

REFLECTIONS ON THE AUGUST, 1974 ALSC MEETING IN HOUSTON

The recent meeting of the International Steering Committee of ALSC proved to be a good meeting, a turning point. The administrative report--the statistical description of the meeting and final resolutions--will be coming out of the ALSC national office. This is a reflection on the political content of ALSC's new motion.

BACKGROUND

The year 1973-74 was characterized by a united-front-from-above approach in which different class elements were brought together on the basis of deals made at the top, between leading personalities and heads of organizations. But given the historical motion of the communist movement, the workers movement, and the Black liberation movement, this approach could not hold back the struggle of two lines: ideological struggle was waged between a bourgeois race analysis and a proletarian class analysis.

1. Frogmore 1973: The adoption of the Statement of Principles boldly placed an anti-imperialist line in command, polarized the forces in ALSC, and began to clarify the two lines. This was a "left" move that forced some nationalists out unnecessarily, but also helped to consolidate the left.
2. Greensboro 1974: The document "Toward Ideological Unity of the ALSC" laid heavy death blows on the putrid position of the reactionary "skin" nationalists.
3. Washington D.C. 1974: The six speeches of the ALSC Conference clearly put alternatives before the Black liberation struggle and reflected a new mass acceptance of a left line.

CURRENT SITUATION

The August, 1974 Houston meeting was attended by some "right" nationalists (General Chui from Dayton, Wesley from Oakland, Jukumu-AAPRP from Gary, Bro. Rap-AAFRP from San Antonio, and an IPE brother from Chicago), but the overwhelming character of the meeting was left. The following <sup>left</sup> groups were there:

SWP--Minnesota

OL--Boston (Atlanta?)

RU--Debbie (observer)

BWC--Atlanta, New Orleans

Most of the folks were with us in one way or another, or Baraka--CAP.

Our strategy has changed now to a united-front-from-below in which we strive to give ALSC political leadership rather than structural leadership. Our task is to understand what this means in practice:

1. The right nationalists do not have a paper-producing style of waging polemical ideological struggle, while the left groups appear to thrive more and more on this.
2. This style is especially becoming true of BWC who appears to be coming after us.
  - a. They are now multi-national and plan to become number "4" of the "biggies" (OL, RU, CL). Their new force will probably be BWC, PRRWO, August 29th Movement, and some ex-RU whites.
  - b. Their first document made room for them in the young communist movement (by attacking RU and CL, The Struggle Against Revisionism and Opportunism: Against the Communist

League and the Revolutionary Union) while their second document (due in September) is aimed at ALSC (really at us as sham Marxists in ALSC), to make room in the Black liberation struggle.

3. At present we have no definite organ to use as our communist voice to shout down and defeat false-incorrect criticisms as well as level our own self-criticisms.

#### STRUGGLE WITH BWC

The issues raised by the Atlanta majority group (as opposed to the minority group led by the nationalist Modibo) and New Orleans gave us a glimpse of what is ahead since BWC cadre led these delegations:

1. Both positions mechanically divorced theory from practice, and reflected a left dogmatic posture. They failed to recognize the difference between Washington and Houston: (a) Washington was for the purpose of clarifying lines contending within ALSC, (b) Houston was for uniting however possible to develop a line for ALSC. They played a left sectarian role in Houston.

- a. New Orleans: "It has been generally accepted that at this point in time the number one priority of the ALSC is ideological struggle around a political line that will guide our practice." But they refused to recognize from where the substance of the struggle will come. They refused to accept our formulation that the ideological struggle must continue to be waged on the basis of the political ideas resulting from the summation of local practice.

b. Atlanta: This position was filled with controversial abstract declarations with no concrete analysis as proof: e.g., "Black people in the United States are an oppressed nation," "the Black liberation struggle in the U.S. is objectively a struggle for socialism," "all those forces who have sharp contradictions with the monopoly capitalist ruling class would objectively be part of the anti-imperialist united front," and "all classes in the Black community are not anti-imperialist and cannot be brought into the struggle." The problem with their formulation was their dogmatic summation that the Black bourgeoisie was categorically lackeys of imperialism, then they changed it to comprador-national with negative emphasis on the comprador, (although an observer from Atlanta said this was not discussed when they prepared the document). We called for their theory to be based on their practice, that they needed a concrete analysis of Atlanta, that our ideological struggle in ALSC must be based on the summation of practice.

BWC does not understand the need to convince people that the "living soul of Marxism is the concrete analysis of concrete things." We must convince people that "Marxism-Leninism has in no way exhausted truth but ceaselessly opens up roads to the knowledge of truth in the course of practice. Our conclusion is the concrete, historical unity of the subjective and the objective, of theory and practice, of knowing and doing, and we are opposed to all erroneous ideologies, whether 'left' or right, which depart from concrete history." (Mao, Four Essays, p. 19).

We must not bow to spontaneity which leads national struggles to Bundism (given the dominance of bourgeois ideas that call for national exceptionalism--privelege), or fall into leftism which leads to sectarianism, and isolate the leading conscious factor (communists) from the masses. Both of these errors tend to liquidate the revolutionary development of the masses engaged in the anti-imperialist motion of ALSC.

