

Isolation and the radical left - statement on the split within the RCT

During the past three months a debate has been taking place inside the RCT on the question of party-building. In the course of this discussion it became clear that major differences had emerged on the question of the tasks facing revolutionaries and the orientation that is necessary for building a Marxist party in the working class.

Pursuing the orientation developed in Revolutionary Communist Papers 1, the majority sought to develop the forms through which the tasks of developing a programme, training a vanguard and building a cadre organisation could be resolved. Understanding these as combined tasks, the majority advanced a perspective which concretised them in relation to today's conditions. Given the relative ideological weakness of the revolutionary left, the majority argued that a particular emphasis had to be placed on programmatic development and cadre training. Through a process of political consolidation the basis would be built for a revolutionary propaganda group, the organisational form that is necessary for training a revolutionary vanguard in the working class.

The absence of a revolutionary vanguard reflects the isolation of revolutionaries from the working class movement. Unlike the radical left, the majority of the RCT argued that this isolation is in essence ideological, arising from the gap between revolutionary ideas and the consciousness of the working class. The necessity for building a revolutionary propaganda group flows from this standpoint. In order to build a revolutionary movement it is essential that revolutionaries begin from tasks that are objectively necessary, that are based on a scientific understanding of today's conditions. Today it is necessary to struggle against the dominant trend in the politics of the radical left, a trend that begins from the radical left's own weakness and isolation from the working class movement and which establishes subjective criteria as the basis for its political orientation. Having lost sight of tasks which are objectively necessary, the radical left is forced to attempt to overcome its weakness through a pragmatic method of work, seeking shortcuts and adapting to the prevailing consciousness of the working class.

The minority comrades who left the RCT on 7 May 1977 to form the CCP begin and end with their isolation. For them political consolidation is inconsistent with confronting tasks that are objectively necessary. They start from their subjective weakness and their need for political education and hence reduce the tasks of developing a programme and training a vanguard to a set of aims. Their separation of consolidation from the task of party-building has led them to a short-sighted approach of 'training' themselves now in order to build a party later. This orientation contains within it the subjective limitation of the radical left. Their perspective seeks to overcome their isolation not through the systematic development of revolutionary theory and the building of a revolutionary organisation, but through winning 'advanced elements' from the radical left. For them, as for the left in general, tactics come first, before the political basis for a programme has been established.

Despite all the emphasis that the ex-RCT minority placed on 'training' and 'political education' their refusal to begin from tasks that are objectively necessary has meant that their pre-occupation with isolation has had the last word. Their tactical orientation to the radical left is different only in form from the RCG's adaptation to the CPGB (see Revolutionary Communist Papers 1).

Tactical questions were not, however, at the heart of the debate. The majority struggled against a trend that sought to subordinate tasks that are objectively posed to a pragmatic orientation based on a fear of isolation. The narrow tactics of the ex-minority towards the radical left attempts to overcome this isolation. The ex-minority fails to realise that isolation can only be transcended through the development of a Marxist programme that begins to provide a bridge between revolutionary consciousness and the consciousness of the working class today.

It is to be regretted that the pressures of isolation have forced the ex-minority away from the tasks that the RCT had set itself. Despite the major differences that emerged in the course of the debate, the majority argued against the minority's decision to leave the organisation, since there was no political basis for a split. The inability of the minority to provide a political critique of the RCT was an indication of their premature step. The ex-minority's underestimation of the need to struggle for a revolutionary programme today has led them to underestimate the importance of ideological struggle inside a revolutionary organisation, a process that is essential if a party is to be built. The majority of the RCT argued that ideological struggle inside a revolutionary organisation was part and parcel of political consolidation and that the ex-minority's organisational separation represented a short-cut approach to party-building. Their split, carried out on an unclear basis, is an organisational reflection of their rejection of a method of party-building that is based on tasks which are objectively posed.

We believe that the perspective for party-building adopted by the RCT provides an orientation which can lay the basis for taking revolutionary propaganda into the working class and that the experience of the coming period will provide living verification of this.

The RCT hopes that the comrades of the CCP will be prepared to discuss their differences with us and that fraternal relations will be maintained between the two organisations. We say this because we believe that political clarity can best be achieved if the comrades are willing to defend their standpoint politically and debate their differences with us.

Revolutionary Communist Tendency

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