

Base-Building

This document is concerned essentially with the principle of base-building rather than with specific policies followed by the RCL, although some reference to those policies is necessary. This is the first of three documents on this general theme. The second of these documents will be on the policies followed within the implementation of the Base-Building strategy. It will deal with the question of "volunteering" for base-building. It will also look at the question of rallying the advanced. The third will concentrate on the mass line.

Background

The CFB, CUA and ELMLA all had extensive experience of broad front work. This included solidarity with national liberation struggles, anti-fascist/anti-racist work, women's liberation etc. They regularly participated in demonstrations. It is not in the scope of this document to analyse the correctness and incorrectness of particular policies of the time, but more to explain a mood that developed. Most 'fronts' were composed of white 'middle-class' people - usually they were more of an alliance of Trotskyist groups. A view emerged within the RCL that the fronts should be criticised for (a) being united fronts of organisations rather than membership based and (b) not having working class leadership.

At the same time, the RCL was developing its own analysis. It held that the 'working class is the only really revolutionary class'. It saw the existence of a 'small labour aristocracy' (which could be economically militant, but was politically backward) and of extensive 'intermediate strata'.

It became of prime concern to the RCL that the party it was building should be a party of the working class in ideology, political line and membership.

At the same time, it held that broad campaigns could only progress if they came under working class leadership.

The RCL therefore adopted its base-building strategy.

The main reasoning behind building factory cells stemmed from McCreery's criticism of the CPGB, in which he attacked them for dismantling an organisation based on factory units (at the point of exploitation). The CPGB had reorganised on a community-constituency-basis, the organisational expression of the 'British Road to Socialism'. The RCL was also very influenced by the adoption of a policy on cell-building by the CWLB (the VOP group) and their pamphlet and conference on this theme.

It soon became apparent that the construction of factory cells required an enormous amount of work, and it was decided that ALL resources should be devoted to cell-building.

The RCL withdrew from all fronts - mainly, but not in all cases, with little regret. The extremes of this policy were seen in the refusal of the RCL to participate in a demonstration against racism organised by the IWA(GB), and its refusal to launch a Kampuchea Solidarity Campaign following the Vietnamese invasion (later slightly modified).

Present Views on Base-Building

1. It was correct to view the working class as the only really revolutionary class. ✓

The character of a class is determined by its relationship to the means of production. The proletariat produces surplus-value which is expropriated by the bourgeoisie. The contradictions between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and between the means of production and the relations of production are objective contradictions and will propel society forward towards revolution.

The current ideology of the proletariat is another matter.

The ideology prevailing in any society is the ideology of the ruling class. The RCL understood that opportunism prevailed in the class. In fact, most of the time the RCL held a line that the main blow should be struck at opportunism. Prior to the second Congress, there was a rightist wind which changed the target to "the opportunists". This was defeated at the CC before the 2nd Congress and overwhelmingly so at the Congress itself.

In fact the RCL has often recognised the problems of the ideology within the class and its whole strategic discussions were based around this ("who are the advanced": We must return to this question).

However, whilst the RCL acknowledged the problem of racism within the working class, it did not grasp its importance.

Whilst correctly recognising that the intermediate strata and the labour aristocracy were the vehicles of opportunism within the proletariat, it did little to analyse the material impact of imperialism on the conditions of the working class. It did little to analyse the material basis which allowed imperialist ideology to take root so firmly.

The RCL still needs to integrate its analysis of opportunism, racism and chauvinism which are all products of imperialism. ✓

Discussions took place on the CC at the time of the 'Cod War' and views did develop about the difference between the long-term basic interests of the working class (socialism) and the short-term material interests of, for example, the Grimsby fishery workers, who supported the Cod War. This analysis needs to be developed so that we can re-develop a strategy of rallying the advanced within the working class.

2. We were correct to see the middle sections of society as 'strata' rather than a 'class'. Different strata stand in different relations to the means of production. These strata vary from those whose conditions are similar to the proletariat, through to those which are on the verge of joining the bourgeoisie. Because we have made little progress on a class analysis over the last few years, we have been unable to develop our understanding of these strata. There is a strong need to carry out this analysis in order to be clear on the position of workers whose relation to the production of surplus value in the narrow sense is unclear (e.g. those in 'service' industries) as well as the position of the various ranks of the middle strata, comprising mainly the intelligentsia.

