

# ALSC-NSC Meets: Sharp Line, Strong Leadership MASS LINE, SELF-CRITICISM WIN PEOPLE'S HEARTS AND MINDS

Following the successful gathering of the sixth national annual conference of the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) in the Black Belt South, August 19th-20th (see *Workers Viewpoint*, Sept. 1978), the newly elected national steering committee (NSC) of the ALSC held a very important first meeting recently. The vigorous and lively discussion at the meeting represented the growth of the ALSC (as both old and new members were represented) and the serious mindedness of the national leadership in focusing in on the key questions facing the African liberation support work and the movement against national oppression in the U.S.

## Political Scenery: Rapid and Favorable Developments

The weekend meeting opened with a presentation on the political situation internationally (focusing on southern Africa) and the recent developments in Tupelo, Mississippi. The Tupelo struggle represents a new era in the spontaneous and powerful resistance of the Afro-American people in the Black Belt South. The brutal beating by two white chauvinist policemen of an Afro-American in jail for riding in a car with a white woman, capped the intense fascist national oppression of black people in the Afro-American nation. This act, drenched in the smell of lynching from slavery time, was the straw that broke the camel's back. It sparked off a tidal wave of black people's resistance against daily attacks from the Ku Klux Klan (who regularly shoot into cars and black people's homes), the low wages and back-breaking work of black workers in the factories of Tupelo, the lack of black professionals in the hospitals, lack of black school teachers, principals, continuous police repression, discrimination in the courts and the systematic stealing of black people's land. For all revolutionary minded people nationwide, Tupelo's armed defense against the Klan, the militant defiance of the bourgeoisie's courts and police, persistence and the solidarity of boycotting of downtown stores (90% effective), the prairie fire-like growth of the United League (which leads the struggle) and the commitment of the people to die for justice, all signal the reawakening of the Afro-American people's movement as a steamroller against U.S. imperialist oppression.

Part two of the political report updated the situation in southern Africa. The situation in southern Africa is definitely more critical now than at any time before. In Zimbabwe, the Patriotic Front has liberated 85% of the country and 1978 has been declared the year of the people. In Namibia, SWAPO has forced the South African fascists into negotiations (though the racists recently reneged on the talks). In Azania, liberation groups are consolidating plans for the offensive against South Africa. This part of the political

report summed up the excellent situation in the African support work in the U.S.—of which African Liberation Day, May 20, 1978 was living testimony. Politically the spontaneous support movement is focused on a higher level with "U.S. Cut Diplomatic Ties With South Africa" as the key theme. Under the leadership of the Workers Viewpoint Organization and ALSC, many revolutionaries are gaining a firmer understanding of imperialism and the need for socialism. New waves of fighting organizers have been and are being trained all-roundedly in the struggle against imperialism. A broad network of different classes and forces have been welded together in support of the national liberation movement in southern Africa. ALD 1978 marked a qualitative leap from ALD '76 and '77 as 15,000 people shook the bourgeoisie's capital, Washington, D.C. and Oakland, California. A strong core of militant, political organizers left ALD and are now like seeds in the fertile soil geared up for the November 11 demonstrations. Victory is certain for the liberation forces in southern Africa. The Smith regime is in total disarray and the superpowers will know no peace.

## Mass Line Campaign Ripples Throughout Chapters and Sinks Roots

The national steering committee meeting proceeded to the major campaign taking place in and around the ALSC—the mass line. The most striking thing about this part of the meeting was the fact that a healthy and conscious two line struggle has unfolded throughout the ALSC chapters nationwide. Leaving the ALSC national conference, singlemindedness toward the mass line campaign is becoming a breathing and living force for the chapters and friends around the ALSC. The NSC members discussed the mass line as key in welding the movement into a hard hitting campaign for November 11 and recruiting and training fighters to the ALSC.

In relation to building the mass movement in this country against a handful of imperialists, mass line is fundamentally a question of stand, method, and viewpoint. The masses of people must be the actual motive force and participants in the struggle from the NSC to the chapters, from the local steering committees to the rank-and-file, from ALSC to friends and new contacts. We cannot do it alone. It is the masses who have to be "on the center of stage", playing the decisive role rather than just being artificially "involved". The masses are the real heroes, and the people, and the people alone, are the motive force of world history. The NSC reaffirmed the need to study, apply and sum up the mass line campaign in relation to a particular front of class struggle—the November 11 mobilization.

