

ORGANIZATION MEANS COMMITMENT

GRACE LEE BOGGS

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This reprint from the revolutionary New Afrikan journal Vita Wa Watu written by Grace Lee Boggs as “anonymous” until her new introduction in 2011.

It argues for a disciplined revolutionary cadre organization from a Marxist-Leninist perspective.

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A red graphic of a machete blade, curved and pointing to the right, serving as a background for the publisher's name.

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PREFACE

I wrote *Organization Means Commitment* in the early 1970s in response to African American activists who, after reading the Manifesto for a Black Revolutionary Party, were asking us what kind of organization they should build.

This little paper was our answer. I wrote but didn't sign it because the ideas in it came from a number of sources, including the Conversations in Maine, and we were already putting them into practice. We never anticipated that it would be reprinted by Spear & Shield. And that many years later it would be read by Yusef Shakur in prison and help him think about how he should organize after his release. And that in 2010 questions would arise about who wrote it and who owned the reprinting rights.

In the early 1970s we had just emerged from a very violent and tumultuous decade. Urban rebellions had exploded all over the country. President Kennedy, Malcolm and Martin, Robert Kennedy had been assassinated.

In the midst of this turmoil Bobby Seale and Huey Newton, accompanied by a handful of armed youth, marched on the California state legislature to protest a ban on weapons and to announce the founding of the Black Panther Party. Overnight, this very visible defiance turned their new party into a mass party, attracting thousands of angry young blacks ready to confront the "pigs," but also making it possible for the "pigs" to send agent provocateurs into the party to propose violent actions and crimes that would result in huge numbers of young lives being wasted.

Organization Means Commitment was written to project a

very different concept of revolutionary organization and leadership, the kind that could only be developed by many years of patient and protracted theoretical and practical struggles. Creating this concept of leadership and of an organization involved:

Creating an organizational structure to develop every member into a leader instead of depending on a few charismatic leaders, as the movement had done in the 1960s.

Distinguishing between Rebellion and Revolution. As we explained in *Revolution and Evolution in the 20th Century (RETC)*: Rebellion is a stage in the development of revolution but it is not revolution. It is an important stage because it represents the standing up of the oppressed. To make a revolution people must not only struggle against existing institutions. They must make a philosophical leap and become more human human beings. In order to change/transform the world, they must change/ transform themselves.”

Thinking dialectically, i.e., recognizing that reality is constantly changing; that an idea that is progressive at one point can turn into its opposite at a later point. Also, because in everything there is both the positive and negative, the responsibility of revolutionary leadership in times of crisis is not just to denounce or protest oppression but to project a vision that encourages grassroots creation of positive alternatives.

Making very clear that a revolution in an advanced industrial country like the United States must be very different from the revolutions that have taken place in Third World or developing countries. The rapid economic development of the

United States was achieved by enslaving African-Americans and dispossessing and exterminating Native Americans. Therefore, the fundamental contradiction that was built into our founding and must be resolved by the next American Revolution is the contradiction between our economic and technological overdevelopment and our human and political underdevelopment.

Because we never lost sight of this fundamental contradiction, over the last thirty years we have been able again and again to project actions that challenge the American people to transform both ourselves and our institutions. Organization Means Commitment means committing ourselves to this kind of transformational organizing, organizing which does not mainly denounce and protest oppression or mobilize Americans to struggle for more material things, but challenges us as Americans to evolve or transform ourselves into more human human beings.

Recognizing that revolutionary leadership means more than just protesting oppression but also projecting a vision that encourages grassroots creation of positive alternatives designed to create more human humans, transformative organizing involves doing the work of loving each other in ways that seem ridiculous if we only think of revolutionary change as masses of people mobilized to make demands on a state. Because our historical reality has been shaped the actions of human beings who have internalized the contradiction between technological overdevelopment and human underdevelopment, even if we protest so effectively that we acquire state power, if we don't change our ways of thinking and relating to one another, we will only further

develop this contradiction with new people in charge. These changes must be rooted in love.

Because the next American Revolution must resolve this contradiction, the organizing that creates it will not simply be anti-imperialist, anti-racist, anti-sexist, or anti-ableist. Instead, the love based organizing that creates the next American Revolution will recognize that all these ‘isms’ are the logical outgrowth of a system whose internal logic is shaped by the loveless contradiction between technological overdevelopment and human under-development. Therefore, the only way to secure freedom from these forms of oppression is to create the freedom to develop and practice new types of more human relationships. Only by developing these kinds of loving relationships can we as humans heal ourselves — and each other — from the damage done to us by an economic and political system bent on creating wealth at the expense of all living things. Through healing ourselves and our communities we can enable ourselves to stop reacting to oppression and begin the process of projecting healthier, more human alternatives that don’t benefit us at the expense of the rest of the world.

As Jimmy wrote in chapter 6 of *Revolution and Evolution in the Twenty-First Century*, “The revolution to be made in the United States will be the first revolution in history to require the masses to make material sacrifices rather than to acquire more material things. We must give up many of the things which this country has acquired at the expense of damning over one-third of the world into a state of underdevelopment, ignorance, disease and early death... It is obviously going to take a tremendous transformation to prepare the people of the United States for these new social goals. But potential revolutionaries only become true revolutionaries if they take

the side of those who believe that humanity can be transformed.” (*Originally published in 1974; Revolution and Evolution in the Twenty-First Century was re-issued with a new introduction by Grace Lee-Boggs in 2009*)

Almost forty years after it was originally written, the Boggs Center to Nurture Community Leadership is publishing *Organizing Means Commitment* because its reprint by Spear & Shield as well as several recent questions raised by young people in reference to it tells us that it should be published.

Because of these questions, we think *Organizing Means Commitment* has a role to play in nurturing the transformational leadership capacities of individuals and organizations committed to creating productive, sustainable, ecologically responsible, and just communities. If it is read and discussed through local, national and international networks of activists, artists and intellectuals, we think it can foster new ways of living, being and thinking to face the challenges of the 21st century.

-- Grace Lee Boggs

INTRODUCTION (1972)

As the US enters the 70's, some people are beginning to discuss the question of how to build a revolutionary cadre organization. Most of those who are discussing it will never get beyond the point of discussion, while of those who are actually beginning to organize, only a minority will probably be around a few years from now.

This is because it is not at all easy to build a revolutionary cadre organization. It takes a lot of time and patience; a lot of hard work and struggle; a continuing relationship from and to the revolutionary and progressive social forces within your society; a continuing expansion and enrichment of your own revolutionary vision and that of the revolutionary social force; the ability to think independently as well as to accept discipline cheerfully; and unrelenting self-criticism and struggle to overcome your own shortcomings.

This work and struggle, this time and patience, this continuing relationship, this expansion and enrichment, this independence and discipline, this criticism and self-criticism, can only come from a continuing commitment in theory and in practice to the conviction that at the heart of (every great revolution) is the urgent need to transform Man/Woman into a new and more advanced form of human being by means of struggle. The only justification for a revolution is that it accelerates the evolution of man and woman.

The first thing you need for such a commitment is an unshakable conviction that Correct ideas matter and that once the correct ideas are grasped by the great masses of people, they become a material force capable of changing society and the world. In a country like the U.S. where there is so much respect for things and so little respect for ideas, the number of people with this conviction is still very small; and the number whose convictions cannot be shaken is even smaller.

