POSITION PAPER OF BACU

At the last Angola Coalition meeting, after a representative of BACU raised several criticisms of a proposed leaflet for the coalition, the question was raised as to whether BACU did, in fact, agree with the principles of the coalition, and it was proposed that BACU's position be discussed at the next coalition meeting.

We prefer to state our views in writing so that there will be no question as to what we are saying and are not saying and so that comrades might be better able to think over our position.

We also do not think that it reflects the proper style of united front work that the time of the coalition meetings should be taken up with such organizational differences. (More on that later.) On the other hand, we [redacted] are always glad to present our views.

The BACU representative raised roughly the following criticisms of the leaflet: (1) it was not written in a popular enough form if it was to serve either as a call to action or even an educational leaflet for a broad audience, especially for workers. Examples were the length of the leaflet itself, certain "left" phrases used that are not commonly understood by those other than communists, the poor introductory section as a particular example. (2) that it did not accord with facts to say, in reviewing the anti-colonial history, "the three organizations united to struggle against the common enemy...". (3) that "the struggle for self-determination has been temporarily aborted" was a seriously incorrect statement, implying that the MPLA is nothing but a tool of imperialism. (4) that certain arguments, such as the danger of war, were not made in a convincing way and if such questions were to be taken up, a more thought-out explanation should be made. (5) that such phrases as "this is what the great Russian communist revolutionary V.I. Lenin said 60 years ago" narrowed the (what should be) broad character of the leaflet and accomplished nothing. (6) that US Imperialism has <u>not</u> "been exposed to its own people". This view implies an exaggerated conception of the political consciousness of the American people.

In response, some comrades stressed that they agreed with almost none of the criticisms, others that they "united with the leaflet" but agreed with some of the criticisms (the weakness of the in-

troduction, the past "unity" of the three liberation organizations, self-determination having been "aborted"), others that the problem was that "secondary" differences were raised in a way that obscured the "primary" question, i.e. do we agree with the political line of the leaflet.

Some comrades raised the question that such views as our representative stated were not in accord with the required political unity of the coalition and that BACU had not operated in an open and above-board manner (apparently meaning that we were attempting to reintroduce BACU's proposal that had already been defeated, that US Imperialism be the primary object of our mass propaganda).

While this had not been the criticism of the BACU representative (that too much was made of Soviet Imperialism, as opposed to American Imperialism), the BACU representative did point out that the following summary of the present conditions of US Imperialism did tend to downplay the danger to the world's people that US Imperialism continues to represent:

"US Imperialism, since World War II the strongest power in the world, has suffered crushing defeats in Korea, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. It has been exposed to its own people and the people of the world as a result of the war in Vietnam, Watergate, the CIA and FBI scandals, and the Lockheed and other corporate bribery plots. Today US Imperialism is a declining imperialist power, and it is going downhill every day."

So what does this chronology all mean? One thing it means is that it is quite beyond our imagination how the points we raised violate the principles of the coalition or, for that matter, reflect that we have not operated in an "open and above-board manner".

On the question of the danger of war between the two superpowers, comrades might remember that BACU was one of the organizations that argued that the coalition should take such a position , i.e. that war is probably inevitable because of the rising ambitions of the Soviet Superpower. Others had felt that they were not sure about the "inevitability" of war, and it was agreed not to take such a position. Now the question is raised that, of all the organizations represented, there is the suspicion that BACU does not believe the Soviet Imperialists are the rising Imperialist power and provide the greatest threat of war.

The reason, we imagine, that confusion exists as to our position on this question is that our representatives raised at the first meeting of the coalition, and it was discussed at the second meeting, that US Imperialism should be the primary target of our propaganda, and that Soviet Imperialism should be secondary.

Our view was based upon the consideration that (1) as American communists, our main job is to build a movement, and use any struggle to build a movement, against the Superpower that is our own ruling class, (2) while US Imperialism has been exposed to a far greater degree than ever before to its own people, it is still far from true that any sort of consistent anti-US Imperialist consciousness exists among the great masses of American people.

Lets take the last proposition first. Many people in the movement often say that "the American working class understands very well the nature of American Imperialism, the nature of its exploitation, etc." Yes, in our opinion, such consciousness is growing, but to think that such a characterization reflects present reality is to fall into the same sort of wishful thinking that we feel has characterized the RU's approach to theory and makes a mockery of all our talk of developing a Marxist analysis of present US conditions.

The position that US Imperialism should be our principal enemy flows obviously from our situation. It is the US ruling class that the US working class and masses of people must overthrow. All of our struggles have that ultimate objective.

How can it be, somebody may ask, that the struggle internationally is increasingly being raised against Soviet Imperialism, more so than US Imperialism, and we do not have the same task here in the US? If you think about it, how it can be is not hard to understand at all. The principal contradiction, even within China, for example, is not against Soviet Social-Imperialism; it is against those who would take the capitalist road.

