

“Sure We’ll Fight the Capitalists—in Russia”

# Mensheviks Wave Stars and Stripes at URPE Conference

A March 17 New York City conference on “the Nature of the Soviet Union and its Role in the World Today,” attended by at least 800 people, became a platform for traitors to the cause of revolution who did their best to turn it into a social-chauvinist rally in favor of U.S. imperialism.

The conference was called under the name of the Union of Radical Political Economists (URPE). The Revolutionary Workers Headquarters—the Menshevik faction that tried to split the RCP a year ago over the question of China—came to dominate the conference, mainly by behind-the-scenes maneuvering, organizational connections and icing out other forces, and not by the power of their line. In fact, most people who came were expecting a very different sort of event.

A very reactionary event it was indeed. True, the USSR was called out for the state monopoly capitalist, imperialist country that it is—but to what end? To win people to the

lie that the U.S. variety of imperialism is the lesser evil. And rather than bring out the revolutionary tasks of the American working class and people in the face of a superpower confrontation, the conference single-mindedly focused on describing Soviet aggression in a way that left out U.S. imperialism altogether, and instead presented the U.S. as a “positive factor” in a worldwide anti-Soviet united front.

Originally the conference was billed as a debate featuring some Soviet representatives, well-known writer Paul Sweezy, and one of the authors of *Red Papers 7: How Capitalism Has Been Restored in the Soviet Union and What This Means for the World Struggle*. Neither the first nor the third of these features turned out to be real.

The large number of people and their mood indicated how much many people are searching for answers to the questions posed by the restoration of capitalism in the USSR

and now China, brought out especially sharply by the new U.S.-China alliance and the Vietnam-China war. Questions like why countries that call themselves socialist are locked in combat, about what the hell is going on in the world and what should be the orientation and tasks for progressive and revolutionary-minded people in the U.S.

While a number of workshop speakers tried to seriously take up these questions, the net effect of the conference was to promote confusion and demoralization—and to influence some people with a thoroughly reactionary line.

## Empiricist Exposure of USSR

In their own plenary presentation and in the workshops, the Mensheviks never talked about what had happened in the USSR to allow the bourgeoisie to seize power. They failed to talk about what this experience means for the proletariat worldwide in its

the villages and to the factories. We must not let writers stay in the government offices; they will never get anything written if they do not go down. Whoever does not go down will get no dinner; only when they go down will they be fed.” (“Talks at the Spring Festival.”)

The film also raises the important question of what the colleges should teach. One day Dean Sun, under the influence of the revisionist line, holds forth at length in the classroom on “the function of the horse’s tail,” completely ignoring the fact that horses are seldom seen in that area of China, while water buffalo, about which he knows and cares nothing, are vital to farming there. The students criticize his lectures, the revisionist chieftains counterattack. “This has upset our whole curriculum!”

Where Mao would stand in such a struggle is clear. He said, “If your lecture is no good, why insist on others listening to you? Rather than keeping your eyes open and listening to boring lectures, it is better to get some refreshing sleep. You don’t have to listen to nonsense, you can rest your brain instead.” (“Talks at the Spring Festival.”) And Mao regarded the question of what class education should serve as a critical question of the revolution.

In the film the revisionist view is best put forward by vice-principal Tsao who angrily asks, “ $2 + 2 = 4$ . Tell me, which class does that belong to? If we can train students with a high level of knowledge, won’t they be serving socialism?” But Dean Sun finds out just the opposite. His best student used his skill to profit off the peasants. Shocked, Sun, unlike Tsao, changes and realizes bourgeois intellectuals can in fact become a powerful social base which the revisionists can mobilize for capitalist restoration (as has actually happen-

ed in the Soviet Union and now in China).

This is a direct attack on what Teng Hsiao-ping was saying at the time and openly said at the National Science Conference in 1978: “The overwhelming majority of them (intellectuals) are part of the proletariat. The difference between them and the manual workers lies only in a different role in the social division of labour. Those who labour, whether by hand or by brain, are all working people in a socialist society.” (*Peking Review*, No. 12, 1978.) He also explains that as long as you’re working under socialism, you are automatically red.

