

# The State of HWRS and What Has to be Done

(Submitted to HWRS for 2012 Congress by DW)

The objective requirements of the class struggle can be brutal when measured against the subjective un-readiness factor of history. For a long time capitalism showed its ability to prevail despite its inherent contradictions that ultimately drags the human race toward destruction. Such ability to prevail has ended with the rise of China to a challenging position against US imperialism. Such inter imperialist contradictions is sharpening with the background of the unrelenting world economical crisis.

The subjective factor boils down to a revolutionary leadership capable to lead the working class to power. Without such a leadership world capitalism, either via a nuclear war or the capitalist-made environmental disasters and climate change, will destroy most life and many human-beings. Civilization (as we know it) will come to an end. This process will develop in few decades. Thus, objectively speaking, this means that we have few decades to build a massive revolutionary party (and international) that could lead the working class to power. Considering the human resources that have the know-how today to build such a party this is almost an impossible tasks.

When we look objectively at such resources we only have to assemble the members of HWRS (and maybe CWG) in one room and look at the mirror. Some individuals who master the dialectic may exist and we only need to find them. But we have to abandon any delusions that we can double and triple our forces through re-groupments and intervention in the class struggle. The above cannot salvage the revolutionary party building problems unless we build a brain, and a head and an energetic healthy body in an historically speaking very short time. But if we will not resolve the problems of building a revolutionary party, there will be no world-wide socialist revolutions and humanity will be dragged into catastrophes and full scale barbarism.

We all know that we must change the energy and the commitment of HWRS members and sympathizers to build the foundations for a revolutionary organization. I will not repeat here the many discussions on the topic of commitment to build such an organization which is a critical factor for our main failures so far. We agreed that the need for a higher level of commitment is objectively needed. The only thing I can do is urge members to adjust their life to the objective requirements so that HWRS can become a revolutionary organization. We need to bear in mind the short time factor. Stopping the barbaric trajectory to which capitalism is dragging humanity can be done only by a revolutionary organization that is ultimately transformed **in time** into a mass revolutionary party.

## The State of HWRS

First we need to be honest with ourselves. Objectively speaking HWRS is not a revolutionary organization. It is a Menshevik organization with a good revolutionary program. To be more precise, as long as HWRS maintain Menshevik functioning with Menshevik organizational structure *in practice*, it still remains a left centrist organization. I recently asked comrade SH if she considers herself a revolutionary. She honestly answered that she does not considered herself a revolutionary because personal reasons are stopping her from giving the proper time and commitment that is required from a revolutionary. She believe that when she'll resolve her personal problems she should be able to function as a revolutionary. We all have our subjective reasons for not being able to fulfill our revolutionary commitment, least but not last of the reasons is the advancing age of the key members. Yet the objective reality has no patience for this. Three and a half years after we re-entered the scenes we *basically* remained in the same infantile stage we were three and a half years ago. Even though we almost "doubled" our forces HWRS is still less than a joke when we measure the 2 or three additional comrades with the objective requirements needed for building a revolutionary organization.

As we know from the laws of the dialectics one factor is always connected to others. Lack of involvement in the daily pain of building a revolutionary organization creates a subjective distortion of one involvement that also creates a distortion of how one perceives the different parts and stages in regard to the elements of the revolutionary party building blocks.

Each stage of party building requires different tactics and plans. This also true in regard to the time and energy devoted to the different areas of party building; in each different stage, each area of party building relates to each other differently. In the very initial stage of party building most of the attention must be focused on contact work, recruitment and education; mass work can only be exemplary on an occasional basis. When the organization transformed itself into a party with the accelerating rate of the class struggle, mass work became more important, or more precisely it is criminal to drop it.

The problem is that HWRS did not manage to advance much beyond the planning board. There are key reasons for this. Without Bolshevik discipline and commitment there is no minimum weekly commitment to the organization. Comrades do political work when their personal problems and lifestyle permits it. This Menshevik structure is what separated Lenin from the Mensheviks in 1902 (3?): It was about the serious commitment for party building. Even more unfortunate today is that with the 5 to 7 comrades that we have it is simply insane to believe that we can advance much further than the planning board unless we totally break from Menshevik functioning. In reality the Menshevik functioning exasperates the problems and weakness in all areas of party work.