The principal contradiction on a world scale may become the overriding, therefore principal, contradictions within many countries, given certain developments. Within the US such a condition would arise if World War developed with China and the US in a united front against Soviet aggression. This could well happen. Unless and until

such a development becomes a reality, the principal enemy of the American people is the US ruling class. Exposure of Soviet Imperialism in the US, especially among the US Left, is completely necessary, but it should be viewed in this context.

That the October League has failed to reflect this approach in the emphasis it has given to the question of Iran is a very good case in point. The Soviets are the increasing danger in the Persian Gulf, as OL points out, but should that be the major and all-encompassing starting point for US revolutionaries, whose government is still the major prop of the reactionary regime of the Shah? Ironically enough, the other comrades are quite ready to condemn OL for its position on Iran, a position that only logically flows from the position that they also hold.

(This, in our opinion, is the nature of OL's mistake on Iran. To say, as RU and many others have, that the basis of this mistake is that OL wants to conciliate with US Imperialism is wrong. We also think it's wrong to imply that the Guardian is making the mistake it is making on Angola because it wants to cover for Soviet Imperialism.)

This question of the principal contradiction has, we believe, implications for how you evaluate other forces, develop forms of work, etc. We can unite with those, generally speaking, who oppose US Imperialism

Another question that arose is how propaganda should be done in accordance with whom it is aimed at, etc. We would like to raise a couple of points from Mao's "Oppose Stereotyped Party Writing" (Volume III, Selected Works, p. 53). Mao wrote this article in 1942 during the war against Japan, when he was still combatting the same mistakes that, in our opinion, characterize our movement today. Mao wrote, "We are fighting against subjectivism and sectarianism, but they will still have a hiding place to lurk in if at the same time we do not get rid of stereotyped party writing."

Whether the political line of an article is correct is, of course, always the first thing to consider. In that sense, style is "secondary". But is style "secondary", in the sense of being unimportant? Not at all.

In that regard, Mao wrote, "Communists who really want to do

propaganda must consider their audience and bear in mind those who will read their articles and slogans or listen to their speeches and their talk; otherwise they are in effect resolving not to be read or listened to by anyone. Many people often take it for granted that what they write and say can be easily understood by everybody, when it is not so at all." (p. 59)

And on the question of length, "If articles are too long, who will read them? ...Some may ask, 'Isn't Capital very long? What are we to do about that?' The answer is simple, just go on reading it. There is a proverb, 'Sing different songs on different mountains.'"

All of us have made these mistakes, have written long leaflets that use phrases and often an entire approach that, if we thought about it, we could not expect our audience to really understand. The starting point for correcting these mistakes is, however, to realize that this is a problem.

Nobody is won to an understanding and agreement with communism by seeing a few communist phrases floated around. We should ask ourselves, are we dealing with questions in a way that people can understand and that will move them forward or are we merely reflecting our subjective desire to say the things that we think communists ought TO say?

The final point that we want to comment on is the question of political struggle in the coalition as it was raised by OL in the last coalition meeting. We think that OL is entirely correct in demanding that political discussions in the coalition be restricted to the political issues that arise out of the work of the coalition and around the principles of the coalition.

Communists make an analysis and decide what a correct level of unity should be for a mass activity. If we incorrectly establish the basis too broadly, the political effectiveness of the action is blunted. If we make the opposite mistake, we narrow the basis of unity so that all who could be united around the correct action are not united. RU, for example, calls many "united front" actions, but they are so dominated by the line and influence of RU that there is really no united front at all.

Many comrades know from trade union work that one of the most difficult, and also decisive, tasks of communists, is to establish

a level of unity around an action on a correct basis. Once the level of unity is projected, political struggle essentially must develop around what is the correct approach to that task. If we were to instead proceed to use the caucus or coalition to lay out our own views, we would effectively sabotage the level of unity and develop a very incorrect approach to mass work.

The argument might be raised, "Certainly that's true in mass work, but we're all communists and should be willing to struggle out our differences."

That's a good point. Through no fault of the organizers, but because of the situation, it's not easy to get anyone but pro-China organizations and individuals to participate in a coalition on this issue. It's possible, definitely, but not easy. We should, however, be attempting to broaden the coalition, instead of allowing the coalition to become a forum for the various organizations to battle out their differences.

In our opinion, "Two-line struggle" will not be resolved here, anyhow. "Two lines" means the correct and incorrect approach to building a revolutionary movement. It is sometimes useful to state and re-state our views, but in the final analysis, correctness is borne out in practice.

We hope these remarks serve to lend clarity to our views and are taken as constructive and comradely.

BACU