A Practical Approach to Strategic Organizing for Popular Struggle

Kevin "Rashid" Johnson

An attempt to prioritize strategic objectives for the Left, toward pushing social forces beyond capitalism here in amerika or abroad, should begin with determining the primary contradictions between the oppressed social forces and those that do the oppressing. Three contradictory relations can be said to exist within the oppressive system of global capitalism, namely: the exploitation of *all* laboring classes by the capitalists, the exploitation of third-world people by imperialism, and the alliance of white workers (and some integrationist ethnic elements) with their imperialist masters against third-world people of color here and abroad. Strategic priorities on the Left must therefore be focused on resolving these contradictions in favor of *all* working classes and moving them beyond capitalist exploitation. This means building alliances between all exploited classes here in amerika and abroad, pursuingactivities that support and back the most severely oppressed sectors of the working class (namely, third-world people here and abroad) at all levels of organizing resistance to imperialism, capitalism and racism, and winning over as broad a section of the masses as possible to the revolutionary camp.

Any organizing must begin with an analysis of the classes within imperialist and colonized societies, to determine who are actual and potential friends, and who are actual and potential enemies of revolution. The organizers must determine what contributions each sector is capable of making and must push them in the direction of allied class struggle within their actual and potential means. This analysis and organizing requires guidance, coordination and implementation by a party element led democratically and imbued with working class consciousness. And this guiding element must be prepared for and capable of being defended on all levels from imperialist attack, both physically and intellectually.

While there are a variety of organizations and discrete movements presuming to serve in radical leadership roles here in amerika

Socialism and Democracy, Vol.19, No.2, July 2005, pp 1–8
ISSN 0885-4300 print/ISSN 1745-2635 online
DOI: 10.1080/08854300500122431 © 2005 The Research Group on Socialism and Democracy

(particularly with respect to the internal third-world colonies), none seem as yet to have committed to the necessary organizing and analysis or even preparations to move the masses forward in a determined struggle against the imperialist structure. This has led to a generally prevalent attitude of pessimism and futility toward revolutionary work, and mass consciousness has slipped into a state of passivity, neutralized and distracted by a steady barrage of mind-numbing, sensory gratifying, thrill-seeking imagery, trinkets and tokens fed to the people nonstop via the empire's corporate entertainment media and mass-production high-tech industries - all provided courtesy of the plundered wealth and labor of third-world peoples. All the while, the imperialist center continues to refuse to meet the basic needs of its own laboring classes and poor, driving them to "criminal" actions prompted by their consequent economic and emotional insecurity, frustrations, and desperation.

Several of the existing organizing groups promote, quite correctly, the training and use of political cadre to (paraphrasing Kwame Nkrumah) go to the people, live amongst them, learn from them, teach them and serve them. But what these organizations and cadre seem to forget or neglect is that the *purpose* of this mass work is to determine the needs of the oppressed masses (needs which empire cannot and will not meet), to organize the people around material programs to meet those needs, and in the process to prepare and arm the masses for the ultimate clash with empire's armed forces which will inevitably move in to disrupt and destroy such organizing through its fictitious "legal" powers, when they begin to effectively undermine the empire's artificial prestige, monopoly over social resources, and pretenses of concern for the needs of the people. The work of these organizations must be to replace anti-people corporate power and political domination/manipulation with people power. The objective should be to build alternative mass-based institutions and infrastructure to displace/replace those of the imperialist system and stimulate the confidence of the people in their own self-sufficiency. Indeed, it is not the political and corporate institutions of empire that produce the material necessities of societies, but the labor power of the masses. They must be made conscious of this, and of the fact that it is because of these institutions that there is no social order and peace.

History proves that revolutionary struggles are most determinedly waged by the energetic and progressive youth and by the most oppressed sectors of a society, those most severely suppressed and neglected by the power structure. Here in amerika the most directly oppressed sectors lie amongst prisoners and the internal colonies of

people of color, especially blacks, Indians and Latino/Mexicanos. These ethnic groups are likewise the disproportionate targets of mass incarceration. And empire also recognizes the revolutionary potential and inherent explosiveness of these groups and has decidedly implemented measures to contain and control them. It has taken control over their ideological and cultural systems and promotes through them self-destructive imagery which glamorizes "elite" white bourgeois culture; it has saturated urban ethnic communities with mind-numbing and socially destructive narcotics; it has instigated conflicts between youth groups (so-called street gangs) which have a vast potential as social-support/political/self-defense organizations; it has proliferated a vast complex of prisons and high-security units to warehouse the poor and people of color who cannot fit into the steadily dwindling US job market, and to isolate those elements who have genuine progressive organizing ability or potential; and it has increased its occupation (police) forces and high-tech surveillance measures within poor urban ethnic communities. Those occupation forces are the true organized criminal forces: terrorizing and murdering civilians at their whim, and then placating community outrage with pretentious "investigations" that go nowhere, and propping up and protecting local criminal elements that aid police in community disruption methods, accepting graft and protection payoffs, etc.

