

CONSTRUCTIVE STRUGGLE

CONSTRUCTIVE STRUGGLE

J. Katsfoter

Unity-Struggle-Unity Press

2023

Creative Commons ShareAlike
License 2023 by Unity-Struggle-
Unity Press

Print ISBN: 978-1-312-71480-9

Ebook ISBN: 978-1-312-71480-9

*Thanks to Cdes. Mazal and Soff, who edited the work
For all revolutionaries everywhere*

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	1
Introduction.....	2
Unity and Struggle	6
Intra-Formation Struggle	11
Inter-Formation Struggle	25
Carrying the Struggle Forward.....	43

Acknowledgements

This guide is a compilation of work done over the last century by Marxist-Leninist authors. It owes most of its existence to Gracie Lyons' excellent 1974 *Constructive Criticism: A Handbook*, which is available at the Encyclopedia of Anti-Revisionism Online (EROL). While it draws from many sources, those familiar with Comrade Lyons' work will recognize much of the material from her handbook in an updated form. Without her handbook, this guide would not exist. I have attempted to distill the lessons from *Constructive Criticism* while adding new material directed at the struggle not only within formations (criticism and self-criticism), but also between formations through the use of polemic, inter-formation meetings, and so forth.

I hope to have added to Comrade Lyons' work, rather than merely *subtracted* from it. Only time will tell if this Guide to Struggle is helpful to the movement.

–J. Katsfoter, March 2023

Introduction

What is struggle? Struggle has a lot of meanings. It can mean something violent, perhaps something scary. In this instance, when we refer to struggle, we don't mean that kind of direct struggle against an enemy. In fact, most of this guide is focused on struggle with and between friends and comrades. Violent struggle, actual conflict, with gunpowder and blood, is in the purview of a military handbook. This isn't that kind of guide.

The kind of "struggle" we're talking about here is the **creative process through which correct ideas are adopted and refined**. This kind of struggle is "social practice" in action. We can call this "constructive struggle," as opposed to the more commonly used meaning of destructive struggle. Constructive struggle is labor spent to grapple with opposing, contradictory, or mutually exclusive ideas; **it is the work put in to align ideas, discover truth, and establish or increase unity**. Destructive struggle, on the other hand, destroys incorrect ideas, removes barriers, and so forth. As students of the dialectic, we know that constructive struggle requires elements of destruction and destructive struggle contains elements of construction – but we are dealing here with struggle that is designed to build up unity, which is **primarily constructive**.

This kind of struggle can be an individual or collective process. In individual struggle, a person struggles against and with their material conditions: they engage in the everyday process of living within and among the productive relations of their present society. As an individual goes through struggle, they change their internal makeup, their ideological catalog, and their revolutionary capacity. The struggle of an individual with their environment is, of course, shaped by their class position, by the productive relations and property relations to which they are subject,

and by numerous other forces too lengthy to list here. This individual struggle between the person and their conditions is not the subject of this piece, but rather is the proper subject of a study in propaganda and radicalization.

Individual struggle can produce good ideas, but it can't produce correct ones. When a person interacts with their environment, they transform raw sense-data — whether it is from working on an assembly line or reading a book — into ideas. These ideas are the basis of theory. However, individual people do not have a sufficient basis of experience to have correct ideas. They have good ideas, but it is impossible for any person to escape the individual biases that color the way they interact with the world and receive information. Class, property relations, and even individual psychology shape the way that ideas are formed in the mind of the subject.

The struggle with which we are concerned is *social constructive struggle*. This is a *dialogical process* which is worked out communally, between and among members of a community or between and among communities themselves. This type of struggle can change not only individuals, but the entire world.

This is why the ideas of any one person must be corrected and refined through *social, communal struggle*. These ideas have to be tempered, purified, and subjected to the scrutiny of many viewpoints; they have to be confirmed, altered, and modified through the inclusion of *other individual struggles*. When many individuals engage in a collective struggle, they each add their own ideas, sense-data, and experiences to the whole. Only when we struggle together, constructively, and communally, can those ideas be said to be correct. Only together can we bring the revolutionary tree to bear fruit.

Social, constructive struggle encompasses a number of different, discrete stages or concepts, all of which are necessary to the culmination of a struggle toward a

correct position, tactic, strategy, or even for establishing a relationship between people, organizations, or things. This is the fundamental result of constructive struggle: the working out of ideas, in particular those ideas which are critical to the revolutionary movement and which will guide it toward its ultimate victory. This is a basic process of revolutionary organizing. It must be approached with care, because when errors occur at this most fundamental level, they can be disastrous.

There are many types of social constructive struggle, for example:

1. The initial formulation of a theoretical position, whether that is as complex as a "line" or as simple as a tactical consideration;
2. Discussion of that initial formulation, including correction;
3. Application of that formulation through practical measures;
4. Observation of the flaws in the initial formulation, as exposed by practical application;
5. Communal re-evaluation of the initial position and correction of that position based on the experience and practical lessons learned in the attempt at application;
6. Rectification of community members by the community; and,
7. Rectification of community standards by its members.

Constructive struggle can also exist between communities or their representatives. In that instance, struggle is a kind of confrontation with a specific purpose. That purpose is usually either to achieve unity with the other formation — to agree to specific things — or else to isolate reactionaries from the masses — to expose the formation for what it is. When we are confronting reactionary, liquidationist, and reformist formations, struggle will often become

destructive. Destructive struggle has been included in this guide because it utilizes some of the same techniques as constructive struggle.

Constructive and destructive struggle are dialectically related. There is no struggle that is not at once both constructive and destructive. When we engage in destructive struggle with reactionary formations that wrongfully call themselves Communist, we are, at the same time, engaging in a kind of constructive struggle that frees real Communists from that formation, as well as solidifying our own positions and drawing in Communists from the masses. The question of whether a struggle is constructive or destructive comes down to the frame of reference. All struggles presented in this guide, both the constructive "friendly" struggles and the destructive "hostile" struggles, serve the same purpose: to build unity of principle and unity of action, and thus to strengthen the Communist movement while at the same time weakening its enemies.

Unity and Struggle

Struggle creates the basis for unity; unity creates the basis for struggle. We have a shorthand for this: “unity-struggle-unity.” Unity and struggle, properly conducted, have a dialectical relation.

It’s impossible to engage in constructive struggle with someone if you don’t have some basic unity with them. This unity usually comes in the form of shared goals, ideological commitments, or beliefs. This is the critical difference between struggles which we’d tend to call constructive and those we’d tend to call destructive.

In a constructive struggle, you are attempting to unify with the organization you are criticizing.

In a destructive struggle, you are attempting to unify only with some, discrete, identifiable group of members of that organization or other observers who are witnessing the struggle.