When your friends and associates accuse you of having too much faith in ideas or in "human nature," it takes a pretty strong person to hold firm. One of the most difficult hurdles that a cadre group has to overcome at its first meeting (and often at subsequent meetings) is

the feeling among those present that there must be something wrong with them because they are so few. In a country like the U.S., where it is normal and natural to judge the value and importance of everything according to the size (the bigger the better), it is not easy to grasp and hold firm to the historical fact that every advance that has ever been made by humankind was started by a few people, often, to begin with, by only one individual, since every beginning can only be a beginning.

Someone — it may have been a man or a woman — was the first to use a piece of stone as a hatchet or hammer or ax; in other words, to take the first step in tool-making (two million) years ago, which has now led to the machine age of lathes, punch presses, and dynamos. Similarly, someone—it may have been a man or woman — was the first to mold a pot out of mud... Elsewhere on earth, maybe another continent, or maybe only a few miles away, another man or woman at approximately the same time may have been doing the same things. But the first man or woman to take this first crude step in tool-making or pottery did not know this. Nor did he or she stop to speculate why only he or she or just a few others were taking this step.

The practice of judging a step forward in humankind's productive or political evolution by the number of people involved is a modern, western, and especially American prejudice. When a handful of people met in 1921 to organize the Chinese Communist Party which now governs 750 million people, they knew, of course, that the party had to become much larger before it could lead the Chinese revolution to victory over imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic capitalism. But those present did not look around at each other and ask, "Why us rather than anyone else?" They knew that anything which men and women create, any advance which humankind makes, must have a beginning and that every beginning must be made by those few individuals who choose to begin something because they feel it should be begun. Before something can GROW, it must first BE.

THE ROLE OF REVOLUTIONARY CADRE ORGANIZATION

Building a revolutionary cadre organization is enormously difficult, but there is no mystery about the essential functions of such an organization. Just as the individual human being requires a mind to synthesize the many varied experiences which it receives through the senses, so the revolutionary social forces in a revolutionary period require a revolutionary cadre organization.

Just as the mind acts as a center for the senses giving and receiving impulses, so the revolutionary cadre organization acts as a center for the revolutionary social forces. Neither can replace the other; nor can either develop without continuing interaction with the other. They are the two poles of a developing and dynamic relationship, continually enriching one another in a never ending spiral process of “from the masses, to the masses.” This dialectical concept is the key to the building of a revolutionary cadre organization.

The first task of a revolutionary cadre organization is theoretical analysis and synthesis. That is to say, the cadre organization must first reflect upon the specific social realities within which it is operating, with the aim of arriving at a clear conception of:

- A) How this social reality has developed historically, and
- B) The contradictions within this reality which are the basis for further development.

The cadre organization must then,

- C) Define which of these contradictions are the principal and major ones requiring solutions if the society is to advance; and

- D) Develop a vision of what kind of new reality will be created by the resolution of those principal or major contradictions.

Finally, the revolutionary cadre organization must,

- E) Determine which sectors of the society have the greatest potential for the struggle necessary to resolve these contradictions and create this new reality.
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These theoretical concepts together constitute the ideology of the cadre organization.

After deriving its ideology from reflections upon the social realities, the cadre organization must devise concrete programs to go to the revolutionary social forces (masses, people) in order to mobilize them in struggles to create new reality through resolving the major contradictions of the society. In devising and projecting these concrete programs, the cadre organization must be concerned not only to increase the momentum of struggle and the physical power of the revolutionary social forces.

It must also be concerned to bring about a transformation in these forces. That is to say, it must seek to increase their initiative, their critical, political consciousness, their sense of collectivity and responsibility, and the structures with which they can not only bring about the collapse of the existing oppressive society, but also create a new society.

The cadre organization, in other words, must be concerned not only with the quantitative but with the qualitative development of the mass struggle and of the revolutionary social forces. It must take seriously the fact that all the people within a given society, including the revolutionary social forces, are shaped by the dominant values of the society.

In the light of the revolutions that have taken place all over the world in the past half century, beginning with the Russian Revolution of 1917, anyone claiming to be a revolutionist must be willing to look beyond the question of power to what happens after the taking of power. Hence, s/he must be concerned not only with increasing the anger and militance of the oppressed but also their determination and capacity to transform themselves. Otherwise, willfully or not, s/he is only preparing them for despair and hence for the leadership of demagogues, and s/he himself/herself is not a revolutionist, but a rebel or a demagogue.

At the same time the cadre organization is also providing the framework within which the cadre members themselves can be

constantly transforming themselves into more conscious, more responsible, more creative and more critical human beings—to whom the revolutionary masses can increasingly look for leadership because they can recognize in them actual, living witnesses to the possibility of creating new men and women.

If the ideology of the cadre organization is sound; if its program meets the needs of the revolutionary social forces; if the cadre themselves are in a close and continuing relationship with these forces, then the revolutionary social forces will begin to struggle around these programs.

In turn, these struggles will bring about new situations, involving new contradictions and new conflicts. This means that the cadre organization must be continuously prepared to reevaluate its ideas of the social reality and to devise new programs to take to the revolutionary social forces.

Thus constantly deepening and enriching both their ideas and their relationship with the revolutionary social forces, the cadre never lose sight of their primary commitment to the revolutionary cadre organization. It is the center from which they go outwards and to which they return. It provides the framework within which they can be continuously re-evaluating their theory and practice and continuously transforming themselves so as to be better able to live up to the historic task for which they accepted responsibility.

THE AMERICAN POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The difficulty in understanding the role of the revolutionary cadre organization does not stem from any intrinsic mystery in this role. Rather, it stems from the lack of experience of Americans in the political process of continuing commitment to the kind of systematic, collective, dialectical, theoretical and practical struggle which is at the heart of a revolutionary cadre organization. For historical reasons, the approach of most Americans to social has always been a pragmatic or problem-solving approach which is essentially anti-intellectual. In what has been described as the "headache syndrome," they react to and try to resolve each problem it arises, as if each were a sporadic, isolated or accidental problem in a system which is fundamentally sound, and therefore capable of quick and easy solutions.

In the recent period, confidence in the soundness of American institutions has plummeted, chiefly under the impact of the revolutionary struggles of Vietnamese people and the revolt of blacks. The result is that a great many Americans, black and white, no longer think of American problems as isolated or accidental. They have traced their roots to the "system" of "capitalism and racism" and concluded that a revolution is necessary in the US. They have further identified the chief revolutionary social forces to make this revolution as the blacks and other non-white (so-called) minorities.

However, for the most part, these people still strongly resist the ideas of committing themselves to the kind of collective and protracted struggle in the dialectical relationship to the revolutionary social forces outlined above. They no longer look at the problems of this society in a piecemeal fashion, to be solved one by one. But they still regard the revolutionary struggle as a series of isolated events, "happenings" and "experiences." The result is that they do not have a framework within which to do the continual evaluation that is necessary, and their angry attacks on the system turn into abstractions and rhetorical denunciations.

