

Your Home, Your Vote, the Future of the World: A Three-Part Political Education Series on the Politics of Basic Needs

Session Two

Polarization in the Storm of a Pandemic: Economic, Political and Social

Sponsored by the Oakland Area of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America.

ORIGINALLY DEVELOPED FOR REVOLUTIONARIES IN OAKLAND, CA IN APRIL, 2020
cleo.lrnaoakland@gmail.com

Purpose: Since the last session conditions in the economy, the political climate and life as we knew it in just 8 weeks has changed in the wake of a global pandemic. In the conditions prior to the Corona Virus Crisis workers were engaged in fights for basic needs, especially around the school closures and the fight for housing. Conditions that were already dire for many have exponentially become worse. In this series we are planning to discuss the fight for basic needs in the context of a global pandemic, the 2020 elections, locally and nationally.

The main reading: Is the Rally Comrades! Article "From the Editors: The Ray of Light inside the Pandemic," <http://rallycomrades.lrna.org/2020/04/from-the-editors-the-ray-of-light-inside-the-pandemic/>

With some excerpts from other articles with links to the full articles in the supplementary materials section.

Other supplementary materials that can be read/viewed in advance: (not required)

Rally Comrades!: Striking a Blow Against Corporate Rule in 2020
<http://rallycomrades.lrna.org/2020/01/striking-a-blow-against-corporate-rule-in-2020/>

Rally Comrades!: Third Party: Indispensable Step for Our Class
<http://rallycomrades.lrna.org/2012/08/third-party-indispensable-step-for-our-class/>

William I Robinson: The Coronavirus and the Crisis of Global Capitalism
<https://www.timetomutiny.org/post/the-coronavirus-and-the-crisis-of-global-capitalism>

The National Memo: Coronavirus Pandemic Highlights Need for a Stronger Public Sector
<https://www.nationalmemo.com/why-the-financial-times-is-now-urging-radical-economic-change>

Additional materials for further reading:

The Revolution Is Under Way Already

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/04/revolution-only-getting-started/609463/>

The social response : Below are some of the forms of the social response to the Covid-19 crisis. What are the rising demands of the social force, the new class of dispossessed that is attempting to form itself up politically? What is the role of a third party in this context? What is the role of an independent party representing the interests of the new class?

We won't die for wall-street video: Youtube:
<https://youtu.be/dCp1HS8DfEI>

Amid COVID-19, It's Time to Nationalize Airlines and Other Industries
<https://truthout.org/articles/amid-covid-19-its-time-to-nationalize-airlines-and-other-industries/>

Revolt TV to Develop Live Weekly News Show
'Revolt Black News' to debut April 16 R. THOMAS UMSTEAD APR 15, 2020

An Emergency Response to the Coronavirus Pandemic (Bernie Sanders)
<https://berniesanders.com/issues/emergency-response-coronavirus-pandemic/>

During the Covid-19 pandemic, nowhere is safe for homeless people <https://www.vox.com/2020/3/18/21183812/covid-19-coronavirus-homeless>

[A Call to Action: Towards a General Strike to End the COVID-19 Crisis and Create a New World](#)
April 01, 2020 *Tuesday, March 31, 2020*

[Bills are Due and Payable: Workplace Strikes and Rent Strikes](#) Posted on [March 30, 2020](#) by [Lambert Strether](#)
<https://www.nakedcapitalism.com/2020/03/bills-are-due-and-payable-workplace-strikes-and-rent-strikes.html>

The Lockdown Backlash May Be the New Tea Party Movement
By [Ed Kilgore](#) <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2020/04/the-lockdown-backlash-may-be-the-new-tea-party-movement.html>

In Light of the Global Pandemic, Focus Attention on the People. MARCH 21, 2020

<https://www.timetomutiny.org/post/the-coronavirus-and-the-crisis-of-global-capitalism>

Mike Davis on Coronavirus: "In a Plague Year"

BY [MIKE DAVIS](https://jacobinmag.com/2020/03/mike-davis-coronavirus-outbreak-capitalism-left-international-solidarity) <https://jacobinmag.com/2020/03/mike-davis-coronavirus-outbreak-capitalism-left-international-solidarity>

