

Clubhouse, Retreat or Barracks?

Problems of Collective Housing

Our organization and its extended bodies have struggled with the issue of collective housing. In cities like Austin and Los Angeles where housing costs are high, charging the maximum rent on any property, it is inevitable that comrades will be forced into communal housing situations. This is a phenomena among the masses as well, in order to afford the rent there is necessarily crowding and overcrowding. Especially for young comrades and young people, numerous roommates are a near constant condition. This is yet another manifestation of the housing situation under capitalism and as such can bring great harm to workers and revolutionaries. Understanding this condition demands the departure point that housing communally is not so much a decision as a necessity for many. Hence any policy must correspond to this condition.

Several solutions have been implemented on our end in reaction to dysfunctional living situations. Housing has been delegated, required approval, and some problem households have been forcibly dissolved. This has up until now been the basic modus operandi. It must be improved by conceiving power, and that the Party Embryo is the main administrators, the vanguard in development, the head of the new state in development—hence it must seek to control and organize as much as possible, and to never relent to disorganization. Each home must be understood as a municipality within a new state, and organized along Maoist principles. Before getting into the matter of the left and right political lines emerging from the aforementioned contradictions, we will examine a few practical experiences we have accrued using Austin and Los Angeles as examples.

The Uncle House in Los Angeles—along with the underestimation of the bad element Fanon (AKA Bradli) we underestimated the problem represented by this “collective” living arrangement. First it was still privatized living under one roof with multiple individuals, and it was never genuinely collectivized. It was collective only in name and reference and never functioned as such.

The first problem for us was the formation of a rightist clique of wreckers manipulated by wreckers in Tampa, Florida. This issue went beyond housing and was mainly ideological and organic—people with postmodern ideas were haphazardly recruited, and through housing exposed like a contagion to others. Fanon maneuvered our structure, and rightism allowed him to be preserved when he should have been eradicated. In summary, he formed an anti-party clique first on the basis of veganism and environmentalism, then on the basis of sexuality and “open” “poly” relationships, essentially extending the bourgeois brothel as a virtuous lifestyle for revolutionaries. He used these contradictions for subversive activity and agreed with so-called “leftists” who were actually rightists in meetings to preserve his status. Uncle House became a poisoned well. This tarnished place did not transform with Fanon’s removal.

The house itself, according to the reports we have read was something of a politicized punk house, that is to say it was operating as a flop house for socially nihilistic comrades—we can call this categorically a club house for misfits who share the same interests and lifestyles. It was not functioning as a revolutionary headquarters to billet troops.

More rightist lines emerged in its murky waters. Mental illness as an excuse for neglecting work, dirty conditions, Franciscan voluntary poverty, Joblessness, self-pity, complaining etc. were the fruits of this weed. Essentially all the members of this household would form warring cliques within themselves

and within the broader movement, disorganization reigned and planted demoralization. The house was forcefully dissolved and all comrades were ordered out of it. It is our view that this was a superficial reaction that eliminated some of the symptoms but did not eliminate the root cause. On one hand, these problems are rooted in society which can only be uprooted by the new society. On the other hand, we scattered to the wind tainted comrades, who are free now to taint others because the condition of housing remains the same, and ideological transformation has not taken place.

The Apartment of Expelled Combatants in Austin—it is known that one combatant was discharged for rightism and refusal to rectify, and that she through gossip with her active combatant roommate helped to further degenerate and demoralize him. This environment helped to cost us two combatants. They are no longer active in the movement in any capacity. There are problems and security risks caused when this happens. It weakens the movement objectively even if they were bad elements.

Austin South House—a so called collective house used as a resource by our movement which operated mainly on privatized liberalism. This house had a rotating crew, it resulted in more liberal sexuality, lying to the organization, dysfunction, unacceptable living standards. It caused demoralization and work shirking. The combatants would routinely leave out items which could be incriminating and were reprimanded and fined many times. One combatant became demoralized and turned into a neglectful rightist, and was transferred as a result. Another was dishonorably discharged. A third and fourth still suffer from being unable to find their bearings and one of them has bouts of unreliability. After the DD the house remained in the control of the discharged and the organization lost a combatant and a valuable resource. Liberal disorganization helped to diminish the fighting capacity of all involved but was not the principle reason.

Austin West House—one of our more durable locations, which has been a valuable resource. The house has changed hands the responsible comrade was reassigned, when this comrade controlled the space it ran far more effectively and in an adult manner but not a military manner. It has become a clubhouse of the Uncle type. The comrades living in this house now have made many mistakes, and treat their lodging as a hang out social space, neglect work, miss meetings, shirk chores, fail to assert authority etc. The house is also known by the state. This house is undergoing militarization with the possibility of further action if necessary.

