

FUNDAMENTALS OF MARXISM-LENINISM

Security

The Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism consists of 3 separate studies, each about 2 months long. People are free to take just the first study, or the 2nd and 3rd also. The study is designed to give people a basic background in the science of Marxism-Leninism, the science of the working class in its struggle for power and for socialism. The study was developed by the Socialist Union of Baltimore.

It is our position that one of the primary tasks of the young communist movement in the United States is to thoroughly ground itself in the theory of M-L so we can avoid the many pitfalls which bourgeois thinking can lead our young movement into. The first step in our theoretical development is to master the tools of M-L and it is precisely for this reason that we have developed and emphasized our fundamentals study.

The entire studies represent the major theoretical contributions of Marx and Engels and the application of Marxism to the strategy and tactics of the revolutionary struggle which has been made by Lenin since Marx's time.

Basic to understand the science of M-L is to be able to use its method, Dialectical Materialism. In readings, through discussion, and finally by attempting to apply it to the actual situation, we study the materialist philosophy and the dialectical method. We particularly concentrate on how to analyze contradictions within a process so we can understand these processes.

In Historical Materialism we study the application of dialectical materialism to history and the development of society. We pay particular attention to the Marxist concepts of class and the state and to understanding the origins of social change—that is, how capitalism develops out of feudalism and how socialism develops out of capitalism. Dialectical and historical Materialism together make up the 1st study.

In the 2nd study we deal with important questions in the Communist Movement. Here we study the practical application of M-L as seen in the history of the communist movement. The important questions we focus around are: the Leninist concept of the Party; left and right opportunism; the united front; the trade union question; the national question; and the woman question.

The 3rd study deals with the economic substructure of capitalism. In political economy we look at the nature of the productive forces in capitalism, the source of exploitation of the working class, the origins of economic crises and imperialism, and analyze the current economic crisis.

While the purpose of these studies is not to present the line of the Socialist Union of Baltimore on various questions, it is our position that a correct approach to the questions confronting the communist movement in the US can only come out of a

thorough understanding of M-L theory, and that our emphasis on a studied, scientific method will lead people to such an approach. It is only with such an approach that the current divisions and disunity within the communist movement will be overcome. This is our desire, our line, our approach to building the communist movement.

Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism - A Study presented by the Socialist Union
of Baltimore (SUB)

DIALECTICAL AND HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

Session #1 : Why We Study

Readings : Xeroxed articles

This first discussion will include introductions, why we are interested in studying, and the concept of learning things to change things.

Session #2 : The Philosophy of Materialism

Readings : Cornforth, Materialism and the Dialectical Method (pp. 7-43)

Questions on the readings :

1. What do we mean when we say "every philosophy reflects a class outlook?"
2. What are the three main points of materialism?
3. What are the principal differences between idealism and materialism?
4. What are the errors made by the mechanical materialists? Does mechanical materialism lead to idealism?

Questions to apply theory to practice :

1. How would you use an idealist approach to a bad situation or a problem at home or at work? How could you deal with the same problem in a materialist way?
2. Can you think of an example where you have thought idealistically but acted materialistically?
3. What is the difference between the way we are using the word "materialist" and the way it is used when someone says "She's materialistic."
4. Mao has said "Everything reactionary is the same in that if you don't hit it, it won't fall." How is this an example of materialist thinking?
5. What are idealist errors you see being made in your political work?

Session #3 : Basics of Dialectics

Readings : Cornforth, Materialism and the Dialectical Method (pp. 57-89)

Questions on the readings :

1. What are the main differences between metaphysics and dialectics?
2. What is the difference between a process and a thing? Why does dialectics look at processes?
3. What is meant when we say that dialectics looks at things in terms of fundamental opposites?
4. What are the four principles of dialectics?

Questions to apply theory to practice :

1. Think of examples of how you sometimes slip into thinking metaphysically.
2. Take an example from work, community, or current political work :
 - a. Give examples of how processes are interconnected.
 - b. What has been the process of change and development? What is rising and developing and what is dying away?
 - c. Give examples of quantitative change and qualitative change in the situation. If qualitative changes have not taken place, what would they look like?

Session #4 : Contradiction

Readings : Cornforth, Materialism and the Dialectical Method (pp. 90-119; review 81-89)
Review of Dialectical Materialism (xerox)
The National People's Democratic Revolution (xerox)

Questions on the readings :

1. How can there be unity and struggle of opposites at the same time?
2. What is meant when we say that contradiction is inherent in every process?
3. What is the relationship between the working out of contradictions and development?

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4. What is meant by the principal contradiction? How is that different from the fundamental contradiction?