If struggle is the attempt to establish correct ideas and heighten unity, we must also have a clear idea of what “unity” is in this sense. Since struggle and unity are dialogical components of a single process — since, that is, they are opposite phases of a whole — we need to understand them in relation to one another. Unity constitutes any areas upon which you and another agree. The “you” and the “other” can be singular or organizational, it can mean “you” as a person or “you” as an entire organization.

Unity comes in a number of flavors. The most important for the purposes of this handbook are unity of action and unity of ideology. Unity of action can further be broken down into unities of strategy and tactics, which are two different things. Unity of tactics is an agreement upon a course of action taken in the short term. Unity of strategy is an agreement about the long-term goals of tactical actions. Unity of ideology is an agreement about specific ideological

points — agreement, in essence, about “the way the world works.” Ideological unity is usually expressed as so-called “points of unity” upon which people or organizations agree.

Members of a single party or formation should share a high degree of strategic, tactical, and ideological unity. When multiple formations work together, they need only share the most basic unity of tactics. If a Marxist-Leninist organization, a liberal organization, and an anarcho-communist organization all join together to sponsor a march and agree that the march will not feature any violence or economic terror from the marchers unless they are provoked, they have agreed to a unity of tactics. This is the most basic type of unity of action. The Marxist-Leninist organization and the anarcho-communist organization probably also share some degree of unity of strategy and ideology.

If you attempt to engage in a constructive struggle or constructive organizing with an organization that you share no unity with, you aren’t actually engaged in a unifying struggle. If you start organizing with people that don’t agree about short term action, long term goals, or ideological positions, at best you’re doing parallel action. Most likely, however, one formation is exploiting the other. That is, if your formation disagrees with another formation about what you want out of a specific action and what means you will use to achieve it, but still act together, only one of those formations can get what they want.

Even though it’s possible to accomplish things this way, it’s not good for long-term party building, and it tends to undermine the cause of the proletariat. It makes the formation engaging in the behavior seem hypocritical or dishonest in the eyes of the people — as it should, because that kind of behavior is hypocritical and dishonest!

That doesn’t mean complete unity is required before you can engage in actions with other formations. If you

were completely unified in all matters, if you shared the same goals, strategies, and tactics, then you wouldn't be two separate formations — you'd be discussing how to bring your formations together into a single organization. We can organize around single points of unity, so long as our formations retain freedom of criticism (the freedom to stand apart from the other organization and maintain your difference, to proclaim that you are not the same as the other organization, even if you are acting in concert) and freedom of action (the freedom to withdraw from a coalition). That single point of unity can be as simple as a common tactic to agitate around ICE detentions, or a common tactic to agitate for increased wages.

For constructive struggle to take place, the two formations must share a basic unity of purpose. This starting point isn't something that you can create; it is already either present or absent based on the individual struggles that the members of each formation have undergone in their lives.

So if unity of purpose is required before we can reach unity of action, we have to ask ourselves: what is unity of purpose? Unity of purpose is achieved through the absolute adherence to some minimum set of demands, some minimum organizing goal: in other words, a minimum program. That doesn't mean a minimum program for all things in all places, but a minimum program for the collaborative action at hand. Agreement on a minimum program sets the stage for the preliminary unity which enables struggle to begin; this is true not only within Communist formations, but between Communist and non-Communist formations as well.

Struggle, therefore, must arise from unity — this starts with the organic unity of people who have experienced oppression and recognized the solution to that oppression is collective action. When collective, constructive struggle is successful, that unity is temporarily broken in order to open the field for disagreement; then, the formation

or formations return to unity. It is through the dialogical process of struggle that unity is heightened or brought to a new, more developed basis. This is what we mean when we say “unity-struggle-unity.” That is: from unity, through struggle, to a more developed unity which incorporates the lessons of the struggle as part of its new basis, which brings the members of the organization closer together and into a more complete unity, that brings two organizations together into a more complete unity, and that helps those organizations and individuals develop their strategy, tactics, and core political lines.

Among Communists

When a struggle begins inside or between Communist organizations, those organizations generally share a great deal of unity already. The unity a Communist organization has in and between its members can actually make internal or intra-formation struggles seem more dangerous, more confrontational, than those with liberals. Paradoxically, because they have an underlying agreement on fundamental issues, those areas in which several Communists do not agree have the appearance of being far more contentious, of much greater import, and much more threatening than the areas where, for instance, a Communist does not share unity with a liberal. It is here that we must put all of the most developed techniques of struggle to use. Improperly conducted struggle among Communists not only gives rise to erroneous and fatally incorrect theory, which is enough on its own to doom a movement, but can also lead to splits, breakdown in morale, and witch hunts. This gives an opening for wreckers and state agents to attack organizations from within.

While you are conducting an action with liberals, you may share only a single point of tactical unity (it is likely that you also share at least some ideological unity — if you’re

marching in defense of reproductive rights, for instance, that is an ideological point of unity you share, even if the Marxist reasoning for defending reproductive rights is fundamentally distinct from the liberal reasoning). When you are engaged in long-term organizing with comrades inside an organization, you expect to share complete or near-complete unity on most important points of theory, strategy, and tactics. That expectation needs to be tempered! You can't share complete unity with everyone in your organization, and it's unrealistic to think that you ever will. Communal action is not predicated on complete agreement on all topics; Communism is not about flattening human experience to a single, correct, line on all things, universally. We will disagree. It is healthy for an organization to struggle around various points. Great care must be exercised to ensure this struggle is conducted fairly, within set boundaries, and does not give space to wreckers, opportunists, and police.

Struggle between organizations serves an important role in building unity of purpose and helping Communist formations work together on actions. The methods and modes of struggle within a formation and between formations are related, but distinct, and must be approached as variants on a fundamental process.

Intra-Formation Struggle

"Inner-Party criticism is a weapon for strengthening the Party organization and increasing its fighting capacity... however, criticism is not always of this character, and sometimes turns into personal attack. As a result, it damages Party organization as well as individuals. This is a manifestation of petty-bourgeois individualism. The method of correction is to help Party members understand that the purpose of the criticism is to increase the Party's fighting capacity in order to achieve victory in the class struggle and that it should not be used as a means of personal attack."

—Mao Zedong, *On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party* (Dec. 1929)

Struggle within a Communist formation is the way in which disputes are resolved and the way in which "lines" or political positions are correctly developed. These two primary functions of intra-formation struggle are often referred to as "self and community criticism" and "line struggle," respectively. In essence, the two types of internal struggle are closely related and one may become part of the other, for they often times bleed into each other; when criticizing an individual or policy, it is commonly discovered that some political line is deficient and needs correcting. When criticizing a deficient political line, it is often discovered that some comrades who had not yet arrived at the development of that line need correcting.

Self and community criticism is the mode practiced inside Communist formations when addressing numbers (6) and (7) on the list above, namely, the rectification of the formation's members by the formation and rectification of the formation's standards by its members. Line struggle addresses issues (1)-(5).