Unlike the exploited poor of the underdeveloped nations, we here in amerika live within the very heart of the military and corporate machine that is destructive of life and of the environment that must sustain all life. This places us in a unique position of being able to deal global imperialism the *coup de grâce*. However, at no time in amerika since the amerikan revoutionary war (1775–83) has any domestic progressive group been prepared or willing to organize the masses to confront the imperial system on all levels. While all organizations of the Left have claimed to recognize class struggle as the only way of defeating capitalism, none have realistically organized to press this struggle forward in the only way that it can succeed, namely, mass-based armed struggle.

Focusing on the most oppressed sectors of the empire's population means that organizing and resources should be channeled in the very places that are now neglected, namely, amongst prisoners, the poor, and communities of people of color.

Some very simple coordinating initiatives can work at this stage to develop mass organizing and consciousness and to build alliances within and between internal oppressed colonies, prisoners and the

poor. These initiatives can begin around readily recognizable existing needs within these groups. They can begin using a model that has proven effective for organizing people here and awakening them to revolutionary ideals, namely, the model of the old Black Panther Party's community survival programs, community policing of police activities, etc. While some of the following ideas I did not originate, they are easily seen as practical for early phase organizing and preparation.

As an initial matter, organizing, politicizing and education on a national level via independent media and outreach can be done amongst prisoners, with special focus given to those to be ultimately returned to society. Using these educated forces in a cadre role upon release, they can set up community patrol programs as a deterrent to minor illegitimate capitalist (criminal) activities (much as the Nation of Islam did in Washington, DC ghettos to deter drug dealing with marked success some years back), and they can set up and operate varied survival programs, e.g. free food, education and basic needs initiatives in poor communities. Meantime, they can work to expose the corrupt, criminal, anti-community bent of the occupying army (police), via intelligence collection and exposure. Camcorders will be valuable tools for such. These groups will operate under a local Council of Community Elders (community elements with general respect within the community, who instead of reporting community problems to police will turn to community patrols), which can be built into a neighborhood assistance program.

At the next stage the neighborhood assistance can contract a Private Security Agency (PSA) as a workers' coop to provide a greater level of security patrols to back the voluntary ones. The PSA will be licensed to use lethal force and carry firearms, uniformed and equipped much as police. Under this arrangement, the neighborhood assistance can implement more sophisticated "serve the people" programs and coop initiatives, including crediting agencies, and the Council of Neighborhood Assistance would hear both civil and criminal cases with agreement by the parties. It could impose penalties of fines, community service or expulsion from the community.

At the next stage when several communities have been so organized, they can be united under a National Congress which can elect political representatives. Under this political umbrella, an ethnic National Guard can be organized and equipped as light infantry, as citizen soldiers who would parallel the state's National Guard and assist with disaster relief in various ethnic communities, and be trained and equipped for biochemical attack.

www.rashid-art-attack.org. Address: no. 185492, Red Union State Prison, P.O. Box 1900, Pound, VA 24279.

The original educated cadre forces will be spread throughout and will be key leadership components within each level of the security forces. They can enter into treaty negotiations with Indian Nations here and with foreign governments. The black demand for slavery reparations (40 acres and a mule) can be channeled toward seeking sovereignty rights and collective land ownership.

People's Banks can be established to provide currency, issue credit, bonds, etc. Currency and stamps can be printed by a third-world government, which may also be willing to make loans and provide foreign aid. This organizing will serve as a rallying point for all blacks in the US and will provide voice for those living outside the enclave communities, and the ethnic National Guard can recruit from across US territory. By attacking local criminal activities oppressing and exploiting the communities, the security force legitimates its own use of force and undermines the empire's control system. When these forces are targeted by empire, the rallying cry will be that the empire's forces are proving their support of crime and graft. They will remain on the defensive, being unable to explain the prevalence of crime when "crime control" was left to them.

Similar community initiatives should occur amongst all US colonies: Arab, Asian, Latino/Mexicano, First Nation, African, etc. and amongst poor whites. The white Left should work to prevent any struggle from descending into a race war, and, allied to but independent of these national (internal third-world) forces, should be building a proletarian class focus, linking this all to the international working class as an anti-imperialist proletarian vanguard. The Left's analyses, resources, contacts and experiences must be mobilized to back the needs of the common people, especially the growing multi-ethnic proletariat, for the common people are the only forces capable of making revolutionary change. Without the masses, there can *be* no revolution.

Alliances should be built between ethnic people in the military and the ethnic National Guards. Nationalist Servicepeople's clubs should be supported and established at all US military bases. Under this process, the people can be building strong revolutionary forces and alliances. These aspects will be aboveground while a highly politicized autonomous underground component will handle certain situations proactively or defensively as necessary. Our own inevitable casualties will be handled as gala events, and the names of our fallen comrades should be put up, their pictures displayed and things named after them.