This is nothing but the same “dying out of class struggle” crap Liu Shao-chi and the rest of the capitalist-roaders mouthed. The revisionists have now even more blatantly reversed Mao’s line and declared that the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois intellectuals are “no longer the object of uniting, educating, and remoulding, but are now a part of the working class engaged in mental labour and a force the Party relies on.” “Fundamental changes have taken place” (!!!) and this policy of Mao’s is “no longer applicable” (*Beijing Review*, No. 5, 1979, p. 10, our emphasis). The bourgeois academic tyrants have now really been unleashed to lord it over the masses.

## Fight the Bourgeoisie in the Party!

Throughout the film, the nature of class struggle under socialism unfolds. The basic line is, as Mao formulated, “Socialist society covers a considerably long historical period. In this historical period of socialism, there are still classes, class contradictions, and class struggle, there is the struggle between the socialist road and the capitalist road, and there is the danger of capitalist restoration.” The

bourgeoisie, he points out, is right in the Communist Party—those in power taking the capitalist road. In the film, behind bourgeois intellectuals like vice-principal Tsao stand the real commanders, the capitalist roaders. At each point, a high party official, Chao (conspicuously similar to Chou En-lai) protects and unleashes bourgeois forces to attack the proletariat.

The revisionists must ban *Breaking* and all revolutionary culture which drags them out, indicts them and prepares the masses for their revolutionary overthrow. Teng & Co. desperately are banning the term “rightists,” and are even removing the designations of landlord and rich peasant (*Beijing Review*, No. 7, 1979, p. 8). To attack Mao’s whole line of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat, *Hongqi* (Red Flag, Feb. 1979, p. 6) accuses the “Gang of 4” of “enlarging the target of the class struggle... using the mysterious, so-called basic line.” (In other words, *what* basic line?) “They cooked up without any basis in reality, class struggle, class enemies inside the party; even cooked up a so-called bourgeoisie inside the party.” The revisionist criminals are truly terrified of the light of day.

*Breaking With Old Ideas* is deadly poison to the bourgeoisie, but a tremendous inspiration for the proletariat. The Chinese revolutionaries who literally put their lives on the line and defied the revisionists to produce this film have created a tremendous and inspiring testament to the power of art at the command of the proletariat. It is a must film for all who want a taste of what is possible under proletarian dictatorship—a product of intense class struggle, and in turn, a weapon to wage that struggle. The RCP is proud to have preserved this film for the proletariat. ■

struggle to achieve communism. They didn't even pay lip service to Mao Tsetung and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, an earth-shaking mass movement to oppose and prevent capitalist restoration based in large part on a summation of what had happened in the USSR.

Of course this was no oversight. Were they to go into these issues, they risked opening a Pandora's box of questions about the path of the neo-Krushchevite rulers of China today. Instead of addressing these questions, their plenary speaker begged off, saying lamely that "not much practice in building socialism has been accumulated" and that therefore "confusion is inevitable."

How remarkable that this Menshevik plenary speaker who bills himself as a "contributor" to *Red Papers 7* had so little to say about the basic class analysis of the USSR which is the backbone and bulk of that book! Part of the explanation is petty careerist pilfering, since his only "contribution" to *Red Papers 7* was a heavily edited travelogue in the book's appendix. But more, the problem was directly political, because in fact the Mensheviks don't and can't agree with that book at all—since its analysis of the process of capitalist restoration applies all too well to China today and not just the USSR.

While the Mensheviks were avoiding the question of the class nature of the present system of the USSR and how it got to be that way, they were leaving the field open for some other featured speakers who did address those questions. One, associated with the neo-Trotskyite (Trotskyite without Trotsky) Communist Labor Party, argued forcefully that the USSR is *not* capitalist but socialist. Another, Paul Sweezy, argued that it is neither capitalist nor socialist but something mysterious in between—a "state society" in which neither the proletariat nor the bourgeoisie runs the state.

The Mensheviks were not at all reluctant to blast away with fact after fact to show how terrible life is in the USSR—without saying why, except in the most superficial way. And they were particularly eager to use "facts"—long descriptions of Soviet aggression in Asia, Africa and Latin America—to "prove" their point that "the Soviets are the main force at this time directly bringing war and aggression to the countries and peoples of the world."

