

## Marxism Today

# Joseph Stalin on Party Organisation

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The 12<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) identified the need for Party leaders, members and supporters to deepen their study of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao Zedong and Ted Hill.

The aim of study is to provide a theoretical framework for developing our understanding of current reality in Australia and the world. Study and investigation of the facts are the keys to unlocking the best strategy and tactics for advancing the class struggle at each stage.

One of the texts recommended for study is Chapter 8 from Joseph Stalin's *Foundations of Leninism*, written in 1924.

It summarises the principles of Leninist party organisation, principles that hold true before, during and after the victory of socialist revolutions.

The whole history of revolutionary movements in Russia, China, Cuba, Nepal, Philippines and elsewhere demonstrates that where these principles have been applied to local conditions, the working class has advanced.

Understanding the need for a Communist Party also means understanding the principles of Party organisation, principles shared by all genuine Marxist-Leninist parties, however much their tasks and stages of development differ.

Stalin listed 6 key features of a Party organised on Leninist lines, goals for parties trying to build revolutionary organisation.

### **The Party as the vanguard of the working class**

The Party must strive to become the vanguard of the working class, absorbing all the best elements of the working class along with their experience, their revolutionary spirit and their selfless devotion to the cause of the proletariat.

The Party must be armed with revolutionary theory, a knowledge of dialectical materialism and the laws of revolution.

The Party must have the respect of the working class. It must see farther than the working class and must give leadership to the proletariat. It must not merely register what the working class and the people feel and think or follow along in the tail of the spontaneous movement, but strive to express the still



V.I. Lenin and Joseph Stalin worked closely together

unconscious aspirations of the working class.

### **The Party as the organised detachment of the working class**

Not only is a genuine revolutionary Party the vanguard detachment of the working class, it must be the politically organised section of its class.

The Party must be capable of giving systematic and organised leadership to the working class in the struggle against capitalism. It must be capable of giving this leadership to the proletariat when conditions are ripe, and be capable of retreating when the circumstances require this.

To be able to achieve this, the party cannot be a loose collection of organisations and individuals. It must be a single whole, with higher and lower leading bodies, with democratic decision-making based on consultation, voting, adherence to the majority decision, and with practical decisions binding on all members of the Party. This organisational principle is known as 'Democratic Centralism'.

### **The Party as the highest form of class organisation of the proletariat**

Apart from the Communist Party, the working class has other organisations that are involved

in the struggle against capitalism.

These include trade unions, co-operative groups, rank-and-file workplace groups and organisations of youth or women. Most of these will be non-party organisations, although the party will have various links with them.

While all of these organisations serve the working class and are essential in the struggle against capitalism, only a Communist Party has the necessary vision, experience, capacity and dedication to determine the political line that provides leadership in struggle.

### **The Party as the instrument of the dictatorship of the proletariat**

The Communist Party is not only the highest form of class organisation of the proletariat, it is a means for achieving proletarian dictatorship where that has not yet been achieved, and for consolidating and expanding that dictatorship where it has been achieved.

Lenin wrote: "The dictatorship of the proletariat is a persistent struggle – bloody and bloodless, violent and peaceful, military and economic, educational and administrative – against the forces and traditions of the old society. The force of habit of millions and tens of millions is a most terrible

force. Without an iron party tempered in the struggle, without a party enjoying the confidence of all that is honest in the given class, without a party capable of watching and influencing the mood of the masses, it is impossible to conduct such a struggle successfully."

The Russian Communists could not have staged the Russian Revolution and gone on to build socialism without the self-discipline that prevailed in the Bolshevik party.

### **The Party as the embodiment of unity of will, incompatible with the existence of factions**

A Communist Party needs unity of will based on the Marxist method of criticism and self-criticism with complete and absolute unity of action on the part of all Party members.

This is not incompatible with democratic centralism, which allows criticism and differences of opinion in the Party. However once the differences have been resolved through patient discussion and debate and a decision arrived at, unity of will and action by all Party members are required to allow the Party to implement its decisions.

What is incompatible with democratic centralism is the existence of factions in the Party. Factions weaken the unity of will and discipline of the Party. This is why Lenin warned of the dangers of factionalism in the Party.

### **The Party and Opportunism**

The Communist Party does not exist in a vacuum. It exists in a sea of capitalist ideas which find their way into the Party. Some people bring opportunism into the Party and are unwilling to accept the principles of democratic centralism and Party discipline. They try to turn the Party into a debating society, rather than a revolutionary organisation of the working class.

The Communist Party struggles with these attitudes, using the method of criticism and self-criticism.

The Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) was formed in 1963 by Ted Hill and other Australian communists who upheld Marxism-Leninism in the struggle against modern revisionism.

The CPA (M-L) was, from the beginning, organised on the principles of democratic centralism advocated by Lenin and Stalin, and continues to uphold these principles of working class organisation.