Always “on the go,” attracted to whatever or whoever turns them on, they jump from one activity or group to another, judging the revolutionary content of that activity or group by its militancy or by the excitement and relief which it offers from boredom and frustration, i.e., quantitatively and subjectively. In the past few years, white youth, rebelling against the materialism and individualism of their middle-class parents, have been drifting in and out of communes and collectives. They claim to be seeking collectivity but they are unwilling to make the long range commitment to any group which is the prerequisite to collective struggle and collective learning. As a result, the collectives and communes springing up and disappearing all over the country are little more than aggregates of subjectivities in which each individual is still doing his or her “own thing.”

These young people have substituted for the pragmatic, anti-intellectual attitudes of their forebears, a new anti-intellectual attitude which is the unique product of the post-World War II society. Raised in a world of unceasing novelty and mobility, of revolutions in production and abundance in consumption, of instant communication and spaceship transportation, they have been culturally deprived of the experience through protracted struggle which has been the good and bad fortune of every previous generation, if only in the productive arena. As a result, they have an existentialist philosophy or the conviction that life consists essentially of momentary experiences.

In the 1960's, this lack of experience in protracted struggle was not a serious handicap. In fact, in retrospect, it was an enormous advantage since it enabled young people to leapfrog the old radical organizations with their obsolete theories and programs (still stemming from the experience of 1917 revolution in Russia), and to create instead a new and unique style of politics. This “new style of politics” centered around the dramatization of confrontations which were then carried into every living room through television. Staging these confrontations and using the mass media with enormous skill, the movement leaders of the late 50's and 60's, black and white, were able to overnight bring home to the entire society the barbarism of US racism and the genocidal war in Vietnam.

Radicalized by these methods young Americans, particularly young black Americans, exploded in the streets of practically every major city in the country, creating by the late 60's a social crisis of unprecedented magnitude with the entire society.

However, while the social crisis was obviously maturing, no cadre organization was being created to evaluate the new reality and to give direction to the emerging social forces. The result is that today the great majority of Americans, both those who feel oppressed by the system and those who support the system because of the benefits they have received from it, are completely bewildered.

They feel as if they were being tossed about in the eye of a great storm with no idea where they should go or how to get there. Likewise, in the absence of a revolutionary cadre organization, most young people who played such an important role in creating the movement of the 60's have been without any framework within which they could collectively evaluate the situation and make new projections to the country, let alone transform themselves into more responsible, more conscious, more dedicated and more critical cadres.

Left to their own individual devices, the great majority of them have drifted out of the movement or have gone the way of left or right opportunism. This is to say, many have become pure adventurists, making isolated and desperate attacks on the power structure or anyone who they think supports the power structure. Others have become careerists, "on the go" in one way or another, as consultants, project directors, or staff persons supported by federal, city and state agencies and by churches and universities in order to co-opt the "heavies" of the movement.

COMMITMENT IS THE KEY

Against this background, it should be clear why the first step of any group of people seeking to build a cadre organization must be the decision of each individual in the group to commit herself or himself to a collective, protracted struggle in a dialectically developing relationship with the revolutionary social forces [people]. Those who are convinced of the need for revolutionary social change and who, out of sober reflection on the concrete experiences of the recent past, have become convinced that spontaneous rebellions, revolts and confrontations—no matter how many or how spectacular — lead not to revolution, but to despair and confusion, should be ready to make this commitment out of their own volition.

If, among those who have come together to discuss the question, only two people are ready for this commitment, these two must resist the temptation to continue meeting with the others in the hope or illusion that by doing so, they will persuade the others to stop wavering and make a commitment to this temptation, they will discover in the end that they are left either with the same two people, or that they themselves have begun to waver, since the waverers are the ones who have behind them the pressure of the way things are, rather than of the way things should be.

The decision by a group of people, no matter how few, to commit themselves to this collective and protracted struggle and to reject “on the go” politics, shapes everything that follows. If their commitment is to become more than rhetorical “testifying,” they must now embark on the concrete steps necessary to create a collectivity out of their separate selves. As it is, they are still individuals, with their own very different ideas about what is and what should be, what they should do and how they should do it, what they can expect from each other now and what they should be able to expect from each other as they begin to struggle together.

In order for the group to start transforming their separate subjectivities, they must first arrive, through organized discussion

and an agreed-upon method of decision-making, an agreement on the following:

1. Their ideology.
2. A program or programs for activity within a prescribed period, long enough for them to complete some projects, and yet short enough so that they can see the end at the beginning.
3. A structure within which they can carry out these programs and which will also provide for the continuing growth and developing of the group as a whole and or every member in it.
4. Standards of membership.
5. Methods for continuing evaluation of their activities and themselves.

Some or all of these may be modified in the course of the organization's continuing development. Particularly in a revolutionary period, situations change very rapidly, and the ideas of the revolutionary organization must change accordingly. As situations change, different views over what should or should not be modified may at such time lead to such opposing proposals that those holding these opposing views cannot continue to co-exist in the same organization, and a split becomes unavoidable.

But unless these changes or differences have developed in relationship to an original set of basic ideas, they cannot be dealt with as political differences, but will instead be interpreted as subjective or personality differences, with all the bitterness that usually accompanies such interpretations.

1. THE IDEOLOGY

For the last 50 years most radicals in the United States have thought that it was sufficient to define the American historical reality in terms of Marx's 19th century analysis of European capitalism and Lenin's pre-World War I analysis of European imperialism, simply adding to these the analysis of American racism, usually interpreted as a manifestation of capitalism or domestic imperialism.

In the past ten years, the New Left radicals have continued to define the American historical reality in these terms. However, in recognition of the postWorld War II struggles of Third World peoples inside and outside the United States and the increasingly middle-class character of the American workers, they have simply substituted Third World peoples for the working class which Marx and Lenin regarded as the revolutionary social force to destroy capitalism and imperialism.

None of these radicals, either in the past or recently, ever took seriously the fact that Marx and Lenin were both developing their theories in systematic reflection upon their specific historical reality, a totally different historical reality from what exists in the United States today. Marx was writing at the beginning of the industrial revolution in Europe 100 years ago, and Lenin in backward Russia over 50 years ago, in periods when rapid development of the productive forces was the urgent concern of Europeans and Russians respectively.

Today the United States is the most technologically advanced country in human history, producing goods and developing the productive forces with such rapidity that every politically conscious, socially responsible person is trying to think of how to slow development down. Far from being in material want, even the poorest layers of the population are constantly being courted by capitalism to buy, buy, buy; and state agencies subsidize these layers so their publicly-financed purchasing power can keep the economy going.

Yet, instead of analyzing this new social reality with the seriousness with which Marx and Lenin analyzed theirs, most radicals have simply reacted to the revolt of Third World peoples by casting them in the role which Marx and Lenin gave to the working class.

Subsequently, as if vying for the leading role on the stage of this social drama, other groups, victimized and alienated within the society (women, youth, prisoners) have begun to substitute themselves for blacks. Now, some radicals, reacting to the chaos and absurdities into which this kind of rivalry to take the center of the

stage is plunging the movement, have fallen back on the working class as hero, hoping against hope that spreading unemployment, inflation, taxes and other economic miseries may yet turn the working class into the revolutionary class which Marx's 19th century analysis called for.

Instead of just reacting to rebellions and to each other as these organizations are doing, the revolutionary cadre organization must make its own serious analysis of the unique historical development of the United States and of the new social tasks which have been uniquely posed as a result of its unprecedented material development. It should then be able to recognize that the major contradiction in this country is not an economic one, but rather the contradiction between this country's extremely advanced technological development and its extreme political and social underdevelopment.