What were people supposed to conclude from this? As one leading Menshevik, a "theoretician" more herky-jerky than ever, put it: "I'll say it straight out—the U.S. has a positive role to play."

Of course he went on to justify this in the name of defending "socialism." This omits the minor detail that China is no longer a socialist country, that China is on the capitalist road *even* according to the criteria advanced by the Mensheviks in their split with the Party—before Teng Hsiao-ping launched his Great Leap. But even aside from all this, what they are putting forward is not some tactical maneuver to "defend China" but a strategy for capitulation to the U.S. imperialists. In their special conference edition of the "10¢ Workers Voice," they describe what they mean by "positive factor" with this statement: "Militant opposition to

foreign aggression—particularly to the Soviet Union which is seeking to align new forces to launch a new world war—has already started to become effective and is an integral part of the struggle for social change and revolution throughout the world. We offer this supplement in this spirit, the spirit of increasing awareness and opposition to the aggression of the Soviet Union; the spirit of opposition to all wars of foreign aggression; the spirit of continuing to stand up and fight for independence, liberation and revolution."

This is exactly a rerun in miniature of the stand taken by Karl Kautsky, the German "socialist" whose name has become synonymous with a betrayal of revolution, the renegade who sought to find an "internationalist" cover for his national chauvinism. On the eve of and during World War I, he denounced imperialist aggression—the imperialist aggression of Germany's rival, Russia. He did a thorough job of exposing Russian aggression in Turkey and stood up for its independence, declaring "Turkey must not be made a vassal state to anyone"—while neglecting to mention German imperialism's war aims of conquering Turkey for itself.

Lenin denounced such people by showing how they "help their respective imperialist governments by concentrating attention principally on the insidiousness of their rival and enemy, while throwing a veil of vague, general phrases and sentimental wishes around the *equally* imperialist conduct of 'their own' bourgeoisie." ("Bourgeois Pacifism and Socialist Pacifism," *Lenin on War and Peace*, Peking, 1970, p. 84.) This describes the Mensheviks to a "T."

#### "Practical" Opportunists

In contrast to the CPML's attempts to stuff their opportunism and national chauvinism with the "Three Worlds" theoretical dressing, these Mensheviks base their call for people to bow down before the Stars and Stripes on agnosticism, empiricism and some old American pragmatism.

Their promotion of agnosticism with the nonsense about "not much experience" having been accumulated in socialist construction boils down to: Well, who can know what socialism is—all we know is that no matter what, China is a socialist country and we've got to defend it; and we've got to support the U.S. imperialists because they are a defense for China. They talk as though Mao and the advances of the Chinese revolution never existed. As though there were no laws which distinguish capitalism from socialism. In this, the Trotskyites certainly have become a "positive factor" for them. Not because the Trots agree with the particulars of their line (they tend to be pro-Soviet), but because they claim that no socialist country can ever really go capitalist, and like the Mensheviks try to hide the class nature of the conflict between the U.S. and the USSR.

But an even more raunchy component of their agnosticism is their continuing theme that because of the rise of the USSR as a superpower "we have to look at the world with new eyes," and "liberate our minds from old categories and old thinking." This kind of

stuff is very much in vogue now among petty bourgeois radicals, although the *Guardian*, for example, another leading exponent of the new know-nothing trend, uses the same approach to argue for going along with the Soviets. But whatever mutant form of opportunism this agnosticism takes, they all try to use the particularities of the present world situation to attack the basic line set by Lenin for the whole imperialist era—for the workers and oppressed people of the world to unite and overthrow all the imperialists and their allies in every country.

The Mensheviks argue that everything is different today because the workers of the world do have a country which they must defend—China. First, this is wrong because China is not socialist. Second, even if it were still socialist, while it might conceivably be necessary for it to enter into a tactical alliance with one imperialist bloc against the other, as the then-socialist USSR correctly did in the face of the threat from Nazi Germany, this would never justify *capitulating* to imperialism, calling imperialist politics and aggression "a positive factor," and trying to pin the workers and peoples of the world like a tail on some imperialists' war horse. The strategic aim of the working class in the era of imperialism is still to overthrow it. It's still proletarian revolution and not preserving imperialism in the name of defending socialism.

