

# Soviet role debated at confab

**New York**—The importance of understanding the nature of the Soviet Union and its role in the world today was highlighted during an all-day conference on this theme here March 17, sponsored by the Union of Radical Political Economists (URPE) and the Economic Society of the New School for Social Research.

Over a thousand people attended the symposium, which included four main speeches and twenty workshops analyzing different aspects of the Soviet Union internally and externally.

The idea of the conference was to present participants with a very broad range of views on the subject, including the positions of the Moscow revisionists, the Trotskyites, genuine Marxist-Leninists and others. But this plan fell through when Soviet government officials from the USSR's mission at the UN as well as Victor Perlo and another representative of the pro-Moscow Communist Party U.S.A. withdrew at the last minute after having promised to participate. Apparently, the revisionists were afraid to make a public defense of the Soviet Union in front of a crowd sure to have plenty of questions and criticisms of it.

The morning plenary offered four differing summations of the USSR: Jonathan Aurthur of the Communist Labor Party filled in for the revisionists and

defended the Soviet Union down the line; Noel Ignatin of Sojourner Truth Organization argued the essentially Trotskyite position that the USSR, although a degenerate workers' state, has not seen the restoration of capitalism; Paul Sweezy, editor of *Monthly Review*, argued that the Soviet Union was neither capitalist nor socialist; and Michael Zweig, a professor at SUNY-Stonybrook and member of the Revolutionary Workers Headquarters presented a general overview of the restoration of capitalism in the USSR and its functioning today as a social-imperialist superpower.

The workshops provided an arena for more interchange and struggle over these various positions, reflected in particular subjects such as "The Soviet Union and the Third World," "The Policy of Detente," "Eurocommunism" and many others.

Particularly good in the workshop discussions were an in-depth presentation by Jorge Calderon, a professor at the Federal University of Mexico, on Soviet military, political, economic and ideological penetration of Latin America; and an analysis by Gary Hansjergen of the Soviet-Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea.

Looking at the conference as a whole, it could be said that while the USSR had its apologists both open-



ly as well as indirectly, the majority sentiment was clearly against the type of society that has been built up internally there as well as against Moscow's search for global domination. Certainly more theoretical work needs to be done on the subject and more facts documented through research—problems of the conference which many people in the audience raised. But overall, the conference served a useful purpose in broadening the debate over the nature of the USSR. Despite efforts of various revisionists and Trotskyites to cover up for the USSR, good evidence about the essentially capitalistic, imperialistic nature of the USSR came through at many points.