This contradiction is manifested in the preoccupation of its people with their own private pursuits and their material comforts and in their lack of political consciousness and social responsibility, as well as of genuine self-governing institutions which could encourage the development of political consciousness and social responsibility. It can then be seen that the chief purpose of the revolution is to accelerate the rapid growth of political consciousness and social responsibility in the people so that they can put politics in command of economics, instead of being ruled by economics as they are today.

2. THE PROGRAM

Mass movement groups are reactive, issue-oriented groups who are constantly plunging into activity around the innumerable issues, usually defense issues, which are constantly surfacing in this period, such as "Free the Prisoners," "Free Angela Davis," "Abolish Stress" "Bring the Boys Back from Vietnam." The result is that most of them disappear as rapidly as they appear. What usually continues is:

A) either one of the Old Left organizations (CP-USA), SWP, PLM, etc.) or

- B) cliques of individuals who are often clustered around a particularly charismatic individual or one who is particularly gifted at fund raising or
- C) social groups of alumni or veterans of various struggles in the 60's.

Few of these, if any, have ever sat down to work out a program that a half dozen people could carry out over the period of a year in order to build themselves into a viable organization with their own collective identity and specific contribution to make to the overall movement. Most of the so-called revolutionaries in the US can rap about the need for a planned economy or for the re-organization of the entire united states from top to bottom. But they never have taken the time to think through the program for even a small cadre organization: a clear conception of the purposes the group is trying to achieve, the methods by which they propose to achieve these purposes, a proposed time schedule, including deadlines for each step of the program, and the specific step-by-step processes.

When an organization works out clearly such programs, it also establishes a basis for the evaluation of its programs. Thereby it does one of the most important, yet deceptively simple, things that a revolutionary cadre organization can do: learn from experience or develop its theory from social practice. Nowhere more than in the US is it so necessary to recognize and emphasize the importance of learning and the development of theory through a continuing relationship of your theory to practice.

This is the only way to combat the powerful tendencies in this country to empty rhetoric (or talk without practice), and mindless activism or reactionary militancy, i.e., militancy to prove one's militancy or because it is fashionable to be militant, rather than to act because one has some deeply felt convictions about the way man/womankind can and should advance, and realizes that these convictions can only be tested in social practice.

Therefore, in the initial period, the main programs of a revolutionary cadre organization should be internal programs. That is to say, they should be consciously aimed at transforming those who have come

together on the basis of commitment to a collectivity, with a powerful sense of their developing and continuing collective identity and purpose. The first year programs of a cadre organization should center chiefly around the following:

- A)** The theoretical strengthening of the members (political education).
- B)** The development of the literature of the organization and the skills of the membership to enable them to take the ideas of the organization to the masses (propaganda).
- C)** The increase of the organization's members (recruitment).

The Propaganda Program of the organization is crucial to the development of the revolutionary struggle since as it cannot too often be repeated, once the correct ideas are grasped by the masses, they become a material force capable of changing society and the world. Particularly at this stage in the struggle, the major emphasis of the organization's propaganda must be on expanding the vision and increasing the critical political consciousness of the people, i.e., inspiring them with the broad purposes of the struggle and developing their capacity to de-mythologize and de-romanticize. To mobilize the masses in struggle or to increase their militancy without at the same time expanding their consciousness of their responsibility and capacity to create "new men and women," is only to lay the groundwork for their despair.

In mapping out the Recruitment Program of the organization, great care should be taken to make the process of recruitment a selective one, aimed at slow and qualitative growth, rather than rapid expansion, taking care not to judge the growth of the organization by the numbers of its members, rather than by their commitment to the ideology and programs of the organization.

In the matter of recruitment, the cadre organization has few models to go on. In the past, it was ridiculously easy, particularly for a worker or a black person, to acquire membership in the CPUSA or the Trotskyite parties.

The organizations, except for relatively brief periods right after the Russian Revolution had so little contact with the workers, and even less with blacks, and so few workers or blacks were attracted to these organizations, that each one became a kind of “prize;” so that if he or she showed any sign of being willing to join, the organization virtually subsidized them, sending them around the country on tours for the party so that the party could present a public image of black or worker membership.

Since the 60’s, on the other hand, thousands of young people have been attracted to the new political organizations of all persuasions, ready to drift into (and out of) these organizations with the same lack of commitment as they have given to ad hoc organizations, particularly if the mass media has given these organizations any publicity. In turn, these organizations, living for the moment and for the spotlight, have recruited furiously in order to give the impression of a large public following.

In the recent past we have had some instructive experiences with organizations who have expanded rapidly for the sake of and with the help of the media. Often they have discovered that they were recruiting many police agents. Even when this was not the case, they have still been at the mercy of their new members, most of who were attracted to the organization in the first place by the image of confrontation which they got from the mass media and who have therefore led the organization into confrontation after confrontation, until its entire energies and resources were exhausted in defense activities.

For all these reasons, it is important that the revolutionary cadre organization seek to avoid both rapid expansion and any kind of publicity, in full recognition of the fact that any rapidly expanding or publicity-oriented organization has no chance to do the learning and developing which are absolutely essential to preparation for rapid growth at a later stage of the protracted struggle.

For the same reasons, a cadre organization must acquire its basic finances from dues paid by its members and from the strictly political activities of the organization (sales of literature, public

meetings, etc.), and not from grants or funds from private or public agencies. The danger is not that these agencies will put direct pressure on or try to dilute any militant activities which the organization may want to engage in. The corruption is much more insidious, arising from the fact that external funding deprives the organization and the membership of the opportunity and the responsibility to develop and lest their own commitment and their own ideas.

3. THE STRUCTURE

Regular meetings at least once a week and always starting on time, the keeping of minutes at every meeting and the reading of these minutes at the subsequent meeting, and a clearly-organized agenda for each meeting, are the elementary structural requirements for a revolutionary cadre organization. If it seems strange to emphasize what should be obvious, it is because these are not at all obvious in the “on the go” political atmosphere of today’s movement, which is more likely to call meetings when the spirit moves it, to disdain the keeping of minutes and to regard presentation of an agenda as incipient bureaucratization or elitism.

Through regularly scheduled meetings, each member begins to internalize the structure of the group as part of his or her own living routines. Through the promptness with which every member arrives at the meeting, the unity of every one starting together is established. Through minutes a group takes responsibility for its programs and procedures from week to week and begins to get a concept of its own development as historical.

Through a clearly organized agenda, the essentials of which should be the same from week to week, every member can be preparing between meetings for his or her participation at the meeting, thus creating a framework for the maximum participation of each member. At the beginning of each meeting, the Chairperson is the one responsible for preparing the agenda.

This can then be revised by the membership who must accept the agenda in its final form before the meeting proceeds. This apparently

simple situation is an example of the leadership to membership relationship which is essential to the development of a revolutionary cadre organization.

The establishment of structure with which leadership and membership can be developed is a very difficult problem inside the United States. On the one hand, there is a strong tendency in ordinary non-political working people to hold back and wait for direction from those who they may consider to be more capable or experienced, i.e., to see themselves as permanent rank and file. Coupled with this is the tendency to rally around and rely upon charismatic leaders to lead them out of the wilderness of oppression.

