'Introduction to Marxism'; 'Communist Society and Marxist Theory' and 'The Fourth International Today'.

A number of special lectures will be held: on the political situation in South Africa, on Art and Literature after the 1917 Russian Revolution and one on Aspects of British Black History—to be given by Peter Fryer.

Over the last two years the WRP (Workers Press) has been

forced to re-examine many political and theoretical questions that it formerly took for granted.

Under the old party leadership that was expelled in 1985 many of the fundamental principles of Trotskyism were abandoned.

The two principal leaders of the party, Mike Banda and Gerry Healy soon became open apologists for Stalinism. Banda is currently of the opinion that the victory of Fascism in Germany in 1933 was due not to the crimes of the Communist International under Stalin's leadership but to the alleged 'irrationality' of the German people.

Our school will be based on the intense political and

theoretical work we have carried out since this split.

Despite the boasts of Thatcher, Reagan and the other leaders of imperialism, capitalism has been unable to resolve its fundamental contradictions: millions starve to death each year while at the same time vast areas of the means for producing wealth go unused in the big capitalist countries of Western Europe and North America.

Hanging over the world capitalist economy are huge US budget and balance of payment deficits. These deficits will have to be tackled after the forthcoming Presidential elections, with severe consequences for the economies of Western Europe and Japan—

all of which are tied intimately to the American market.

And at the hour of its greatest need the Stalinist bureaucracy tries desperately to come to the aid of imperialism, withdrawing its troops from Afghanistan, plotting a secret deal with the Botha regime in South Africa that would, amongst other things, sacrifice Angola, and at the same time conniving to undermine the struggle of the Palestinian people.

We believe that only Trotskyism, the Marxism of today, can answer this crisis. That is why we are holding our school. We cordially invite all students and others to take part in the discussions that will take place at the school.

LEICESTER WRP
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June 18 & 19

On the Founding
of the
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(Workers Press).**

*Re-establishing Marxist Fundamentals for the
1980s.*

Three days of lectures and discussion for students
and others.

JULY 8, 9 and 10, 1988.

Venue: Kingsway—Princeton College, Sidmouth Street, WC 2. (Off
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Cost: £10 for three days, £5 per day.

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I/We enclose £..... for days at
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WORTHY OF OUR STEEL

BROADLY speaking, opponents of Marxism come in three main varieties.

First of all there are the mediocrities. Ignorant and presumptuous, most of them have read very little of what Marx and his successors actually wrote, don't understand what little they have read, and set up a man of straw whom they triumphantly refute.

This first variety heavily outnumber the second: those intelligent opponents who compel respect because they take the trouble to grapple with Marx's ideas.

During the recent unfortunate gap in publication of Workers Press, I used the spare time I suddenly found on my hands to read the collected notebooks and diaries of one of those intelligent opponents, the now unfashionable American novelist and critic Edmund Wilson, and also to reread after many years the book in which he develops his critique of Marxism: 'To the Finland Station' (1940).

Wilson was almost unique among anti-Marxists of his generation in that

he never for a moment confused Marxism with Stalinism, and never wrote from any sort of ivory tower.

He wasn't an academic, and on the whole he disliked and distrusted those whom he referred to as 'the Professoriat'. He recounted with relish the story of the professor who said: 'I find that nowadays every time I remember a student I forget a fossil fish.'

Of the four published volumes of notebooks and journals, covering more than 40 years, the one that Workers Press readers would probably find most interesting is 'The Thirties' (MacMillan, 1980).

This tells of his experiences in 1932 when, during the worst winter of the Depression, with 13,000,000 unemployed in the USA, he went with a delegation to the Kentucky coalfields on behalf of the Independent Miners' Relief Committee.

Starve

The coalowners were trying to isolate the miners and starve them into submission. Wilson and his companions were run out of the state, and some were beaten up, by sheriff's officers.

This volume also contains his on-the-spot impressions of a visit to the Soviet Union in 1935.