3. We were correct to see that these strata were objectively less revolutionary than the proletariat. The intermediate strata as stated above vary considerably and are bound to split in a revolutionary situation. But the main centre of the strata have features similar to that of the petty bourgeoisie. They can be radical, progressive, libertarian etc., but their position in relation to the means of production also leads to vacillation. This breeds all sorts of errors even among the radicals - from right opportunism to sectarianism.

4. The RCL's failure to develop its analysis of the national minority struggle particularly towards the concept of the strategic alliance led to serious errors.

Although the Manifesto endorsed the existence of 'national minorities', it did not carry the analysis forward. To some, the concept was an opportunity to marginalise the struggle. Objectively this is what then occurred. The criticism of broad fronts in general (middle strata domination) should have been developed to the realisation that broad campaigns involving national minority rights should have national minority leadership. The task of communists should be to support the development of such leadership and to mobilise (particularly) working class support for the campaigns. The white communists should have an additional particular task of campaigning against racism within the working class.

In relation to base-building, it must be said that neither of these tasks could be carried out without continuing to develop some form of campaigning alongside national minority organisations, at the same time as developing work with the white working class. Such work should be based on the objective interest of the working class in the abolition of exploitation and the current relations of production and the demonstration that the strategic alliance is the prerequisite of freedom for all the exploited and oppressed in the long term.

The development of the analysis of national minority struggles still remains important if this relationship is to be correctly understood. The national minorities as a whole are potentially revolutionary - anti-imperialist. The overthrow of imperialism is objectively necessary if they are to win their rights. But national minorities consist of different classes. The national minority working class has an objective interest in socialism, which is not shared by the national minority bourgeoisie. This has an impact on the struggle for free national development and on the struggle for socialism.

In Conclusion

It remains essential that the building of a revolutionary communist party take place within the struggles of the working class.

It is also essential that the party is multi-national.

The party has as its objective the revolutionary overthrow of imperialism and the construction of socialism. The proletariat has no fundamental interest in oppressing any section of society.

The revolutionary struggle against imperialism demands the alliance of all forces opposed to imperialism. But only communism can thoroughly defeat imperialism.

Base-Building p.4.

Although the focus of contradictions, and the main force fighting imperialism, lie in the Third World our task is to contribute to building the party within the British state.

It is essential to recognise that the struggle will necessarily take place through a number of stages.

In the first stage it is our task to rally the advanced - to build a **vanguard** organisation. This cannot take place in isolation from the masses. 'Rallying the advanced' requires the development of analysis, strategy and tactics that aid the advanced in practical struggle. — *Theoretical achievement*.

Again, such development cannot take place without grasping the mass line, and understanding it in a way that is neither sectarian nor tailist.

The general call for base-building took place when the RCL had few resources. The call to put all available resources into base-building was inevitable - and inevitably led to a rupture of the RCL's relationship with other struggles and its ability to learn from those struggles.

It is fundamental that the RCL **work within the working class**. Part of this must be at the **place of work**. It is essential that the **process of exploitation** be exposed to view. It is also essential that the future party has an organised strength within industry where its voice can be heard and where it can develop a form of power.

Building factory cells has to be a basis for our work at some stage. **But it must not be done in isolation from other struggles** - either among the working class or among national minorities, or in the struggle against the oppression of women or solidarity campaigns with the struggles of the Third World.

It was therefore premature to adopt this as a strategy at that stage, and will be for some time.

However, this does not mean that such work should not be developed where possible, as conditions permit. In one or two areas it may be possible now, or in the near future, to support comrades in industry and to integrate such work with other campaigns. There will also be other methods of involving in the collective struggles of the working class. And we must constantly be aware of the need to integrate ourselves, as communists, among the working class as much as possible.

How we develop work with the working class, without repeating past errors, must be our major priority.