Movement people, including young blacks, also tend to be caught up in this “cult of personality.” But there is an even more widespread tendency among young people to regard any leadership as “elitist” and “bureaucratic” and to insist instead on what they call “participatory democracy” or the uninterrupted rule of the rank and file. Although apparently contradictory, both the “cult of personality” and the “ultra-democracy” of young people actually stem from the same existentialist, ad hoc approach of movement people to revolutionary struggle. Constantly on the go from rally to rally, living for the psychological impact of each meeting on their feelings, they are not concerned with the development of collective struggle, but rather with their own momentary feelings as individuals.

The structure of the revolutionary cadre organization, on the other hand, is created to develop a dialectical, i.e., a developing, relationship between the leaders and members of the organization analogous to that between the organization and the revolutionary social forces.

The important difference is that the members of the revolutionary cadre organization elect their leaders out of their own ranks, choosing those who they believe to be the most capable of guiding and directing the organization, and holding them responsible for giving such guidance and direction. This is one of the many ways

in which the revolutionary cadre organization is constantly making creative use of the dialectical interplay and tension between the two opposites, Democracy and Centralism, for its own collective development. Or, to put it another way, it is precisely because collective development is so critical to the essence of the revolutionary cadre organization that it is able to make conscious and creative use of the interplay between the two opposites, Democracy and Centralism.

Most Americans find it difficult to understand the principles and practices of Democratic Centralism because Americans, generally speaking, proceed not from the concept of roles, but from the concept of rights versus privileges and prerogatives.

This concept of rights, embodied in both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, predisposes Americans to regard any relationship between individuals and leaders as an antagonistic contradiction and to look at every situation from the viewpoint of the individuals preserving his or her right from external infringement. The concept of roles, on the other hand, involves looking at relations in terms of the development of the collectivity, whether this be the organization, the society as a whole, or any institution in the society.

At the heart of Democratic Centralism is the question: "What functions must be performed by each part of the structure if the collectivity is to be able to act as and continue to develop into a strong nucleus of revolutionary leadership and as a framework for the continuing development and transformation of every member?"

It is necessary to have leadership within the structure of a revolutionary cadre organization because it is necessary to have some persons or a Central Committee that is playing the role of projecting and generalizing, unifying and coordinating. If there is no chairperson within a particular committee, or no Central Committee within an organization with a number of committees, who is playing this role as "center," then there is only the plurality,

the specificity and the variety of the members on the constituent committees.

On the other hand, if the various members and the various committees who are responsible for specific programs, are not constantly developing their programs, are not increasing their contact with the revolutionary social forces, are not discussing issues and programs of the organization, and not developing their ability to think independently, then the unity of the organization turns into homogeneity.

This Discipline and Democracy are both part of the principles of the daily practice of a revolutionary cadre organization, not because they have been imposed or because they are guaranteed by statute, but because of the deep conviction of each member that these are both necessary to the development of the organization.

Every member is bound by the decision of the organization because every member realizes that without discipline, everybody and anybody could go his or her own way, do his or her own thing, and the organization would fall apart. On the other hand, the leadership is constantly encouraging and seeking to create situations in which there is full discussion by the membership because it knows that if decisions are arrived at without the full democratic discussion and even debate of the members, the organization cannot penetrate to the issues involved in any decision or the dualities that are implicit in every unity.

Leadership knows that agreement reached through a process of full discussion and debate is always more effective than agreement reached through unquestioning ascent. Leadership and membership both know that liveliness of mind must go hand in hand with Unity of Will if the organization is to develop. Structure should be the basis of flexibility, not rigidity. Both leadership and membership in the revolutionary cadre organization is an art, in the sense that both leaders and members must learn to play creative roles in the development of their mutual relationship.

There are no exact rules for the behavior of either leaders or members as there is in a scientific experiment, or in learning an athletic skill, where uniform conditions can be artificially set up and repeated again and again. However, experience has shown that certain procedures and attitudes can be immediately recognized as contrary to the general dialectical principles of Democratic Centralism. For example, the “rotating chairperson” (which is often proposed in the name of “participatory democracy”), destroys the possibility of leadership playing its essential role as “center.”

A chairperson must hold office for a period of time long enough so that s/he can develop the responsibilities of this role. On the other hand, a chairperson who is not constantly listening to the members of his or her committees will soon be speaking only from her or his limitations and will be unable to project to the members a unity which has the richness of variety embodied in it. A chairperson must be efficient at running meetings, but she or he must also be willing to do “propaganda work” among the members of the committee individually, in order to develop a common language with them. A leadership which resorts to agitation and exhortation of the membership is usually one which has failed to fulfill its responsibility of projecting programs and positions which embody the relationship between what the organization is doing from day to day and the long range role of the organization in the acceleration of the evolution of humankind.

If the leadership does not fulfill its role of projecting, creating and innovating but is only reacting to the membership, then the tendency is for weaknesses of individual members to surface, i.e., for individual members to “act up.” In this situation leadership feels threatened, is tempted to overact, reminding the members of their duties and of its rights, i.e., of the chain of command, and sometimes even to mobilize those members whom it considers more loyal and supportive against those who are “acting up.” But this type of administrative, disciplinary, commandist and subjectivist behavior on the part of the leadership cannot possibly restore the moral authority of leadership, since by definition the role of leadership is not a defensive but a creative one.

The organization must be constantly on guard against the tendency of members on all levels to self-cultivation, i.e., the use of the organization's resources only for the development of the individual. On the other hand, if the leadership is not playing its proper role of encouraging the independent creativity of the membership, the tendency of membership is to slip into passivity, merely receiving and supporting instructions from the leadership. As the organization then begins to stagnate, leadership again is tempted to exhort the membership to greater efforts and liveliness. But this exhortation is futile, since by definition, agitation of the members is contrary to the role of leadership, and so forth and so on.

In all these ways, through living and often painful experiences in the correct and the incorrect handling of the very demanding relationships between leadership and members, the members of the revolutionary cadre organization and the organization as a whole begin to internalize the rhythms of the dialectical as contrasted to the administrative method. This internalization becomes decisive in the handling of contradictions between the organization and the revolutionary social forces; both in the struggle for power and in the even more important and awesome responsibilities that ensue after seizing power.

4. THE STANDARDS

Every collectivity of any kind, whether an organization, a class, a race, or a nation, must establish standards, i.e., those values and patterns of behavior which all members are expected to strive to embody in their daily thinking and practice, chiefly in order to advance the collectivity.

A revolutionary cadre organization, on the other hand, establishes its standards not only to advance the group but in full consciousness of the group's responsibility to advance the evolution of humankind. Starting from the fundamental premise, a revolutionary cadre organization at this time must establish its standards in the light of two major realities:

- 1) the peculiar and contradictory character of the chief revolutionary social forces; and
- 2) the protracted struggle that will be necessary to bring about the revolutionary transformation of this society.

These realities make it essential that the revolutionary cadre organization adopt as its standards those values which have proved to be most durable and universal in the course of humanity's millennia of development. Such values must include: love and respect for one's own people, not for their sake alone but as a springboard to love and respect other people; respect for ideas; dedication; dependability; and discipline, self-reliance, and accountability; care and development of one's body as well as of one's mind.