There are two aspects to mass line, both vital to the success of our cause. One part of mass line is learning from and listening to the masses, being willing pupils. The masses of people are the ones who lived and fought the daily hell of imperialist oppression, the ones concerned with the well-being of their brothers and sisters, the ones with years of actual experience in fighting and organizing and the ones whose historical and self-sacrificing struggle will bring all reaction to its grave. This rich history and the actual, direct knowledge of struggle is the basis of our line, of which we learn from the theory of Marxism and from the masses. These are the only 2 sources of our line—both derived, directly and indirectly, from the masses. We must link them and take it back to them at a higher level, returning to them by our social practice.

Do we believe the masses make history? Do we see that they have something to say, that they know the reality of imperialist oppression and that we have to learn from them? These were the deep down, crucial questions that have broad implications discussed by the NSC.

When plans are made by a few

people only, with little or no input from others, what happens? Some members don't know what's going on, are not enthusiastic about the work, because they have not actively participated in decision-making and actual implementation of these decisions. They do not take up the work in a vigorous way and sometimes even drop out. Then the steering committee ends up doing all the work, becomes overburdened and ends up replacing the chapter membership which should have been getting trained as they collectively pushed out the work. We must listen to and rely on the masses for their creative energy, drive, determination and ability to get the work done. We must promote a democratic style of work where we listen to their opinions, even if they are in the minority or say something we are opposed to, so we can draw out all the views and concentrate them into a unified, hard-hitting political course of action.

For instance, in the New York chapter of ALSC, one member was out in the community on a regular basis at the time of the death of Arthur Miller. This member sensed the anger of the black community in response to the cold-blooded murder of Arthur Miller and the demand for some action.

The comrade came back to the chapter and proposed that the chapter take up this issue. The majority of the chapter disagreed. Later a struggle developed in the chapter. The chapter then agreed to take up the struggle around the Miller killing but didn't move on it. Basically the comrade started losing initiative and confidence in the local chapter of ALSC. Why did this happen? The majority of the chapter were figuring on pushing out the African liberation support work. But fixating on support work and missing the immediate skirmishes that the masses were involved in showed that the chapter was taking up the support work in a

*Continued on page 12*



"Unleash the Masses, Bombard the Headquarters!" proclaims this picture from China, which shows the power of the masses unleashed during the Cultural Revolution through mass line.

## ALSC

Continued from page 3

routine way. Neither front of struggle should be pitted. Both are fronts of struggle through which advanced and active fighters come to communism.

### Role of Theory Unite People On a Higher Level

As the Communist Party of China has taught: "To treat the masses correctly, we must also know how to use Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought to lead them. For members of the Communist Party, maintaining close ties with the masses means to learn from them; it also means to propagate Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought in their midst for the purposes of arming and organizing them. As to the method of dealing with the masses, on the one hand we must combat the theory of the "omniscience of the leadership" and the "backwardness of the masses", defeat the bad style of work of bureaucratism and commandism; and on the other hand, we must oppose the line: "if the masses want it that way, so be it" and defeat the harmful tendency of tailism. It is the only way in which we can apply Chairman Mao's revolutionary line correctly and properly accomplish the work of the Party."

### Mass Line is Not Just For Meetings

The meeting focused on one chapter and the role of its local steering committee. This local steering committee had the tendency to let chapter meetings drift on and on and not focus the meetings politically. Key to resolving this situation, raising the level of the chapter members and vigorously pushing out the work even more, was the mass line. The local steering committee should sum up different parts of the work to two lines and key in on the major points. Related to this, was the need for better preparation before chapter meetings. Steering committee members needed to talk to chapter members in between meetings. This would give the steering committee a feel for what are major issues in different areas of the chapter's work, and thus sharpen proposals from the steering committee. But mass line should be practiced on a day to day basis, not just during meetings.

