



Political Education Programme



TOPIC 1

Introduction to Marxism: who were Marx & Engels and what did they say?

- Reading 1:** Marx the Revolutionary (MWT),
- Reading 2:** The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism (Lenin)
- Reading 3:** Ninety Years of the Communist Manifesto (Trotsky)
- Reading 4:** The Communist Manifesto, Chapters 1 and 2 (Marx & Engels)

TOPIC 2

How do Marxists understand the world? Marxism's dialectical and historical materialism

- Reading 1:** Dialectical Materialism: the Foundation of Revolutionary Theory (WASP)
- Reading 2:** The Preface to "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy" (Marx)
- Reading 3:** Materialist Conception of History (Engels)
- Reading 4:** How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, Chapter 2 (Rodney)

TOPIC 3

How is the working class exploited? Introduction to Marxist economics

- Reading 1:** Introduction to Marxist Economics (CWI)
- Reading 2:** Value, Price and Profit (Marx)
- Reading 3:** Capital, selected chapters (Marx)

TOPIC 4

Social grants & police brutality – the Marxist theory of the State

- Reading 1:** State and Revolution, selected chapters (Lenin)

TOPIC 5

How can we win the working class to revolutionary socialism?

- Trotsky's Transitional Programme**
- Reading 1:** The Transitional Programme (Trotsky)

TOPIC 6

The lessons of the Russian Revolution

- Reading 1:** 1917 (CWI)
- Reading 2:** Lessons of October (Trotsky)
- Reading 3:** South Africa's Impending Socialist Revolution, Chapter 2 (MWT)

All readings are available on the WASP website (except the Rodney reading from Topic 2). All readings can be ordered from WASP as printed booklets. See website or call 081 366 7375 for price list.

TOPIC 7

The rise and fall of Stalinism: how and why did the bureaucratic dictatorship fail?

- Reading 1:** The Legacy of Leon Trotsky, Chapters 2-3 (MWT)
- Reading 2:** South Africa's Impending Socialist Revolution, Chapter 4 (MWT)
- Reading 3:** From Perestroika to Capitalist Restoration (CWI)

TOPIC 8

The socialist revolution in the neo-colonial world – Trotsky's Permanent Revolution vs the SACP's National Democratic Revolution

- Reading 1:** The Legacy of Leon Trotsky, Chapters 1 and 5 (MWT)
- Reading 2:** Results & Prospects (Trotsky)
- Reading 3:** The Right of Nations to Self-Determination (Lenin)

TOPIC 9

Lenin's theory of imperialism: why was Africa colonized and how is it exploited today?

- Reading 1:** Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism (Lenin)
- Reading 2:** South Africa's Impending Socialist Revolution, Part 3 (MWT)
- Reading 3:** A History of Pan-African Revolt, excerpts (CLR James)

TOPIC 10

Apartheid and the liberation struggle

- Reading 1:** South Africa's Impending Socialist Revolution, Part 4 (MWT)
- Reading 2:** Lessons of the 1950s (MWT pamphlet)
- Reading 3:** The Soweto Uprising (MWT/WASP)
- Reading 4:** The Legacy of Leon Trotsky, Chapter 6 (MWT)
- Reading 5:** Letter to South African Revolutionaries (Trotsky)

TOPIC 11

Africanism vs. Marxism

- Reading 1:** Class & Race: Marxism, Racism and the Class Struggle (WASP)
- Reading 2:** Africanism vs. Marxism (WASP)
- Reading 3:** The Third International After Lenin, selected chapters (Trotsky)

TOPIC 12

The revolutionary party & democratic centralism – organising a Bolshevik party

- Reading 1:** The Bolshevik Turn (WASP)



Political Education Programme



The importance of political education

Political education is at the centre of what it means to be a member of WASP. For a revolutionary party like ours a politically educated and trained cadre is essential. One of the five requirements of being a cadre member of WASP is a commitment to take part in political education.

This approach stands in stark contrast to parties like the ANC, DA and EFF. Unlike WASP, their leaders have no ambition beyond taking over the management of capitalism. They see a politically educated membership as a threat to enjoying the privileges of office. For them the masses are only voting fodder requiring their 'cadre' to be shallow careerists and 'yes men'. The leaders of these parties are not interested in mass struggles for higher wages, service delivery or free education. A politically independent working class or youth movement with its own democratic organisations and activists who can think for themselves are viewed as a threat.

But tireless and systematic political education is a practical necessity in a revolutionary party. With political education comes the confidence to organise and lead struggle for immediate improvements in the living standards of the working class and youth. WASP works to arm its members with an understanding of the revolutionary ideas of Marxism that can guide the day-to-day struggles in the workplaces, the communities and on the campuses and connect them the struggle for a socialist society. In turn, participation in struggle further enriches our ideas allowing us to continually sharpen our theoretical weapons.

Further, political education is vital to strengthen the democracy of the party and the accountability of leaders. Political education allows members to draw conclusions about new political developments and their impact on the work of the party; to take decisions about the tactics necessary for successful struggle; and to assess the correctness or otherwise of the decisions and direction given by the leadership.

As a starting point, all WASP members should:

- Read and study our "what we stand for" demands and our manifestos.
- Regularly read the WASP and CWI websites for political analysis and reports of struggle in South Africa and internationally.
- Read (and write for) *Izwi Labasebenzi*, WASP's magazine.

Building a strong political foundation

But it is also important to be familiar with the ideas that all of our current analysis, programme, tactics and strategies are based upon. Our introductory political education programme is designed to give an overview of those key ideas.

These include the ideas of:

- Karl Marx (1818-83) & Frederick Engels (1820-95)
- V.I. Lenin (1870-1924)
- Leon Trotsky (1879-1940)
- The first four congresses of the Communist International (1919-22)
- Trotsky's Left Opposition (1923-27) and the founding conference of the Fourth International (1938)
- The documents and experiences of the Committee for a Workers International (1974-), including its predecessors and its South African founding affiliate the Marxist Workers Tendency (1979-1996).

Some crude Africanists assert that Marxism is not relevant to Africa. We disagree completely! Marx's analysis of the political-economy of capitalism as a world system, further developed in Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution and Lenin's theories of Imperialism and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination, provide the only solid foundation to understand the history of Africa and the situation we face today. The CWI and MWT, using these theoretical tools, further developed a Marxist analysis of the post-World War II 'Colonial Revolution', so-called 'African Socialism' and the so-called 'African Marxist Regimes', as well as the economic and class foundations of apartheid.

Overleaf we have broken our key ideas into 12 'topics'. New members should aim to cover one each month, completing the course in their first year of membership. The topics include suggestions for readings, all of which are available on the WASP website and in printed booklets.

Wherever possible, political education groups should be organised so that comrades can work through the material together. All WASP branches should regularly revisit the programme for discussion. New members should be supported in working through the material, including the organisation of individual discussion. This is important because some of the suggested material is in old fashioned English and can be challenging even for mother-tongue speakers. (It is our ambition to make all of the suggested readings below available in all of South Africa's languages.)