Modi's India Isn't Prepared for the Coronavirus

<https://portside.org/2020-04-14/modis-india-isnt-prepared-coronavirus>

Why The 'Financial Times' Is Now Urging Radical Economic Change Subin

Dennis April 11 | 2020

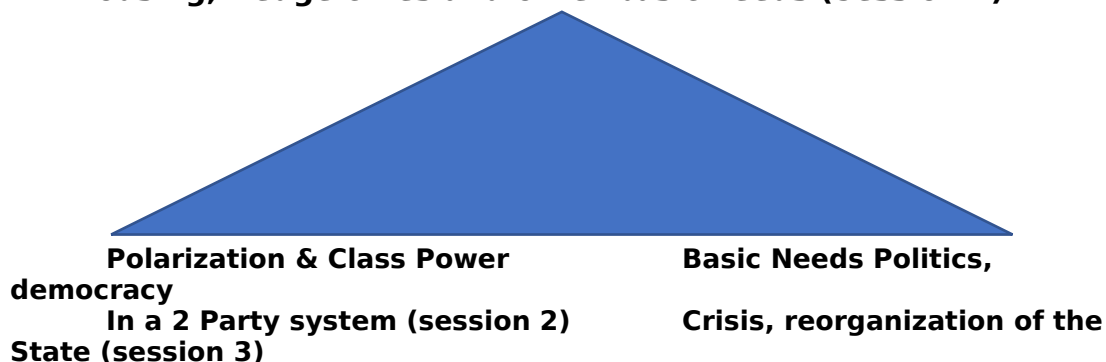
<https://www.nationalmemo.com/why-the-financial-times-is-now-urging-radical-economic-change>

Arundhati Roy: 'The pandemic is a portal' |

<https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca>

Session 2: Polarization in the Storm of a Pandemic: Economic, Political and Social

Housing, Hedge cities and other basic needs (Session 1)



Session 2: Part One 11:00 am - 11:50 am

Question #1: What is polarization as it relates to class? What examples of polarization are we seeing today?

From the Editors: The Ray of Light Inside the Pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic has reached nearly every corner of the world. In just 42 days, 582,634 of us in the U.S. have COVID-19, and 23,649 have died. Globally, 1,935,646 have the virus, and 120,914 have died. The poorer you are, the harder you will be hit.

The COVID-19 pandemic is upsetting every aspect of life in the world, and here in America. This month, Feeding America said it would need \$1.4 billion over the next six months to ensure its food banks have enough resources to serve their communities.

On the other hand, many of the wealthy in the New York area have isolated themselves in luxury. They play golf, garden, have food delivered from New York City to their safe havens, according to CNN. Compare this to the nurses, doctors, housekeepers, food servers and cooks in hospitals and nursing homes, and grocery store workers, many of whom take public transportation to work. Many of them have died from the virus.

Millions of Americans are shocked and angry. And, despite the dangers and fear, many are speaking out and participating in new forms of protest. Revolutionaries must be a part of and help bring clarity and direction to the outcries. Going forward depends upon understanding how we got to this point, the significance of these events, and the social and economic context of this crisis.

We are gripped by an economic revolution. New ways of producing goods of all kinds are destroying our society, which is based on workers making a wage. More types of work are being performed by robots, electronic methods, and Artificial Intelligence, replacing human labor. There is a growing class of people who are being pushed out of any way to work, receive a wage, and purchase housing, food, and medical care. Whole communities are being destroyed in the process.

The coronavirus pandemic has increased the momentum of this entire process.

The coronavirus crisis is showing how the most vulnerable and economically unstable are suffering the most. CNN reported, "According to figures released this week, African Americans make up 32% of the population of Louisiana, but account for 70% of the coronavirus deaths; they make up 15% of the population of Illinois, but account for 42% of the deaths; and they make up 14% of Michigan's population

but account for 40% of deaths. The disparities in cities were particularly wide, with blacks accounting for 72% of the deaths in Chicago, where they make up just 30% of the population.”

Latinos in New York City make up 34 percent of the people who have died of the coronavirus but makeup 29 percent of the city’s population.

Being among the destitute and marginalized of all ethnicities means you have poor health care, more health problems, and fewer resources to fight off viruses. The gap in life expectancy between the richest and poorest 1 percent of individuals in the U.S. is around 14 years, which continues to grow. The government shutdown in 2019 laid bare how many of its employees live paycheck to paycheck, unable to sustain themselves in times of crisis.

There is a general sense among people that the effect of the pandemic on the economy and society is permanent, and that any relief from the government is temporary. Corporations are accelerating their use of automation to replace employees who have been laid off because of the health crisis. Millions will have no jobs to return to.