We do not engage in "ruthless struggle and merciless

blows," but rather, "starting from the desire for unity, distinguishing between right and wrong, through struggle, arrive[] at unity on a new basis." We must always engage in both kinds of struggle with our comrades with the sincere intentions to protect and educate. We must be willing to "remain[] loyal to a mode of operation based on persuasion [even] when the lack of response" makes this method "appear ineffectual and even foolish," as did our comrades in Viet Nam.

Many of the principles discussed in this section will apply to other kinds of struggle, but not all of them will.

To begin a struggle, it's enough for an individual member of an organization or even someone who is not a member, to voice a criticism. That criticism may be of an individual or of some way that the organization behaves (self and community criticism) or can be a more fundamental criticism of an organization's positions (line struggle). It's important that the person voicing the criticism be allowed to voice it openly to the organization and be treated with respect while doing so. In the revolutions of both Viet Nam and China, the public was often called to voice criticisms of the Communist parties and Communist cadre.

Before beginning intra-formation struggle, you should observe two basic principles: responsibility to investigate, and democratic centralism.

No Investigation, No Right to Speak

If you have not thoroughly investigated a problem, you should not be the person speaking on it. Investigation comes in many forms, including reading reports from other comrades who have investigated a problem... but you should never simply speak to be heard.

This also means that you should have done the investigation into the conditions of the thing you are criticizing that will allow you to understand its nature. Not every instance someone is made uncomfortable by

something someone else says or does, for example, is chauvinism. You must know, and know well, the material foundations of critique-worthy behavior and/or beliefs, and you must be able to identify what does and does not fall into those categories.

Democratic Centralism

"The principle of democratic centralism and autonomy for local Party organisations implies universal and full freedom to criticise, so long as this does not disturb the unity of a definite action; it rules out all criticism which disrupts or makes difficult the unity of an action decided on by the Party."

–V.I. Lenin, *Freedom to Criticise and Unity of Action* (May, 1906)

"[L]eading bodies of the Party are elected by the membership on a democratic basis and enjoy their confidence... resolutions and policies of the Party are the crystallization of the ideas of the rank and file as expressed on a democratic basis... [and] these bodies are empowered to exercise centralized leadership in the management of all Party affairs on behalf of the membership and to command obedience from the organization at lower levels and from Party members. Order within the Party is built on the principle that the individual is subordinate to the organization, the minority to the majority, the lower level to the higher level and all constituent organizations to the Central Committee. In other words, the Party's centralism is based on, and not separated from, democracy. It is not absolutism."

–Liu Shaoqi, *On the Party* (May, 1945)

Observing democratic centralism is an important element to engaging in struggle. The questions that democratic centralism answers are: "When is struggle appropriate inside an organization?" and "In what manner is struggle

appropriate inside an organization?" For the purposes of this discussion, because we are talking about Communist formations, we should assume that the organizations and formations that we are engaged in are subject to correctly implemented democratic centralism.

Entire pamphlets have been written on this topic alone, so we will be unable to cover every nuance and particularity of democratic centralism here. However, we can discuss the general practices of democratic centralism, and how to properly abide by them without getting into the detailed rules and principles underlying them.

Democratic centralism requires a full and open debate on all issues, and it requires that debate to be held before the entire membership of the organization before the organization commits to a course of action. This debate should be critical, can be sharp and even harsh at times, but when a decision is made and a vote is held that commits the organization to a course of action, all further criticism of the course of action must be suspended if it threatens to undermine the ability of the organization to act.

This means, you should engage in struggle when an issue is up for debate. Once the debate has ended, you can discuss the issue again, but you should refrain from criticizing that decision from outside the organization if that issue decided a plan of action. You shouldn't go into the public and agitate for your position, nor should you form internal factions with the plan of overthrowing the decision. The time to argue forcefully for a change in decision is when there is a full meeting and when, at such a meeting, there is a two-thirds majority willing to revisit the issue.

Guidelines for Internal Struggle

Although these guidelines are specifically for struggling with comrades inside an organization, they can easily be applied to all kinds of "comradely" struggle, and should form the basis of one's understanding of how to go about

struggle. Yes, it's true: the great revolutionaries were caustic and sarcastic, but these are the written records they left behind. By their very nature, those articles, essays, books, etc., will reflect a position they were staking out using rhetoric. Remember, also, that often, those disputes were not occurring within a single cohesive party or were occurring at a time of party consolidation.

1. Develop, Don't Destroy

"Do not take a mechanical and extreme attitude. Properly combine irreconcilability and clarity in matters of principle with flexibility and patient persuasion in methods of struggle; in the course of prolonged struggles, educate, criticize, temper, and remould comrades who have committed errors but who are not incorrigible... Do not become 'struggle addicts'."

—Liu Shaoqi, *How to Be a Good Communist* (Jul. 1939)

The purpose of intra-formation criticism is not to destroy an opponent, but to develop a comrade or an organization. You should never begin criticism among your formation-members with the intention of isolating them, driving away their support, or making them appear foolish. These tactics are reserved for fighting the enemy, not finding unity among your comrades! Despite the fact that they may have erred, you should not treat your comrades as the enemy. If you do, the battle to maintain unity is already lost, and you are splitting your formation, or at least in dire danger of doing so! The label of wrecker may be leveled against you with absolute sincerity, because such behavior can only serve to damage the capacity of a formation to act, to provoke baseless recriminations, and to breed fear and an environment of retaliation.

You will need to learn to check your own emotions when struggles begin, and take a thorough inventory of your feelings. Ask yourself what you want out of the struggle,

and whether you truly intend to make the formation better by engaging in it, or if you're merely committed to getting your own way. Ask yourself why it is necessary for you to win: what is the worst thing that will happen if you don't? Will the formation be destroyed? Is it worth risking a split to insist that you are correct?

Often, you will find that you remain firm in your opposition once you have taken this inventory, but you will be able to strip away the mean-spirited language that may damage your relationships with your comrades, and you will be able to accept the decision of the group even if that decision ultimately does not adopt your position.

2. Dialogue, Don't Lecture

All struggle is a dialogical process. The person who begins the criticism does not thereby set its limits and remain its master. Once a criticism has been voiced, it is necessary to collectively investigate the basis for the criticism, and it may be necessary to correct it, refine it, or even broaden it. Often, an initial criticism will not be correct or complete; it is only through drawing that criticism out into the open that it can be considered from all its sides and that all members of the organization can contribute to it. We cannot rely on a single point of view to be correct, but rather must adjust and correct our points of view by submitting them to the entire organization or whatever body is conducting the criticism or struggle.

