Today, as the U.S. and the USSR move more closely toward inter-imperialist world war, as revisionism in China flaunts itself bluntly and rushes to restore capitalism, as the revolution in Iran moves forward and begins to reach a decisive point, as the ideological and political line struggle in the ranks of revolutionaries worldwide intensifies, as the contradictions within the system of U.S. imperialism sharpen—in other words, with the world in tremendous ferment and history moving rapidly forward, even the leaders of a dogmatist sect have to take their minds off phrase-mongering for an instant and stare in fear and bewilderment at the swiftly changing world, and even reformists have to find some way of dealing with the broader questions about the world.

Such is the case with the Workers Viewpoint Organization (WVO), whose leadership has suddenly realized that perhaps there has been some sort of qualitative change in China since Mao’s death and—more to the point—that those in and around WVO demand some sort of stand on the question. And so, some seven months after the Revolutionary Communist Party had publicly denounced and exposed the revisionist coup in China and analyzed it in depth, WVO, in the course of an article on “Where Is China’s Foreign Policy Headed?” reveals that, by the way, “Teng and Hua and their cliques have usurped state power and are proceeding on the all-round restoration of capitalism in China.”

Actually, WVO has realized this fact about China at least for some months. But where were these valiant foes of revisionism then, in January, when that arch-traitor and reactionary Teng Hsiao-ping came to tie China to the U.S. war chariot? Why, they were right out there, of course—hanging onto the coattails of both U.S. imperialism and Chinese revisionism at once, publicly holding that China was a socialist country and that “...those who oppose the state-to-state ties, like the Revolutionary Communist Party...can never understand how Lenin and Stalin skillfully used the state-to-state front as one way to undermine imperialism, play off inter-imperialist rivalries, and consolidate socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat.”

“Support All Diplomatic Relations”

Did they think, then, that the normalization of relations between China and the U.S. was “consolidating socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat”? Well, they carefully, and with great guile, refrain from saying this outright, although they do insinuate that normalization is somehow “strengthening socialism” in China. But when it comes to making a direct argument for state-to-state ties, they “ascend” to the level of empty and fatuous generalization:

Full diplomatic relations between different countries such as those between the U.S. and China are good and must be supported. Why? Although different classes will try to use it differently, in all cases they help to increase people-to-people contact among the peoples of the world. Through exchanges of various kinds, such as movies, publications, and sports and visits to each others’ countries, which are aided by full diplomatic relations, people from different countries can expand the bonds of friendship. This promotes proletarian internationalism.... This is why we support state-to-state relations between, say even France, Yugoslavia or even the Soviet Union and the United States.”

There are many interesting questions, of course, raised by this great discovery of WVO’s. For instance, is support for full diplomatic relations between France and Yugoslavia of greater or lesser importance than support for the maintenance of state-to-state ties between the U.S. and the USSR? And, in the case of China, which is the more staunch fighter for proletarian internationalism, the U.S.-China Peoples Friendship Association or the U.S. Chamber of Commerce?

But leaving all such questions aside, what is notable about WVO’s attempt to explain their spineless passivity when the chief and most loathsome representative of the new bourgeoisie in China came parading through the U.S. is its total abstraction from the concrete situation. What was the concrete meaning of normalization and Teng’s visit at this particular moment in history? Didn’t it signify the fact that the revisionists are selling out China to U.S. imperialism and tying it to the U.S. war bloc? WVO does not even attempt to analyze the concrete situation, but instead warbles this ludicrous little song about how diplomatic ties always mean people-to-people friendship, love and peace (oh yes, and proletarian internationalism too).

Trying Not to Face Up to the Situation

But of course the reason for all this stupid song and dance by WVO is quite clear. They knew very well in January that there had been a revisionist coup in China and that capitalism was being restored in this once-proud bastion of socialism. But they had a whole worked-out policy of privately letting a few people in on the “secret” that revisionism had triumphed in China, while publicly upholding China as a socialist country—because they thought that the exposure of Chinese revisionism would demoralize the masses, making them lose faith in the viability of socialism. So, since their leadership was afraid to face up to the blatant revisionist takeover in China (a fear which they disgustedly project onto the masses of people), they had to wrap themselves in the liberal tinsel of “people-to-people contact” and so forth.

But now all that has changed, hasn’t it? Now WVO is bravely marching out of the closet to expose Chinese revisionism! Well, not exactly. Their announcement that China is ruled by revisionists is by no means front page news, but is buried in an article on the future direction of Chinese foreign policy. (Perhaps if World War 3 breaks out WVO will sneak an announcement of the fact into their sports page—so as not to demoralize the masses too much!)