Everyone is familiar with the saying “the rich get richer.” Today it means greater polarization with all the wealth going to one pole, and all of the destitution to the other, encompassing great sections of the population. What we need to know is that the process of polarization is a necessary stage of change. It is essential to workers coming to the realization that they are part of a class whose interests are entirely antagonistic to the ruling class.

The polarization of wealth in 2020 has no equal in other moments of human history:

- 2,153 billionaires have more wealth than the 4.6 billion people, who make up 60 percent of the planet’s population.
- The top eight richest billionaires own as much combined wealth as “half the human race.”
- The U.S. is the world’s dominant country for billionaires, home to an estimated 705 billionaires.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development found that the U.S. is one of the most unequal nations in the world. Only Bulgaria, Turkey, Mexico, Chile, Costa Rica, and South Africa have greater inequality.

Andrew Yang, a former candidate for President, said, “We’re going to see something like 10 years of change in 10 weeks.” Right now,” Yang adds, “this virus is the perfect environment for companies to get rid of people, bring in robots and machines, and figure out how they can operate more efficiently. ... There’s a growing recognition that our economy is transforming not just in the short term, but in the long term.”

The powerful U.S. State apparatus has step by step transformed the political landscape of the country. Its goal is to guarantee that that the ruling class remains in control of the means of production at the expense of vast numbers of Americans.

The crisis we are in is vast and deadly, and yet it offers the possibility of a way forward.

The force for changes lies within the 18 plus million people who have lost their jobs, the millions lining up for food, the hundreds of thousands seeking medical care to treat the coronavirus, the more than one-third of those who couldn’t pay their rent in April. This force is the ray of light inside the pandemic.

Revolutionaries have to rely on the impulse of the people to organize and unite to fight for a better future. We have to play a role in uniting those impulses with a vision of the country, where the means of production are publicly owned, and their product distributed according to need. In spite of worsening economic conditions, nothing can be accomplished until the American people hold a vision of where they want to go and what they want to be. Creating this vision with them is the overriding task of revolutionaries and the foundation of our organization, the League of Revolutionaries for a New America.

Session 2: Part Two 11:50 am - 12:40 am

Question #2: What does Nationalization in the interest of the working class mean? Why is it important for our class?

Polarization: Political, Economic & Social

Wikipedia defines a constitutional crisis as “a problem or conflict in the function of a government that the political constitution or other fundamental governing law is perceived to be unable to resolve.” Constitutional crises can lead to paralysis, collapse of governments, loss of political legitimacy, and even civil war. The most serious constitutional crisis in America was the secession of the Southern slave states and Civil War in 1861. But there have been other crises as well, like the disputed election of 1876, that led to the violent overthrow of Reconstruction state governments in the South. Constitutional crises may appear to be matters of self-interested political infighting, but we ignore them at our peril. They have life-and-death consequences for millions of people.

The constitutional crisis in America today is not just about Donald Trump. There is no question that Trump must be impeached. The country cannot tolerate his criminality for another moment. But the constitutional crisis is deeper than just the president, or any partisan divide. The Trump presidency serves the ruling class by working to consolidate a fascist social base and speed up its transformation of the State into a corporate dictatorship. But the merging of the State and corporations will continue down this road with or without Trump. The people need a plan to stop fascism regardless of which spokesperson of the ruling class puts forward fascist solutions to the crisis.

Social Polarization

The clash between the social struggle and the ruling class is polarizing all the old social and political organizations that have historically tied the workers to the corporate domination system. Nowhere is this clearer than in the Democratic Party. One section of Democrats is aggressively fighting for single payer health care, housing, and the abolition of ICE, while the other is equally aggressively opposing them. **Two opposites like this, one attacking public property and the other advancing it, cannot remain the same party.**

Analysis of the details of the Green New Deal and Sanders Economic Bill of Rights shows that together they constitute the broadest and most articulate expression of this motion. They are political vehicles. The fight for basic human needs expressed in these programs is objectively striking at the connection between the Democratic

Party base and the corporate ruling class. In fact, major Wall Street donors to the Democrats have threatened to support Trump if either Warren or Sanders wins the Democratic nomination.

The Green New Deal calls on the Federal Government to embark on a ten-year national mobilization to “achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions through a fair and just transition.” It would “create millions of good high-wage jobs” and ensure “high-quality health care; affordable, safe, and adequate housing; economic security; and clean water, clean air, healthy and affordable food, and access to nature.”