The Mensheviks' agnosticism goes hand in hand with their empiricism. They throw up a smokescreen of jumbled facts isolated from any (openly stated) overall analysis of the world situation. The Soviets are trying to move in on Latin America, they are moving in Africa, the U.S. has been weakened in Southeast Asia and Iran, etc. From all of these "facts" they imply that the only beast that exists is the Soviets. And they conveniently ignore the central fact that both superpowers are heading up imperialist blocs and are locked in combat for a new redivision of the world. But of course there is an overall analysis behind all this, one based on opportunism and national chauvinism.

And their line is pragmatic in the most disgusting form. "We oppose Soviet aggression, don't we?" Then what could be more "practical" than joining with the U.S., the most powerful anti-Soviet force in the world? This is very practical indeed—unless your goal happens to be breaking free of imperialism and all reaction, a goal which can never be reached by joining up with one or the other superpower war bloc.

#### Opportunists Collude and Contend

For the Mensheviks, this conference represents something of a coup, about the most "successful" (that is, big) thing they've been able to pull off in over a year of searching for cracks to crawl through. They proved far more capable of promoting the stars and stripes on the basis of "facts" and practical considerations than the CPML has been with all its patently absurd appeals to capitulationism on the basis of the "three-worlds theory" and ridiculous claims that this was the way Mao Tsetung said to go—which appeals neither to genuine followers of Mao

## Vietnam Veteran Stands Trial

# What's Wrong With Treason?

(WPS)—In September 1965, Marine private Robert Garwood, a jeep driver, disappeared on the way to division headquarters near Da Nang, Vietnam. Now, thirteen years later, Garwood has come back to the U.S., where he is being kept under lock and key on a military base on charges of having deserted to the other side and trying to get other GIs to do the same.

Shortly after Garwood disappeared, an American was spotted fighting alongside Vietnamese liberation forces. As *Newsweek* put it, "It may or it may not have been Garwood, since a handful of other Americans also had gone over to the other side. These deserters were known to American troops by nicknames such as 'Porkchop,' 'Tex,' and (in the case of a white renegade and his black sidekick) 'Salt and Pepper.'" This was in 1965, in the *first months* of all-out American troop involvement, before thousands of GIs declared their own peace with the Vietnamese liberation forces and American officers seemed more likely to get killed by their own men than by the other side, before GI rebellions began to blow the U.S. armed forces apart.

When men accused of siding with the "enemy" came home—and there were more

than a few of them—they faced the stockade or prison mental wards. The military used every psychological and chemical means at their disposal to break them—not to get them to recant, which was impossible, but to convince them that it was useless to hold out. Their families came under intense fire. Sinister "friends," like lawyers eager to "save" them if only they'd be "reasonable," sprang up from nowhere. At least one ex-POW who was the victim of such an assault was driven to suicide.

These men had it driven home to them—if they hadn't figured it out already—that this wasn't their country, that it's the capitalist ruling class that runs it and tries to crush all resistance.

When these men were coming back from Vietnam a few years ago, the bourgeoisie did their best to keep it quiet. They tried to keep it out of the public eye, and didn't make a big deal about denouncing them as traitors before the people, for fear that a great many people would support them and realize that they too supported treason.

With Garwood, it's different. Now the imperialists have no choice. They're dusting off the uniforms and the rifles, and they know damn well that an awful lot of people didn't like the last war and don't want to fight another one. So they throw the book at Gar-

wood and threaten to take him out and shoot him, and hope that all the guys who'll be the grunts next time are watching and learning a lesson. At the same time they're hoping they can get Garwood to say that he didn't do it, so that they can pretend that it's impossible that any American would ever turn against "his" country.

But to some extent, and for a time, millions of Americans turned against "their" country during the war in Vietnam. A great many came to stand up for the other side. This has left a deep impression, which helps to prepare the conditions so that next time, when it won't be a matter of going over to the "enemy" but of opposing both superpower sides, GI rebellion can lead to turning the guns around and waging revolution.