Two years later, in 'Triple Thinkers', he declared that 'Marxism in Russia

for the moment has run itself into a blind alley—or rather, it has been put down a well.'

The same book includes an admiring reference to Trotsky's 'Literature and Revolution' ('a most remarkable little study') and the judgement that 'if Marx and Engels and Lenin and Trotsky are worth listening to on the subject of books, it is not merely because they created Marxism, but also because they were capable of literary appreciation'.

Boast

Soon after Hitler came to power, Wilson recorded in his notebook that the Nazis were melting the life-size bronze statue of Marx in front of the Karl Liebknecht House into busts of Hitler, and announcing that they were not only going to extirpate Marxism but 'would tear the word out of every book till in 50 years time nobody in Germany was going to know what it meant.'

Here is the third kind of anti-Marxist: the modern barbarian. As I read Wilson's fiercely contemptuous entry I remembered that Thatcher not long ago made much the same vainglorious boast as Hitler.

We can be certain that where Hitler failed Thatcher will not succeed.

General Evren, the President of Turkey, has been invited to the UK for a state visit in July. A campaign has been set up to stop this visit, since General Evren, who has been in power since the military coup in 1980, has been responsible for the arrest of over half a million people, thousands of cases of systematic torture, and hundreds of deaths.

One of the leading trade union organisations DISK (The Trade Union Confederation of Revolutionary Workers) has been banned since September 1980. On the Mayday demonstration this year the police attacked and arrested more than 200 workers. The denial of self determination for the Kurdish people is perpetuated by the assimilationist policy of the Turkish state. Part of the campaign organised by a broad based committee of Turkish and Kurdish organisations to highlight the violations of basic human rights in Turkey today under the Evren regime, is a labour movement delegation in June which will visit military prisons in Metris, Mamak and Diyarbakir. The delegation will consist of Jeremy Corbyn MP, Diane Abbot MP, and Bernie Grant MP.

● The campaign is appealing for funds for their work: cheques payable to ORGANISING COMMITTEE TO PREVENT GENERAL EVREN'S VISIT TO UK, and send to: Liberty Hall, 489 Kingsland Road, London, E8.

Israeli prisoners attacked

Victims of Zionism

Israeli left-wing editor Michal Schwartz is in hospital with serious injuries after a prison attack. Friends understand Michal and colleague Roni Ben Efrat were set upon by criminal inmates, incited by prison officers.

The authorities had put it around that the two women had been 'helping terrorists'.

Roni and Michal, arrested in April, worked on the bilingual paper 'Derekh Hanitzotz/ Tariq as-Sharara', closed by the Israeli authorities in February because of its truthful reporting on repression and resistance in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza.

With others, including Roni's husband Ya'akov and staffer Ribhi al Aruri, they now face charges of 'belonging to an illegal organisation', (allegedly the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.) The case highlights the way the Zionist 'Iron Fist' policy of brutal repression against Palestinians in the occupied territories has inevitably spread back within the Israeli state.

The closure of Palestinian newspapers, arrests and deportations of journalists, and military closure of all printing presses in Gaza, was followed in March by a temporary closure order on the Haifa-based Communist Party newspaper 'Al Itihad'

In Jerusalem, Michael Warshawsky, a member of the 'Matzpen-Marxist' tendency (supporters of the United Secretariat-Fourth International) faces trial next month on charges of 'assisting a hostile organisation'. The charge refers to typesetting work for Palestinian trade union and women's organisations, which the authorities allege were linked to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

Four other Israelis — Yael Lotan, Reuben Kaminer, Latif Dori, and Eliezer Feiler, are awaiting sentence after being found guilty of 'terrorist contacts', for attending a peace conference last year in Bucharest with PLO representatives.

Bribes of packets of fags

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

They demanded the public security minister make a self-criticism over the growing violent crime in China. And one poster boldly asked 'Must we wait until someone from the home town of the general secretary is killed before we get protection?'

Posters attacking corruption have appeared around the campus. 'Bribes of expensive gifts have corrupted the whole of state industry,' one poster

alleged. 'Private business runs on bribes of packets of cigarettes.'