Even when an organization is the one doing the criticizing, there is always the good chance that there is reciprocal criticism that the organization should be responsive to. For this reason, when struggle begins, we must be accepting of all-around struggle and criticism; not criticism on unrelated topics, or about unrelated events, but criticism and struggle focusing on the topic at hand.

Remember that struggle is a process, not a single moment. The beginning of a struggle is almost always triggered by

a unidirectional criticism or question (one that originates from one person or organization and is directed, one-way, toward another person or an organization), but once the struggle begins it has to be allowed to go both ways; that is, the person or organization under criticism must be able to dialogue with the criticizer. In addition to “feeling” fairer (and thus being more likely to get the criticized to agree with the criticism), the dialogue is often an opportunity to improve not only the criticized but the criticizer.

3. Make Criticism Concrete

“In inner-Party criticism, guard against subjectivism, arbitrariness, and the vulgarization of criticism; statements should be based on facts and criticism should stress the political side.”

—Mao Zedong, *On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party* (Dec. 1929)

It is important to specify exactly what actions, positions, or failures are the basis of the struggle. It is particularly necessary to remember this when engaged in self and community criticism. In a line struggle, the criticism is necessarily concrete, because the line itself is being developed or criticized. However, when attempting to address the attitudes and behaviors of our comrades, it is easy to give ungrounded criticism.

“He doesn’t take the revolution seriously” - “He is a national chauvinist.” How is our comrade who is being criticized in this manner able to internalize and address that criticism? He does not know how to comport his behavior to group expectations. Further, criticisms of this kind may be wrong. “He doesn’t take the revolution seriously” may be a gloss on a comrade’s consistent lateness; the concrete criticism is, then, “He is never on time.” We don’t know the subjective mental processes that lead a comrade to being late. Perhaps he doesn’t take the revolution seriously, or

perhaps he has difficulty keeping a schedule. Perhaps he has other obligations in his personal life that he is chronically unable to discharge, and what he really needs is the support of his comrades and an investigation into how he can have his labor unlocked and made available!

When you engage in criticism of anything, from another comrade, to a political line, to a minor word choice in an article, it is important to convey the criticism using grounded examples. Don't simply state "the author has trouble capitalizing the correct nouns" — show the writer and refer directly to the nouns that they're failing to capitalize! Remember that struggle proceeds out of unity, and therefore comes from a place of love. Don't give in to negative feelings while you're doing this. It is vital to hold up the actual examples of the trends that are being criticized and not to address subjective feelings about the subject of the criticism.

What is a subjective feeling? These are the things that we assume about someone based on their actions. As above - we cannot know what's in the mind of our comrades when they act in ways that make us angry. We should identify these feelings; a good way is to use "I" statements, even if just to ourselves. "He doesn't take the revolution seriously" can be rephrased as an "I" statement - if the problem is that the comrade is always late, "I feel disrespected, frustrated, and hurt. His lateness makes me think he doesn't value my time or the time of his comrades." Once this is clear, we can reach the actual meat of the criticism: the comrade is chronically late.

4. Clarify Feelings

Those subjective feelings we identified in part 3 above should be clarified and expressed so our comrades know how we're feeling. This isn't necessarily a substantive part of the criticism, but it allows our formation to know where we are emotionally and what needs we have. It also allows us

to be human and friendly to one another. Very few comrades actually want to hurt each other's feelings — and those that do, often want to as a result of long periods where hurt feelings aren't expressed.

This is not the opportunity for a general grievance session, of course! We cannot turn every criticism and self-criticism session into the airing of all our feelings about our comrades, good or bad. We must stay on the topic of the criticism that is being discussed. Still, we can neither permit our feelings to command our criticisms, nor can we dismiss them. As in all things, our feelings are in a dialectical relation to the struggle process: they are important and useful, but cannot be permitted to become the primary engine of struggle.

It is also important to analyze the class-origin of our feelings. The things we feel don't simply arise out of nowhere, but rather are produced as a result of our own thoughts and values and their interaction with class society.

You should try to identify the thought or value that caused the feeling. Objective events that happen in the world are experienced by individuals and filtered through thoughts and values. This dialectical relation (objective events/thoughts and values) produces the feeling. By identifying the thoughts and values that produced the feeling, you can determine whether or not that feeling is a product of some ingrained petit-bourgeois or individualist value. We should try to encourage, in ourselves and others, thoughts and values that reflect the long-range interests of the working classes; that is, our thoughts and values should be Communist thoughts and values.

The struggle against capitalist ideology inside ourselves is a reflection of the class struggle in society; it would be idealistic to imagine that if we were just "good" enough we could ourselves be individually exempt from those class-based feelings. Instead, we have to root them out actively, and struggle provides us a place and time to do that.

5. State Wants

Once you've said clearly what you're criticizing (whether it's a behavior, an act, a person, a line, or a lack of a line) and you understand your own feelings, you should then try to clarify exactly what you want the person, group, or thing you're criticizing to do to rectify the problem. Sometimes you don't have a clear idea, which is alright so long as you know that. Knowing the limits of what you want or think is as important as identifying the problems in the first place.

Don't try to be coy! Come out and state directly what you think will remedy the problem. This isn't rude, though we may feel it is because of the way we've been educated and trained as members of a society where we have to constantly look the other way. Don't be overly forceful, simply state evenly and concretely what you think will help.

For instance, we might state to our comrade who was always late to meetings "We need to find a way to work around your problems so we can begin our meetings on time."

When it comes to line struggles, we are less likely to know the things we want. "I want the organization to study this problem and propose a position" is perfectly valid. However, if you've been thinking over a problem for a while and believe you have a line that is correct, you should propose it! That line will then be criticized and subject to struggle, debated, and examined by other members of your organization.

6. Explain Your Purpose

It can often help to diffuse conflict when you explain the reason you are making a criticism or engaging in a certain avenue of struggle. Before you can state your reason for criticism out loud, you will often need to take many of the above steps internally and state your reason to yourself. Sometimes, you will discover that, before you make your criticism, your reason for engaging in criticism or struggle is not designed to advance the revolution: for instance, you

may find out, as I have, that you are about to engage in a struggle is over a word-choice in a line because it has a shade of meaning you don't agree with. Before you do, you should ask and clarify to yourself: what is the basis for engaging in struggle over this topic? Do I actually believe that this will have a negative effect on the overall struggle unless it's addressed? You may discover that you are "addicted to struggle," that is, you want to fight simply to have something to say, or else because you believe it is proper or that this is the correct time for struggle.

This is not to dissuade you from engaging in necessary struggle! Indeed, struggle is one of the main engines by which revolutionary formations advance their comprehension, their political lines, and develop militancy and connections with the people. Struggle is important, but more clearly, correctly developed struggle is important.

Once you have clarified with yourself the reason for your criticism, you will be able to deliver it in a fashion designed to educate, uphold, and protect your comrades and the revolutionary work you're doing together. You should state the reason for the criticism before you make it, then explain the concrete issues, articulate your feelings, and conclude with your wants.

