

# ANGOLA: STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPERIALISM and OPPORTUNISM

## PART 2

## GO HAND IN HAND

This article concludes the MLOC's analysis of the history of the Coalition for Angolan Self-determination (CASD), which was started in the June-July issue of UNITE! The CASD was initiated in January of 1976 by the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL) and Fruitvale Law Collective (FLC) around two principles of unity: 1) Superpowers Out of Angola! and 2) Self-determination for the Angolan People! The coalition soon split into two blocs, which each advanced consistently opposing views on almost every question.

The majority bloc, which held a generally correct line, included I Wor Kuen (IWK); October League (OL); Asian Student Union (ASU) at San Francisco State and Laney College in Oakland; Fight Don't Starve (FDS); August Twenty-Ninth Movement (ATM); MLOC; and for a time the Bay Area Communist Union (BACU); as well as individuals. The minority bloc included RWL; FLC; Japan Town Collective (JTC); Revolutionary Student Union (RSU); the representative of the African Liberation Support Committee, even though ALSC as a whole does not hold the positions advanced by the minority bloc; and after a point BACU and Yen'an Collective, a local Marxist-Leninist group.

The conclusion of this analysis shows how an opportunist line leads to unprincipled struggle; presents a self-criticism of the MLOC's participation in the CASD; and summarizes the main lessons of the CASD, for the purpose of educating the communist and workers' movements.



An opportunist political line leads inevitably to an opportunist stand towards principled struggle and relations between Marxist-Leninist organizations. The minority bloc engaged in activity in the coalition which was designed to split, not to unite Marxist-Leninists, and which materially held back the development of the coalition's political line, resulting in the disunity which was displayed at the March 27th event.

In the process of the coalition's work, the minority employed two main tactics to split the coalition. First, the minority repeatedly refused to accept the majority position as the unity of the coalition, and consistently refused until four days before the event, to engage in full and scientific struggle over the different views on the nature of the international situation.

Faced with consistently principled struggle and victory of the correct position on this question, the RWL, February First Movement (also a member of the minority), FLC and other organizations and individuals of the minority, continued to insert the concept of two "contending trends" into

outlines for the coalition's leaflets and speeches.

When the correct position was victorious in regard to the content of the leaflet publicizing the event, the minority refused to accept the united viewpoint of the coalition and tried to have a speech put forward that would include the concept of two contending trends. When the majority's position again defeated this position in the struggle over the content of the speeches, the RWL raised that this unity did not bind the speaker's panel during the question and answer period of the prospective program. In writing the speech on the international situation shortly before the March 27th event, the RWL, against criticism and suggestion, overstressed the factors for war to the point of negating the significance of the rising factors for revolution. This clearly shows that it was the minority's intention to negate the unity of the coalition and put forward their own views, in essence of not in form. The slant of the presentation in the speech, and all earlier struggles point out that the RWL in particular was more intent on winning the hegemony of its own line than achieving principled unity.

Second, the minority abused its control of the chair of coalition meetings to stifle speakers who opposed the minority view, and to encourage speakers who supported that position. The chair failed to operate on the basis of principled impartiality, but instead used its position to interject questions, challenges, and repudiations into the statements of those representing the majority position. In this respect, the RWL was the least principled in its use of the chair. This abuse was resisted by members of the majority, as well as some supporters of the minority bloc.

The program of March 27th itself could not but reflect the disunity fostered in the coalition by the minority, and the refusal of the minority to abide by the unity of the coalition. At its program, the coalition presented three speeches, a cultural presentation, and answered questions from the floor. The speeches explained a) the history of Angola up to January of 1975; b) the international situation; and c) the present situation in Angola since January of 1975. These speeches, and the music and skits performed by the ALSC Cultural Collective of Oakland advanced the unity of the coalition, the majority position. However, the chair of the program was used by a representative of the minority during the question and answer period to present the minority position as the unity of the coalition.