Each of these locations has caused two line struggles between bourgeois and proletarian ideology, since the first example is well documented, and the second involved so few people, the third and fourth must be examined more.

South House came up with the line, “better to apologize than ask permission” an anti-party anti-military line—the line of the petty bourgeois venture capitalist who assumes that to get a big pay out or a desirable experience it is worth risking disapproval. That seeking approval would risk being answered in the negative, and therefore it is better not to ask than to be told “no”. Marxist politics were dismissed. The result of this line was that one comrade who was in a vulnerable place was convinced to violate rectification and discipline, and as a result was removed from the city. The architect of the better-to-apologize line succumbed to total bourgeois individualism and was discharged dishonorably, a stain he will carry for the rest of his life, and will have to be charged with once we take state power.

West House has come up with the line, “if you see something take care of it” in terms of cleaning and maintenance, this line opposed the line that housework should be organized and a chore calendar should be made. The winning line of, “if you see something” relies on volunteerism and is anarchist—it is a rightist line that dissolves structure and undermines discipline in the name of personal

responsibility. It imposes disorganization on organization and has helped turn the place into a casual clubhouse for a clique instead of a barracks for billeting troops.

What resulted from their line? Two combatants failed to concern themselves with the masses and hung out in their warm, electrified house when the city froze and the masses went without, these two combatants shamed themselves and abandoned their post, the higher ranking of the two comrades “forgot” a meeting with leadership and did yoga with her friends instead—decadent, bourgeois and selfish. This leading comrade has had a long recent history of serious work errors.

The other comrade failed to go out and find out what the generated organism she is in charge of was even doing, she just kept hanging out with her clique. A third comrade, a PE militant, is also to blame here, she failed to win the left line and impose order discipline and structure, she failed to accomplish unity in plan and unity in command. She failed to pull rank on the two selfish comrades and put them in their place militarily. She knew there were problems, but she did not study the problem, raise the issue, and give orders to those of lower rank, or seek orders from comrades of a higher rank. She forgot that she was a Communist in this situation and had operated under the idea that her friends were just friends and not subordinate comrades. Everything was causal and fun, politics were not in command, revolution was not grasped and production was not promoted. As a result two good standing comrades have been led into making mistakes, and one comrade in precarious standing has deepened her mistakes. This will not do.

Lessons from Practice

During the ice and snow storm in Austin several leading comrades and cadres were forced to bunker together due to power heat and water outages. This meant many were forced into a small space. In order to have the dangerous new conditions not harm the work, the comrades committed to implementing military discipline to their new arrangement. This increased their productivity and improved their situation. Everything was planned, and all plans were carried out. Criticism and self-criticism improved the plan and accounted for mistakes. The week was highly productive and successful. Unlike the other cases, the leading comrades and cadres proved that collective living can and must serve the revolution, and that it does not necessarily cause conflict. What was their secret? How did these comrades manage to improve their work in such dire conditions as the cold, food shortage, mobility impairment, etc.? The first answer is ideology, the second is discipline. These will be examined more here.

Principles for Collective Housing Arrangements are summed up with Barracks Life

Militarization applies to all levels of Communist work, including our housing and personal lives. We never stop being Communists and combatants. The following principles outline the difference between functional and dysfunctional, between success and failure.

1. Nuclei—all work on this question must proceed from the Communist understanding of a nucleus. Communists belong to cells and combatants belong to units, and many belong to a generated organism as well. This is clear, what is not clear with the active living arrangements is that the housing unit also forms a nucleus. That is a stable core with a clear leadership which function in a broader movement. Beginning from the basic nuclei we can organize housing. A house is a system and within it there is a nucleus made up of those organized as communists and combatants. Each of these is subject to military discipline.