### Two Lines on Wether to Tap All Levels of Commitment

Another important part of the mass line is understanding how to use the commitment of friends of the ALSC who are interested in the work, respect the ALSC, but who also have limited time to devote to the struggle. This is a question of mobilizing all the positive factors (all friends around us) and having a long term view on how to step-by-step develop the political level and commitment of all friends interested. From the overwhelming success of ALD, the day to day support work activities, and struggles against domestic national oppression issues—waves of friends surround the ALSC. Some friends commit 50% of their time to the work. Others give 1%, 2% or 5%. Tapping this latter group represents a two line struggle on whether the same

people do the work or new people take up the struggle. Though at this time their commitment is lower than the full-time ALSC organizers, this latter group is dying to give their limited time to do phone calling, postering, selling the *All Africa is Standing Up!*, xeroxing, distributing leaflets, working on different things to help build the NCSAL, etc. Understanding this shows a thoroughgoing development of the mass line campaign and grasping the protracted nature of how people become more politically committed to the movement and eventually join the ALSC. Whether we tap these comrades is a question of whether we believe in winning and training the active and advanced. The NSC summed up that the mass line campaign is rippling and sinking roots throughout the ALSC nationwide. Though the study, the two line struggle and application has begun, this is only the beginning of the campaign and it is not a settled question. The November 11 mobilization and demonstration is a concrete quidepost to sum up the campaign.

### Lessons in Independence and Initiative

The NSC discussed the second main point presented at the sixth annual ALSC national conference— independence and initiative. Overall chapters had gained rich experience through the ALD event on how to push out the united front (the NCSAL) and at the same time keep the political and organizational independence and initiative of the ALSC. This had been fruitful as shown by the success of local NCSAL chapters across the country banning the Krugerrand blood coin from shops (through pickets and city council resolutions), through uniting students, professionals, trade unions, community groups, revolutionary nationalists, the media and others around concrete projects under the banner of "U.S. Cut Diplomatic Ties with South Africa". While broadening, the ALSC's influence had grown through pushing out its newspaper, keeping up the regularity of its organizational life and drawing in new friends in and around ALSC.

The NSC also dissected one important example of errors in the united front work. In this instance, the ALSC had worked with some black politicians and dropped its independent plan. By dropping the ALSC's independent plan objectively meant giving the initiative to the black politicians. This example was very important and instructive for the ALSC because it helped train members how to differentiate political and ideological lines while working in the united front. Politically this error represented liquidating the proletariat's independence and initiative and pushing everything through the united front. Instead of keeping a larger independent plan of the ALSC and having the politicians as only one part of that plan, the black politicians became the ALSC plan.

In united front work, negotiation and compromise are necessary. The whole question is whether compromise is going to further or hurt the struggle. Chairman Mao most emphatically points out, that "All political parties and groups in the united front must help each other and make mutual conces-

sions for the sake of long-term cooperation, but such help and concessions should be positive, not negative." (*Selected Works*, Vol. II, p. 213). Positive concessions will push our overall work forward, while negative concessions will liquidate our work among the masses. Chairman Mao teaches, "... the independent character of the parties and classes and their independence and initiative within the united front should be preserved, and their essential rights should not be sacrificed to cooperation and unity, but on the contrary must be firmly upheld within certain limits. Only thus can co-operation be promoted, indeed only thus can there be any co-operation at all. Otherwise co-operation will turn into amalgamation and the united front will inevitably be sacrificed." (*Ibid.*, p. 215)

This mistake was due to different reasons: hoping that the politicians would bring other superstructure groups, hoping to get some funds for the work. Two views came out on who makes history and who should lead the united front. By pinning hopes on the black politicians, objectively the incorrect line stated that the politicians make history and the masses of people do not. Do bourgeois politicians make history or are the masses of people (the brother on the street, the worker in the factory) on "center stage" and the decisive factor, the real heroes? As for the money for buses and travelling, a revolutionary movement can only rely

on the masses. Once they have become politically aroused and take up the fight they will fight for money as part of the struggle. Here again, two different lines.

Pinning hope on the black politicians (or other non-proletarian classes and strata) does not remove the most important fact of all—the proletarian forces, the revolutionary forces, the ALSC is still the backbone of any struggle and still has to do most of the work. A fundamental lesson was the need to ensure the ALSC's independence and initiative and ensure that base work continues simultaneously as we also do superstructure work.

Ideologically this error objectively meant not keeping a proletarian class perspective, and being influenced by the bourgeois ideology of the national bourgeoisie. Giving leadership to the national movement and the liberation support work means continually broadening out to many groups of different classes and strata. The more you broaden out, the more you come in contact with and are influenced by the ideas, mood, vacillations of other classes. In the national movement, if we are influenced by the ideas and thinking of the national bourgeoisie, this inevitably (regardless of intentions) will lead to surrendering to this class.

