

Debate with CPML Begins

Two weeks ago we issued a challenge to the CPML for a debate on the situation in China. We offered to exchange articles in each other's newspapers as the form of debate. Since the CPML has not yet replied, we have decided to begin printing their articles anyway. The first installment which appeared in the October 1st issue of The Call was titled—unbelievably, as usual—“China's flourishing culture seen in Bob Hope special.” Among other things, this article shows that in order to reverse right and wrong politically, The Call also has to go to great lengths to reverse long settled questions such as whether or not Bob Hope is funny. The Gang of Four are accused of suppressing reactionary comedians like Mr. USO Bob Hope, who was also run out of Vietnam by the American troops he was sent to entertain. If this charge against the Four is true, then this proves conclusively that not only did they have a correct political line, but they were also artistically excellent and had a great sense of humor. The Revolutionary Worker printed an article on this same Bob Hope special in the September 21st issue. The Call article is reprinted in full below:

China's flourishing culture seen in Bob Hope special

Bob Hope's TV special “On the

Road to China” provided American audiences with a good look at China's flourishing cultural life in the wake of the gang of four.

The three-hour special, which was a product of a four-week stay in China by Hope and his company, featured traditional Chinese opera, acrobatics, classical ballet and skits performed by three Chinese comedians.

The cultural dictatorship imposed on the Chinese people by the gang had suppressed most of these art forms. In fact, one of the comedians had been jailed for his political opposition to the gang and the two others forced to abandon their craft.

In place of a hundred flowers blossoming, the gang created a cultural desert. Jiang Qing's eight “model works,” with their stereotyped style, were performed endlessly and nothing else was allowed.

The recent TV special, aired Sept. 16 on NBC, demonstrated that China is again experimenting with and mastering many different art forms. Compared to life under the gang, in fact, a cultural revolution of sorts is taking place in China today.

The U.S. contribution to this cultural exchange was well within the mainstream of American culture but without any of the T'n'A usually associated with variety shows. Peaches and Herb and Crystal Gale carried the disco and country rock sounds to China while Big Bird of Sesame Street and mimes

Shields and Yarnell added comedy.

The show featured two especially touching moments. One was the reception given Mikhail Baryshnikov by a Chinese ballet company which had been unable to perform for nearly a decade due to the gang's xenophobic outlook. Classical ballet was one-sidedly viewed as bourgeois and “foreign” although millions find great beauty and powerful emotions in the incredible technique demanded by this art.

The other moment was an exchange between Hope and the three comedians whose pantomimes were both hilarious and poignant in light of the fact that their talent had been suppressed for so many years.

One thing marring the show were the chauvinist remarks made by Hope. But

some of his humor was in fact geared to the Chinese. Hope confided that they especially liked two of his jokes.

One was a crack about how he had enjoyed the ride from Beijing airport even though the handlebars were a little rough. Another was when he quipped after a toast of Mao-tai, “One sip of that and your head will have a cultural revolution.”

The Hope special had a larger significance, though, than just a cultural exchange. In part because of Hope's immense popularity among the American people, his “On the Road to China” special was symbolic of the developing ties of friendship between the American and Chinese people. ■

“Singin' 
in the Acid”