Questions to apply theory to practice :

1. What is the fundamental contradiction in ~~your life today~~? What is the principal contradiction?
2. Taking the principal contradiction in your life :
 - a. How can quantitative to qualitative change be shown?
 - b. How is development illustrated in the resolution of the contradictions?
 - c. What are some new contradictions that rise out of the resolution of the old?
 - d. At this time what are the dominant aspects of the contradictions?
 - e. Which contradictions are antagonistic?

Negation of the negation -
Session #5 : Review

Readings : Serving the People with Dialectics

Where do correct Ideas Come from (xerox)

xeroxed articles on criticism, self-criticism, and transformation

Questions for review :

1. What is the Dialectical Materialist theory of knowledge?
2. Why do we use criticism and self-criticism?
3. How do we use dialectical materialism in criticism?
4. What has this study meant for dealing with your life and political work?

Historical Materialism

Session #1 : Historical Materialism

Readings : Cornforth, Historical Materialism, Chapters 2 - 4 (pp. 14-64)

Questions for discussion :

1. Why do we say that the "mode of production" in a society determines the social, political, and economic life?
2. How does capitalism determine our social, political, and economic lives?
3. What is the superstructure?
4. If the economic foundation determines the superstructure, does that mean that ideas have little or no effect on the course of history?
5. How do changes in the mode of production come about?
6. What happens when there is a contradiction between a new mode of production and the superstructure of the old mode of production?

Session #2 : Class and Class Struggle

Readings : Cornforth, Historical Materialism (review pp. 14-46; read pp. 64-70)

Marx, Communist Manifesto, Chapter on "Bourgeoisie and Proletariat"

Class divisions in the U.S. (xerox)

The State, Huberman and Sweezy

Report: A Short History of the World (application of Historical Materialism)
(xeroxed outline provided)

Questions for discussion :

1. What is the basis of classes? What determines what classes exist? How can we tell what class a person is in?
2. What are the basic classes under capitalism? Define each in relation to the means of production.
3. Why is there class struggle? Is it inevitable?
4. Besides the two basic classes, what other classes exist under capitalism? What is their relation to the bourgeoisie and the proletariat?

Session #3 : Class Consciousness

Readings : Keracher, The Head Fixing Industry (pp. 5-27; 41-44; 48-50)

xeroxed readings

Questions for discussion :

1. Why do different classes have different ideologies?

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2. Why do some workers share ruling class ideology?
3. How does the ruling class push its ideology among workers? - school check,
4. What class are you in? Has your family always been in the class you are in now?
5. How did your family's class influence you?
6. How are you affected by the ideology of the ruling class?

Session #4 : Class Ideology and the State

Readings : Lenin, The State

Report : Origins of the state

Questions for discussion :

1. Why does the state develop? What developments in the economic structure resulted in the development of the state?
2. What do we mean when we say that the state is an instrument of class rule? Is it possible for more than one class to rule (control the state)?
3. If the state is an instrument for class rule, what is the use of fighting for democratic reforms?

Session #5 : The State and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

Readings : Democratic Management in Our Brigade (xerox)

Duan article from Viet Nam Review (xerox)

Proletarian Democracy, Society of Equals (xerox)

Lenin, State and Revolution, Chapter 3 (pp. 42-66)

Stalin, Foundations of Leninism, Chapter 4 (pp. 40-54)

Report: Democratic Centralism in Cuba

Questions for discussion :

1. Why is it necessary for the working class to smash the state rather than just taking over the ruling class apparatus?
2. Why is it necessary to have a state under socialism?
3. What is the difference between the dictatorship of the proletariat and the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie?
4. How can we have proletarian dictatorship and democracy at the same time? Is there such a thing as pure democracy?
5. Why does the state wither away in the transition to communism?

REVIEW OF DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

1. IDEALISM VS. MATERIALISM

- a. Idealism is a way of viewing the world that claims that, in the final analysis, all things and changes in the material world are caused by something outside matter, something we can not know, i.e. the spiritual, supernatural.
- b. Materialism is the way of viewing the world that asserts that everything in the material world is caused by, or comes from, the material world, matter. Thus everything is knowable, even if the state of development of our knowledge has not reached a particular level. a.

2. METAPHYSICS VS. DIALECTICS

- a. Metaphysics is a method which looks at things in abstraction from their conditions of existence, change, and development. Therefore, it views things as fixed and absolute.
- b. Dialectics is the way of understanding the world as a complex of processes, in which things are constantly changing and developing. In dialectics processes are analyzed in their interconnection and their concrete processes.

3. FOUR KEY ASPECTS OF DIALECTICS

- a. Movement and Change - All "things" are in the constant process of change, are in constant motion. Something is always rising and developing, something always dying & away. Every "thing" is really a process.
- b. Interconnection - Processes do not exist in isolation from each other, but are connected, interrelated, dependant on each other.
- c. Quantitative and Qualitative Changes - The process of development is one whereby quantitative changes (changes of increase or decrease) which are usually small and insignificant, lead to qualitative changes, which are fundamental changes in which a new entity is formed. Qualitative changes happen abruptly, rapidly; they are a sudden leap to a new state.
- d. Contradiction - There are internal contradictions in everything. Change occurs due to the working out (resolution) of contradictions.

