

## INSTITUTE RESOURCE PAPER #6: REVOLUTION – THE LINE OF MARCH

**The communists, therefore, are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate results of the proletarian movement. (from the Communist Manifesto)**

The line of march is a mapping out of how to get from where you are to where you're trying to go. For revolutionaries, it is the stages through which history marches toward the revolutionary transformation of society and a sort of "battle plan" for getting through those quantitative stages of the revolutionary process. It includes both objective and subjective aspects.

Social revolution begins with the introduction of qualitatively new means of production into the economy. It goes through stages of destruction and reconstruction. Once the process has begun, the destruction is an automatic process. Reconstruction, however, is not automatic. At critical points and through the work of conscious revolutionaries, political revolution (i.e., the seizure of political power) makes possible the stage of reconstruction. After the assumption of political power, the revolution unites and completes itself by changing the mode of distribution and thereby reconstructing society.

The revolutionary process plays out on the economic, social and political levels. The economic process is the environment for and lays the basis for the social process, and the social process is the environment for and lays the basis for the political process. These

processes are all going on at the same time; each goes through the dialectical process of the leap. The process is very complex. We may not be able to categorize each stage into a definite time frame, but we can define the stages.

Transformation is not a simple process of something getting bigger or smaller. It begins with the addition or subtraction of something. Once something new is added to a process from outside of that process, the step-by-step transformation into something new begins. The process of transformation consists of a leap forward, stagnation, backsliding, polarization, destruction, and leap forward. In this sense, the line of march of the revolution is the quantitative stages of qualitative change.

When we look at how the processes interrelate and the definite quantitative stages each process goes through, we begin to get the big picture of the line of march of the revolution.

Economic revolution, a revolution in how things are produced, begins the revolutionary process. The quantitative introduction of a new quality into the old economy begins the process of the leap from one quality to another. How does this work? The economic conditions of society are made up of the method of production and the method of exchange. The introduction of new ways of producing things disrupts that society economically. Today, new methods of production are beginning to do away with labor; and therefore, they do not correspond with the old system of exchange according to value and money -- or with the society that is built around that system of exchange.

New ways of producing things call forth new classes and begin the polarization of society. Today the new methods of production are creating a new class -- the part-time, temporary, low-wage workers, the permanently unemployed, all those whose precarious position in society is based on the fact that there is now production without labor in a society set up for distribution according to wages and money. This new class is the cutting edge of the quantitative introduction of the new quality into the social process. The development of this new class is disrupting a society organized around the basic relation between industrial workers and the capitalists to whom they sell their labor power. As it evolves, the new class polarity is shaping the social struggle less and less

around the struggles between national and other such social groups and more and more along the lines of wealth and poverty.

The new class created by the new method of production brings something qualitatively new to the social struggle over the distribution of the wealth. The fight over the distribution of the social product clashes more and more sharply with the entrenched system of exchange and distribution. No one can either start or stop the fight of people for what they need and what they feel society can provide for everyone. And so the struggle against the existing conditions continues to grow.

The gulf between wealth and poverty that is polarizing the whole world economically marks a new stage of polarization in the US. Polarization means the "destruction of the middle," or the destruction of that which holds the process together. In the sense of society today, we see this in the form of the destruction of the incomes, ideologies and institutions that used to tie together society as a whole. In this sense, the polarization of society destroys that which held it together under previous conditions and lays the basis for the next stage of revolutionary change.

As new objective conditions undermine the material and ideological middle of society, they also sweep away the foundations for the politics of the past period. Thus we see the beginnings of the political polarization of America – on one side, the impulses toward class identity and political independence, and on the other, the drive toward fascism. As each side pulls against the middle, the old political mechanisms for rule begin to weaken and crack. As this process unfolds, we can see the outlines of the coming political struggle in America.

The social struggle over the distribution of the social product and against the existing conditions is distinct from the political struggle to impose the demands of a class and for the power to reorganize society and reconstruct it on the new foundation. Political struggle does not grow automatically out of the intensification of the economic struggle. Preparation for the political struggle to resolve and reconstruct requires a qualitative change in the character of the consciousness and the struggle. Accomplishing this qualitative change depends on the introduction of the new quality into the process from the outside. Economic crisis will provide some of the objective aspects of that. Conscious

revolutionaries concentrate on the subjective aspects, especially the changes in the thinking of the people. We concentrate on developing consciousness about the actual process going on -- what the problem is, a vision of what the world could be, and a program for revolution to reconstruct society. These new ideas make it possible to complete the leap in the quality of the ideology and politics of the people. At every stage of the process, revolutionaries consciously prepare for the moment when it will be possible to assure the goals of the unconscious social struggle through political revolution.

Effective revolutionaries proceed from the line of march of the revolution, the stages in which history marches forward to the revolutionary reconstruction of society. We study the objective developments and the stages of the revolution in order to anticipate what revolutionary forces they will activate. On that basis, we make plans to carry out our role and focus our efforts for every stage.

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## **APPENDIX - DEFINITIONS**

Revolution is composed of both objective and subjective aspects. The economic revolution takes place as qualitatively new means of production replace the old. On that basis, a political revolution takes place. A political revolution is the process of a subordinate class overthrowing a ruling class and becoming the ruling class. Together, these two elements constitute a social revolution.

Social revolution begins with the introduction of qualitatively new means of production into the economy. It goes through stages of destruction and reconstruction. Once the process has begun, the destruction is an automatic process. Reconstruction, however, is not automatic. At critical points and through the work of conscious revolutionaries, political revolution (that is, the seizure of political power) facilitates the stage of reconstruction. After the assumption of political power, the revolution unites and completes itself by changing the mode of distribution and thereby reconstructing society.

"We are dealing with two processes. One is the broad social movement that arises from the contradiction between the static social structure and the highly mobile revolution in the means of production. The second we are dealing with is the subjective, conscious effort to achieve the goals of that proletarian revolution." (Rally, Comrades!, 11/92)

"We make our own history, but in the first place under very definite presuppositions and conditions." (Engels, letter to Joseph Bloch, September 21, 1890)

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The line of march is the stages the revolution must pass through. It has both objective and subjective aspects. On the objective side, it is the stages of development of the various aspects of the economic revolution and its effects on society; on the subjective side, it is the battle plan for achieving the goals of that revolution through political revolution.

Effective revolutionaries proceed from the line of march of the revolution, the stages in which history marches forward to the revolutionary reconstruction of society. We study the objective developments and the stages of the revolution in order to anticipate what revolutionary forces they will activate. At every stage of the process, revolutionaries consciously take the steps of preparation to assure the accomplishment of the goals of the unconscious social struggle through the political revolution.

"In the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, [the communists] always and everywhere represent the interest of the movement as a whole.... The communists ... are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement." (Marx and Engels, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 1848)