Young people in US today, both black and white, and particularly black, are potentially the chief revolutionary social force for the overthrow of the present society. They are the ones most hostile to the present system and the ones with the maximum energy for fundamental social change. At the same time, these young people both black and white (the latter especially insofar as they have become alienated from their communities and are imitating black radical youth), are the ones most deficient and lacking in the above values.

Hence they are "now" people for the most part, standardless and valueless. Hence their "revolutionary" energies are most likely to explode in rebellions and rebellious activities of the most negative kind: dropping out, copping out, freaking out, "ripping off" and other helter skelter, individualistic and adventuristic actions. Rebels without a positive cause, they have no vision of what the struggle must be for and therefore no concept of the "new woman/man" who must be created through revolutionary struggle.

Typical of their inability to put the development of humanity at the center of their thinking is their endorsement and encouragement of "ripping off" merchants (as representative of the capitalist system) as if this could possibly leave unaffected the humanity of those doing the ripping off. The result of these negative rebellions is that

large sections of the population are becoming completely alienated from the perspective of revolutionary social change, either becoming passive and despairing, or in many cases, actively counter-revolutionary. Thus, instead of increasing the revolutionary potential, these potentially revolutionary social forces are actually decreasing its potential.

Most liberals, and these young rebels themselves, are reluctant to face the new reality which is being created by these negative rebellions. Instead, they excuse these rebels by saying that their attitudes and actions are “only” or “in the final analysis” the product of objective and historical conditions and therefore outside their control. They point to the post-war world of abundance and electronic media which have provided instant gratification of every physical and psychological want to the youth generation; to the barbarism of racism and the genocidal war in Vietnam which have demoralized young people by exposing the dehumanized character of American capitalism and imperialism and the American political-economic-academic power structure; and to the failure of the older generation over the years to resist this barbarism and inhumanity.

However, in citing objective and historical conditions as an excuse for the negative rebellions and rebelliousness of young people, these liberals and the rebels themselves are evading the crucial contemporary contradiction: that, on the one hand, these young rebels in their rebellions are the most complete expression of a corrupt value free society; while on the other, they are the ones with the greatest potential to bring this system to an end.

In other words, the revolutionary cadre organization cannot wait upon the revolution to change the objective conditions that have produced these social forces as they are. It must find ways and means, within the present, to bring about the revolutionary transformation of these young people in order to make the revolution, i.e., in order to bring about changes in the objective institutions and conditions.

One of the most important ways that the revolutionary cadre organization can do this is by projecting and embodying in its own ideas and practices, the values which have proved most universal and enduring throughout the development of humankind; in other words, the revolutionary cadre organization itself must insist on the indivisibility of politics and ethics. This indivisibility of politics and ethics is also indispensable to the development of the revolutionary cadre organization for the protracted struggle which lies ahead of it. Without the above standards, it is impossible for the cadre to develop trust in one another and from those whom they seek to lead. Without trust, no protracted struggle can possibly be successful.

In affirming the indivisibility of ethics and politics, the revolutionary cadre organization is breaking consciously with the political tradition which has dominated western thought since Machiavelli, five hundred years ago, created the science of politics as a question of strategy and tactics. Marx did not challenge this Machiavellian concept chiefly because politics was secondary to what was happening in the process of production. There he believed, the very development of the productive forces and the struggles of the workers against exploitation, were creating in the workers the highest standards of collectivity, discipline and social responsibility. For Lenin, politics was much more important than it had been for Marx, but Lenin had conceived the revolutionary party chiefly as a means to increase the hostility of the masses to the system as a whole so that they could then be mobilized in struggle to overthrow the system.

Today, however, in the US in the last quarter of the 20th century, our historical conditions and therefore our responsibilities cannot be the same as Marx and Lenin. In the revolutionary forces with whom we are the most concerned, there is no lack of hostility and antagonism to the system as a whole. What they lack is a concept of:

A) transformation of man/woman which must be at the center of revolutionary struggle; and

B) protracted struggle. Together these require a new concept of the indivisible relation between politics and ethics.

5. METHODS OF EVALUATION: CRITICISM AND SELF-CRITICISM

After the completion of every project, no matter how small, there must be a thorough-going evaluation of the project by the revolutionary cadre organization. Were the purposes of the project fulfilled? Were they clearly defined and understood by everyone involved in the first place and were they kept in mind throughout the project? Were the methods effective? Were they the best methods or the only ones that could have been chosen? Were schedules maintained and was every step of the process carried out? If some steps of the process were left out, was this harmful to the project or were some of them superfluous from the beginning? What were the achievements and shortcomings of the project, and what lessons can the group learn from it? What were the reasons for the breakdown or failure of the project at any point? Which of these were outside the control of the group and which might be anticipated and prepared for in the future? What were the expenses and income from the project? Was strict accounting kept at every point and made available to the group as part of the final evaluation? Was every member clear about his/her responsibilities at every stage of the project? Were the resources of the group (skills, contacts, equipment, time) adequate to the project as planned, or did the group exhibit overconfidence and impatience in the planning?

This kind of methodical evaluation is a concrete manifestation of politics in command. In other words, it stems basically from the philosophical conviction that in all relations between human beings and their environment, human beings must assume conscious responsibility for their actions and not resort to the vulgar materialism of always blaming others or outside conditions and thus seeing themselves as passive victims.

All this may seem very elementary and common-sensical, but it is far from being obvious, either in the general overall political atmosphere of this country, or in the particular atmosphere of the “movement’s” helter skelter, on-the-go politics. Americans generally tend to have a technical approach to every project, to try to overpower those whom they are seeking to influence or to defeat, by the sheer weight of their know-how and equipment. Or they have a “new frontier” approach: if something doesn’t work out so well, or things go bad, just abandon the project, or the place or the people involved in it, and go on to something or somewhere or somebody else. They are always running off to a new beginning.

Because “movement” people have failed to make serious examinations of the American philosophical environment, they have simply carried these same attitudes into their own activities, simply adding their own special contempt for ideas and their love of rhetoric, their predisposition to spectacular confrontations, and their hunger for continuing emotional excitement. Engaging in activities for the sake of activism, and not in order to test dear convictions in social practice, they have rarely worked out clear programs with purposes, methods, schedules and processes, clearly defined, and therefore are incapable of careful evaluation.

Hopping from one issue to the next, they have not even stayed together long enough to develop a sense of commitment to one another or to particular constituencies, which is a prerequisite to the practice of evaluation. Reared in an economy of abundance, they have little or no idea of how many working people (who have had to sweat for every dollar) judge a political organization by the seriousness with which the organization handles the questions of finances.

When one realizes how deeply ingrained these helter skelter attitudes and practices are in the objective environment and historical tradition, one realizes how futile it is to depend on rebukes and reprimands to correct them. Rather, through understanding the historical and philosophical roots of these practices, the revolutionary cadre organization can arrive at a firm

appreciation of why, by contrast, it must build itself step by step on completely different philosophical foundations, based essentially on the dialectical method of development through collective and protracted struggle.

The theoretical acceptance of this dialectical method, however, by no means guarantees that the attitudes and practices so deeply rooted in the history of the country will immediately disappear. To uproot and correct these attitudes and practices on a continuing basis, the revolutionary cadre organization must include a place for criticism and self-criticism on the agenda of every meeting.