Receiving Criticism: Paraphrase

The first thing you should do when you, your project, your proposed theory, your proposed line, or anything that might be tied to you is criticized, is paraphrase what you hear the person criticizing you as saying. That is, repeat it back in other words. "I hear you saying such and such." This will often lead to improved communication, because what we hear and what is being said is rarely precisely aligned. Small differences in the understanding of the connotation of words, the reading of tones, and so forth, can create large and sometimes destructive differences in the criticism that is communicated as compared to the criticism that is

received.

Constructive struggle requires clear lines of communication in which every participant understands precisely what is being criticized. Only with clarity can the criticism be evaluated and the thing under scrutiny be properly corrected (if it needs to be corrected). It's not much good for the person doing the criticizing to try to be clear, state their wants, explain their feelings, and engage in good faith dialogue if the message they're speaking isn't the message that winds up being conveyed.

Receiving Criticism: Handle Defensiveness with Care

It's important not to become defensive when engaging with intra-formation struggle. It's easy to feel as though your back has been put up against the wall. As revolutionaries, we hold all of our opinions with extreme commitment. When someone challenges an opinion, they may do so with too much vigor because they have a conflicting opinion; likewise, when our own opinions and positions are challenged, it is easy to become drawn into a conflict of egos rather than a constructive struggle.

Members of a formation must do their best not to engage in defensive behavior; but likewise, those leading or making criticism must also recognize that this behavior has been instilled in us; we are used to our "correctness" being tied not only to our ego, but to our very existence: to be wrong in a capitalist world may cost you your job, and may therefore cost you your livelihood. When struggling with comrades, we have to let go of that ego-element to "right" and "wrong." No one should be engaging in struggle to be correct, or to overbear other people; engaging in struggle is done because of a firm and genuine belief that it will further the cause of the proletarian revolution.

Defensiveness can manifest in more than one way, and it's important to be able to identify it. The traditional example of defensiveness is a reactive aggression directed at the source

of criticism. However, defensiveness can also manifest as immediately giving in to the criticizer, even when the criticized person disagrees. It can manifest as totally shutting down in the face of criticism, or withdrawing from future discussions and arguments. In many cases, it will require a deep knowledge of the comrade in question to identify defensiveness on their part.

Responding to defensiveness gently is important; aggressive, high-energy, or exasperated responses to defensiveness merely tends to feed the underlying cause, that is, fear of damage to the ego. After all, it is bad to be wrong, but worse to be seen to be unable to grapple with being wrong! One of the big risks of defensiveness is that it can end struggle prematurely, before all sides and issues have been brought to light. Someone who has responded defensively should be given the empathy and the space to back down from their reaction so they can engage thoroughly and completely in the struggle.

Occasional Struggle and Speaking Bitterness

It is necessary to occasionally subject a formation to a general call for criticism. This keeps the organization healthy and ensures that it is engaged sufficiently, that everyone working within it remains unified in its action, and can help drive forward theoretical understanding. It is useful to open these occasional struggles to the general public at large, if the formation is large and inter-connected enough with the masses, such that it can receive criticism from the masses effectively, and such that it has a presence in the communities that criticism would be useful and worthwhile. This type of occasional struggle should not be undertaken routinely, and it should not be undertaken lightly. Every six months is the absolute shortest period it can be contemplated at; anything more frequent would subject the formation to too much strain and may risk causing the "addiction to struggle" problem.

Related to this concept of occasional struggle is “speaking bitterness” — that is, a general airing of grievances. Speaking bitterness does not generally begin formally in the same way as struggle, because when grievances are aired they may be aired without concrete criticism, without clear feelings, simple wants, and so forth; this is a way for members of a formation to “vent” safely. It may develop into a legitimate and fruitful struggle, but it does not have to.

Knowing they are safe to “speak bitterness” (so long as such bitterness is not a function of national or gender chauvinism) is critical to fostering a sense of belonging and well-being among Communists of a single formation.

Inter-Formation Struggle

There can only ever be one Communist party acting as the vanguard in any given region; there can only be one party that leads the people, which has their full strength and confidence, and so on. If there are two parties, for instance, vying for this position, then there is no vanguard and neither party can properly be the Communist party. During the period before a vanguard has clearly been established, there will be many formations that adhere to a Communist or semi-Communist line. These are the necessary precursors to a vanguard, and drawing them together into a vanguard requires inter-formation struggle.

Before going about any struggle among and between other Communist or semi-Communist organizations, we have to clearly identify whether the formation is properly Communist — that is, whether it adheres to lines which are recognizably correct or merely slight deviations capable of correction — or whether it is Communist in name only, or semi-Communist in that it is not self-aware of its adherence to some correct positions and some incorrect positions because it is ignorant of Communism.

If the organization is properly Communist or semi-Communist, you should treat it as an inter-formation relationship. If it is revisionist or liquidationist (that is, it loudly proclaims itself Communist but adheres to a line such as enforcing national or gender chauvinism, or tails a bourgeois party and advocates for limiting its involvement to participation in the bourgeois state) it should be treated as a struggle with a type of “left” formation, rather than an inter-formation struggle.

In inter-formation struggle, the goal is to sharpen the weapons that both formations use on the bourgeoisie and their state, and ultimately to draw the formations closer to unifying on the basis of common struggle. In struggle

among left formations, the goal is to break up, destroy, and free the advanced elements of those formations.

Among other left formations, the above intra-formation guidelines are a good place to start. You are struggling with comrades with whom you share many critical areas of unity. There are some major differences in approach to be aware of, however.

Every Member Represents Your Formation

When struggling with other Communist formations, it's important to remember that the behavior of every member of your formation reflects on your organization. Should even one member be overly rude, critical, chauvinist, whatever the case may be, that rudeness, criticalness, or chauvinism will be attributed to everyone in your organization, and may follow those people around from organization to organization even though they didn't have anything to do with the rudeness, the criticalness, the chauvinism.

Because the fact of the matter is, if such behavior comes from a comrade in your organization and goes unchallenged and uncorrected, everyone in the formation did have something to do with it. It was your formation that permitted it to grow and fester, or advanced someone who was not yet ready for advancement.

This can be remedied by calling down swift repercussions for someone behaving in that way. As soon as such behavior is brought to the attention of the formation, the people toward whom your comrade has been rude, chauvinistic, and so on, should be told that you and your people are doing something about it. This may itself be the touch-off of a struggle between that comrade and the rest of the organization.

Present Your Criticisms Clearly, Concretely, and Privately

Just the same as when you're struggling inside a formation with your comrades, you want to present the other formation you are drawing into struggle with a clear list of issues. You should avoid moralizing, because this triggers defensiveness; rather, prepare your concrete issues, identify the things that you want to criticize in as solid and demonstrable a format as you can.