### Attack or Self-Preservation

Related to this particular ideological weakness is the self-preservation

Continued on page 13

# AVAILABLE NOW!

## Communists Should Be The Advanced Elements Of The Proletariat

By the  
Shanghai People's Publishing  
House, 1974

Translated by the  
Workers Viewpoint Organization

\$2.25

# ALSC

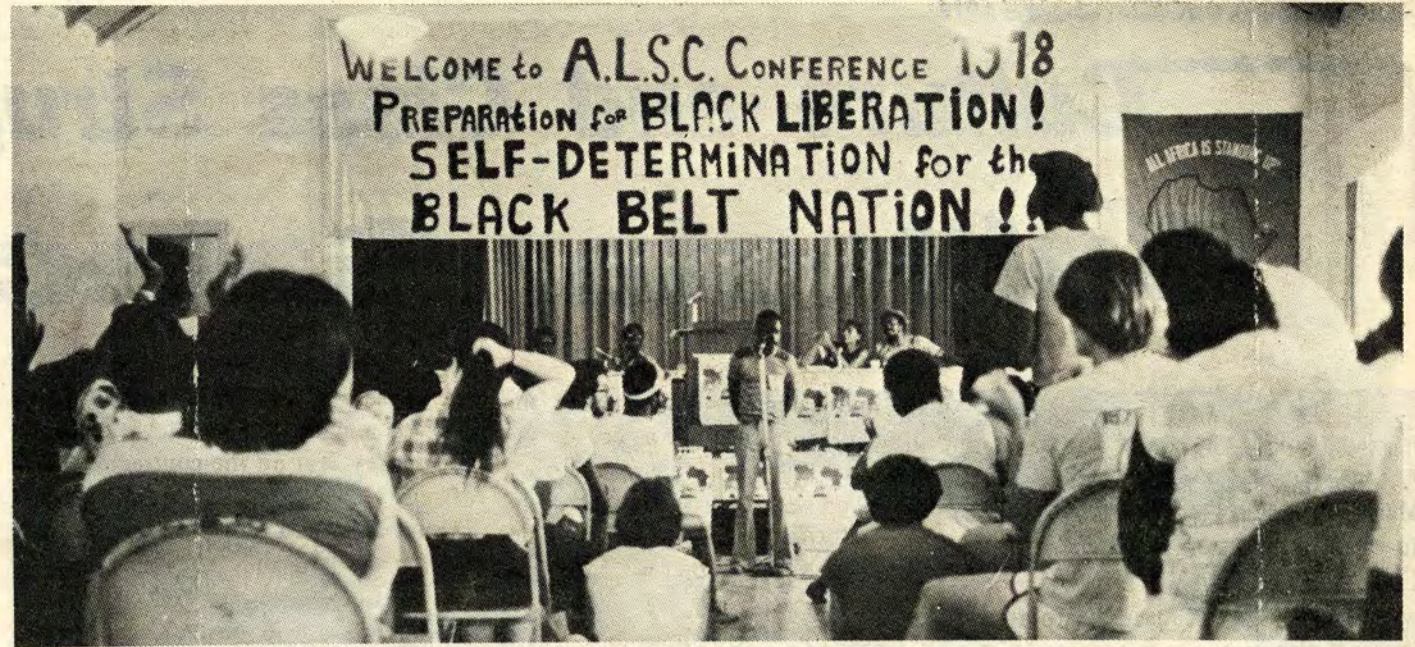
Continued from page 12

outlook. The self-preservation outlook starts from oneself and doesn't see the sentiment, creative energy, and vigor of the masses. When work has to be done this incorrect ideological line says "I can't do more work." The purpose of this incorrect line is to preserve and save oneself. It doesn't see that more and more fighters are around us and anxious to take up the work. It's an outlook that got stuck with the "same old people have to do the work." It's stuck with an outlook that says struggle and our strength is not really at a higher level and that we don't need to bring it to an even higher level. It's an idealist and metaphysical outlook that refuses to check out the material reality and sees us going around in circles; objectively struggle is in vain and not for necessity. It's a pessimistic outlook that doesn't check out the reality of the excellent situation and that the future is even brighter. It sums up the struggle from the feelings of an individual as opposed to correctly gauging the real sentiments of the masses. The self-preservation ideological line is closely connected to conservatism and routinism. When the viewpoint is to preserve oneself and not see the fighting energy of the masses, then one becomes conservative, oblivious toward new tasks, new political situations. Conservatism in thinking inevitably leads to routinism in practice. Routinism means continuing to "toll the bell everyday like a monk". Routinism misses the changes in different political situations.