The concept of criticism/self-criticism has become a popular phrase in the “movement” only in the last few years as a result of the role that it played in the protracted struggles leading to the victory of the Chinese Communists and which it continues to play in the building of a new society in China and in revolutionary struggles elsewhere in Asia, Africa and Latin America. As long as the revolutionary movement all over the world was dominated by the D-day concept of revolution (which had been borrowed mechanically from the example of the 1917 Russian Revolution), criticism used to take the form chiefly of postmortem analysis.

For example, one group or individual would insist that a particular setback in revolutionary developments in a particular country was the result of a mistaken policy and therefore of the group or individual sponsoring the policy. Simultaneously, the claim would then be made that if those in charge had pursued the policy of the critic instead, then there would have been success rather than failure. This kind of arrogant subjectivism and hypothetical after thinking is completely foreign to the concept and practice of revolutionary criticism and self-criticism.

Revolutionary criticism and self-criticism is based, first and foremost, on the dialectical concept of development through collective and protracted struggle. It involves the clear recognition that in every situation there is a contradiction which requires a choice between two roads, that no one is immune from making a mistake or wrong choice, but that the entire group, the individual

making the mistake, and indeed everyone concerned with revolutionary struggle, can learn from the mistakes and wrong choices that have been made by the individual or group. Moreover, the recognition, the examination, and correction of mistakes and weaknesses all provide additional energy for the advancement and acceleration of revolutionary struggle. This is the dialectical concept of the “dynamic of error.”

In order for this “dynamic of error” to develop, the group must be united by certain common principles and ideas. All the members must be committed to common perspectives or a common ideology; they must share common standards, must be committed in time, and they must share a fundamental recognition of the role that struggle itself plays in developing. Without these common principles, criticism/self-criticism cannot rise above subjectivity and get to the essence of what is wrong in any particular situation, i.e., the objectivity of the mistake.

Essential to the concept of objectivity is the recognition that the mistake is not just an accidental one, i.e., that it is not unique to the particular individual or to the particular occasion. On the contrary, it probably relates to the particular historical environment or to the social background of the individual involved, e.g., intellectualism, technocratism, male chauvinism, permanent rank-and-file-ism. This objectification enables the entire group to raise its consciousness and helps others with the same back-ground to be on the alert against specific weaknesses. In the American social and political environment at all levels, it is very difficult to make this kind of objective criticism/ self-criticism a real part of daily life and practice. This again is for the very deep historical reasons already referred to, especially the tendency of Americans to look upon problems as nuisances and headaches, to be gotten rid of by some external means (e.g., pills), rather than as challenges from which one can learn.

Therefore, the tendency is to cover up mistakes rather than to admit or grapple with them. Americans are also very preoccupied with their own personalities or individualities and inclined to develop guilt feelings about their own mistakes or as a result of

hurting other peoples' feelings, by pointing out mistakes. For example, an individual may apologize for making a mistake because he feels guilty, thinking that he or she is criticizing himself or herself when s/he is really just expressing subjective or personal feelings. Often what is put forward as self-criticism is simply self-protection, e.g., when an individual rushes to admit a mistake to avoid criticism or further examination of the mistake by others.

Subjectivity assumes many forms, e.g., the protection of one's feelings or those of others; fear of hurting feelings or discouraging people by pointing out their mistakes; attacking those who hurt your feelings by criticism; fear of taking issues with others; not pointing out the person who makes a mistake or not pointing out a mistake at once but waiting until the persons involved are less emotionally caught up in their mistakes and then dealing with the question only as an abstraction and therefore without the sharpness which enables the maximum lessons to be learned by all concerned; hesitating to take issue with or criticism of the leaders; hesitating to criticize themselves for fear of undermining confidence in the organization (emperor protection); "selling" ideas to others rather than discussing and debating issues in such a way that members can make responsible choices; making excuses for oneself or for others when mistakes are made (not enough time, something else came up, conditions beyond our control, etc), thus being "understanding" and "sympathetic" rather than demanding on oneself 31 and others.

All these are manifestations of liberalism which is part of the very air we breathe in the US. Liberalism or the evasion of responsibility is what most Americans mean by "freedom." Freedom is the right not to be held responsible or accountable for one's actions. Since this tendency is so powerful in the society, it is inevitably present in the organization. In the past the US has been able to survive liberalism because of the unique historical conditions of this country, particularly the "wide open space" which have allowed people to pick up and leave the scene of their mistakes.

Finally, however, the chickens are coming home to roost in the country. In a revolutionary cadre organization, they come home much sooner.

Liberalism leads to the covering up of mistakes and therefore to the weakening of the organization. When mistakes are covered up, they also pile up to the point where it becomes impossible to isolate and correct the specific mistakes, and the organization is in danger of breaking up in demoralization and bitter antagonisms. The above list of liberal weaknesses, incomplete as it is, is familiar to everyone who has ever been in any kind of organization. When one realizes how many of these have characterized one's own practices in the past, it is easy to become discouraged, unless you keep in mind at all times the goals and methods to which you are committed and the collective commitment to this goal which will enable the organization to grapple with and overcome these weaknesses one by one, week in and week out, through criticism and self-criticism in the course of the protracted struggle.

6. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MASSES

Up to now, we have been discussing the revolutionary cadre organization's relation with the "masses" or with the "revolutionary social forces," as if these masses were "faceless masses" or as if these social forces were units of undifferentiated physical energy out in space somewhere. This is the way most radical groups talk and think of "the masses" and the "revolutionary social forces." Fortunately, their conceptions do not correspond to the way things actually are.

Actually, "the masses" and "revolutionary social forces" already are bound together in varying degrees and in different ways, sometimes in actual organizations, more often by loose structures of various kinds. For example, people live in particular geographical areas, work at particular places, join together because of ethnic, age, sex ties, or because of common cultural, religious, political, professional, recreational, economic or community

interests that can range all the way from bowling to Community Control of Schools. They may organize rapidly in response to particular issues and then separate, each going his or her individual way, or they may try to find ways and means or reasons for staying together.

Particularly in a revolutionary period like ours [the 60's], when large sections of the population have lost faith in existing institutions, the prevailing tendency in the country is centripetal. This takes organizational form in the tendency to form all kinds of groups. Some groups spring together as a result of spontaneous eruption or in order to make the struggle over a particularly burning issue more effective. Others are formed chiefly in order to give individuals a sense of belonging to some collectivity because they have lost faith in the nation. Others exist for no other reason than that the power structure needs them as channels of communication to the potentially rebellious sections of the society.

Because of this general self-structuring by the masses which is going on all the time, and because this self-structuring gathers momentum in a revolutionary period, the revolutionary cadre organization's relations are basically not with single individuals and never with abstract generalized masses. Instead they are usually with particular groups of various kinds which can range from political to recreational to ethnic to economic. Usually most of these groups are going in their own separate directions which may be parallel or diverging but which rarely converge.

However, again because of the revolutionary character of the period, there are many reasons why these groups should or could converge to go in a particular direction together or to conflict on particular issues. Usually a particularly raw issue is enough to bring them into conflict, although sometimes a counter-revolutionary or revolutionary group may for reasons of its own seek to bring about a clash. On the other hand, it is unlikely that the many groups which have within them the potential for united action in a revolutionary direction will work for any extended period of time unless under the open or quiet leadership of a revolutionary cadre organization.