In answer to questions about Cuba, the chair stated that the

coalition had no unity on that subject—a clear distortion of the truth. Further, the chairperson covered for Soviet social-imperialism in contradiction with the unity and slogans of the coalition. In response to the question, "Why does the coalition condemn Soviet 'aid' to Angola, and not Soviet 'aid' to Vietnam during the Vietnamese war?" the chair gave a purely revisionist answer. The chair stated that because the character of the Soviet Union had changed since 1974, it was now more dangerous and social-imperialist. This answer provided a cover for the actions of the Soviet social-imperialists against the peoples of the world before 1974, and negates the fact that the Soviet Union is social-imperialist since the mid-1960s.

The third example of how an opportunist line leads to unprincipled actions was the position of the minority bloc regarding struggle with opportunist coalitions on Angola. The CASD united to attend the Irwin Silber forum in Oakland in February, with the purpose of combatting and exposing the Guardian's centrist position, which is essentially a cover for Soviet social-imperialism. At that forum, the coalition did not present its position in a systematic or strong way, and failed to expose the roots of the Guardian's opportunism.

This failure was summed up by the CASD as conciliation with Soviet social-imperialism, and with the Guardian's position. The coalition resolved at that time to attend an April forum on Angola held in Oakland, California, by two coalitions, embracing a wide range of opportunist forces, including the CPUSA.

However, when the time came to prepare for this forum, the minority bloc held the position that the coalition should not attend the opportunist forum, on the basis that the majority bloc did not offer a "high enough" level of unity with which to combat opportunism. In essence, on the basis of an error made once in the face of opportunism, and the engineered failure of the CASD event, the minority held that the coalition should not continue to combat revisionism and centrism, and to perfect its own line and style of work! This clearly shows the petty bourgeois nature of the minority position; it is characteristic of the petty bourgeoisie to become disheartened after a defeat or two, to assign blame where it is not due, and to back off from further struggle. The proletariat, however, cannot afford this luxury.

The majority succeeded in assuring that the coalition's proletarian internationalist spirit and duty would be upheld, by attending the opportunist forum to struggle and expose

the roots of the revisionist and centrist positions on Angola. Systematic preparation was assured by assigning portions of preparatory work to coalition organizations and individuals who volunteered for the task.

In spite of all attempts to be systematic about preparation, the majority could not succeed in guaranteeing that all the work would actually get done. In the face of these decisions to prepare for and attend the opportunist forum, the RWL representative failed to prepare the section for which he had volunteered, missed an important preparatory meeting of CASD representatives, failed to notify coalition members as to what was the matter, and arrived late to the opportunist forum. The reason, it was stated later, was not an emergency, but rather an on-going weekly commitment of which the RWL representative had full knowledge before volunteering to prepare for a question for the opportunist forum.

These actions begin to show a pattern, which is the clearly observable result of the political line of the minority. This pattern is the unprincipled and contemptuous refusal to unite with other Marxist-Leninists and progressive forces in the course of combatting opportunism, the conscious refusal to uphold the political line and decisions of the majority, and in fact, the perpetuation of splitting and disruptive activities in the face of principled political line and practice.

*These actions are not consistent with the principles of equality among organizations, consistent and thorough criticism and self-criticism, and seeking to unite, not to split. These actions and the political line they flow from represent a profound disregard and disdain for the masses of oppressed and exploited people internationally and in the U.S. These actions serve the interests of the imperialist bourgeoisie in attempting to split the growing proletarian and communist movements, in order to perpetuate bourgeois ideology and class rule.*

### SELF-CRITICISM

The participation of the MLOC showed serious flaws which objectively weakened the coalition's struggles against opportunism, internal and external. The core of our error was a lack of struggle against opportunism, the failure to take up strongly and consistently the task of mobilizing the masses in support of the Angolan liberation movements. In the course of the coalition and its work outside of it, MLOC did not consistently accomplish the small and daily tasks of practical work so necessary to the successful completion of any project.

Within the coalition, we did not take the kind of leading role which our theoretical and political knowledge would have enabled us to do. Both in the small and large tasks, the work done by MLOC was inconsistent, although the contributions which were made were generally of a strong and principled nature. *This error represents an objective conciliation with Soviet social-imperialism, a capitulation before its temporary strength, the tactical victory of which has directly strengthened the U.S. bourgeoisie. This is a serious political matter.*

The ideological source of this error was the failure to break decisively with right opportunism, and in fact under-estimation of its strength in the coalition, the movement as a whole, and in our work. Although in historical and theoretical terms the MLOC is familiar with the main danger of right opportunism and revisionism in particular, our failure to struggle more strongly against it in this instance shows that we have not yet firmly grasped this lesson of the international communist movement.

