

# 500 Attend LA Conference

On the heels of the success of last November's Conference on the International Situation, held in New York City, plans were laid to have a similar type of conference on a local scale in Los Angeles where, because of the 3000 mile distance, only a few people were able to go to New York. In mid-February these plans came to fruition when over 500 people from Southern California gathered to discuss the vital questions facing the American people about the world situation today.

Conference participants included many students, former anti-war activists, teachers, scholars, older people who had participated in the people's struggle for a long period of time, and workers who had more recently come forward in the class struggle. Sponsors included Associated Student Body of the L.A. City College, the Black Student Association of UCLA, Black Student Association at Trade Tech, Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars at UCLA, Union of Marxist Social Scientists at the University of California at Santa Barbara (UCSB), People's College of UCSB, the Revolutionary Communist Party, the Iranian Student Association, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), the Revolutionary Student Brigade, the Vietnam Veterans Against the War and numerous individuals, including 15 professors from several campuses.

The conference organizers made big efforts to involve broad numbers of people and forces. 20,000 leaflets were distributed and hundreds of groups were contacted. The large turnout is testimony to the growing interest in the questions discussed. But at the same time there were some forces who held back from participating out of narrow and sectarian interests. Some of those who have taken strong positions on the international situation, for example the New American Movement and circles within the National Lawyers Guild refused to put forward their views publicly.

Because of this sectarian attitude on the part of many of those who hold clear (although in the RCP's opinion, wrong) positions, the different tendencies did not come out as sharply delineated as at the New York Conference. This also reflected the fact that the public struggle and discussion of these questions has been limited in the past.

The Conference opened with presentations by Raoul Fernandez, a professor from the University of California at Irvine, Roger Dittman from University of California at Fullerton, and Mary Lou Gomez of the Revolu-

tionary Communist Party.

Fernandez summarized many of the characteristics of World War 1, World War 2 and the Vietnam War. He stressed that there was a need for more scientific study of the international situation and that it was rapidly changing. But while claiming that the USSR is the "main source of war," he did not take a position on exactly what the tasks facing the American people were in relation to the international situation.

Dittman, on the other hand, did put forward a more definite position. He argued that the U.S. was clearly the main danger to the world's people. While criticizing the Soviet Union for being "revisionist" and playing "power politics," he claimed that they often played a positive role in world affairs, giving the example of Angola, of all things.

Mary Lou Gomez summarized key aspects of the line of the RCP on the international situation: that both the U.S. and the Soviet Union represent the main enemies of the world's people, and that the contention between them is leading toward world war, while factors for revolution are also on the rise; and that in this country the working class must direct its struggle toward overthrowing its own ruling class in the context of an international united front against imperialism, aimed particularly at the rulers of the two superpowers. She sharply contrasted this view to the line of some U.S. forces that the USSR is the main danger in the world today, or its opposite, that the U.S. is the sole main enemy of the world's people, both of which amount to lining up with one or another of the superpowers.

Later on, workshops were held on particular aspects of the present international situation. In these and in small groups throughout the course of the day there was enthusiastic and lively struggle and discussion.

The conference was an important step in clarifying the understanding of the different political lines and their implications, in the Los Angeles area. A number of people, who when first approached about the conference didn't see the pressing need to discuss these issues, came away realizing their great importance, and, as was the case for the great majority of the 500 who attended, are determined to deepen their own understanding of the international situation through further struggle and study, while actively participating in the struggle against imperialism. ■