It would also end and repair historic oppression of what it calls “frontline and vulnerable communities,” identified as “indigenous peoples, communities of color, migrant communities, deindustrialized communities, depopulated rural communities, the poor, low-income workers, women, the elderly, the unhoused, people with disabilities, and youth.”

The demands of the new class that is being displaced from the economy finds expression in Sanders’ Economic Bill of Rights, which calls for a Federal jobs guarantee, a right to health care, housing, education, retirement, and a clean environment. Sanders’ Housing for All platform calls for spending \$2.5 trillion to build ten million units of affordable housing, end homelessness, fund community land trusts, and impose national rent control.

At the same time, Sanders addresses some of America’s most urgent social issues. His anti-mass incarceration program calls for stopping excessive sentencing “with a goal of cutting the incarcerated population in half.” He has called for a moratorium on deportations, breaking up ICE and the Border Patrol, dismantling border concentration camps, reuniting families, demilitarization of the border, and a swift and fair pathway to citizenship.

The power of these programs depends entirely on their connection with, and ability to impact, the actual struggles of the dispossessed. Workers across the country are locked into militant but defensive struggles for their economic survival. Renters are rising for rent control, and workers are striking to fight takeaways and protect services for their communities. They are resisting heroically. Programs like the Green New Deal, the Sanders’ platform, and to a lesser extent Warren’s, offer an

important opportunity to unite, embrace, and rally around a positive vision of the better life that America's wealth can provide for all, if it were distributed according to need. Sanders and Warren are able to promote these programs because for the first time in history, their campaigns have mastered the ability to fund themselves essentially from the working class. . . .

Role of Revolutionaries

The opportunity exists to work with these programs to inspire people with the hope they need to strike a blow against the corporate rulers. The government is increasingly intervening in the economy to ensure circulation of commodities. The only question is whether this will be done in the interests of the people, or in the interests of the corporations. The Sanders, Warren, and Green New Deal programs offer an arena to organize and fight politically for public ownership for public benefit.

Workers cannot win their economic demands, until they break free from corporate politicians and confront the corporate power structure of the Democratic Party. The formation of Lincoln's Republican Party offers important lessons on how this can happen. The emerging anti-slavery majority first built a large following inside the establishment Whig Party. After exposing the party's inability to reform, it took the party's base and started a new party that replaced the old one.

The recently dispossessed make up the center of gravity in the social struggle. Many of them are inside the Democratic Party, attempting to use it as a vehicle for advancing their immediate demands in the political arena. Revolutionaries have to position themselves where politicization of the social struggle is pushing workers toward political independence. The task of revolutionaries is to propagandize and teach, as the workers find their way forward toward an independent political party, and ultimately toward formation of a workers' party.

The revolutionaries today fight to win the immediate aims of the workers, but in the movement of the present they also represent and take care of the future of that movement. The role of revolutionaries is to organize and educate the new class to make it happen. The demands expressed in the Green New Deal and Economic Bill of Rights cannot be realized without a political revolution that actually wrestles

state power away from the corporations and reorganizes the economy along cooperative lines. **RC**

See also:

Rally Comrades! From the Editors: A Class Perspective on Nationalization 4.24.20

Though the two major parties have argued since late March about the nationalization of healthcare as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, private interests have won out because the system is built to serve those interests. We are told the story in ways that serve the ruling class. That narrative offers examples of division to breed despair, while our real hope for a way out of this crisis and others is an understanding based in class unity.

Mainstream news talks about disparity using every measure but economic class. Some stories report that Black workers have been dying at exponentially higher rates than other Americans, while others note that Hispanic workers have died at a higher rate than any other ethnicity in New York. Navajo workers in New Mexico have more cases of the virus than eight other states, and it has lost more of its people than 13 other states. Although the death rate for white workers is lower than for those groups, they are the largest number of COVID-19 fatalities.

The COVID-19 statistics show that class is the common denominator among the vast numbers of people who have died of this disease, and class consciousness is the way forward. The Americans who are getting exposed to this disease at the highest rates are those who keep our groceries on the shelves and sell us what we need, those who deliver our mail and other goods and fix our electricity and plumbing, and especially those who fight on the frontlines in health care. The vast majority of all these groups are low wage workers. It is no coincidence that the employment group hit hardest by COVID-19 in New York City worked for the Manhattan Transit Authority, 33 bus drivers alone having died by the week of April 21.