How can WVO possibly justify this method of treating the question of what has happened in China? They might appeal to the way in which the Communist Party of China dealt with the triumph of revisionism and the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union, waiting several years before launching public polemics. But this analogy wouldn’t justify their actions, for several reasons. The CPC was a large party holding state power, and this gave rise to certain necessities in its relations with other parties. But much more importantly, even while criticizing the Soviet Union by name, the CPC was fighting to defend Marxist-Leninist principles and prepare so that the inevitable split in the international communist movement would take place on the most favorable basis. When China did come out with public polemics, the issue was not treated as a brief aside. The CPC, having politically laid the groundwork and having forged unity with other Marxist-Leninist forces, organized a fierce and protracted struggle against Khrushchevite revisionism.

But look at the way WVO has dealt with the revisionist coup in China. First they attacked the RCP for bringing up the matter; then they actively tried to mislead the masses as to what had really happened, publicly upholding China as a “socialist country”; and finally, when they were forced to admit that there had been a revisionist coup, they tossed it out in an offhand manner, as if hop-
ing that no one would notice. Is this how communists deal with an issue of overwhelming importance to the world situation and the revolutionary movement? Basically WVO tries not to deal with it.

Could WVO claim that they weren't misleading anyone when they said that China was socialist because it takes some time for capitalism to be restored, and until then a country is still socialist? Well, certainly it does take time for capitalism to be restored. "Capitalism" and "socialism" refer to relations of production, and these cannot be changed overnight. But the qualitative change takes place when revisionists seize power, i.e. when a new bourgeoisie seizes control of the state. Unless they are overthrown, they will inevitably change the production relations and fully restore capitalism. Moreover, in the meantime their politics (and the politics and actions of the state) will be thoroughly bourgeois. In this situation, especially when the usurpers have consolidated their grip on the party and state, does it make any sense to continue to hail a country as socialist after a revisionist coup?

Of course not. Rather than seeking to prepare people to recognize the fact that capitalism was being restored in China, WVO went out of their way to disorient and disarm the masses.

This is certainly very far from the course of action which Mao recommended when he said in 1965:

"If China's leadership is usurped by revisionists in the future, the Marxist-Leninists of all countries should resolutely expose and fight them and help the working class and the masses of China to combat such revisionism.

And then, compounding the flagrancy of their opportunism, we find that the article in which their tardy announcement is contained is one whose main point is to reaffirm WVO's support for the Chinese invasion of Vietnam! In fact, with "critics" like WVO, the Chinese revisionists hardly need supporters. For as we shall see, WVO likes a lot of the revisionist line coming out of China. They positively embrace the "three worlds" strategy and the proposition that the Soviet Union is the main danger to the people of the world. They certainly have no objections to economism, which drips from the pages of their newspaper, or reformism, which permeates their practice. No, the only thing which current Chinese revisionism offends is WVO's dogmatism. WVO does not like to have liberalism so openly proclaimed, and Marxism so explicitly attacked, as by today's imperialists. But given the objective balance of forces today (that China is a third world country and the Soviet Union is an imperialist superpower) China's action, aside from revisionist intentions, is objectively to strengthen third world peoples and countries to stand up against the rising superpower—the Soviet Union.

Sound familiar? Of course—it's the old tired October League-CPML line: every blow against the "more dangerous" U.S. must be supported as anti-imperialist. The only new twist is that for WVO, China can no longer be supported as a socialist country, but rather, now, because it's part of the "third world".

What somehow disappears from view in this analysis (just like for the CPML) is U.S. imperialism. The end result is uniting with the U.S. imperialists against their superpower rivals. The only place that the U.S. appears in WVO's picture is in the intentions and wishes of the Chinese rulers. But the connections between the U.S. and Chinese rulers are not merely ideal, they are in the mind alone, but are real and material. Why does WVO think that China's attack on Vietnam was launched only after Teng returned from his U.S. tour? Does WVO really think that the actions of Vietnam (also a "third world" country!) are closely connected with Soviet social-imperialist aggression, but that China's acts have no material connection with U.S. imperialism? Do they really not see that China's new bourgeois rulers are placing their country within the orbit of U.S. imperialism? Or do they simply prefer not to bring these unpleasant facts out, so as not to "demoralize" the masses?