2. Crisis—the next thing is to understand the role of crisis and conflict, internally to the home and externally in the world, the nuclei must understand the contradictions and act upon them as a unit. The role of crisis has implications on operations. A house nucleus can act quickly among the neighbors in conditions of major crisis on an immediate local level.
3. Regime—the single most important principle of collective housing. The role of regime must be understood as a planned way of doing everything imposed vertically. Regime cannot be dispensed with -- if it ever is the home becomes dysfunctional. Regime is not improvised, it is enforced with military precision like any other orders.
4. Routine—routine must be understood as a necessary bi-product of regime, which informs one's behavior and regular automatic mode of operation. It is regular procedure stemming from specific operations and programs provided by the regime. Routine is played out every single day with only slight modifications when necessary.
5. Structure—the arrangement according to plans; organizing the component parts of a complex organism.
6. The Fist of Unity—that is; unity of plan, unity with command, political unity, unity of understanding, unity in action. Without struggling for the fist of unity, disunity will reign and disorganization will ensue.
7. The neighborhood is the people—houses must understand themselves in their conditions, understanding that the neighborhood is the people and not the house physically or the physical buildings and streets that surround it. Critically considering the people of the area and its interactions with them. This can provide security, intelligence and resources to the nuclei.
8. Quarter Master—this is the responsible comrade in the situation who acts as the leader and head of household. Who is the main one issuing orders and enforcing discipline. Following all meeting and organizational policy to impose organization on disorganization. The Quarter Master or Barracks Officer, is typically the highest ranking comrade. In other cases the Barracks Officer can be elected by the household, or appointed by the military based on this recommendation.
9. Transfer—houses must sometimes be broken up and individuals transferred, this should be a political decision and not one of convenience. Comrades with bad habits and bad work methods should be split up with transfer. In a bad house, a good comrade is likely to be brought down rather than bring up the others, unless the comrade is a militant with a strong unbreakable constitution.
10. Inspection—we must comprehend inspection as a matter of overall regime and routine and not as a reaction to concern. The CDCC cannot carry out routine inspection, this must be done by the regime on the lower and middle level. This should be done by a Commanding Officer, the head of the house, a cell leader or branch leader etc. Inspectors must be trained, briefed and debriefed. Their findings when appropriate must be handed to the CDCC immediately. General reports should include a housing report for the CDCC which contains routine information while action items should be put into emergency reports.

A Model for Collectivization

First, in order to collectivize, things must be organized. Common meal sharing extends to purchase and consumption as well a sharing labor, and more importantly dividing labor the right way. Absolute equalitarianism must be eliminated, each must work, but not all at the same task as individuals but as a comprehensive unit.

This is all impossible without meetings; scheduling should ideally permit daily meetings of the barracks where all billeted there convene democratically and these should be chaired by the responsible comrade. If daily is impossible, then every other day is necessary. Failure to do this should mean transfer for anyone unable to meet the regime. The meetings provide a necessary structure to daily life helping the political and mass work. Those with flexible schedules should do everything possible to accommodate those with strict schedules. Meetings should attempt to take place at the same time every day following the rule of regime, routine, structure. When appropriate the comrades should be called to attention by the responsible comrade and given the appropriate orders before meetings. All meetings should have a firm start and end time, and all should have clear, repeated resolutions.

Meals and meal times should be collectively planned at meetings or by an assigned group. Cook and prep teams should be pre-planned with volunteers or by assignment, a separate cleaning detail should be organized the same way. All of these should follow the tightest schedule possible and the barracks should convene together to resolve the contradictions which impede the schedule.

Complaining should be forbidden. Well-placed and thought-out criticism must take place in meetings and not on the fly, though reminders and corrections should take place in the moment.

Recreational time should be scheduled along with free time. Work time takes priority for both day jobs and political work, with political work being principle.

Wake up and lights and sleep times must be organized according to the routine and the schedule—in short, according to the concrete conditions. These can be adjusted to accommodate work load and capacity when needed but should become routine.

Security detail should be formalized and not left to cultural inclination.

Established rules and protocol must be made clear and enforced. If one person is in violation, it affects all others.

The 11 commandments must be observed at all times. No comrade is permitted to forget their post or their rank and must adhere to discipline.

Conclusion

Ideology, that is Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, principally Maoism with the contributions of universal validity of Chairman Gonzalo, must form the foundation of everything we do, every policy, protocol and rule. It is the basis of everything.

The above document is a sketch of successful collectivization, organization and barracks life. It is a combat weapon against privatized individualism, anarchism, volunteerism, liberalism, and self-indulgence. It is a work in progress which must be developed and adjusted. All resources, including housing, must be utilized in the interest of reconstituting the Party, fortifying, protecting, and improving the soldiers of the Party in formation.

Collective housing must not mutate into social club houses, flop houses, or retreats away from the struggle—they must be conceived of as barracks. Distinctions must be made between Communists, combatants, and the masses. When the masses or activists enter a collective living space they must be brought up to function in it as a part of it; just like in the generated organism, the revolutionaries mobilize them and educate them. In such cases the activist or masses must be developed as class conscious people who are future fighters for the revolution.

All of the above does not reduce the role of individual initiative, but offers better conditions for it to be realized through collective action. Communication and organization are critical to functional operations. We must bring our revolutionary optimism and enthusiasm to our homes.

IMPOSE THE LEFT LINE UPON THE RIGHT!

DESTROY DISORGANIZATION WITH ORGANIZATION!

COMMUNISTS PLAN EVERYTHING!

EVERYTHING IS A BATTLEFIELD!

MAKE OUR COLLECTIVE HOUSING COMBAT BARRACKS FOR BILLETING TROOPS!