

Session #1 - Discussions

Feb. 21, 1998

The RCP: What are our various attitudes towards it? How do we view ourselves in relation to it? What are our criticisms of it? Is there any hope for it?

There was not complete unity on this issue, but we were not really very far apart. One person expressed very powerfully her experiences which illustrated how the RCP neglects political education, even within its own ranks, and even to the point of *discouraging* it. This struck a sympathetic cord with others. She related her own generally positive experiences with the masses while attempting to follow the RCP line, but said that few others in the Party seemed to be really putting that line into practice. Several others of us were somewhat more skeptical of the general effectiveness of the RCP approach to the masses, even when it is seriously attempted.

One person expressed the view that the RCP has abandoned the mass line and the willingness to seriously participate in most of the struggles of the masses, except from the outside, by selling their newspaper.

Several people mentioned how the Party has been stagnating, losing a number of good people over the years, failing in such important campaigns as the 100,000 newspapers distribution campaign, building mass organizations, and so forth. One person expressed it very well: "Maoism can do better than that!"

Another person also remarked that the RCP has become a "black hole" as far as input and criticisms go, from both members and from outside. Everyone strongly agreed with this, and lamented the apparent unwillingness of the Party to even respond to criticisms, let alone consider them carefully and take them to heart.

One specific area where this is a glaring problem is in regards to reevaluating the Party's "80's analysis," that world war and revolution were "inevitable." Other issues and criticisms which one or more of us have raised with them, and which have not even been acknowledged, are: the negation of the negation (and other issues related to dialectical materialism); tendencies towards pragmatism and the abandonment of serious political study; the failure to use the mass line; questions about possible errors in the Cultural Revolution; and a great number of other political questions, big and small.

Some people expressed the hope that the RCP will eventually come around, correct the errors it has been making, and re-establish its leading role in the revolutionary movement. Some others think they are no longer capable of doing this. Some are not sure, or still have some hopes which may be fading fast. Many, or all, of us still think that even if the whole Party cannot correct its errors, there are many individual members who may be able to break with a failed line without abandoning revolution altogether.

Several people expressed the strong desire that we not turn our Group into some kind of anti-RCP organization, or that our *entire* focus be on the RCP. Everyone agreed with this, but I think we all also agree that the RCP and its line and policies will remain for some time as *one* important focus for us. Moreover, it is entirely appropriate to criticize it on various points, including publicly. In fact, it may well prove to be one of the most important things we can do at this point, to forcefully criticize the erroneous line the RCP has fallen into.

All Issues Are Open for Discussion: One person put forward the view, which I believe all the rest of us agreed with, that we should take the attitude that “all issues are open for discussion and debate.” I am sure he didn’t mean to suggest by this that we throw out everything we know, that we go so far to question such givens as that society is composed of classes, that there is an imperialist ruling class in this country, and that we desperately need a revolution. But there are in fact a great many valid questions *from the revolutionary point of view* which have been swept under the rug in the communist movement for far too long. One example, CFB suggested, is: errors made by the Maoists in the Cultural Revolution. Another is the assumption that revolution in “third world” countries must invariably follow the Chinese model of the countryside surrounding the cities.

I think we all agree that issues like this are indeed open for discussion; we are all against dogmatism.

More People: We discussed the importance of contacting more people and drawing them into our discussions and efforts. One person especially emphasized that we should not look at ourselves alone as a body sufficient to accomplish what needs to be done at this stage.

A Journal: The necessity for establishing a public presence at some point not too far in the future was discussed. It was pointed out that unless we did this we could not hope to have much impact. Several people expressed the hope that we might be able to publish a journal in which important articles that we or others come up with might be made available to the larger revolutionary community. It was also suggested that we find a way to publish important larger works, such as the work on materialist dialectics now being prepared.

Other Things: In addition to the above issues, there was some good general political discussion on a number of points. One person, for example, expressed an interesting and useful analogy which we should not forget about: the first 150 years of the Marxist revolutionary movement is to what is yet to come, as the 1905 revolution in Russia is to the 1917 revolution. We should not get too depressed by the temporary overthrow of proletarian power in Russia and China, just as Lenin and the Bolsheviks did not get overly depressed by the failure of the 1905 revolution. There are great days still ahead!

One person quoted Gert Alexander: “I want revolution so badly I’m even willing to be scientific about it!”