With regard to China's Vietnam invasion, as we stated a few months ago:

In reality the Chinese are acting on behalf of the U.S. imperialists, allowing the latter to deal a proxy blow to Soviet political and military positions in the area, yet officially disclaim any responsibility and pose as the only legitimate arbiter of the conflict. The U.S. plays a gentle lamb while "communist" powers fight it out. This appearance, built up by Carter and the press, obscures the essence of the situation—the rivalry of imperialist blocs—in which the U.S. is hardly a disinterested observer.

The Workers Viewpoint Organization promotes the same surface appearance as does the U.S. bourgeoisie. For them, too, the U.S. imperialists are uninvolved in all this, peaceful lambs—except that China is trying to lure these poor passive imperialists into conflict with the Soviet warmongers. U.S. imperialism as a shrinking violet—a picture not only out of touch with reality, but also very much in line with the interests of the U.S. bourgeoisie.

But this pattern of sticking to the surface appearance of things while covering over the role of U.S. imperialism is very much part of WVO's line. Look, for instance, at their pushing of the Soviet-main-danger line and the "three worlds" theory. On the one hand, it is obvious how this covers for U.S. imperialism, as just illustrated. On the other hand, it shows the extremely shallow and dogmatic nature of their "criticism" of Chinese revisionism. For in fact these theories, pushed by today's Chinese rulers and their flunkies around the world, are precisely a manifestation of Chinese revisionism. For in fact these theories, pushed by today's Chinese rulers and their flunkies around the world, are precisely a manifestation of Chinese revisionism. For in fact these theories, pushed by today's Chinese rulers and their flunkies around the world, are precisely a manifestation of Chinese revisionism. For in fact these theories, pushed by today's Chinese rulers and their flunkies around the world, are precisely a manifestation of Chinese revisionism. For in fact these theories, pushed by today's Chinese rulers and their flunkies around the world, are precisely a manifestation of Chinese revisionism. For in fact these theories, pushed by today's Chinese rulers and their flunkies around the world, are precisely a manifestation of Chinese revisionism. For in fact these theories, pushed by today's Chinese rulers and their flunkies around the world, are precisely a manifestation of Chinese revisionism.
theory is nothing but a rationalization for unifying with U.S. imperialism against the USSR is illustrated by the fact that China's third world status is said to be a determining factor, whereas Vietnam's equally valid status as a member of the same "world" is ignored.

This is apparently supposed to be justified by their claim that "Teng represents the class interests of the national bourgeoisie and the new bourgeoisie in China..." By saying national and new bourgeoisie, WVO must mean by "national bourgeoisie" the old national capitalists of China. But in fact the old national bourgeoisie is a weak social force in China and is a very secondary aspect of the revisionists' social base there. On the other hand, the new bourgeoisie, the bourgeoisie which arises under socialism, which is concentrated within the communist party itself, and which seized power in China in 1976 and rules today—this new bourgeoisie is predominantly comprador in character, sellouts to imperialism, as has been glaringly demonstrated by the "opening up" of China to imperialism, especially the U.S. bloc, over the past year. But WVO seems not to see any comprador character at all in China's new rulers. Just another third world country ruled by a national bourgeoisie—that's how they paint China. Of course this is a notch down from being a socialist country; but on the other hand (a fact which WVO often brings up), the national bourgeoisie does have contradictions with imperialism, and though it tends to vacillate a lot, it will take actions against imperialism. By pretending that China is now ruled by a national bourgeoisie with sharp contradictions with imperialism, WVO can slither into a position of critical support for China and its traitor-rulers.

So it ends up that their stand on China is almost a carbon copy of the stand of the Guardian, that "independent radical" newspaper, with regard to the Soviet Union. In both cases the stand is that the country in question is admittedly revisionist but nonetheless "objectively" manages often to play a progressive role.

In fact, it becomes clear that WVO's "criticism" of revisionism in China is a sham. They claim to uphold Mao and the Four against Teng and Hua in the midst of an article devoted to supporting Teng's theory of the "three worlds" and the "main danger." They try to pretend that this strategy can be attributed to the revolutionaries in China, but this is only a pretense. As was pointed out in an article on the "three worlds" strategy in Revolution:

It is interesting to note that the "three worlds" was never presented as a strategy, and still less attributed to Mao, during his lifetime. Teng Hsiao-p'ing's speech to the UN in 1974 (which stops short of openly proclaiming the "three worlds" as the international strategy for "revolution") makes no attempt to attribute the "three worlds" theory to Mao. Following Mao's death, neither the Central Committee statement which enumerated Mao's many contributions to Marxism-Leninism and the revolution nor, for that matter, Hua Kuo-feng's memorial speech (obviously the product of struggle on the Central Committee and in the main reflecting Mao's line, not Hua's) mentioned the "three worlds" theory.