When you believe you may be able to correct an error or misalignment in another formation, you should also avoid broadcasting that error to the masses. This kind of back-and-forth cattiness can provoke the membership to behave in unprincipled ways in public (in violation of the first point above) and can give your formation the appearance of being spiteful. Rather, the criticism should be clearly, concretely, and formally prepared, and then transmitted by closed channels to the formation you are criticizing.

You should also include in this criticism that you want to open a dialogue between your organizations. Ideally, you would select a group of members to represent your formation and the other formation would select a group to represent theirs. If you come to a conclusion of unity at the end of the meeting or meetings — that is, if you struggle through the issue and agree upon the final position — both formations should then publish the substance of the struggle publicly.

Following this procedure tends to build confidence from the masses, rather than diminish it; it demonstrates that Communists are truly working to refine both their theory and practice, that they are responsive to the needs of the masses, and that above all they are not dogmatic and actively improve their organizations.

If you do not come to an agreement and it becomes clear that your organizations cannot find unity, you may need to

re-assess whether or not the other formation was properly Communist to begin with or whether it is now more liquidationist, reformist, fascist, or what-have-you. If you determine that the formation is not Communist or semi-Communist, you should elevate your criticism to a more aggressive type below.

Schedule a Preliminary Meeting

The best way to resolve criticisms is to do so in person, at a formal meeting through which the criticisms can be addressed. Since the U.S. Communist movement lacks a true vanguard that can facilitate criticism of this kind amongst all of its constituent parts, Communist formations can and should, in the interim, create temporary arbitration bodies between them. When you plan to criticize or struggle with another formation, you should also present them with a plan for a meeting.

The first meeting may be simply among selected members of both formations with knowledge of the topic undergoing struggle. This would be a kind of arbitration committee which both formations agree to have authority to conduct a preliminary dialogue. If possible, both formations should send the same number of delegates to this preliminary committee.

At this meeting, it is incumbent upon the calling or moving organization to present a list of criticisms and explain the individual basis of each point. Of course, these should also have been submitted to the responding organization beforehand, to give their delegates time to absorb and address them internally. Once the calling organization has spoken, the responding organization should reply. Although this can be as simple as a blanket refutation of the criticisms, it should make some effort to address their substance; a refutation, in essence, should challenge either 1) the factual basis of the criticism ("this didn't happen, and we can show

that to you”), 2) the theoretical basis of the criticism (“this happened, but wasn’t wrong for the following theoretical reasons”), or 3) both (“this didn’t happen, and even if it had, it wouldn’t have been wrong”). To successfully discharge criticism in a constructive way, if a refutation is going to be provided, it must be detailed and it must permit the calling organization to fully grapple with the facts and the underlying theory.

The responding organization may not refute the criticism; it may accept it, and agree that certain things need to be changed. In this case, the responding organization’s delegates may return to their organization with a recommendation for changes in line, in practice, in the expulsion of certain abusive members, or for any other action that would remedy the criticisms presented by the calling organization.

The most likely scenario, however, is that the receiving organization will agree in part and disagree in part; thus, it will answer some or all of the criticisms with replies, some with acceptance, and it may also issue counter-criticism. This is the expected outcome and should be embraced. It is possible that the committee will be able to form a consensus on the most pressing criticisms and what must be addressed by both sides; it is possible that the committee will not. The delegates from both organizations should then return to their organizations with the findings of the preliminary committee, the reports issued from the majority and minority of that joint committee, and prepare for a more in-depth engagement between membership.

Ongoing Struggle

If a single meeting of a preliminary committee does not reach a joint consensus, or if that joint consensus is then rejected by the general body of either or both of the involved organizations, the struggle must continue. In no case should

either organization break off communication with the other short of an actual attack by the other organization — informants, physical threats, etc. The reason this method of struggle was selected was because both organizations agreed that the other was a principled, Communist formation, and thus deserves to be treated as such.

The struggle between the two formations can continue through small arbitration committees with delegates selected by each formation, or it can result in a general conference or convention between the two formations, with the entire body being permitted to present theory, evidence, etc.

Should a deadlock occur, it is better to suspend struggle for a period to allow tempers to cool than it is to inveigh against each other — this can lead to the permanent breakdown of working relationships, with each formation issuing resolutions against the other to no effect except to weaken the movement and deprive the people of unified tribunes and representatives in the overall class struggle.

Among "Left" Formations

Non-Communist formations that are still "left," that is, genuinely concerned with the liberation of the masses or perceived to be concerned with the liberation of the masses by the masses themselves, must be handled slightly more aggressively than fellow-traveler Communist and semi-Communist formations.

This aggressive criticism and self-criticism actually typifies many of the disputes that we are left reading about from the 19th and early 20th century Communists. That is to say, these angry polemics treated other parties and party-fragments as deviating sufficiently from the correct path of Communist political organization as to require sharp criticism.

Among these "left" formations we can distinguish those

which are pro-Communist (even if they are not themselves Communist) and those which are anti-Communist. To some extent overlapping, but not precisely identical, with those categories are formations which are truly revolutionary and those which are reformist.

Among Pro-Communist Formations

Pro-Communist formations are those which are objectively pro-Communist as well as those which claim to be pro-Communist, but which have fallen prey to ossified leadership that is revisionist, opportunist, or anti-democratic. The reason we include those deviationist formations is their capacity to hold otherwise principled comrades in their thrall, neutralizing them in the overall struggle and isolating them from the masses.

Thus, we again are faced with a division: objectively pro-Communist and opportunist. Our demands and forms of struggle should be tailored not only to the overall makeup of the organization with which we are struggling, but the dominant character among its leadership. While it is tempting to approach a supposedly pro-Communist organization the same way that we might a reformist or anti-Communist organization, that risks isolating those we could win. The movement can ill afford to lose anyone, let alone large numbers of otherwise-principled Communists.

Among Objectively Pro-Communist Revolutionaries

Maintain Cordiality and Independence of Action

When struggling with objectively pro-Communist groups, the priority should be to maintain cordiality while guaranteeing independence of action. That is, a Communist formation cannot afford to subordinate its goals to a pro-Communist "left" organization. It must maintain its distance. At the same time, it may fruitfully engage in

struggle alongside this formation and help reform it from without by treating it as a Communist formation above — by submitting criticism privately and attempting to resolve the issue between groups. A commission comprised of members of both groups may be in order, similar to the preliminary arbitration committees mentioned above between Communist formations. If possible, the Communists should avoid making a full break with the group they are struggling with — however, setting provisional boundaries (“we will only work with you on the following actions, until the following conditions are met”) is perfectly acceptable.

One must, of course, beware of engagin in this kind of boundary setting; if the Communist org is less well-integrated into the masses than the org it is attempting to criticize, setting these kinds of limits will have the opposite of the intended effect, and will tend to isolate the Communists from mass action.

