

Report on the Interactive Discussions on Building a Revolutionary Proletarian Party

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Aloran, a Burdwan-based politico-cultural magazine, had called for an interactive discussion on the Necessity and Problems of building a Revolutionary Proletarian Party. The call had gone to a large number of groups and individuals. Five papers had come in for discussions – one by Chandan Debnath of *Aloran* in his personal capacity, one by Gautam Sen of Majdoor Mukti Committee, one by the Communist Centre of India, the paper being presented by Partha Sarkar, and two papers from Radical Socialist. Other political trends were also present, such as the International Communist Current. About 34 persons participated in the meeting, which was held over one and a half days from the 14 April after lunch to the evening of 15th April.

The papers and the discussions brought up a range of issues. The first set of questions addressed were the relationship between class struggle, proletarian revolutionary consciousness and party building. The second set covered the question of working class self-emancipation and how far the vanguard party idea was compatible with that. The third issue was one of programme – what to retain and what to abandon from the past, what to bring in as new issues of a new age. The fourth question was whether we could find out a pristine Leninist model and return to it. Then came the question of tactical moves in today's context about how to proceed towards revolutionary regroupment.

Some participants felt there was too much discussion over history, and too little on contemporary tasks. Others disagreed on this. The debates over history were related to tactics and programme. Thus, one RS speaker argued that the traditional manner in which “communists” in India had talked about Sramik Srenir Eknayaktantra (One-leader-dom of the Working Class) as the equivalent of the Revolutionary Dictatorship of the Proletariat reflected a petty bourgeois and Stalinist understanding, and it was necessary to look at (i) the usage in Marx and Engels, (ii) the early Soviet experience, (iii) The Stalinist experience and then draw a balance sheet. The principal debate over history covered on one hand the positive lessons of the Russian revolution, its degeneration and the relationship between Bolshevism and Stalinism; and on the other hand the question of revolutionary strategy and tactics in bourgeois democracies with functioning civil societies and where other historical experiences seemed more useful.

Participants agreed that the repeated tactical attempt at building unity without prior ideological debate was a false route. The centralisation needed today was first of all ideological centralisation. RS advanced a few programmatic issues, which however were not discussed much. Soma Marik, in her summing up, pointed to this as a major flaw in left political thinking in India. These issues were:

- Integrating class and gender, in both general programme and in party building measures.
- Avoiding the twin pitfalls of treating identities other than class as either false consciousness or the full goal of a supposedly self contained (national/peoples/new) democratic revolution. To bring dalit workers, adivasi workers, ethnic minority workers, women workers into the party and into the class movement it was necessary to look at all aspects of their activities and redefine class, acknowledging the fractures and hierarchies within so as to overcome them.

- Taking environment seriously and developing proletarian solutions for environmental issues, instead of writing environmentalism off because it was currently led by bourgeois and petty bourgeois ideologues and NGOs.

RS proposed that further discussions should focus on programme. The two RS contributions, along with some further material, will be published soon.

Radical Socialist

P.S.

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