

## Lawyers Guild Meeting

# Mao Defendants Case Stirs Dispute

On August 13, the National Executive Committee of the National Lawyers Guild (NLG) passed a resolution demanding that all charges be dropped against the Mao Tsetung Defendants. RCP supporters had asked the Guild to take a firm position against this assault on the Party and its Chairman. The National Lawyers Guild won a fighting reputation for its struggle against red-baiting and McCarthyite repression in the 1940s and 1950s and in many political court battles since then. The NLG could play a very helpful role in mobilizing members of the legal profession and others to stand up to the government's attacks in this case.

For this reason the resolution was definitely a positive development. It was the product of some sharp struggle which took place at the Guild's National Executive Board meeting (essentially a bi-annual mini-convention) over the weekend in Minneapolis. This struggle revealed that there are a few opportunists operating within the Guild who are so blinded by their sectarian hatred of the RCP and the cause of revolution that they would try to destroy the Guild as a progressive organization, rather than see it take a stand against the government in this case. Most definitely these opportunists, including the CPML, the CP and others, would like nothing better than to see RCP Chairman, Bob Avakian, and the 16 other defendants in prison.

At a meeting of the Guild committee against government repression and police crimes, which took place at the beginning of this convention, RCP supporters and others introduced a resolution against the railroading of the Mao Tsetung Defendants. After some discussion as to whether or not this resolution would imply that the Guild supported the stand taken against China's revisionist rulers in the January 29th demonstration, the resolution was passed overwhelmingly with only secondary changes. It was considered inconceivable that Guild members would not vote to condemn this kind of repression. Later copies of this resolution were given out to everyone at the convention, as part of the general agitation and educational work done by RCP supporters around this case.

Under ordinary circumstances, this resolution would have been routinely passed along to the National Executive Committee without further question. Recognizing that this resolution would be controversial, and wanting to build real political support and not just get a formal resolution, Party supporters tried to have discussion of this resolution scheduled into one of the main plenary sessions. This request was denied. Still, there was quite a bit of informal discussion.

This was more than some people could stand. The CPML, along with the "Revolutionary Workers Head-

quarters" (better known as the Mensheviks, who split from the RCP), who generally played a fairly laid-back role in this conference, were forced to jump out and fight. Even though many people at the convention had some questions about China and the RCP's denunciation of the current leadership, these groups did not dare openly argue against the resolution as being "anti-China." This was a confession by the CPML and the Mensheviks of political bankruptcy. They knew that any real debate over the question of what has happened in China would only make their hollow and reactionary pro-Teng line look very foolish to anyone who thought about it. So instead, they launched a cowardly sneak attack by parliamentary maneuver.

Late in the afternoon on the last day of the convention, a half an hour before it was scheduled to end, when many of the hundreds of observers and delegates had already left for home, a motion was made to table the resolution on the Mao Tsetung Defendants—with the excuse that it was too controversial to pass without discussion and there was no longer enough time to discuss it!

As the forces marshalled by the CPML and the Mensheviks, and the few more honest people who were fooled by the appeal not to vote on the motion "without discussion," all raised their hands, and the motion to table the resolution passed by a vote of

51-38, a handful of people sat with smug looks on their faces. They thought they had won a cheap victory. They thought they had stampeded people into what amounted to taking a stand *against* the Mao Tsetung Defendants without discussion.

It was only a few minutes before these snakes had the smiles wiped off their faces. According to parliamentary rules and the agenda, there was to be no more discussion and debate. But more and more people were becoming uneasy, and more than a few were furious, seeing that what had happened would bring shame upon the Guild—that the Guild could not continue as a progressive organization and at the same time allow itself to be characterized by the same kind of anti-communism that it had been formed to prevent.

The struggle broke loose a few minutes later, during the very last item on the agenda, "criticism and self-criticism." Speaker after speaker rose up to denounce what had happened as completely unprincipled and disgusting, as something which threatened the Guild's very reason to exist. Only one person dared defend it, a CPMLer from Chicago, who said that maybe it was wrong to hang the RCP without a trial, but that "many of us hate the RCP for good reason." This made it ever more plain that the CPML's hatred for the RCP, and really for revolution itself, ran far deeper than any desire to appear progressive or "non-sectarian."