However, if a group is amenable to changing tactics, lines, or what-have-you as a result of outside pressure, and if the Communists are more connected to the community than the org with which they are engaged in struggle, this kind of wall-building can be useful to force organizations to reconsider chauvinist attitudes or incorrect political positions. In order to maximize struggle and to unite all that can be united, this kind of boundary should be set only in the face of the most openly reactionary political lines or active, reactionary, opportunistic, or abusive policy or behavior. That is, in its simplest form: danger.

Among Opportunists

Opportunists are formations which call themselves Communist — which say they are, for instance, Marxist-Leninist, but which do not practice Marxism-Leninism or have otherwise revised core elements of Marxism. Those “Communist” groups that have fallen to revision

can be worked with, but they must periodically be subject to agitation designed to “activate” their slumbering or captured membership into engaging in an internal struggle to purge the formation of these reactionary or opportunistic elements.

Direct struggle with this kind of group is rarely fruitful. Opportunists do not generally respond to critical pressure; indeed, the opportunist generally becomes more opportunistic and more aggressive as critical pressure is applied. Thus, struggle against opportunist formations must take a substantially different form. When assessing the formation, you should first determine why this opportunist formation is a target for struggle. Because opportunist formations do not generally recover from opportunism, there must be a compelling reason to engage at all.

There are two possible beneficial outcomes when struggling with or against an opportunist formation:

1. To discredit the opportunists and reveal them for what they are; or,
2. To break the opportunist leadership apart and free the otherwise-neutralized Communists.

When would you desire these outcomes? This is a strategic question that must be answered by analysis. Engaging with opportunists is not without its dangers and should not be done lightly. Nevertheless, reasons do exist. A non-exhaustive list of analytical determinations, and which outcome one should aim for when engaging in struggle against and with opportunists:

The opportunist formation has begun shifting toward fascism or another form of right-opportunism;

The opportunist formation has locked up the potential labor and allegiance of otherwise-principled Communists and your formation has determined that the opportunists can be shaken from power, or a struggle can be induced within their ranks which would result in the weakening

of the opportunist leadership or the ultimate expulsion of the principled Communists to the benefit of the overall movement;

The target formation is misleading the masses or other organizations down a reformist, chauvinist, or other opportunist channel and must be isolated from the masses as a result;

The target formation is actively counter-revolutionary.

These are not the only reasons to struggle with opportunist organizations, but they are some of the most prominent ones. The appropriate goal for struggle should be apparent: if the opportunists are misleading the people or becoming dangerous and hostile, the goal should be to isolate them and therefore expose them publicly. If the opportunists are neutralizing their own otherwise-revolutionary membership, then the goal should be to break up the opportunist formation's grip and induce a struggle inside the formation which either results in the victory of the principled members of that formation or in their expulsion. Both results are beneficial to the movement.

Criticize Publicly and With Principle

When criticizing and preparing to struggle against opportunists, your target is not actually the opportunist leadership itself. It would be nice if the opportunists could engage in struggle with you and work through their non-revolutionary or counter-revolutionary positions, but the fact that you and your organization have decided they fall into the opportunist group already militates against that. You should not expect opportunists to engage in good faith. We can always hold out that hope, but it would be naive, particularly given the history of opportunism in the U.S. Empire, to believe that opportunist leadership is capable of self-reform in most circumstances.

If your target isn't the formation that you're struggling against, who is? The people. Whether this is in the form of

other organizations, the masses at large, or those comrades trapped inside the opportunist formation and neutralized by it, the real target of your struggle against these opportunists is not the opportunists at all! The purpose of engaging in the struggle is to do so openly, publicly, and in a principled fashion.

Unlike struggle with organizations your formation has determined are principled, struggle with opportunists must take place in the open. It must be visible to the public. This is for many reasons. First, because opportunists usually only bow to public pressure — this is what makes them opportunists in the first place. Second, because the masses can use the criticism of the opportunists as a moment to better understand the theory of revolution and develop their revolutionary consciousness. Third, because one of the common features of opportunists is the suppression of dissent and criticism, often the only way to reach the principled rank-and-file in an opportunist organization is to publicly and openly post that criticism; direct appeals to their leadership are often useless, suppressed, or even worse, re-framed as direct attacks on the organization rather than criticism which can be addressed through mutual struggle.

At the same time that your formation sends your criticism to the opportunist formation, it should also make it publicly available for the masses to read and see. If possible, it should be given to all of the smallest and most local units of the formation that you can.

The formal and public criticism should be even-tempered and target the worst offenses of the opportunist group. It should not entirely condemn or dismiss the group — this is counter-productive. Rather, the formal and public criticism should:

1. Be reasonable and make reasonable demands in response to the listed criticisms;
2. Hold open the possibility of organizational reform;

3. Invite the opportunist formation to a meeting of delegates, as described above under inter-formation struggle; and,

4. Set clear, public, and reasonable deadlines and expectations — make it clear that all communications from the organization in response will be publicized.

Should the opportunists consent to meet and actually engage in struggle, this should be considered a victory. However, this does not guarantee the opportunists have decided to constructively engage in struggle — you must still maintain your awareness that they may be trying to abuse the process to clear themselves of opportunism or slander your organization. Thus, all proceedings must be carefully documented by their attendants, and the notes and minutes from all meetings should be made public as soon as is practicable, and distributed not only to your own organization's membership, but, as far as is possible, to the entire membership of the opportunist party.

If the opportunists do not consent to meet, or a meeting is not realistic (for instance, if you are a small organization struggling against a very large organization that will likely ignore your demands), publication of the call for meeting, the criticisms, etc., should be widely circulated. If there are principled people within the opportunist organization, they will see the circulars and a struggle within the organization may ensue.

Among Pro-Communist Reformists

Reformists may sometimes be friendly toward Communists, and even accept basic tenets of Marxism. Direct constructive struggle with this type of organization is usually counter-productive; they do not yet share a degree of unity sufficient to advance into revolutionaries — if they did, they would have already done so, considering their willingness to work with Communists and their ability

to set aside the lies perpetuated by the bourgeois state. Rather than engaging with pro-Communist reformists in “constructive struggle,” it is better to engage in collective struggle around the issues with which the reformists already share unity with your organization.

When engaging in a common struggle, there are still things to keep in mind. Chief among these is that Communists must never allow their revolutionary demands and freedom of action to become submerged into the demands of reformists; although we can march with them, protest with them, and act with them, we cannot adopt their slogans, adopt their reformist positions, or disappear into the general mass of organizations that support them and act with them. When Communists enter a coalition, they must also stand apart from it; they must offer aid without condition, but maintain their own revolutionary line, sacrosanct and untouchable.