Therefore, the more rapidly various sections of the population are in the process of self-organization, the more important is the role played by the revolutionary cadre organization. In anticipation of this increasing momentum towards self-organization as the crisis deepens, it is never too early in a revolutionary period for the revolutionary cadre organization to begin the painstaking task of organizing.

In fact, all previous history (including that of the US in the 60's) shows that once the dam of public confidence in existing institutions begins to break, the centripetal tendencies in the population far exceed the cadre organization's ability to provide leadership.

Relations between the revolutionary cadre organization and other organizations fall into several distinct categories:

- 1) The revolutionary cadre organization and/or its individual members can simply join with other organizations in a United Front as a member of the Front, like any other organization in the Front. This usually happens over a single, limited, momentarily very popular mass issue, usually a defense issue. In this kind of united action, the Front usually disappears as rapidly as it appeared, i.e., it is a sporadic or episodic unity that usually does not require the leadership of a revolutionary cadre organization.

- 2) The revolutionary cadre organization and/or its individual members can take the initiative of bringing together a number of various organizations in a United Front to carry on extended struggle for positive goals, e.g., the community control of schools in a particular district and eventually over a much wider area. In this case, because the United Front has extended time and geographical perspective, the revolutionary cadre organization must undertake to build it only after it has conducted careful advanced preparation of the constituency and has carefully trained cadres who will be able to influence the United Front and keep the struggle from disintegrating, without, however, assuming actual leadership positions.

3) Individual members of the organization can be assigned to join one or more of these organizations, not to take over the leadership, but to influence them in a revolutionary direction or even in some cases to bring about their disintegration (if they are not playing a progressive role in the general movement), meanwhile recruiting some members from the group to the cadre.

4) Individual members can sometimes be assigned to help form a group for a particular purpose, e.g., for revolutionary study or to act as a revolutionary current within a general movement.

In all these relationships, the revolutionary cadres are always conscious of their interpenetrating role, i.e., “from the masses, to the masses.” In other words, they are using their contact with these groups to get a better idea of the stage of development of the social forces as well as to influence the direction of the social forces. In this interpenetrating dialectical relationship, they never lose sight of their primary commitment to the revolutionary cadre organization and the protracted struggle, no matter how pressing may be a particular issue nor how desperately a particular community or organization may want to turn over to the cadre members the main responsibility for leading that particular community or organization.

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing we have outlined the fundamental dialectical principles and some of the most important concrete practices of a revolutionary cadre organization as a developing reality. If the members of a revolutionary cadre organization are not constantly striving to **internalize** the dialectical principles motivating their practices, the organization sinks into routinism. On the other hand, if they are not constantly striving to **externalize** the dialectical principles in concrete practices, the principles turn into empty rhetoric.

Many of those reading this pamphlet may vigorously disagree with what it sets forth. Others may draw from it the conclusion that a

revolutionary cadre organization is necessary if there is going to be a successful revolution in the United States. Not all those who arrive at this conclusion are ready to build or join such an organization. Some may be against a revolution altogether. Others may say that they agree with the ideas theoretically, but that building or joining such an organization is a job for someone with the patience and the capacity to think more grandly. If, on the other hand, some readers decide that they do want to commit themselves to a collective and protracted struggle, they probably know one or two or a few other people who have arrived at the same point. These few people need some way to arrive at some kind of basic agreement on fundamental ideas and some knowledge of one another.

One way to do this is to form a revolutionary study group, in order to study previous revolutions and the specific contradictions in the United States which require resolution by revolution. The study of the theory and practice of previous revolutions is for the purpose of learning from them what is and what is not relevant to the specific contradictions of the United States (i.e., the relevance of a party and cadre organization). Through study of previous revolutions, we can gain an appreciation of the way in which revolutions have advanced the evolution of humankind, and therefore, a profound conviction that [our] revolution must also advance the evolution of man and woman. At the same time, through the study of previous revolutions, it should become clearer to us that every revolution is unique, the specific product of specific energies of specific masses, specific organizations and specific leaders in a specific country under very specific conditions, all of which have been developed over a number of years, at a particular time, in a particular historical period, and which therefore cannot possibly be repeated at another time and in another place. This general truth is of crucial importance in seeking to determine the specific contradiction requiring resolution in the United States, the first country in human history to face problems posed by economic abundance, the first people in human history to have discovered from their living experiences that material wellbeing does not necessarily bring happiness and therefore the people who have the privilege of pioneering the revolutions of the Twenty-first century.

In forming a revolutionary study group, the purpose, procedures, schedules and responsibilities of each member, should be clearly worked out and accepted by all the participants at the first meeting. It is never a good idea to leave your purposes and procedures fuzzy in the hope that thereby you will keep some people with you who might otherwise be scared off by a straightforward statement of your goals and what will be expected of every participant. None times out of ten, this kind of liberal attitude does to prevent the eventual breakaway of the person or persons involved; it only postpones the crisis and makes it more painful.

A revolutionary study group should not be organized for the sake of study alone, but for the purpose of laying the basis for a revolutionary cadre organization. Therefore, participation in the group should be restricted to those ready to do the systematic work required for such a study, including reading, leading and recording discussions, disciplined attendance at regularly scheduled meeting, criticism and self-criticism, over a period of approximately six months. During this period some members are bound to raise the question of getting involved in struggle over some burning topical issue. This will be one of the groups first tests as to who, if anyone, in the group really accepts the principle that “without revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary practice,” and that without commitment to collective and protracted struggle, there can be no successful revolution. Anyone who is not able to refrain from involving the group in topical struggles until it has at least worked out some minimum ideological understanding, some programs of its own and some structure and standards is not likely to be much good for the protracted struggle.

In this way, not only the material studied, but the way it is studied is itself preparation for the organization of a revolutionary cadre.

Rest In Power

GRACE LEE BOGGS — an Asian American intersectional feminist — died at the age of 100 on October 5, 2015, in Detroit, where she spent much of her life working as an activist. Boggs's identity as a first-generation Asian American woman made her uniquely aware of the different yet connected struggles her community faced. Her early exposure to class inequalities inspired her fight for workers' rights, specifically in relation to capitalism and racism. Her legacy as a community organizer is still apparent in various labor efforts today. (- From Teen Vogue)

Books

- **George Herbert Mead: Philosopher of the Social Individual** (New York : King's Crown Press, 1945)
- ***The Invading Socialist Society*** (with C.L.R. James and Raya Dunayevskaya) (1947)
- ***State Capitalism and World Revolution*** (with C. L. R. James and Raya Dunayevskaya) (1950).
- ***Facing Reality*** (with C. L. R. James and Cornelius Castoriadis). (Detroit: Correspondence, 1958).
- ***Revolution and Evolution in the Twentieth Century***. (with James Boggs). (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974).
- ***Women and the Movement to Build a New America*** (Detroit: National Organization for an American Revolution, 1977).

Biopic

- American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs, a 2013 biographical documentary on Lee Boggs life, activism and philosophy,

"You cannot change any society unless you take responsibility for it, unless you see yourself as belonging to it and responsible for changing it."



“The propaganda program of the organization is crucial to the development of the revolutionary struggle since as it cannot too often be repeated, once the correct ideas are grasped by the masses, they become a material force capable of changing society and the world.”

— Grace Lee Boggs

June 27, 1915 - October 5, 2015