As I wrote everything is connected to another. Without the commitment and the *energy* to fight capitalism, the subjective and to some degree individualist attitude (or the influence of bourgeois culture) disrupts the correct dialectical coordination of different areas of party work. In a small organization with few resources it is very hard to coordinate all the organization activities to create the right balance. In this country the most common “solutions” is a pragmatic approach for party work. Pragmatism is the chief philosophy of American bourgeois culture. The pragmatist fights obstacles by using the least difficult paths and options. In American left politics the pragmatic solution (using the least difficult paths and options, or the obvious things in front of one nose) is activism: give priority to “practice”, or the organization intervention in the “class struggle”. I remind comrades being pragmatic is not a conscious process. It comes from the American culture that uses simplistic solutions without using the dialectics: that is, the “common sense” solution, doing what familiar and make sense, or feel familiar and comfortable instead of overcoming and transforming all the painful contradictions.

In the case of HWRS we allowed the intervention in the struggles to be priority before other critical activities such as contact work, regular classes and to some degree international work. If we were a big organization in a growing class struggle such emphasis would have been right. But it is not right for a tiny organization with few members *in a relatively low class struggle despite the crisis*. The pragmatic approach stagnated us and almost destroyed us. To the credit of most comrades it is important to note that they endured the difficult three and a half years without quitting despite periods of despair and demoralization. Our luck has started to change when started our close collaboration with LBB.

### **What is to be done**

I am not interested to point fingers or illustrate in length how pragmatism prevailed. The failure to do very strong and focused contact work together with classes or forums to attract and recruit contacts kept us dangerously lean. An organization of few people cannot grow without prioritizing contact work, classes and forums regardless of many leaflets and speeches one delivers in left events or actions. It is simply against the laws of physics to break our isolation this way. You can plow the ground as long as you want but the plants will not grow until you put seeds (more energy and new members) in the ground.

Specific balance sheet of the organization should be written elsewhere. I will concentrate here on the solutions.

### **Is there a revolutionary theory (using the dialectics) in regard to the organizational question?**

To distinguish ourselves from the centrists we are proud to show our theoretical correctness on imperialist China, the counterrevolutions in the Soviet Unions and Eastern Europe, etc. On the other hand we tend to see organizational questions of party building as logistical nightmares. We do not understand how to use the dialectics to resolve them. We need to change this outlook, since the resolution of our organizational problems are questions of life or death.

Lenin’s “*What is to be done*” is viewed today almost with contempt by many in the left. Even the best leftists see it as an “old” book that views the organizational question and the need of trained professional revolutionaries from the narrowness of working under the Czar’s police state. Even our friend Dave from the CWG raised his eye brow and dismissed the book as old and irrelevant when I mentioned (in an e. mail) the importance of “*What is to be done*”. (This was not a surprise to me since the CWG tails the spontaneity of the working class on “critical support”, that is, the CWG and many centrists expect the working class to rally solidly behind their rump after giving Social Democracy critical support for 100 years.). But “*What is to be done*” is not an old dogma. It is about the importance of a revolutionary theory (the dialectics) and the building of a strong revolutionary organization with the proper organizational structure that can face the bourgeoisie without capitulating to the spontaneity of the working class and the backward ideology that permeated inside the workers movement.