'There is a certain county which because of its old connections with party secretary Zhao can always obtain hard-to-get oil and raw materials,' it added.

The corruption issue arouses strong feelings among masses of Chinese working people, a recent opinion poll shows. And amid worsening social tensions, the bureaucracy is now trying to push through price increases in basic foods.

Lormin in the USA

cont...

Robertson hoped to draw during his campaign.

Despite an expenditure of over \$27 million, making him the biggest spender, Robertson came out a poor third in the Southern primaries on 8 March, dashing his hope for the presidency this year. He lives to fight again, liberally supplied with cash.

Reports of Robertson's campaign stressed that his stage-army of supporters was a dowdy lot, made up of lower middle class and blue collar workers, unlike the smart set following Bush - who topped the polls for the Republicans - or the well-groomed Dukakis people. This observation says something about the social basis of the support for the electronic preachers and the radical right in general. Spurned by the well-heeled, the better educated, middle class liberals, organised workers and blacks it makes its appeal to those who have in reality not done so well out of Reaganism - but put the blame somewhere else - on the decline in moral standards, on reds and liberals, on bankers and big government - just as Reagan did in 1980.

Likewise, the mass support for all the tele-evangelists comes mainly from those who believe in the American dream but feel that they have not fully shared in it. They seek consolation for their problems and anxieties in religion, 'the heart of a heartless world'. The teachings of the evangelical fundamentalists are precisely tuned to these underprivileged strata, uneasy with, or opposed to, many trends in modern capitalist society but unable to understand their predicament or to do anything about it. Being 'saved' is the substitute for the more satisfying life in this world which is beyond their reach.

Lost

In a country where the rat race is relentless and unceasing there are many who, while not being poverty-stricken, feel themselves lost, left behind and out of tune with the times. Trapped in routine jobs and a mediocre daily existence they look enviously not at the wealth and power of the ruling class (which they see through the distorting prism of 'Dallas' and 'Dynasty') but at that of the 'sinners'. They find solace in the assurance that they will be 'saved' from the horrors of hell (an exaggerated version of their daily lives) and will finally attain the American dream (in heaven). No need to do penance and obtain absolution through the old ritual, just listen to what Swaggart, Bakker, Robertson or Roberts say - and don't forget to keep sending the cheques.

Meanwhile, the preachers make cynical use of TV like other hucksters; to shift merchandise at a handsome profit, though their commodities are religious objects and 'salvation' itself. It will change your life even more thoroughly than changing your breakfast food or drinking more Coca-cola. It is all somewhat reminiscent of the sale of indulgences which Martin Luther denounced in the Catholic Church in the 1520s.

The powerful psychological hold which the evangelists are able to exercise over the converted, or 'saved', should not be underestimated. It enables the faithful to

accept flagrant contradictions and incongruities which are obvious to the outsider, such as the high-spending life-styles of the preachers themselves. The faithful willingly pay for the soothing snake-oil of the medicine men. They become addicts, hooked on a powerful drug ('the opium of the people'). They need a regular fix and remember to send in their regular cheques to keep the supply coming. A counter-organisation, Fundamentalists Anonymous, claiming many members, is now in business to help people break from the habit.

Recent revelations have done something to reduce Robertson's electoral appeal, too. Last year the focus was on the opulent life of Jim and Tammy Bakker, leaders of the PTL (Praise the Lord) ministry in South Carolina. It was revealed that Jim Bakker had had sex with a young woman euphemistically described as 'a church secretary', who had been bought off with a payment from church funds. Other allegations of homosexual as well as heterosexual activities were also made. It transpired that Tammy, who gave her name to a brand of tights sold by the church, had been under treatment for drug abuse. As extra-marital sex is number one carnal sin and drug-taking is not far behind, these revelations came as a shock to the faithful and an unexampled source of ribaldry for the cynical. Magazines and newspapers had a field day and the woman in the story became a celebrity, able to command large sums for exhibiting her body in the pages of 'Playboy'.