Politically, this error flows from the failure of democratic centralism to function properly within the MLOC. The absolutely necessary process of checking up on tasks assigned in order to ensure that the responsibilities inherent in the line of the organization and the duty of Marxist-Leninists to uphold proletarian internationalism, were being carried out properly did not take place. Thus comrades working on the coalition were not given adequate political direction or proper conditions for struggle within the organization in order to further their work on the coalition.

Rectification of both the ideological and political errors is part of an ongoing internal struggle within the organization. This struggle encompasses developing a deeper grasp of the nature and forms of right opportunism, and of the theoretical and political bases from which to defeat it on each question. This rectification process also involves setting the MLOC on the firm basis of correct democratic centralism, in the course of the struggle against both bureaucratic centralism and ultra-democracy, which go hand in hand. The on-going struggle to defeat opportunism and build unity around political line, is the basis for democratic centralism. The development and strengthening of this necessary unity is progressing due to our participation in the CASD, and our recognition, through criticism and self-criticism, of the serious errors made in that involvement.

In conclusion, it is important that we summarize some of the main lessons learned from our work in the CASD. These include the following points:

#### 1.) PARTY BUILDING

In the course of the work in the CASD, the party building line of the MLOC was basically confirmed in practice, and through struggle. On the one hand, it became evident through the course of the two line struggle that communist organ-

izations alone shall never defeat opportunism and imperialism. It is the masses of working and oppressed peoples who will take up this task when mobilized and educated by the vanguard communist party, armed with the scientific guidance of Marxist-Leninist theory. In order to be able to rally the working people of the U.S. to support national liberation movements and to perform the internationalist task of overthrowing the U.S. bourgeoisie, communists must struggle with the working class patiently and systematically, educating the masses through their own experience. *The struggle of communist organizations against opportunism must become the school of training for the working class and oppressed nationalities of the U.S. and the world.*

Thus far, this concrete use of theory by U.S. communists, the utilization to the fullest of theory's mobilizing, organizing and educating power, has been generally lacking. Communist organizations have frequently ignored this task, or have been too wrapped up in polemicizing "within the movement" to carry it out. Polemics are indeed an important tool with which to combat opportunism and educate the class. However, it is in the struggle with the masses to implement political line that our positions are tested and achieve the goal of mobilizing working people against the state.

Further, *the MLOC tested and reinforced its position on uniting Marxist-Leninists and grasped more firmly how the four principles of relations among organizations are linked together.* (See UNITE! ,Vol.2, #2.) If an organization does not practice equality, but holds itself above others; if it practices hegemonism instead of defending the principle of independence of Marxist-Leninist organizations in this period; if it seeks to hide its own errors by attacking other comrades instead of practicing criticism and self-criticism correctly; all these things lead directly to seeking to split and not to unite Marxist-Leninists. The example of RWL's role in the coalition in relation to other organizations and individuals is an instructive negative example, an example of the errors made in these relations, as shown in sections above.

In the period when uniting Marxist-Leninists is the primary of the two inter-related tactics to be taken in reconstituting a vanguard party, the concrete lessons learned in how to go about this, as well as how not to, have been very valuable. The MLOC also made a right deviation in respect to this task, which stemmed chiefly from an idealist under-estimation of the struggle necessary to complete this important task, of uniting organizations and comrades around political line. This under-estimation is part of the error of not struggling against right opportunism consistently inside the coalition. Its source is a tendency to imagine that what is possible will be easily accomplished, an outlook being combatted within the MLOC.