Revolutionary theory or the dialectics must apply to all aspect of life and the class struggle including all aspects of party building in its different stages. To avoid opportunistic mistakes Lenin argued that we must build from the start a party based on Democratic Centralism against the Menshevik “democracy” (which in reality “bureaucratic centralism”) with the opportunist capitulation to spontaneity and economism ( activism inside the trade unions based on bread and butter). Here are Lenin’s most famous phrase put in context:

“Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. This idea cannot be insisted upon too strongly at a time when the fashionable preaching of opportunism goes hand in hand with an infatuation for the narrowest forms of practical activity. Yet, for Russian Social-Democrats the importance of theory is enhanced by three other circumstances, which are often forgotten: first, by the fact that our Party is only in process of formation, its features are only just becoming defined, and it has as yet far from settled accounts with the other trends of revolutionary thought that threaten to divert the movement from the correct path.”  
(<http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/i.htm>)

Lenin urges revolutionaries to apply revolutionary theory (the dialectics) for building a revolutionary party saying that in an initial stage “our Party is only in process of formation, its features are only just becoming defined”. More than 100 years passed since Lenin wrote the above. Sadly because few people really understood the dialectic, the revolutionary movement consists today only of few individuals; almost chillingly we are roughly where we were then (when Lenin wrote “*what is to be done*”) with the exception that the need for a revolutionary party is a million times more urgent today. Lenin in a sense (please I don’t mean it is the same today, I use the comparison for clarity) wrote today’s state of HWRS when he wrote that:

“The history of Russian Social-Democracy can be distinctly divided into three periods: The first period embraces about ten years, approximately from 1884 to 1894. This was the period of the rise and consolidation of the theory and programme of Social-Democracy. The adherents of the new trend in Russia were very few in number. Social-Democracy existed without a working-class movement, and as a political party it was at the embryonic stage of development.”  
(<http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/concl.htm> )

We are only entering 1884 to 1894 in a modern sense. We need to understand using theory (the dialectics) how to resolve the huge organizational problems of HWRS. First we need to avoid what Lenin called “the opportunism [that] goes hand in hand with an infatuation for the narrowest forms of practical activity” i.e. the impatience that results in what we call these days “activism” or the rush to intervene in the class struggle without fully understanding the organizational stage (and remember the organizational question is a political question) of HWRS’s party building. The dialectics suggests to me that with such few comrades in the organization, we must balance contact work and revolutionary education and theory (classes, party’s forums) against ineffective interventions in left activity and even in the class struggle, that is, create a balance in favor of contact work and theory.

This, of course, does not mean no practical work in the class struggle. But it has to be balanced correctly with other areas of work that are critical for cadre development and growth.

Most importantly we must institute (or re-instate) Democratic Centralism in the true Leninist spirit against the Menshevik practice for the last three years that was so demoralizing for our organization. An ACTIVE leadership that meet regularly must emerge from the Congress. Without such leadership we could not go forward even one inch. We will slip back into the informal Menshevik functioning.

The truth is that one needs a leadership for a group of 10 or ten millions. Humans under capitalism cannot function without a leadership: this is true for a revolutionary party, a mass organization of the working class or a bourgeoisie organization. The difference is that in a revolutionary organization and healthy workers organization the leadership is truly elected and accountable. In corrupt trade unions or a bourgeois organization the leadership is not truly elected and accountable.

Democratic centralism in a revolutionary organization is very different than simple majority vote in a mass movement. One of the reasons for this is that in a revolutionary party the leadership (and the membership to the extent possible) uses the *dialectics consciously*. This is why Trotsky wrote that the mature leadership must know the relationship between centralism and democracy: when to give a lot of room to discussion and to advance theory, and when it is time to insist on the centralism of the revolutionary action. In the case of HWRS ample of democracy is necessary at this point of primitive accumulation of cadre. **So leadership is not about centralism at this point but about responsibility and accountability in regard to the decisions and direction of the group.** I mentioned a number of times how desperately we need a branch organizer. A branch organizer’s (who should be one of the elected leaders) tasks is not about giving comrades orders. But he/she needs to make sure that the correct balance is observed between exemplary work in the class struggle with serious contact work and political educations of members and contacts. In the delicate state of HWRS a branch organizer should not simply tell comrades that they need to do this or that because this is what was decided. To motivate comrades to give more energy or time to the

revolutionary activity, the organizer will achieve better results by regular humanistic communications with comrades, being compassionate and understanding of comrades situations and contradictions. We also need to re-instate the activity sheet that we used in the 1990s. This is the best way to make sure that what we set to do every week is being done.

