

Important Thoughts of Marxist Classical Writers on the Construction of Party Discipline

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Abstract: *Marxist classical writers attached great importance to the construction of proletarian parties and continuously enriched and improved the theory of proletarian party construction in practice. Among them, the important ideas on the construction of proletarian party discipline have become the theoretical source of the construction of proletarian party discipline in various countries, and provided scientific guidance and profound inspiration for the discipline construction of the Communist Party of China.*

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1. MARX AND ENGELS ' THOUGHTS ON PROLETARIAN PARTY DISCIPLINE

From the 1840s onwards, Marx and Engels responded to the urgent needs of the proletariat. In the process of participating in and guiding the workers' movement, founding proletarian parties, and especially fighting against erroneous thoughts such as anarchism and sectarianism, they gradually formed the theoretical origins of the construction of proletarian party discipline.

First, they emphasized discipline and formulated the world's first constitution for a proletarian party. In June 1847, the League of the Just held a congress in London and decided to accept the advice of Marx and Engels and reorganize the League into the Communist League. From November 29 to December 8, 1847, the Communist League held its Second Congress and commissioned Marx and Engels to draft a new program. This became the influential "Communist Manifesto." Another document adopted at this congress was the "Rules of the Communist League." Comprising 10 chapters and 50 articles, the "Rules of the Communist League" established the organizational system of a proletarian party for the first time in the world, clarifying the institutions, mechanisms, and norms upon which the Party's operations depended.

From a disciplinary perspective, three characteristics emerge. The Communist League Statutes established the principle of democratic centralism. The Statutes of the Communist League eliminated all references to conspiracy and sectarian activities from the original Statutes of the League of the Righteous, as well as all the complex, semi-mystical rituals involved in membership. They stipulated that all members were equal and had the right to vote and be elected; leaders at all levels of the League were democratically elected; the Congress was the League's legislative body; the Central Committee was the League's executive body, reporting to the Congress and exercising unified leadership over the entire League; and members were required to obey all decisions of the League. The Statutes established an organizational system and powers from the central to the local levels. The League's organizational structures were divided into grassroots, local, and central organizations, designated as branches, districts, general districts, the Central Committee, and the Congress. The Congress was the highest authority. The statutes also stipulated the powers of each level of organization and the system of mutual reporting between them. All organizations were required to hold regular meetings. The statutes also defined crimes against the League. "Anyone who fails to comply with the conditions of membership" would be "temporarily expelled from the League or expelled, depending on the severity of the offense." "The question of expulsion from the League can only be decided by the Congress." "Crimes against the League shall be tried by the District Committee [1]."

After the dissolution of the Communist League, Marx still emphasized in his letter to Engels on May 18, 1859: "We must now absolutely maintain party discipline, otherwise nothing will be accomplished." The basic framework, principles and content of the [2] "Statutes of the Communist League" were subsequently continued in the party constitutions of Communist Parties in various countries around the world, and profoundly influenced the Communist Party of China and were reflected in the Constitution of the Communist Party of China.

Secondly, he emphasized the enforcement of discipline, believing it to be a crucial guarantee for the victory of the proletarian party. In January 1848, in "The Chartist Movement (A Mass Meeting in Support of the National

Petition)," Engels quoted a Chartist representative's metaphor about discipline: "We also strengthen our 'national defense': courage in our hearts, discipline in our ranks, unity in our actions [3]!" Engels strongly agreed with this statement, pointing out that discipline, like national defense, can overcome difficulties and turn danger into safety. In April 1861, in "Brighton and Wimbledon," Engels quoted a speech by British Colonel McMurdo, pointing out that when facing a strong enemy and encountering a great challenge, unstable emotions will arise within the ranks. To overcome adverse situations, "only discipline" can enable "everything to act as a whole [4]." In September 1893, in a speech at the Berlin Social Democratic Congress, Engels clearly stated: "German Social Democracy is the most unified, the most united, and the most powerful party in the world, because it has a cool head in the struggle, strict discipline, and a vigorous spirit [5]."

Marx and Engels always believed that "discipline is the first condition for an effective and strong organization [6]" and that the implementation of strict discipline is an important guarantee for the proletarian party to achieve revolutionary victory.

Finally, uphold the authority of the Party Constitution and resolutely fight against any violation of it. After the founding of the International Workingmen's Association (the First International), Marx immediately drafted the "Provisional Rules of the International Workingmen's Association." In 1866, the "General Rules of the International Workingmen's Association" were formally approved at the Geneva Congress. Marx believed that the Party Constitution was the "legal basis for the activities of a viable party" and the "common law" of all its components.

After Bakunin joined the International Workingmen's Association in 1866, he established a separate sectarian organization, the International League of Socialist Democracy, centered in Geneva. He advanced theories and programs that directly contradicted the IWA's Charter, such as the principle that "the working class should not engage in politics." This forced the IWA into a situation where it had two international organizations, two general councils, and two different programs and charters. In December 1868, Marx, in a resolution drafted by the General Council of the IWA on his behalf, stated: "The existence of a second international organization operating both within and outside the International Workingmen's Association is bound to lead to its disintegration." In [7] March 1869, Marx, again on behalf of the General Council, was entrusted with informing the Central Bureau of the IWA, pointing out that Article 2 of its program violated Article 1 of the General Rules of the IWA and exposing its attempt to establish an "international within an international" within the IWA. In January 1872, Engels, in his article "The Sanvilliers Congress and the International", profoundly exposed Bakunin's violation of political discipline and clearly pointed out: "Members of the organization must abide by the organization's constitution and the resolutions of the Central Committee and must not create organizational divisions." [8] Under the unrelenting struggle of Marx and Engels, the Bakuninists were expelled from the First International.

