

from that which the CPUSA gives to the USSR, completely ratifying all policies of the Soviet bureaucracy. Nor should we be in any way identified with the kind of "support" which the Socialist Workers Party here still claims to give to the socialist countries. Their support is exceptionally well illustrated by the way they have hailed the Solzhenitsyns, the Sakharovs, the Amalriks, and others who are clearly and unequivocally champions of bourgeois reaction.

(The Militant, organ of the SWP, has, by the way, now declared its intention of entering the debate on China and Angola, although it has not supported the MPLA and has regarded it as virtually on the same footing with the FNLA and UNITA, characterizing all three as bourgeois nationalist groups maneuvering with imperialism. In its opening article there is not a word which would disclose the SWP's class characterization of the USSR, but does anyone really need to be told? Nominally, they say it is a workers' state. In practice, they treat it as an imperialist country.)

The record of our party on support to the struggles against imperialism is very clear, beginning with such concrete events as the first demonstration in the U.S. against the Vietnam war (1962) which perhaps many on the left may not have noticed—although Ho Chi Minh did, and specifically acknowledged the support of Youth Against War & Fascism in an interview with Wilfred Burchett published in the Guardian (May 16, 1963).

Our very impressive demonstration on behalf of the Angolan people this January 17, and our work on the May Day anti-apartheid, anti-imperialist demonstrations, along with the Pan African Students Organization in the Americas and many other organizations, are most recent examples of our party's ability and willingness to take the necessary initiatives. A study of our party history reveals militant and consistent opposition to imperialist attacks against the oppressed peoples and socialist countries, with outstanding effort on such questions as the Middle East, Indonesia, Cuba, and Korea.

Beyond Angola, what is the real issue?

Angola, of course, which has currently engendered so much controversy in the movement, is not the key issue. It is merely a

surface manifestation of a much deeper conflict. The real issue is the class character of the USSR. To deny this, to evade it, will lead to greater confusion, frustration and demoralization.

The class character of the Soviet Union has been at the bottom of the most heated political controversies in the left-wing movement virtually since the birth of the Soviet Socialist Republic. It is, at least in part, the fundamental axis of the world political struggle today, and it is impossible to construct a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist program in any single country without taking into account the class character of the USSR.

We, of course, believe neither that there is a new exploiting class in the Soviet Union, nor that there has been a return of the bourgeoisie to power there under the guise of Marxist-Leninist phraseology. We firmly adhere to the position that the USSR is a workers' state, although it has undergone a severe strain, deterioration, and erosion of revolutionary principles, and is moreover headed by a privileged and absolutist bureaucracy which limits, distorts, and has on many occasions endangered the very existence of the socialist forms of organization in the USSR. This bureaucracy arose under the desperate conditions facing the newborn workers' state in its early years, but was held strongly in check during Lenin's time. After his death, however, it began to assume more and more ominous proportions.

However, the underlying *social system* of the USSR is infinitely superior to that of the most developed, the most "glorious," and the most "democratic" of the imperialist states. Whatever the drawbacks of the Soviet Union, whatever its trials and tribulations, whatever false policies have been imposed on the USSR by its leaders, it has nevertheless been able to achieve tremendous social, cultural, and material progress for the masses which no capitalist state could possibly have accomplished in the circumstances under which the USSR was originally founded and developed.

Indeed, the USSR is rooted in a social system superior to the capitalist system. It is our fundamental political position that, regardless of the Soviet bureaucracy, the USSR contains a new social formation, based on a historically superior mode of production, and is progressive in relation to monopoly capitalism in the same way that capitalism was a superior system in