## 2. PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM

Work around the Angola situation deepened our grasp of the urgency and depth of the struggle against opportunism and imperialism, in the U.S. and internationally. *This was a lesson in proletarian internationalism, of which some of the most basic components are yet to be fully grasped by the U.S. communist movement as a whole.*

This weakness of the U.S. communist movement is reflected in the tendency only to see phenomena from "the perspective of the movement in the U.S." rather than viewing the U.S. movement as an integral part of the international army of the proletariat. In some ways, this mistake is a remnant of American exceptionalism, the result of viewing the U.S. communist movement as somehow the exceptional case in the international communist movement, somehow apart from the international proletariat. Much communist work suffers from this malady; it will continue to derail our work within our "own" working class and oppressed nationalities as well as our solidarity with the working class and peasantry of other nationalities as long as it goes unchecked.

Further, the U.S. communist movement has yet to fully realize that the development of an opportunist position on Angola by U.S. revisionists and opportunists is only a small part of an international campaign of the bourgeoisie against communism and the working class. This is most sharply brought out by the attacks of the revisionists and centrists on China, which aims at isolating and crushing the great dictatorship of the proletariat in China. This attack on the leader of the international communist movement has not been resisted strongly enough. It is the duty and interest of the proletariat of all countries to make the defense of China, Albania, and the other socialist Republics one of our first tasks, integrally bound up in the party building process. *An attack on China is an attack on the whole working class and all of the oppressed nations, world wide. We must truly make the struggle against opportunism and imperialism go hand in hand, in our defense and support of the glorious leaders of the international proletariat.*

## 3. THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE TWO SUPERPOWERS

Even prior to the participation in the CASD, the MLOC had come to recognize the necessity of launching on-going, protracted and deep-going work to mobilize the masses of the U.S. against the two Superpowers, and particularly the threat of imperialist war. The CASD contributed to this work. But at the same time, as the MLOC sought to point out throughout the work, this task cannot be effectively taken up by promoting numerous short-term coalitions around particular events. A broad based mass organization must be developed to unite and steel the many progressive and revolutionary minded

people in this country opposed to both Superpowers, an organization which will offer the basis—with the reconstitution of a vanguard communist party—for a united front against both Superpowers. While the particular form this will take remains to be struggled out, the work in the CASD and MLOC's different contacts have vividly brought out the necessity for such an organization.

## 4. AFRICAN LIBERATION SUPPORT WORK

Throughout the entire work of the CASD, the MLOC raised the necessity to link the struggle of the Angolan people to the struggle of all African people, for national liberation and sovereignty, and to link the work around Angola to the task of actually uniting the multi-national proletariat in support of African liberation struggles. The MLOC did not move to initiate any concrete action on its own, but urged the CASD as a whole to move in this direction. Neither the CASD nor the ALSC took up this task this year in any effective way, and virtually left the field completely open to the most backward and opportunist elements.

Objectively, by failing to vigorously take up this work, revolutionaries in the U.S. conciliated with the interference of Soviet social-imperialism in Africa, and the spread of distortions by the modern revisionists in the U.S. and internationally. In CASD, this error flowed directly from the disunity perpetuated by the minority, and their incorrect views on the international situation and the nature of national liberation movements.

The MLOC is resolutely committed in the future to shoulder firmly the task of mobilizing the working class of the U.S. in support of the struggle of the African masses for their national liberation. Support for the African peoples' struggles against the two superpowers must move toward assuming the same proportions as existed in support of the people of Indochina.

Finally, from the struggles in the CASD and similar struggles we have entered around the country, the MLOC has emerged more strongly committed to strengthening and continuing its support for the Angolan revolution and the struggle of the Angolan people against the new colonialists—the Soviet Union and the puppet Cubans. The struggles we have described have helped us to grasp the protracted and detailed work that is required in order to adequately unite Marxist-Leninists around a correct political line and to move resolutely toward the reconstitution of a vanguard communist party. The theoretical and political clarity gained in these struggles have contributed greatly to the work the MLOC is taking up - along with other comrades - of strengthening unity around political line which will make the drafting of a party program possible.

LONG LIVE THE ANGOLAN REVOLUTION!  
CARRY THE REVOLUTION TO THE END!  
OPPOSE AND DEFEAT BOTH SUPERPOWERS!  
UPHOLD PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM!  
BUILD THE VANGUARD PARTY!