The debate and struggle spilled out onto the floor and was vigorously pursued among the delegates as the convention broke up. RCP supporters were joined by several other people who, although they most definitely did not want to be branded as "RCP symps," went among the delegates asking them to personally sign their names to the

**Continued on page 16**

# Dispute

Continued from page 11

resolution which had been tabled. Many delegates said that they weren't sure where they stood on the Party, and even that they considered themselves hostile to the RCP, but that they could not let their organization be ruined in that way. Even the person who had made the motion to table the resolution came forward, saying that he had been put up to it by the CPML without any political discussion of the consequences and that he wanted to withdraw the motion. The National Executive Board decided to take up the question and finally passed a resolution to defend the 17 RCP members and supporters when it met the following day.

One very serious shortcoming of this Guild convention was that it did not pass a resolution against the jailing of the five Red Lake freedom fighters, who were railroaded to prison just a few weeks and a few blocks away from this meeting. A stand by the Guild against this outrage would have made news and had a real effect in the Twin Cities and the whole state—and the failure to take such a stand was reported in the newspapers with glee.

A resolution condemning the jailing of the Red Lake freedom fighters, introduced by a representative of the *Revolutionary Worker*, was violently opposed by a leading member of the American Indian Movement (AIM), who voiced his opinion that the Red Lake defendants were "drunks," paid by the government, and just generally self-seeking maniacs—not fighters for the Indian people. This is exactly the same kind of slander spread by the capitalists and their press around this case, just as they tried to label the Moody Park rebellion in Houston and the Humboldt Park uprising in Chicago as drunken outbursts and not righteous rebellions against oppression.

While some people were confused by specific slanders (whose purpose was to spread such confusion), these lies could not answer the basic question of why the government has been so determined

to jail the Red Lake fighters on long terms. The fact that this scurrilous attack on Red Lake was coupled with praise for another reservation struggle where this AIM leader brought in the American Arbitration Association, certainly helps shed some light on the political reasons behind it.

The struggle around Red Lake became an important issue for the rest of the convention even though it did not appear on the formal agenda. It went on in many forms and became extremely heated. Many Guild members felt that because of the opposition from the AIM leader, the subject was too confusing. A few opportunistically argued that the Red Lakers should not be defended because a leading figure in this struggle had declared to the press that they were opposed to communism. But regardless, there is the fundamental question of principle: when the people rise up, when the oppressed rebel and the bourgeoisie comes down on them, do you stand for or against them?

After some discussion with other AIM and Guild members, a new resolution was proposed, putting the Guild on record as opposing the jailings without any mention of the rebellion itself. This was referred to a subcommittee meeting, and the *RW* representative was later informed by a messenger that it had been turned down "because the RCP had proposed it!" This almost unbelievable act of narrow-mindedness was defended by some of the same people who like to hide their reactionary opposition to the revolutionary line of the RCP behind the claim that it's the RCP which is sectarian!

In this regard, the efforts to drag the Guild into the Democratic Party by a coalition of forces in which the pro-China revisionist CPML and the pro-Soviet revisionist Communist Party were the most prominent (with the silent yes votes of the always agreeable Mensheviks) were very revealing about the underlying stand which gave rise to the frantic attacks by the opportunists.

On the proposal of a long-time CPML type, and with the CP and the CPML leading the charge, this conven-

tion agreed that the Guild should join the Progressive Alliance, a "coalition" headed by UAW President Doug Fraser and IAM head William Winpisinger, whose explicit purpose is to "revitalize America's political institutions," especially the Democratic Party with which both Fraser and Winpisinger are closely tied.

When many people argued that for an organization commonly understood to be "radical" such as the Guild to join such an alliance would only strengthen the effort to drag people back into "American political institutions" at a time when the Democrats, the Republicans and the whole system are becoming increasingly exposed, the CPML forces echoed the argument they had previously written in the Guild newspaper: "The NLG should not stand aside when it has a real opportunity to go where the mainstream of the labor movement is."

Most of the Guild's membership is made up of people who came to hate and fight the system during the mass upsurges of the 1960s. As lawyers, most witness the brutal and unjust nature of "American justice" every day. But at the same time, constantly dealing with the law on its own terms and working as a part of a "legal fraternity" alongside prosecutors, judges, and so on pulls people very strongly in a conservative direction. This is the aspect which those who actively work against revolution have been counting on and building up.

But something else could also be clearly seen at this convention: the truth about this society and the ruthless nature of the class that runs it can't be covered up. Despite the bourgeoisie's attempts to train lawyers as defenders of capitalism, many lawyers have come forward to fight it tooth and nail, inside and outside of the courtroom. In fact, the clumsy manipulative attempts of a few to use the Guild against revolution have brought some important questions even more sharply into focus for Guild members. Many are determined to grapple with and grasp these questions and take a stand with what is progressive against what is reactionary. ■