Mission

Jealous rival evangelists, including John Ankerberg, Jimmy Swaggart and the formidable Jerry Fallwell, played a key role in disgracing Bakker and driving his ministry into bankruptcy. Early this year, one of those, Jimmy Swaggart, was himself in deep trouble when it was learned that he was a regular client (though apparently not a generous one) of the New Orleans red light district. His church was presented with photographs showing him in the company of a prostitute, and not on a charitable mission. Presented with the evidence, Jimmy confessed and called for forgiveness from his flock and his family. Significantly, however, the evidence had been obtained by a private detective working for another evangelist, Marvin Gorman, who had been unfrocked and thrown out of the church - on the instigation of Swaggart - for adulterous conduct. Undeterred, Gorman had set up a church of his own, which has been modestly successful and initiated court action against Swaggart for spreading false rumours about his sexual misconduct, claiming damages of \$90 million, no less. Whether this is the end of the saga remains to be seen.

Meanwhile, just as these new revelations appeared, Robertson's presidential campaign was warming up and obtaining some unexpected successes in the north. He promptly accused Bush supporters for the timing of the revelations and other dirty tricks. Robertson had already been needled by two accusations. One was that he had used the influence of his father, a Senator, to avoid going into the combat zone when serving in the army during the Korean War. The second was that when he married his wife was five months pregnant, damaging for someone who made the denunciation of extra-marital

sex a major part of his preaching. His reply to the latter charge was that at the time he had not yet been born again. These accusations, as well as the Bakker and Swaggart affairs, may well have accounted for Robertson's poor showing in the southern primaries and the religious right as a whole has taken something of a beating. Receipts from collections have fallen off sharply. The scandals involving the Bakkers, Gorman and Swaggart were made for prime-time TV but hardly likely to increase the audiences for the evangelist shows. The PLT ministry is in bankruptcy and financial austerity has spread to others. Swaggart's own ministry, for example, has been under scrutiny for years by a critical local TV station. As long ago as 1983 it pointed to extravagant spending and lack of accountability. It charged that little of the cash raised to feed starving children overseas actually reached them. The church gave employment to over 1,500 people. Swaggart's headquarters at Baton Rouge, Louisiana, is run by a seven-member board, 4 of whom are members of the Swaggart family. A couple of dozen other family members are on the payroll. Total revenue last year amounted to over \$141 million; of that, spending on TV time and equipment accounted for \$45 million. It claims to put on TV and radio programmes in 145 countries. Swaggart was particularly on the treadmill to raise more money. As one authority on the subject put it, 'It's hard to tell whether they are on television to raise money or raising money to stay on television'. Now that, to say the least, Swaggart has been exposed as a sanctimonious humbug, the finances of his Baton Rouge operation are likely to face closer examination by the media - and the Internal Revenue Service.

If a weekend assignation with a young model could practically ruin the career of a budding president (Gary Hart), Swaggart's sordid trysts with prostitutes makes it unlikely that he will be able to resume his previous authoritarian rule or that his denunciation of extra-marital sex will have the same degree of credibility as in the past.

Setback

Although these various revelations have exposed the raw underside of the evangelical business, they may prove to be no more than a temporary setback for a movement which expresses the needs of millions of Americans. Of course, further revelations may come. Evangelicals are authorities on sin and do doubt will try to turn to

advantage the successes which the devil has achieved even in the top ranks of their own organisations. These sects thrive on guilt, especially guilt associated with sex. Newer figures will no doubt emerge to take the place of those who have fallen by the wayside more have lost their former charismatic powers.

One such is Oral Roberts who achieved the ultimate in frantic fund-raising by announcing that God would 'call him home' if the fund target was not met. While the rank-and-file faithful did their bit it was a friendly bookmaker who enabled Roberts, age 70, to stay in this world for a bit longer. The more orthodox churches in preaching style and doctrine are hoping to capture some of the disillusioned faithful. Tele-evangelism will not die, but it will never be quite the same; viewers will keep a tighter hold on their cheque-books now that they have a better idea of where their money is going.