MAIN CONCEPTS AROUND CONTRADICTION

- a. Definition of Contradiction - A contradiction is a unity of opposites. In every process there develop two conflicting aspects. The existence of each aspect presupposes the existence of the other aspect, that is why we say that both aspects exist in a single & unity. But these two aspects are opposites, and therefore their existence is a struggle between opposites.
- b. Universality and particularity of Contradictions - By the universality of contradiction we mean that contradictions exist in all processes - nothing exists without them. The particularity of contradiction refers to the fact that every contradiction in a process has its own uniqueness, that is, it is different in some way from other contradictions.

c. Common Errors in Analyzing Contradictions -

1. Failure to analyze contradictions concretely is to be dogmatic. It is absolutely essential to analyze the particularity of each contradiction. Different contradictions are resolved in different ways, so we can not abstractly apply a formula and not worry about the concrete conditions. Lenin said "the most essential thing in Marxism is the concrete ~~and~~ analysis of concrete conditions."

2. Failure to analyze both aspects of a contradiction is to be one-sided or subjective. We must look at both the positive and the negative, what is rising and what is dying away in order to understand a contradiction. The Chinese always talk of "dividing one into two" - for example looking at the strengths and weaknesses of comrades in order to use the strengths to overcome the weaknesses.

3. Failure to look at a contradiction in the context of other contradictions and at each stage of a process is to be superficial. We must give a through analysis to all the conditions surrounding (and affecting) the contradiction we are concerned with.

d. Fundamental Contradiction - The fundamental contradiction is the underlying contradiction throughout the history of a process. For example, the fundamental contradiction in capitalism is between social production and private appropriation.

e. Principal Contradiction - This is the contradiction that is most important at a particular time in the history of a process. It is that contradiction amidst many contradictions in the process of a complex development, whose existence and development determine and influence the existence and development of other contradictions in that process. Although the fundamental contradiction stays the same through out a process, the principal contradiction often changes at different stages of development in a process.

f. Primary Aspect of a Contradiction - In the two aspects of a contradiction, one plays a dominant role in the contradiction. This is called the primary aspect. For example, in the contradiction between the working class and the bourg., in the U.S. today, the bourg. is the dominant, the primary aspect. When there is a change in what is the primary aspect of a contradiction, we say that a qualitative change occurs. A qualitative change thus occurs when the primary and non-primary aspect of a contradiction transform themselves into their opposite. For example, when the working class becomes the dominant aspect, there will be a qualitative change to socialism.

g. Internal and External Forces - When analyzing a process it is necessary to limit the scope of what we are looking at. Thus we can talk about which forces are internal (within the scope of our analysis) and which forces are external (outside the scope of our analysis).

But in the development of a process there are no such things as external forces. It is correct to view all things as interrelated: thus every process is in reality a product of an infinite series of forces (called the history of the process). No force is external because every force is internal to the totality of the material world.

This can be made clearer by seeing what happens to "external" forces when we make the scope of our analysis broader. Looking at the Vietnamese revolution, we would have to view U.S. imperialism as an external force. But if we look at larger contradiction of the world imperialist system, U.S. imperialism and the Vietnamese revolution are both "internal" forces.

I. BUILDING A MARXIST-LENINIST PARTY: 3 sessions.

A. What is a M-L party and why is it necessary- 1st session

Readings:

1. xeroxed paragraphs from Red Papers IV on why the working class is the leading class.
2. "The Party", from Stalin's Foundations of Leninism pp. 101-115- about what a M-L is.

Optional 3. 2 xeroxed pages from Suo's party-building sum-up, on why a M-L party is necessary in US.

4. "Why Workers Need a Party", from The Organizer, Jan.-Feb. 1975.-

Optional 5. pages on democratic centralism (xeroxed) from Mao to Mao.

Questions:

① Why is the working class the class that will make a socialist revolution? Why are the advanced of the working class, those who will lead the revolution, mostly found in the industrial proletariat and highly specialized service sectors?

② *What is a M-L party? What are its key features?*
What is the relationship ~~between~~ between the "advanced detachment" (vanguard party) of the working class and the class itself?

b. What is the relationship of the party to mass organization?

c. What is meant by "from the masses, to the masses" or to put it another way, how does the party exert leadership among the masses?

③ a. Why is unity of will necessary in the party? How can we have both unity of will (centralism) and criticism (democracy) at the same time?

4. Why is a M-L party necessary to make a socialist revolution in the U.S? Some people argue that a M-L party is not the necessary formation for the U.S. Why is that analysis incorrect?