The other side of this is that the Communists must not ask anything of the reformists. The unity of the reformist organization and the Communist organization can not come at a cost to the reformists; we cannot hold them hostage. Rather, we offer our support — and, where appropriate, our leadership — without preconditions. We meet the people where they are.

It is through engaging, supporting, and working through these common struggles while maintaining a separate, revolutionary, line that the reformists who are friendly toward Communists will be convinced of the necessity of revolution. It is through this friendly engagement and assistance, this struggle around unity on certain issues, that a new, higher unity can be achieved. New Communists are drawn to organizations which exhibit a consistent principled line and also act to help the people.

Among Anti-Communists

Constructive struggle among anti-Communists is not possible — this is why they are anti-Communists. You may achieve temporary unity with such formations, but unless they evince a willingness to advance to a more constructive stage, you should try to keep your distance. Refusing to work with them is petty and counter-productive, but it is better to work with anti-Communists only when they are in a broader coalition of other forces. Committed anti-Communists may be dangerous to you and your formation: they may use counter-revolutionary violence or contact the state repressive apparatus (police, FBI, whatever) to suppress you.

Among the People

“Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality will have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things.”

—Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* (1845)

We are always Communists, no matter where we go or what we do; we carry this with us, and thus also we carry the responsibility of representing the movement wherever we go. Every act is either building or destroying Communism; we are always either working toward our own maintenance and self-reforming, or working against it. We can't separate our public behavior as individuals from our “personal” behavior as Communists. To that end, it is critical that we have a code of action that helps guide us in the way we conduct ourselves among the people.

Do Not Engage Without a Plan

We do not debate fascism or fascists in public. There is no way to engage a fascist that does not lend his movement credibility other than to respond to fascism with force. Debating fascism not only unnecessarily cedes ground

(that fascism is subject to debate rather than instant extermination), it also amplifies the fascist's voice. We must always deny fascists the air to speak; this includes speaking in the real world, and it also includes social media. There is nothing to be gained from arguing with fascists on the internet or in organizing spaces. If you currently lack the power to violently expel them from the space, bide your time and wait until you do have that power. Organize against them, but never directly confront them until you are prepared to eject them.

It can be tempting to engage with reactionaries and revisionists in public settings; this is generally a mistake. Reactionaries, revisionists, and chauvinists of all kinds thrive from the attention of public engagement. They aren't attempting to make legitimate arguments, but rather to energize and mobilize their already-committed base of support. Just as Communists can make use of well-meaning liberals to broadcast correct ideas to nearby uncommitted but revolutionary-minded listeners, fascists, reactionaries, and revisionists will make use of your platform to reach isolated but counterrevolutionary listeners. Do not allow them to do this.

If you want to dispute the tenets of a reactionary or revisionist that is masquerading as a Communist, you should do so under the principled rubric of formal struggle articulated above and in no other way. Individualist responses are dangerous. In fact, they can not only amplify their voice through your individual platform, they can also use the opportunity to identify you and your comrades, single you out, and prepare counterrevolutionary violence for you later.

Individualist, one-on-one, and unorganized attempts to deal with fascists and reactionaries are always dangerous. If your blood is up and you're thinking of retweeting a fascist, approaching a fascist and yelling at him, or inviting a fascist

to a friendly debate, you should take a minute to remember that you need the backing of an organization to keep you safe in his presence.

Use Reactionaries As a Springboard

There are ways, however, to engage constructively with reactionaries in public spaces. You must first assess the type of reactionary you are speaking with — or that, more likely, is speaking at you. If they are potentially violent, or are openly fascistic, dangerous to your organization, etc., you should follow the guideline above: that is, avoid engagement. If, however, they are merely someone possessing reactionary views who is not among the most backward and ideologically intransigent, you can actually use your interaction with that person to 1) demonstrate your own principles by being kind even when they are not, and 2) to loudly proclaim Communist arguments and values — in other words, to agitate or propagandize — in response to their commentary and questions.

This always requires having a fully-considered plan in place before engaging. To achieve this effect, you must treat them not as an opponent to be debated through repartee, rhetoric, etc., but rather as a misguided friend whom you are firmly, loudly, but above all kindly, correcting. This is for the benefit not of the reactionary or the person with reactionary tendencies (although it may very well benefit them and convince them in the end). Their convictions are not your primary concern. Rather, this is to give you an excuse to broadcast the correct, Communist principles and lines, to yourself pose questions and answer them, to give yourself a reason to speak to the class struggle and address real issues with correct theory and positions.

Remain Humble

You also have to remember that you are a servant of

the people; when you're in public, you should behave like one! Bombastic, aggressive boasting about your accomplishments and the accomplishments of your formation is not likely to impress anyone except those who already support you. The masses do not "owe" anything to any Communist organization. No other formations "owe" you recognition. The respect of the masses and other formations are things that are earned through practical organizing. It is disruptive and isolating to claim achievements that you and your organization have not earned.

Of course, it is also important to be proud of your organization and not to downplay real achievements. What, then, is the difference between being correctly proud and incorrectly boastful? Organizational, Communist, and even revolutionary pride is shown when one accurately broadcasts the achievements of an organization without overestimating them. An accurate understanding of one's achievements in the overall scheme of organizing toward revolution is necessary to avoid this error. Boasting, on the other hand, is the exaggeration of an organization's achievements, the overestimation of its importance, the assumption of a mantle it has not earned and does not possess. Boasting is, in essence, making true with your words what you wish were true in the world, but is not. The only groups and individuals who are prone to this deviation are those who are ineffectual, who have failed to accomplish lasting achievements in the world.

The surest method for identifying and avoiding boasting is, unfortunately, to accrue a wide experience in organizing and learn to recognize the impact of accomplishments, to correctly gauge the impact of one's actions and the level to which an organization has achieved its goals, has achieved integration with the masses, and so on. Even so, because the movement comes from the masses and returns to the masses, Communists must remain humble. It is the

masses who are the moving force in society, and it is the masses and their self-emancipation that will lead us toward Communism. Only in recognizing this will the Communist accurately assess their own position.

Carrying the Struggle Forward

It is imperative that, no matter the mode and form of struggle, each and every struggle be part of a long-term strategic plan. Struggle is a tactical choice; when you engage, with whom you engage, and how you engage must serve a strategic end. There is little point in engaging in struggle that will be counterproductive, isolate you from the masses, or strengthen reactionary formations. Even within your organization, you should choose when and how to engage in struggle; you should ensure that the time is right, that the organization is not undergoing, for instance, extreme pressure from the outside, or re-organizational stress.

I believe, and I fervently hope, that this guide will provide some insight into the manner in which struggle can be conducted; in my own experience, lack of study in this topic has been deeply harmful to the movement. By careful consideration and much practice, struggle may be transformed into an engine for positive, constructive change, and through that change the Communist movement may be strengthened.