Those GIs who committed treason were the only American heroes in Vietnam. Those who refused to go out in combat or fraged an officer, those who rebelled, demonstrated, mutinied—they struck a blow against the common enemy of the people of the U.S. and Vietnam. There were thousands of heroes like this in Vietnam, thousands who betrayed their country, betrayed the imperialist blood-suckers who rule America and sent them to Vietnam, and in this way stood up for the real, basic, revolutionary interests of the American people and the people of the world. Those who took their guns and went over to the side of the Vietnamese showed true valor.

They joined up with and waged a war against the U.S. imperialists. Such men pointed to the future. One day, if in other wars the rulers of the U.S. put guns in our hands, the American working class and the masses of American people in their millions will launch our own war and wipe them off the face of the earth. ■

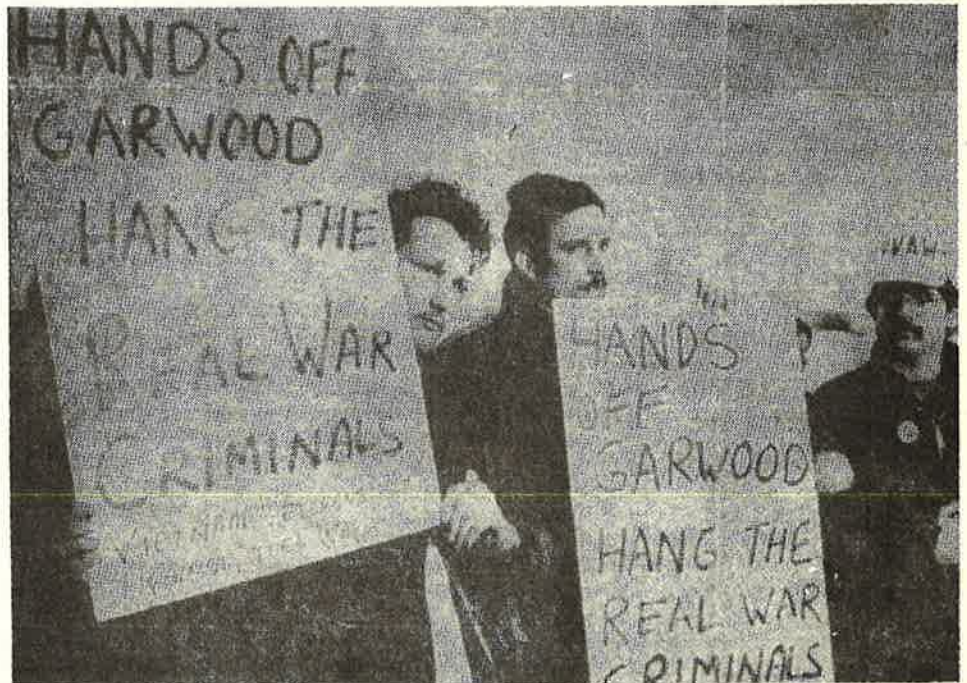
## URPE

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Tsetzung nor to the pragmatist and somewhat anti-communist minds of many petty bourgeois radicals. For awhile the Mensheviks seemed reluctant to openly put out the CPML "defend U.S. imperialism" on the basis of the "Soviet main danger" line. But now the Mensheviks have achieved advanced world levels in social-chauvinism themselves.

Why wasn't the equally social-chauvinist CPML brought into the conference in a big way? Was it because their long-time practice has made them stink to even the most naive radicals? Is it because the Mensheviks didn't want the CPML there to start yapping about the "three worlds" and so on and blow their empiricist and pragmatist trip? Or was it just plain sectarian rivalry? Of course, all this takes place within the context of growing unity between the two groups and the promise of more to come, despite all the jockeying for just who is going to unite on top of whom.

This whole conference was a backward step which at best left people confused and/or annoyed and in a few cases actually won some people over to its counterrevolutionary line. It was an attempt to ambush people who have come forward against U.S. imperialism and turn them upside down. ■



VVAW interrupts close-door press conference at Chicago military base where Garwood is held. "Why are you trying to hang Garwood?" Marine security freaks out. "Isn't this one more way to get the American people prepared for war?"