There are always contradictions between the formal way of Democratic Centralism that includes votes and resolutions and the actual way in which things are done. We know that compromises must be made from time to time. We cannot always do what we decided to do. One of the things that a leadership or a branch organizer need to decide is which compromises are necessary and which compromises we must battle against because they harm our growth or slide us back into Menshevik functioning.

Because contact work is so critical I propose that we have a Contact Director. Such a director should not only call contacts and make sure that they are seen, but he/she should make regular reports to the organization about progress. It goes without saying that if a comrade cannot see a contact, the contact director needs to find another comrade to see the contact. Thus we don't need a formal contact director but a living one that observes the work's progress on a daily basis.

Because of the smallness of the group I suggest that the Contact Director will also be the Education Director. This makes sense because contact work and education are closely related. This means writing proposals for study groups, classes and forums, and making sure that his/her adapted proposals are really implemented and **not forgotten because of the rush of activities** (the way it is done now).

We also know that we need a comrade that will be responsible for consistent international work, a comrade that needs to coordinate our intervention in LBB and the class struggle, etc. The joke is that to fulfill these positions we need to use all the membership. Nevertheless, these requirements derived from objective necessity.

In general, the dialectic relationship between the need to focus on education versus the class struggle is similar to the relationship between propaganda and agitation. The smaller the revolutionary organization is the more focus it needs on education and propaganda. A very small organization also need to rely on correct theory(method) to defend correct principles because it's revolutionary method and theory has not been proven through its practice in the class struggle. For a mass party the above relationship between theory and practice gives practical work in the class struggle a prominent role. It has the resources to focus on the class struggle and thus its agitation is much stronger than propaganda. We also have to bear in mind that the intensification of the class struggle inevitably changes the relationship between theory and practice. Revolutionary practice cannot be avoided in time of intensified class struggle. And in a true revolutionary organization such practice enriches the revolutionary theory.

Everything that is mentioned in regard to leadership and Democratic Centralism has to be implemented with our tiny resources. There is good news though that gives us hope. We have a good chance to recruit young black militants and expend our organization to the Midwest. The infusion of youth and youth energy will not resolve our dire need for cadres. But it will give us the energy to CHANGE the dynamic within the organization.

Words are not enough. Nothing will really happen without the internal struggle for a change in which each comrade must take some responsibility. I know that it will be extremely difficult. I am well aware of the number of comrades that we have and the real difficulties that each one of them have to overcome or modify in order to find more time and energy for revolutionary work; not to speak about my own serious illness that prevented me from doing revolutionary work for years. What I presented is the kind of change that is required from the OBJECTIVE requirements that are needed to transformed us from the circle into a real revolutionary organization.

The coming Congress is the most critical Congress that we ever had. The Congress must find the revolutionary spirit to fulfill the objective need for a change. I am asking the Congress to find a way. We have a great responsibility to re-claim revolutionary (and humanistic) Marxism and ingrain it in the blood and the brain of the infant that we call HWRS. Our task is to transform this infant into a young child, organizationally speaking, with the spirit and theory of the a very young Bolshevism that Lenin wrote about in *What is to be done*.

Our task in the coming years is to develop revolutionary working class leaders. The kind of leaders that Charles D referred to recently, that is, with the 2 or 3 additional developed recruits from LBB we could really make a difference in the Bay Area struggles. We need to become a steeled organization with black and brown leaders that can intervene in the class struggle with the political program and the transitional demands of HWRS and LBB. Lenin summarized the kind of party and leaders that we need:

“Political thinking is sufficiently developed among the Germans, and they have accumulated sufficient political experience to understand that without the “dozen” tried and talented leaders (and talented men are not born by the hundreds), professionally trained, schooled by long experience, and working in perfect harmony\*, no class in modern society can wage a determined struggle.”(<http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/iv.htm> )

This is a perfect summary of why we need a revolutionary party and what kind of leaders do we need.

DW

\*yes I know there is no perfect harmony. But we can get closer to it by fighting alienation which is another big topic. But not for this document.