

Towards a New Revolutionary Communist Organization

Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, the providence moves too. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents, meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamt would have come his way. I have learned a deep respect for one of Goethe's couplets:

“Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it.

Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.”

–William Murray¹

A few months ago a number of us started getting together to see if we could organize ourselves and others, make a qualitative breakthrough in our revolutionary activity, and somehow make a worthwhile contribution to building a more serious revolutionary movement in this country. Although we were small in number, and as might be expected, tentative and groping at first, we all felt a sense of exhilaration at our beginning. We felt this way because we had at least a faint intimation of the great possibilities, the potential of what we were trying to do.

Since that promising beginning, however, we have all let our various other activities—most of which are also well worth while—interfere to too great a degree with building this new organization. We have lost some momentum, and have failed to make the establishment of this new revolutionary communist organization our top political priority. Fortunately, with the upcoming meeting with the folks from the East Coast we have an excellent opportunity to get back on track. We should seize the time with this series of meetings and firmly establish what so far has been a pretty shaky start.

We have all recognized the necessity of drawing up some principles of unity as one of the first steps in establishing this new organization. However, we have not buckled down on this task so far. I think we all kind of felt we needed to feel each other out a bit, renew old acquaintances, get to know the people we hadn't known before, and so forth. Certainly that makes some sense. So we began by having a series of discussions about a couple important books and some RW articles. That was worth doing, and we should do a lot more of it in the future. But I would like to suggest that for right now we put our primary focus on what should be considered our initial main task as an organization—namely, drawing up these important principles of unity. We need to do this so that we can seek out and draw in other people, certainly. But we also need to do it for those of us already involved, so we know better where we stand as a group, and are more certain about what we as a group are really trying to do.

And to that end, I believe it would be a good idea to bring in at least some basic elements of what might be considered a party program (or programme as the British, the RCP and I like to spell it, at least in this context). I am not suggesting we try to write a full-scale programme for a revolutionary political party at this point, partly because I don't think we have that much unity yet, and partly because I am not certain that even all of us put together are fully capable of accomplishing it yet. It would be premature, and presumptuous. But principles of unity, if they are to be more than vague statements of general beliefs, or worse yet, pious window dressing, must include some statement about what the organization and its members are trying to do, and how they intend to go about doing it.

So for example, I don't think it is enough to simply say: "The U.S. is a capitalist country and a revolution is needed to put the working people in power, establish a socialist society, and gradually transform socialism into communism." That is certainly true. But the principles of unity should also say that our organization (probably in concert with others) will strive to help lead the people in accomplishing these tasks, and that our members are determined to contribute to this process in a number of specific ways. (Basically by joining up with the struggles of the people and bringing the light of revolution into those struggles, in my opinion.)

I also think we ought to give some serious thought to choosing a name for our group. That may seem like a relatively small matter that can easily be put off. Or even an action that is completely inappropriate at this point. But I think choosing a name will inevitably be a major political question; it will help concentrate our programmatic discussions, and bring to a head any deep-seated disagreements that may or may not exist. It will *force us* to come to some immediate agreement on some very basic issues.

After we adopt our principles of unity, and have settled on a name, what will our central task be for the immediately following period? I think it will be to establish a journal. One reason for this is that no organization can make any real difference in this world if it does not have a public presence. A second reason is that we want to draw in a lot more people, and this can only be done at this point by discussing and defending our point of view in a journal. (You can't be attracted to an organization or point of view that you don't even know exists.) A third important reason is that no matter how unified we are on our basic principles of unity, there will need to be a on-going forum for discussion of a large number of subsidiary and additional topics. Any political organization needs to constantly develop its outlook if it is not to stagnate and die.

In *What Is To Be Done?* Lenin said that the focus for the construction of a revolutionary organization should be a newspaper. Certainly a regularly-appearing newspaper must be published by any serious revolutionary organization—*once it gets to the point where it can do so!* But we are not likely to be at that point for some time. Anyway, a magazine can evolve toward a newspaper in various ways, such as by appearing more regularly, shortening the time from the writing of articles to their publication, talking more about the important issues of the day, and so forth. The main thing is to get *some publication* going as soon as possible. Then at some point "one can divide into two" and we can hopefully have a theoretical journal *and* a newspaper. But that is looking far ahead at this point.

If we are to truly make a difference as individuals we must join together in an effective revolutionary organization. If that organization is to truly make a difference, it must not be just a discussion group (though all sorts of discussions will be part of it). My main fear at this point is that we might not have the will and the courage to really seize the time and start doing what really needs to be done—firmly establish a new revolutionary communist organization. It is true that we must be modest and realistic, but we must nevertheless be bold and farsighted. I think we can achieve all these goals.

—S.H. (8/22/98)

¹ William Murray, *The Scottish Himalayan Expedition* (1951). The Goethe couplet is from *Faust*, part I (1808).