Apart from these scandals and their repercussions, what has to be emphasised is the open association of evangelical Christianity with right-wing politics of the most reactionary kind and the renewed emphasis on fundamentalism, the literal truth of the bible. Needless to say this outlook is anti-rational, anti-scientific and totally obscurantist. It expresses, in one form, the decay and decadence of capitalist society, one that renounces the great achievements of bourgeois thought itself from the time of the 18th century enlightenment. It uses the most advanced techniques of modern science and reason to explain what was otherwise inexplicable in the material world around them.

This trend is not confined to Christianity; a wave of fundamentalism is sweeping the Muslim world. Nor is it even necessary to be religious in the conventional sense. Publishers and booksellers are responding to a demand for what the trade calls 'New Age' books, the fastest growing market in the publishing business. These books deal with the occult, mysticism, reincarnation, astrology, the supernatural and purported meetings with extra-terrestrial beings.

People who snap up these books are no doubt of a higher level of education and sophistication than the followers of the tele-Evangelists and might feel insulted to be put in the same camp. But this vogue is equally symptomatic of the irrational, anti-intellectual and idealist currents generated by capitalist society in decline. Marxists need to follow and closely examine and analyse these trends as part of the social crisis of a decadent system.

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Thatcher's credit crisis

THE SECOND rise in interest rates within a week underlines the continuing instability of British capitalism as well as the continuing tensions within the Tory Party about how to handle this instability.

The second rise — taking bank base rates to 8.5 per cent — was caused by growing concern at an uncontrolled credit boom.

Over the last year alone, credit has increased by 20 per cent and the boom shows no signs of slowing down.

Credit grew by 1.2 per cent in April and the Department of Trade and Industry last week admitted that it had seriously underestimated the pace of expansion.

The chronic decline of British manufacturing means that much of this expansion will be used to buy imported goods from Japan and western Europe, bringing the threat of a severe balance of payments crisis later this year and with it the need for a savage contraction of the economy.

Interest rates had to rise over the last two weeks if the credit boom was not to get completely out of hand. But the much publicised

conflict between Thatcher and her Chancellor Nigel Lawson still remains in the background.

This conflict has nothing to do with personalities or with the question of who will be the next leader of the Tory party. Lawson wants to control the level of sterling on the foreign exchanges by manipulating interest rates.

Thatcher believes sterling should be allowed to find its own level through the play of market forces.

Conflict

What is this conflict about? A rising pound means that British exports are forced up in price and imports correspondingly fall in price.

Manufacturing industry, what is left of it, therefore wants to see the pound as low as possible.

The City of London on the other hand has a vested interest in seeing sterling at the highest possible level: this is necessary if London is to retain its position as a leading financial centre against growing competition from other areas of the world.

For over a century the British

BY GEOFF PILLING

ruling class has relied on considerable 'invisible earnings' (money from banking, insurance, shipping services, interest from capital exports and the like) to cover up the long drawn out decline in the manufacturing sector of the economy which started in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

In 1870 Britain was responsible for about a third of total world trade. By 1950 this share had fallen to ten per cent and now stands at around half that level.

Over the same period Britain's slice of world industrial production fell from over 30 per cent in 1870 to its present level of around three per cent.

One feature of the 'Thatcher years' has been the growing parasitism of British capital, with ever more weight falling on these financial activities with manufacturing industry declining at an accelerating rate.

This is not the result of some 'policy decision' on the part of the ruling class.

The Stalinists, echoing what the Keynesian reformists have long

said, bemoan the fact that industry has been successively undermined by the needs of finance and banking. Their solution for the economic malaise of British capitalism — the so-called Alternative Economic Strategy — is as utopian as it is reactionary.

It consists of an expansion of the economy brought about through government spending and a policy of import controls to allow the revival of the manufacturing base of the economy to revive.

The first policy — greater government spending — would merely fuel the inflationary credit boom which is now of such concern to the Treasury.

A policy of import controls would pit workers of one country against each other and assist the capitalist class's policy of 'divide and rule'.