The ones who are dying of this disease are those who don't have the luxury of staying home. Also, the underlying complications that lead to higher death tolls with this pandemic—diabetes, asthma, and heart disease—are all diseases of poverty. Add to that the horrifying statistics of outbreaks in assisted living facilities, jails, prisons, reservations, and immigrant camps, all places where our class is warehoused when the system has no use for us.

With over 800,000 Americans diagnosed with the disease (four times that of any other country), and 43,000 dead (20,000 more than any other country in the world), Americans can't help but question the role of the federal government if it can't meet the needs of its people at a time of national and global emergency. So, we know better than to believe our interests are at heart when nationalization gets talked about by those in power in our country.

Though some senators and governors called for the nationalized distribution of health care supplies, the Trump Administration rejected the idea, and the government did very little to help most Americans over the next month. Twenty-two million Americans filed unemployment by

mid-April, and America's foodbanks saw all-time-high demands they are often not able to meet. Revolutionaries recognize this as an opportunity to talk about how and why the system works as it does.

The American government has a history of nationalizing industry when that was needed to hold the country together, but the private-public partnerships that the ruling class is using to fight this virus have abandoned millions of Americans to poverty, sickness and possible death. In World War I and World War II many essential industries were nationalized for the war effort. In the 2008 financial crisis, the ruling class partially nationalized banks and took over General Motors and Chrysler. All of these examples allowed the American ruling class to maintain its power, and the ruling class is today again arguing that over nationalization as a way to protect private property. Without a national debate about whose interest nationalization will serve, the real problems highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic will go untouched.

Though the disease is incapable of discriminating based upon class, our ruling class certainly is. The vulnerability of our working class due to capitalism leads to the kind of discrimination that always takes place under this economic system — private property protects the few and lets the great majority fend for themselves. Americans can see this problem and are open to ideas like nationalization. Nationalization has to be in the interests of the workers. Otherwise, nationalization by itself will not protect our interests any more than it did during our past wars or when we bailed out companies who turned around and fired their employees.

The revolutionaries' task is to fight for nationalization in the interest of the workers, not private property. The America we want — a country that will no longer sacrifice its essential workers and its sick and its homeless for the interests of private property — can only be achieved by a working class that understands its interests as a class. Our working class must recognize nationalization as a tool to take control of our lives and, in the process, protect all of those most vulnerable in the current system, including our friends, our neighbors, and all those we hold dear.

League of Revolutionaries for a New America, Committee on League Education in
Oakland (CLEO)

DRAFT Some Definitions 4/25/2020

(Economic) Classes are large groups of people formed by their relationship to the means of production, whether they own the means of production or work at the means of production. There are 2 basic classes - the owning class and the working class. The working class must work for a living under capitalism. The owning class owns the means of production and has enough wealth that it does not have to work.

The New Class: A new class of workers that is being created by the introduction of labor-replacing technology into production. The new class is superfluous in a system which no longer needs their ability to work. This new class consists of employed and unemployed sectors. The part-time, contingent, minimum wage, below minimum wage workers within the employed sector are already over forty percent of the U.S. work force. This employed sector of the class is constantly drawn into the growing unemployed sector that ranges from the structurally unemployed to the absolutely destitute, homeless workers. Electronics has expelled these workers from their former relations to the capitalist class, which owns the means to produce wealth in society. No longer able to bargain for better wages and working conditions, this new proletariat is the only class placed in a position to overturn the system that has expelled them. They must reorganize society in their interests. The demands of this new impoverished class for food, housing, education, health care and an opportunity to contribute to society are summed up as the demand for a cooperative society based on the public ownership of the socially necessary means of production and the distribution of the social product according to need. The new class must have political power to achieve these goals. For the first time an objective communist economic class is forming to become the foundation for a communist political movement.

Polarization is the process of opposing poles being wrenched apart, destroying what held them together and made them what they were. Growth and development occurs as a result of the contradiction and struggle between the two poles. Polarization is the process of separating the opposing, or contradictory elements that make up an entity. Social science deals with the movement of opposing classes. Polarization - the process of one aspect going in one direction, and the other aspect going in the other direction - is an essential part of change; without it, there is no forward motion in society. Polarization is a crucial part of how things change and is a focal point for revolutionaries.

With the introduction of qualitatively new productive forces we see the beginning of the destruction of the classes, the institutions and relationships that developed on the old material basis. Every political revolution has been characterized by polarization. As these relations are torn apart, the "opportunity for new bonds to form" begins. Faced with the fraying bonds that once held it together, all of society is pulled into the process. It is in

such times of motion and change that revolutionaries can play their historical role.