2. The Atlanta group confused a united front with a coalition--this confuses form with content. A united front is a class concept that refers to political action uniting different classes, elements within classes, and social strata (their objective and subjective representatives). So communist work in the trade unions is united front work, <sup>as</sup> all mass work for communists has a united front character--all of it is to be compared with party building work in which there is the highest level of unity achieved. A coalition is a form of organization in which two or more individuals and groups come together for a specific action, or a stage of historical development. The question we must ask is why they confuse these two things.

They state:

"Our view is that the ALSC should do away with the use of the Black United Front in the statement of principles. We feel that the organization can be more appropriately described as a coalition of anti-imperialist and anti-racist organizations and individuals. And because we understand that ALSC is a genuinely anti-imperialist and anti-racist organization, we would also put forward that we are not seeking to build a black united front. As was stated earlier, all classes in the black community are not anti-imperialist and cannot be brought into the struggle."

Apparently they are setting the stage for BWC to come in to lead ALSC, by forming a coalition with the current leadership and

then, because of their "advanced development", representing the line as it sharpens.

This sectarianism reflects a petty bourgeois approach to organization. In Frogmore a person from Atlanta who drew attention on himself by giggling at the nationalists, appears in Houston running a hard sectarian line. In Frogmore he admitted failing to take the meeting seriously and study the situation in order to sum up the two lines. In Houston he ran the hard line although he admitted that neither sector of the bourgeoisie would probably be in ALSC to the extent of threatening its existence. They just thought it would be a good "idea" to adopt their divisive hard line because it was (abstractly) "correct". Rather than developed, he has flip-flopped from right childishness to left-phrase mongering.

#### OTHER LEFT GROUPS

- A. SWP is just there, in the form of August Nimitz, a college teacher from Minnesota, and a few others. They are only monitoring ALSC at this point, and do not raise any of their issues like they did at the Washington conference.
- B. RU is in the form of Debbie from New York, to monitor ALSC leadership, to sell RU literature, collect names and addresses of progressive folks, and check out the role of other forces. But she doesn't have a good mass style, and had two white RU folks pick her up in a pick-up truck right in front of most conference delegates--she stayed with them rather than the conference delegates.
- C. OL in the person of Tarik from Boston, agreed with Gene's proposal except they wanted a tighter organizational form. The sister (Ethel Shefton) elected to the National Secretariat from Boston might be OL, or just personally close to Tarik.

THREE MAIN ISSUES

1. Theoretical: After a full day of discussion, Baraka had responsibility of presenting a resolution on this--which he did. However, he presented a list of questions on Black people for the young communist movement, and not necessarily the more limited questions we need to answer for ALSC to continue its development as an anti-imperialist mass motion. The unintended consequence of this could be opening the door for ALSC to communist ideological polemics, such as the upcoming BWC broadside on ALSC. We countered the "theory as politically advanced abstract ideas" with the position of "theory as the summation of practice, positive and negative examples of revolutionary struggle." With the BWC approach ALSC will become the arena for sectarian struggles that will drive many undeveloped forces out and block out many--as Debbie put it "close the door behind us." With our approach the masses of ALSC and the BLM in general will learn "warfare through warfare" and get to know advanced ideas by summing up what they already know--practice. Socialism must be brought to the masses in concrete terms and not in academic volumes with abstract proclamations of truth.
2. Program: We advocated the general theme of "Defeat Portuguese Colonialism! Solidarity with the African Revolution!" While the Atlanta majority group put forward a proposal on boycotting South African Coal. Ours allows for maximum democracy and widespread development of local committees. BWC's (Atlanta) proposal either allows for their advanced practice to seize the objective leadership of the anti-imperialist motion, and have legitimacy in ALSC, potentially setting the stage for an attempt

to seize the leadership of ALSC or it will provide another case of their failure to follow through on a plan of action.

We must monitor the struggle against importation of coal from South Africa as an indicator of BWC strategy.

3. Structure: We put forward political leadership over structural leadership and ended up with a National Secretariat of 8 people being: 5--us or leaning toward us; 2--Baraka-CAP, 1--leaning toward OL (?). We must avoid having monthly meetings and set only quarterly meetings (e.g., September, January, April, July). All other matters can be dealt with between DC and Newark.

Our political leadership is going to be based on 5 documents we have or are producing:

1. Special edition of the African World on ALSC Conference
2. Speech by Abdul at ALSC Conference
3. Book by Owusu, including diary on trip to Mozambique and speeches at ALSC conference and 6th PAC
4. Paper by Gene as a response to 3 critics of ALSC--Mwanza, The East--Black News, & Muhammad Speaks
5. A communist criticism of attacks on ALSC--CP, BWC, right bourgeois nationalists (liquidationist revisionism, leftist opportunism, and bourgeois nationalism).

#### SUMMARY

In all, we must:

1. Move to consolidate our analysis of and relationship to Baraka;
2. Prepare for struggle with BWC;



3. Continue to monitor OL and RU in ALSC, and in African liberation support work in general;
4. Consolidate left leaning middle strata in liason-study group relationships;
5. Continue our immediate task toward PROLETARIANIZATION--
  - a. Grasp Marxism-Leninism!
  - b. Sink Deep Roots in the Working Class!
  - c. Build a Marxist-Leninist Organization!