B. How to build a M-L party in the US. - 2nd session

Readings:

- PWOC speech on party-building -xerox
- SUB sum-up on party-building -xerox

Questions:

1. Why is it the priority of Communists in the US today to build towards a M-L party? Why are we ready to build towards it?

2. Why are we not yet ready to form a M-L party in US? What is the principal contradiction holding back the development of a M-L party?

3. What should our strategy be for building M-L party in US?

4. What are the key ways (tactics) to achieve that strategy?

Left and Right
C. Errors in Communist movement, especially party-building movement.

Readings:

Definitions -xerox

SUB summary on revisionism in U.S. Communist Party

Optional "The workers' Party and Revisionism", pg.17 of Organizer
May, July 1975 - also about CPUSA.

1 of { "Dogmatism" - from The Organizer, Aug.-Sept. 1975
"Dogmatism and Party-building movement" - The Organizer,
Oct. nov., 1975

Questions:

1. What is opportunism?
2. What are right and left opportunist errors? Give examples of each from your concrete experience in Baltimore.
3. What is revisionism? How is the Communist Party of USA, (CPUSA) revisionist?
4. What is dogmatism? How is it manifested in the party's building movement?
5. What is the source of left and right opportunism? Why do honest Communists make these errors? How do we help avoid them?

THE TRADE UNION QUESTION

Session #1 - Marxist Theory of the Trade Unions

Readings: Lenin, Left-Wing Communism pp 43(bottom)-48.
PWOC, The Trade Unions: Class Collaboration and Class Struggle, pp.1-9
"Limitations of Trade unions" - 2-pg. xerox

Questions:

1. Why do Communists work in the "reactionary" trade unions?
2. Why do trade unions arise? What is their basic function under capitalism?
3. Define the trade union bureaucracy.
4. Why does the trade union bureaucracy develop? Is it inevitable under capitalism? Are all trade union bureaucrats necessarily the enemy of the revolutionary working class movement?
5. Can trade union organization change the fundamental relationship between capitalists and workers?

Report by study leaders: Short history of the U.S. Trade unions.

Report by member in class: How imperialism provides the material base for aristocracy of labor, and how this is connected with opportunism."

Reading: "Imperialism and the Trade Unions" by PWOC.

Session #2 - The State of the Trade Unions in the US Today.

Readings: Speech by PWOC on Trade Union Strategy and Tactics pp. 1-13.
Optional: "The State of the Unions" from PWOC paper on Trade Union Question, pp. 15-16.

Questions:

1. What are the changes in the economic situation which has strengthened the hand of the capitalists in the U.S. today?
2. Why has the response of labor to the economic crisis been so weak?
3. What is the current state of the rank and file movement?
4. How have the revisionists and dogmatists held back the workers' movement in this current period?

Report- Building Class struggle Unionism- Fur and Leather Workers Union, pp 341-380.

Session #3: Strategy and Tactics of Communists in Unions Today

Readings: "Party-Building in the Trade Unions" speech by PWOC, pp. 1-5. (to answer question # 3)

Readings: (cont.)

Trade Unions: Class Collaboration and Class Struggle
by PWOC, pp.9-12. (to answer questions #2)

"Class Struggle and Class Collaboration" pp.16-21 of
PWOC paper on Trade Union Question. (to answer questions
#1)

Questions: 1.

1. What is the basic strategy of Communists within the trade unions?
- 2.. What are the 4 thrusts of class struggle unionism
3. What is the relationship between work in the trade unions and our party-building tasks in the current period.

Report: How does the development of a communist current in the trade unions represent a fully developed united front?

Readings: SUB sum-up on united front.

III. The Afro-American National Question

A. What is the National Question? What does it have to do with Black people in the U.S.?

Readings:

1. Stalin, Marxism and the National Question; Sections I and II.
2. PWOC, Black Liberation Today; Chapters I and II.

Questions:

1. What causes a nation to develop? How did the black nation arise?
2. What are the characteristic features of a nation? How did this apply to blacks in the U. S.?
3. What happened to the black nation?
4. What is the right to self determination? Do Communists always support succession?
5. What is the difference between a nation and a national minority? What are the rights of each?

Presentation: Left and Right errors in understanding the National Question.

B. Where does Racism come from and how can we fight it?

Readings:

1. PWOC, Black Liberation Today, Chapter 6.
2. PWOC, Racism and the Workers Movement.

Questions:

1. What is racism and where did it come from?
2. How does racism divide the working class?
3. What is our strategy for black liberation and how does this relate to our fight against racism?
4. How can racism be defeated? In the Trade Unions? In the Coalition? In the health group?
5. What are the responsibilities of a white Communist? Of a black Communist?

Presentation: Left and Right errors in fighting racism.