Self-preservation, conservatism, and routinism are all deadly bourgeois ideological trends. Opposed to this incorrect way of thinking is the revolutionary thinking of the rising class—the proletariat. The bourgeoisie wants to preserve itself and the capitalist system. They are a doomed class. They hope to keep the working class in its routine and oppressed rut under the capitalist system. The proletariat has nothing to lose except our chains. Our outlook is to attack with political initiatives always in our hands. Our attitude is one to welcome new skirmishes with the bourgeoisie. In our fight against exploitation and oppression, we learn through repeated attempts and through our mistakes by sizing up the situation and our cutting angles, using a "thousand angles and a hundred devices." It looks up to its class brothers and sisters positively, embraces them and draws them into the attack against the bourgeoisie and all our enemies. It starts from the perspective of the masses.

## Relation Between International Support Work and Domestic National Oppression

The ALSC leadership in African liberation support work has developed greatly in the last year. At the same time many people and groups have asked the ALSC to give leadership to their issues of national oppression (i.e., quality education, police brutality, tenant fights, etc.). This raised questions about the ALSC's line on taking up support work and national oppression issues. Last December 1977, the ALSC held an extended NSC meeting and de-



ALSC Conference showed how mass line is necessary to push work forward.

decided that most chapters should only focus on doing African liberation support work. At the recent NSC meeting, the Workers Viewpoint Organization summed up that this line was incorrect and made thoroughgoing self-criticism for promoting this view. The Party traced the historical development of this line and gave the conditions and basis for this error. During the latter part of 1977, the ALSC was still in the process of rebuilding itself. The view at that time was that the ALSC needed to concentrate its focus and leadership on one front of class struggle to ensure that the support work was done well and kicked off the ground. This was the condition that led to the incorrect line. Focusing in on the support work has yielded fruits (in terms of raising the political level of the movement, training and accumulating more revolutionary forces). But as a line, it objectively pitted support work with taking up domestic national oppression issues. This line did not firmly connect the fact that the motor that drives the masses of oppressed people in this country in support of the revolutionary movements in southern Africa comes from the class exploitation and national oppression here in the U.S. Both the support work and national oppression issues support each other. Also this incorrect line deviated from the Party's basic line of accumulating revolutionary forces from all struggles. To just do support work blocks the domestic national oppression issues as a channel for progressive people to come to communism. Both fronts of class struggle can be taken up. If we are doing support work but another struggle arises, say police brutality, and the subjective factor is high with active people involved, then we should take up both. The same goes for a situation where we are involved in a local national oppression issue and a group of students are fighting a divestment issue. We should take up the divestment issue. In fact, at the national steering committee meeting, different chapter representatives gave examples of how their chapters were correctly taking up both support work and national oppression issues. Now that the relation between African liberation support work and domestic issues has been summed up to a conscious political line, chapter representatives are happily prepared to go back and attack the bourgeoisie even harder in order to win over and train more revolutionary fighters who come from all streamlets of discontent

and all manifestations of class exploitation and national oppression.

### Sharp Lines, Strong Leadership

The first national steering committee of the new ALSC leadership was very timely. It finely tuned the ideological and political lines of the ALSC and focused the line of attack, both in the support work and domestic issues. Since the national conference, the mass line campaign has begun. Chapter members are gaining good experience in welding together united fronts in the national movement and at the same time ensuring the independence and initiative of the ALSC. A presentation from the *All Africa is Standing Up!* newspaper staff summed

up the role and importance of the paper to two lines: whether we should push out the paper as the main way to keep political independence and initiative or not do so and become swallowed up in the environment of the united front. The NSC summed up that, at this point, the key to the paper's impact is its actual use in ALSC study sessions and its distribution. The meeting shows a strong ALSC national leadership. The weekend itself served as a school of Marxist education and class struggle. The national leadership and the ALSC is now united on a higher ideological and political level. This will certainly bear bigger fruit as we prepare to harass the bourgeoisie in the November 11 demonstration. ■

# AVAILABLE NOW!

## WORKERS VIEWPOINT JOURNAL 5

AUGUST, 1978

Study Notes on the "THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT": Part I, The State

MARXISM OR AMERICAN PRAGMATISM?: Part II, The Right Opportunist Line of the R.C.P. Summed up

History of ZAIRE and the Katangan Gendarmes

"RAISE LESS CORN AND MORE HELL" A Communist Analysis of Populism

\$2