Marx and Engels' theory on the construction of discipline of proletarian parties emphasized the "importance and purposefulness of party discipline" and believed that party discipline is an important guarantee for victory.

2. LENIN'S THOUGHTS ON THE DISCIPLINE OF THE PROLETARIAN PARTY

Lenin inherited and developed Marx and Engels' ideas on building discipline for the proletarian party. In the process of leading the Russian revolutionary struggle and party building, he formed Lenin's theory on building discipline for the proletarian party.

First, it emphasized iron discipline as a fundamental condition for defeating the bourgeoisie. In 1903, the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party held its Second Congress, where a debate erupted over the party constitution, particularly Article 1. Lenin advocated for a tightly organized and strictly disciplined proletarian party, while Martov advocated for a loosely organized and laxly disciplined party. The core issue was whether proletarian organization and discipline were necessary. Ultimately, Lenin's proposal was passed by a narrow margin. Those supporting Lenin became known as the "Bolsheviks," while those supporting Martov became known as the "Mensheviks." In his 1904 article "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back," Lenin stated: "The stronger our party organization, which includes genuine Social Democrats, the less vacillation and instability there will be within it, and the more extensive, comprehensive, profound, and effective will be its influence on the working masses surrounding it and under its leadership. It is obviously absolutely unacceptable to confuse the party, which is the vanguard of the working class, with the class as a whole." [9] In Lenin's view, a proletarian party rallied the advanced forces of the entire class, and one of the most important criteria for this was strict discipline. Lenin's theories were fully validated in the subsequent Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, with the Bolshevik Party ultimately

becoming the leading force in the Russian Revolution. In 1920, Lenin summarized the Bolshevik Party's 15 years of struggle in "Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder," further stating: "One of the fundamental conditions for victory over the bourgeoisie is the unconditional centralization and the strictest discipline of the proletariat [10]."

Secondly, democratic centralism was established as the Party's fundamental organizational principle. In March 1906, Lenin explicitly declared in his "Tactical Program for the Unity Congress of the Social Democratic Labor Party," "The principle of democratic centralism within the Party is now universally recognized." [11] Based on Lenin's proposal, democratic centralism was first established as part of the Party's organizational charter at the Fourth Conference of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in April 1906. Lenin provided a scientific explanation of democratic centralism: "We advocate democratic centralism. Therefore, we must understand the profound difference between democratic centralism, on the one hand, and bureaucratic centralism, on the other." [12] Lenin believed that autocracy must never be practiced within the Party; democracy was essential. The Party must also never be in a state of weakness, disunity, or anarchy. Therefore, centralization was essential. However, this centralism was based on democracy, and the resulting centralism was democratic centralism, and therefore, democratic centralism.

At the same time, Lenin emphasized that democratic centralism should be governed by strict discipline. In May 1906, in his article "Freedom of Criticism and Unity of Action," Lenin stated: "The principle of democratic centralism and the autonomy of local bodies implies full and universal freedom of criticism, provided it does not undermine the unity of already determined action. It also implies that no criticism that undermines or interferes with the unity of the Party's established action is tolerated." In [13] November of the same year, in his article "The Struggle Against Constitutionalized Social Democrats and Party Discipline," Lenin stated: "Unity of action, freedom of discussion, and freedom of criticism—this is our definition. Only such discipline is the discipline that belongs to a democratic party of the advanced class [14]." In Lenin's view, discipline should include two elements: unity of action, which is the obligation of Party members, and freedom of discussion and criticism, which is the right of Party members.

Finally, supervisory bodies were established to ensure the enforcement of Party discipline. Following the victory of the October Revolution in Russia, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) became the ruling party of the world's first socialist state. Faced with new problems and challenges, Lenin proposed a series of important ideas for strengthening anti-corruption and intra-Party supervision, actively exploring and implementing them. Following Lenin's proposal, the Ninth National Conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) in September 1920 decided to "establish a Supervisory Commission parallel to the Central Committee," elected by the Party Congress. The Twelfth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) in 1923 decided to merge the Workers' and Peasants' Procuratorate with the Party's Central Supervisory Commission. The Thirteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) in 1924 extended this practice to local Supervisory Commissions and Workers' and Peasants' Procuratorates, directing the work of the Central Supervisory Commission. The Party's Central Supervisory Commission became a key supervisory body, established under Lenin's leadership. This merged specialized Party and government supervisory body could examine not only internal Party issues but also those within administrative bodies, empowered to oversee all Party and government organs, both central and local. Lenin also oversaw the issuance of a series of disciplinary documents, including "Amendments to the Draft Decree on the Punishment of Corruption," "On Bribery," and "On the Fight Against Bribery," severely punishing Party members and cadres who violated laws and discipline. This demonstrates Lenin's commitment to ensuring equality before the law and his commitment to maintaining Party unity and ensuring the enforcement of Party discipline through oversight and internal regulation.

Lenin's theory on the construction of discipline of the proletarian party is based on the theory of Marx and Engels on the construction of discipline of the proletarian party. It puts forward a series of original views on "what is the discipline of the proletarian party" and "how to strengthen the construction of discipline of the proletarian party", which has a direct impact on the subsequent discipline construction of the Communist Party of China.

Scientific theoretical guidance is the Communist Party of China's fundamental advantage and key to success. The important ideas of classical Marxist writers on Party discipline are the theoretical source for the discipline-building of proletarian parties in various countries, providing scientific guidance and profound inspiration for the Party's discipline-building efforts.

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