



Chapter 10

Recruitment

Methods of outreach and recruitment vary depending on whether a group is aboveground or underground, how it is organized, and what role is being filled. There are really two kinds of recruitment, which you might call organizational and mutual recruitment. In organizational recruitment, an existing organization finds and inducts new members. In mutual recruitment, unorganized dissidents find each other, and forge a new resistance group.

It's relatively easy for aboveground groups to engage in outreach and to publicize their politics and actions. Underground groups need a somewhat more involved recruitment procedure, largely for security reasons, and they have a much smaller pool of potential recruits.

Someone who is considering serious underground resistance should keep a low profile: avoid prominent, militant aboveground action; it's important not to draw unwanted attention in advance. That doesn't mean that people should stop being activists or stop being political, but militant aboveground action is a definite disqualifier for underground action. Budding activists need to be told that there is a choice to be made between aboveground and underground action.

Stages of Recruitment

There are three basic stages of recruitment. The first is outreach or "prospecting," in which a group tries to make contact with potential recruits (and make their pitch). The second is screening or selection, in which the available candidate pool is winnowed down and the best recruits are chosen. In the third and final phase, those recruits are offered training and integrated into the organization.

Outreach

If specific skills and attributes are needed, it is necessary to go out and find those people, often in more peripheral parts of the resistance movement, and make the pitch. A good pitch has four distinct parts.

First, recruiters should hit their high points and explain the benefits of joining up: social benefits, self-actualization, and making a difference in the world. Speaking with a person who has experience in the organization can help convince the candidate, as can testimonials.

Second, the appeal needs to hit at a deep emotional level, not just an intellectual one. Recruiters are after the small minority of people who are predisposed to resist. They don't have to create new feelings; they just have to evoke or release strong feelings already present in the candidates.

Third, recruiters must address any concerns or anxieties. Lastly, the recruiter offers next steps to the candidate.

Recruitment is only one side of the membership equation; the other side is activist retention. Many things can keep activists going, like success, camaraderie, and a sense of momentum. Activists need emotional support and morale boosting, especially when things are not going well. Good work and long-term commitment should be recognized and celebrated.

People who criticize or engage in cliquishness should be politely told to cut it out, as this behavior can cause the group to self-destruct in the sort of way that causes lasting animosity and bitterness. You are much less likely to have these kinds of problems if you screen people in the first place.

Screening and Selection

All groups should engage in some screening of recruits (formally or informally), the underground being especially vigilant. There are many different screening methods, only some of which will be used by any given group. In roughly sequential order, these methods include:

- Outreach pre-screening / prospecting to look for indicators that the candidate has promise, such as pre-existing skills, and a history of participating in action against those in power.
- Physical checks for listening devices, police union cards, and the like.
- Vouching or references
- Background checks
- Surveillance or tailing
- Lifestyle or habit checks / warning signs: such as drug addiction, and irresponsible, impulsive or abusive behavior that would put the group at risk.
- Interview or political screening: Candidates may be asked questions about their politics, or they may be asked to study and agree with certain materials, points of unity, or conduct.
- Intuition and trust
- Test task
- Induction and oath: In armed groups, the consequence for collaboration has almost universally been death.
- Evaluation period

Be absolutely certain that a candidate is suitable and trustworthy before inviting the person to join. Underground groups cannot “disinvite” someone who knows who and where they are.

Recruits must have the psychological balance required to deal with stressful situations, and the social skills needed to work in a close cell or affinity group. Members of an underground resistance should also be willing to go to jail if needed.



Recruit Training and Enculturation

New recruits need cultural training, that is, they need to develop a shared culture with the other members of their group so that everyone can work together smoothly. They also need training in the specific skills needed for their work. This suggests the need for a sort of “basic training for activists,” which would be generally available—and strongly encouraged—for people who want to be part of a culture of resistance. Skills that are legal and should be ubiquitous in a culture of resistance include the following:

- Anti-oppression analysis and training
- Group facilitation, decision-making, conflict resolution, crisis intervention
- Basic history of resistance
- Basic grounding in resistance organizational styles and strategies
- Basic off-the-grid and survival skills
- First Aid
- Reinforcement of culture of resistance norms and attributes
- Physical training and self-defense
- Communications including secure communications

If these skills become commonplace in resistance cultures, cadres can focus on training the particular skills needed for their strategy and tactics.