Overshadowing all the problems of British capitalism is the fear of the instability of the American economy. Whoever wins the coming Presidential election will be driven to take a series of protectionist measures to control the US external deficit. Such moves would spell ruination for much of British industry along with that of Western Europe and Japan.

Lefts have no answer to TU crisis

continued from page one

For over a century, the British capitalist state has rested on an alliance — tacit or explicit — between finance-capital and the labour bureaucracy. Built up at the time of the world-dominance of the Empire, this combination contained the class struggle within bounds through two world wars, the 1929 slump, and the period of Britain's imperial decline.

After the bureaucracy had betrayed the post-1918 upsurge, it was possible for the Labour Party leaders to alternate the role of HM Loyal Opposition with that of HM Government.

But this intricate machine would have blown up on many occasions without another piece of accessory equipment. The trade union and Labour Party left-wing, joined later by the Stalinists, was required to provide an essential safety-valve, making radical noises from time to time. At the present stage of development of world capitalism, however, this entire apparatus is unable to function in its old form.

For several years, the leaders of the EETPU, in conjunction with other sections of the trade union bureaucracy, have

been moving towards a new and more direct collaboration with monopoly-capital and its Thatcherite spokesmen. In behind-the-scenes discussions with the representatives of the monopolies and the State, they have been planning to sell the rights and conditions of the working class as a whole, promising to deliver up a tame workforce to the transnationals.

Shield

While this 'new realism' has been taking shape, Willis and Kinnock have been playing their part as a shield for Hammond, Jordan and the like. Meanwhile, the 'lefts' and the Stalinists look for some way to patch things up between the two wings of the bureaucracy. (The parallel with the way the SDP was allowed to prepare their split with the Labour Party is more than a coincidence.)

The bureaucracy aimed to demoralise and disrupt the efforts of rank and file trades-unionists to resist the Thatcher offensive. But the stubborn struggles of miners, printers and others, while not victorious in themselves, nonetheless

blocked the success of this plan. Now, two years after the EETPU played its scab-herding role at Wapping with impunity, the Hammond-ites are obliged to come into the open and to break with the rest of the TUC.

Socialists in the unions must fight to kick Hammond and his backers out of the movement, as direct agents of the employers. Members of the EETPU who are principled trades unionists should be welcomed into membership of bona fide unions.

Decay

The line that the unity of the TUC must stand above everything else must be rejected. Unity with Hammond, Jordan and their like is unity with those who want to sell the working class directly to the capitalist state and the employers.

Long ago, just before Stalin's assassin killed him, Leon Trotsky discussed the function of trade unionism in 'the epoch of imperialist decay':

'Monopoly capitalism is less and less willing to reconcile itself to the independence of the trade unions,' he wrote. 'It demands of the reformist bureaucracy and the labour aristocracy who pick the crumbs from its banquet table, that they become transformed into its political police before the eyes of the working class...'

'Does this mean that in the epoch of imperialism independent trade unions are generally impossible? It would be fundamentally incorrect to pose

the question this way. Impossible are independent or semi-independent trade unions. Wholly possible are trade unions which not only are notholders of imperialist policy but which set as their task the direct overthrow of the rule of capitalism....'

'This means a struggle to turn the trade unions into the organs of the broad exploited masses and not organs of a labour aristocracy.'

These words have greater significance today than when they were written. The unions have to go beyond their function as bargainers with capital, pressurising employers into granting better wages and conditions. They have to mobilise, not only their existing membership, but their families and entire communities, bringing to the fore those sections of unemployed, youth, woman and migrant workers who are the chief victims of international capital.

In the globalised economy of today, they cannot restrict themselves to the struggles on a British scale, but must turn to the fight against the transnational corporations and their financial controllers. But for such changes, they can no longer look to parliamentary reforms to answer the attacks of the State.

The transformation of the unions along these lines requires the building of a leadership based on implacable struggle against reformism and Stalinism. We invite you to join the Workers Revolutionary Party in carrying forward this struggle.