Similarly, the state Constitution adopted in 1975 (before the coup) stresses proletarian internationalism and support for the struggles of oppressed nations and peoples and does not mention the "three worlds," while the recent constitution, adopted by the revisionists, makes the "three worlds" line the basis for "proletarian internationalism" and relations with others in the world.

The new bourgeois rulers of China have only been able to come up with two quotations in which Mao ever refers to the "three worlds," and in neither does he in any way make it some global strategy. And the reason is clear. This "theory" propounded by the current Chinese rulers is nothing more than a strategy for capitulation to imperialism. (See the above-mentioned article, which shows how this is so in detail.)

Metaphysics

What WVO wants to do is just change one "little" fact in their view of the world ("revisionist coup in China") and have everything else remain the same. This is impossible and is a good illustration of their metaphysical outlook. Wasn't the coup the outcome of very sharp class struggle in China? How could this momentous struggle not have been reflected in the area of foreign policy?

In fact WVO's whole approach to the China question is a good illustration of the dogmatism and metaphysics of the leaders of this sect. Essentially they adopt a theoretical position on the coup, but this has no relation to anything else. As Engels said,

To the metaphysician, things and their mental images, ideas, are isolated, to be considered one after the other and apart from each other, fixed, rigid objects of investigation given once for all.

One of the characteristics of metaphysics is not grasping the relationship and intercon-
The fight of women to maintain and move beyond the inroads they've already made in heavy industry is the fight for women's equality in the concrete!

Classic economism is the guiding thread of much of WVO's recent practice, with their paper coming to resemble the Mensheviks' Workers Voice, filled with page after page of local shop struggles, strike news and sum-ups, trade union battles, etc. Here is the real heart and soul of the struggle of the working class, WVO seems clearly to be saying. And within the trade union struggles, they display the selfsame narrowness and reformism, as often as not uniting with the hacks and nearly so anxious for unity with WVO as WVO was with them.

The list could go on and on. There is WVO's response to the "energy crisis": Nationalize Big Oil!—a "concrete" demand which, they explain,

...would expose the "Communist" Party USA's nationalization plan, which views the road to socialism peacefully paved by a series of nationalizations of various industries. On the other hand, this program of nationalization would benefit workers by diverting billions of energy profits into programs for workers.

In their analysis of and work around the liberation struggles in Africa, WVO goes in for reformism mixed with hypocrisy. With regard to South Africa, this organization holds that the central task for the people of the U.S. has to be getting the U.S. government to sever state-to-state ties with the

The brave "leftists" of the Workers Viewpoint Organization reveal their true colors in a collection of typically rightist headlines.

traitors of the trade union movement. In March of this year, for instance, these opportunists managed to write a fairly lengthy article on the United Farmworkers strike which contains not one word of criticism or exposure of Chavez—an article in which they sum up the significance of the strike as follows: "And most important, it's a milestone battle for all oppressed nationalities in the struggle to assume their rightful place in the mainstream of the U.S. trade union movement." Chavez himself could hardly have said it better. (Not until 2½ months later did WVO finally voice a criticism of Chavez—no doubt after they found that the hacks in the UFW were not How exactly does this differentiate WVO from the CPUSA, one might well ask? This is where the tricky part comes in. Apparently the difference is that the WVO doesn't really believe in the demand they raise:

Of course, we must have no illusions that the state apparatus is anything but the agents of the monopoly capitalists. But the demand for nationalization would help raise economic demands (for lower gas prices, utility bills, etc.) into political demands directed at the state itself.

This is another variant on the Trotskyite tactic of "transitional demands" (workers

aren't ready to hear about socialism, so raise some reasonable-sounding demands that the capitalists will definitely not give in to, and then when the workers can't win these demands, tell them this shows how the only solution is revolution, etc.) and also a classic case of economism. Talk about "lending the economic struggle itself a political character!"