Internal conflicts should be handled internally; we will solve our own problems. The various brain trusts, talents and skills of

Kevin "Rashid" Johnson is an incarcerated revolutionary artist and writer. His works have been widely circulated in "underground" media. A website is under construction at

progressive and ethnic people should be tapped and applied to further these organizing initiatives. Alternative environmentally friendly and cheap energy sources can be refined and used, e.g. hydrogen-based fuel systems, vegetable oil, etc. – alternatives which empire will not pursue because they are not profitable to the multinational corporations that have maintained traditional monopolies on petroleum and natural gas sources and distribution, and on industries powered by them.

Popular media oriented to the mindset of inner city youth should be developed using existing cultural forms (hip hop, graffiti, R&B, etc.) to promote progressive values and consciousness, in place of the destructive thug, pimp, hustler, material-worshipping subculture so prevalent among today's ethnic urban youth. And the façade of a "free press" existing within corporate media must be exposed. All national groupings, blacks especially, must take control of their own ideological systems which have been hijacked by corporate amerika and used to crush progressive and national consciousness. Revolutionizing the image and message of the youths' cultural institutions and art forms is imperative.

At mass gatherings and demonstrations, cadre should work the crowds, collecting names and needs of people of various social backgrounds and those with resources, skills, talents, etc., to determine the needs of various communities and those people willing and able to contribute work, resources and organizing to meet those needs. Another imperative will be arming the people and training them in the use of arms. Community gun clubs, paintball games, hunting trips and camps call all to be organized. Arms can be seized from criminal elements and cached. Also, drugs seized can be burned at public press conferences – not turned over to the police – so as to assure that they won't be "returned to the streets."

Criminal elements in the communities should be confronted with evidence sufficient to convict them if tried in the empire's courts and offered the option to submit to the jurisdiction of the National Council Association, which they will likely do, knowing they won't face prison time. Enforcement of civil and criminal penalties will be a community function instead of being assigned to the empire's goons and systems of fraud.

Pressure can be brought to bear against prison abuses by organized popular demands for oversight and investigations by popular committees and human rights organizations. Isolated prisons in rural areas can be besieged. Encampments can be set up by family and friends; pickets, rallies and marches organized in nearby towns. Free bus transport

and guesthouses for visitors can be organized. Local churches can be encouraged to provide hospitality to visitors, local peace movements can be tapped, etc. The possibilities for organizing are infinite. Meantime our own people can be infiltrating the establishment at all levels. There can be local press exposure of chronic abusers, and neighbors can be encouraged to speak out against them. Talks can be held in local churches and town meetings, etc. Counter-KKK protests can be organized; family members staked out in tents near the prisons, protected by community security forces, would make dramatic world-media images. Children's marches can be held. Consequent DOC (Department of Corrections) panic will produce reforms and removed personnel, opening up space for challenges to the very idea of prisons and mass incarceration of millions.

While the theme of abolishing prisons *sounds* very Left, absent revolutionary change here in amerika, it is as remote a reality as demanding the abolition of empire's police and military forces, since prisons are a principal method of empire's disposing of a large portion of the population that it cannot fit into the steadily contracting economy; in addition, service-sector jobs are created in and around the prison industry, especially in rural, economically strapped regions of the country. A more do-able program, pending revolutionary change and building toward revolutionary consciousness, would be to struggle against the use of prisons to *de facto* strip the poor and ethnic populations of all political rights, and for turning prisons into centers of progressive education ("schools of liberation") to politicize and produce people who will be productive assets to their communities and national groupings.

It should be understood that all previously successful revolutions had nationalism at their helm, e.g. US (1775–83), Russia (1917), China (1949), Cuba (1959), Vietnam (1975), etc. So we must support revival of traditionalist national identity amongst the internal oppressed colonies of amerika, and consistently support and provide common ground and not contradict the nationalistic socialist objectives of various US black revolutionary organizations, e.g. New Afrikan People's Organization, African People's Socialist Party, Maoist Internationalist Movement, etc. We must also work closely with progressive women's organizations.

Our overall work should be seen here as continuing the unfinished democratic revolution begun in 1776, which inherently makes ours a socialist struggle. Amerika has passed through all the precursor phases to socialism: feudalism, bourgeois democracy, capitalism, imperialist monopoly capitalism. As a comrade recently expressed to

me, "They claim the necessity of restricting civil rights and liberties to provide the people with security. We have to show we can provide our own security while extending civil rights and liberties." Our socialist struggle should apply the lessons learned from the errors, failures and hardships of earlier socialist experiments abroad, and steer our struggle down a road of democratic and not totalitarian socialist development. We have the advantage now of avoiding many of those previous errors and their totalitarian forms, which were the result of their efforts to match the industrial and military might and development of the West. With a successful revolution here, we will inherit those technologies, which we can turn to the benefit of the international workers instead of toward destruction of human life and the planet.



SOUTH CHICAGO ABC
ZINE DISTRO
POB 721 HOMEWOOD IL 60430