Struggle in politics as in all things takes place when there is polarization. Polarization in society is the result of polarization in the economy.

Economic polarization: the increasing pulling apart and division in the economy between the owning class and the working class. This is being increased by the introduction of labor-replacing technology. The 2019 Oxfam report, “Public Good or Private Wealth?” gives an indication of the depth of this polarization worldwide. In the 10 years since the global financial crisis, the number of billionaires has nearly doubled. The wealth of the world’s billionaires increased by \$900 billion in the last year alone, or \$2.5 billion a day. Meanwhile, the wealth of the poorest half of humanity, 3.8 billion people, fell by 11 percent. Between 2017 and 2018, a new billionaire was created every two days. Yet wealthy individuals and corporations are paying lower rates of tax than they have in decades.

Political polarization: the splitting apart into 2 distinct political interests – one side for the interests of the owning ruling class and the other for the interests of the working class/new class, with the shrinking and elimination of the political and economic middle, which many think of as the “middle class”.

Nationalization means that the State intervenes in the economy on someone’s behalf. Nationalization could mean, for example, the State taking over and directly managing an industry—but the question is, managing it in the interests of which class, the capitalists or the workers? Each class needs nationalization to serve its own interests. With technology eliminating jobs and markets shrinking as a result, the capitalists are forced to rely on nationalization to guarantee their profits and their survival as a ruling class. To protect private property, on behalf of the ruling class as a whole, the State has to take over control of the economy, that is nationalize it.

Similarly, the workers need nationalization in their interests to secure what they need to live, and objectively they are beginning to fight for this. The working class is becoming aware that the problems of society require national solutions from the government. They are demanding jobs, housing, food, clean water, healthcare, quality education and other basic needs. They

are demanding a program for nationalization in the interest of the people, even though they may not be consciously expressing it in this way.

Nationalization prepares the ground for the eventual battle to be concentrated against the State rather than directed at thousands of scattered capitalists. Nationalization raises the issue of which class the State serves, and nationalization becomes a battlefield where class consciousness can be taught. As people begin to realize that the corporate State won't redress their grievances, the basis is laid for the struggle to be transformed into a fight for power and for a whole new society.

The State

The State is an organ of force by which the ruling class maintains power. It arose with the division of society into classes in order to maintain the rule of one class over another. As an instrument of the ruling class to protect private property, the state maintains the domination of the owning class over an exploited class. The ruling class has benefitted from the labor of the exploited class and uses force and political power to maintain these relations. The State includes the military, prisons, legal system, government, etc. It consists of special bodies of armed forces that have at their disposal the prisons, and other means of subjugating the will of others by force.

As capitalism is coming to an end because of the introduction of labor-replacing technology, the State acts to ensure the continued dominance of the ruling class and private property. The new class of thrown-out workers, fighting for a better deal within the confines of capitalist relations, comes directly up against the state as a special apparatus for the systematic application of force and its multi-faceted methods of control.

Playing an active role in the transformation from one economic base to another, the State itself is transformed. The process underway is about the transformation to a fascist State and world order.

Fascism: Economically, fascism is corporate economic power merged with the political power of the State. Politically, fascism is the substitution of one form of class domination – bourgeois democracy – by another. The objective foundation of fascism is the capitalist class's inability to rule any longer by "democracy." Fascism is State intervention in every aspect of the economy

and society to protect private property. The new class must fight for its very existence, must fight to meet basic human needs in a system controlled by a ruling class that no longer needs it to make profit. The ruling class is countering that response with direct force – with the erection of a fascist State.

Revolution: Revolution is a historical process by which a subordinate class overthrows its ruling class, establishes itself as a new ruling class, establishing a new political system. The first stage of revolution is economic. It comes about when new, more efficient tools are introduced into production that produce social wealth faster, cheaper and easier. New tools create a new class or classes. The classes are qualitatively different. They don't fit and can't exist in the old relationship. A massive and prolonged struggle erupts to create a new productive relationship.

But, revolution is not simply the overthrow of one class by another. It is the disruption and destruction of an entire society brought about by the introduction of the new means of production. As a result, the base of society begins to weaken and disintegrate as new relationships struggle to be born. This, in turn, forces the political superstructure to strengthen its hold on society. The facade is stripped away. The naked oppression of the state begins to stand exposed.