In their analysis of and work around the liberation struggles in Africa, WVO goes in for reformism mixed with hypocrisy. With regard to South Africa, this organization holds that the central task for the people of the U.S. has to be getting the U.S. government to sever state-to-state ties with the

South African government. Besides fostering reformist illusions (making it seem like the basic task of the people is to make the U.S. government behave better), this also testifies to the inordinate importance which WVO for some reason attaches to state-to-state ties (compare their line on U.S.-China normalization). Meanwhile in connection with Zimbabwe, WVO is content to call for uncritical support for the Patriotic Front, somehow "forgetting" the fact that especially Nkomo of ZAPU (one of the two organizations in the Patriotic Front) has been rather close to the "main danger" Soviet social-imperialists, who have plans to do in Zimbabwe something like what they did in
Angola. WVO has no hesitation in tiptoeing around their “main danger” line when it interferes with their tailing of Pan Africanists and narrow Black nationalists.

Examples could be multiplied further in disgusting profusion, but enough (and more than enough) has been brought out to show the rightism, reformism and economism of this sect. But, as mentioned above, the leaders of this organization at the same time actually pride themselves on being great upholders of Marxist theory. In an article written last summer on the Revolutionary Communist Party, they claim that “the essence of the line difference between the RCP and the WVO” has to do with “the role of revolutionary theory in building the Party”—billing themselves as upholders of the centrality of theory and the RCP as downgraders of it.

**Cannot Understand Marxist Theory**

In fact WVO has never been an exponent of Marxist theory. They have always been consistently dogmatist in their understanding of Marxism, metaphysically separating theory and practice. This not only has the result that they do not apply Marxism to their practice (so that they fall into reformism and economism, as we’ve seen), but it also means that they cannot actually reach a correct understanding of the theory of Marxism, either—for Marxist theory is the summation of revolutionary practice. Of course this does not mean that Marxism is the summation of one’s own immediate practice; it sums up the revolutionary practice of the proletariat and on this basis man’s historical practice in the struggle for production, scientific experiment and the class struggle, and this theoretical summing-up can (and must) be studied *in its own right* as well as in connection with particular struggles and events. But the purpose of studying it is in order to apply it, and thereby to change the world—and those who are not engaged overall in revolutionary practice, in changing the world in a revolutionary way, cannot fully understand the theory itself, because of the dialectical link between theory and practice.

Thus what WVO calls “theory” is nothing but stale phrases and long quotations, bits and pieces torn out of context and bombastically displayed. And even beyond this, WVO has developed a neat trick of writing long polemics in which they flay their opponents with dogmatist phrases—but carefully avoid actually laying out their own position. Take the Black national question, for instance. Here WVO used to say that it had a “partial position” which did not include a line on the “Black Belt nation.” Then suddenly they began to proclaim that adherence to the existence of a “Black Belt nation,” and upholding its right to self-determination as central to the struggle of Black people in this country, is a line of demarcation for communists. Not only was this done without a word of explanation as to why or how they had suddenly come to this conclusion, but they have up to the present day not published one piece of serious theoretical analysis of the Black national question.

But then, on the other hand, WVO has also published not one piece of theoretical analysis of any important question facing U.S. revolutionaries. Their performance around the China question is typical—one day they uphold China as socialist, the next they announce that a revisionist coup had actually taken place some time ago, without any explanation or analysis of what happened. For them, a few dogmatic phrases on the subject suffice—in fact that’s what they *mean* by theory.

Thus the WVO leaders have always been consistent dogmatists. They used to have disdain for the struggles of the masses, and just run their dogma, with lots of “left” phrasemongering; then they decided that they had become such master Marxists that they could “bite into the spontaneous struggles.” Here they tail whatever spontaneously arises, promote reformism among the masses, and dole out some dogma to an inner circle. In fact this rightism, this bowing to spontaneity, was inevitable once WVO turned to work among the masses, precisely because their “pure” theory was always divorced from practice. They have always been consistently dogmatist in their understanding of Marxism, since metaphysically separating theory and practice means not applying Marxism to the concrete situation—and therefore not actually understanding the theory of Marxism, either.

WVO’s leadership hopes that their tip of the hat to Mao and the Four will allow them to maintain the torn vestiges of their “left” cover, to appease the revolutionary-minded people in and around their ranks, while not interfering with their increasingly right-wing line on domestic and international questions. Actually, their latest move only heightens the contradiction between their professing Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought, but their insisting that it has no meaning for action.

**Footnotes**

3. Ibid., p. 9.
9. Ibid.
12. Workers Viewpoint, March 1, 1979, p. 16.
13. Ibid., p. 17.
15. Workers Viewpoint, May 1, 1979, p. 10.
16. Ibid.