

League of Revolutionaries for a New America

Basic Education for New Members

Class III The Reality We Face

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The Reality We Face

Reality is that which, when you stop
believing in it, doesn't go away.

Phillip K. Dick

Any real assessment of the situation we face would not be accurate without looking at the scope of the crisis. Assessing the situation is the way revolutionaries become effective.

The introduction of qualitatively new productive forces is putting all of us into the food lines, homeless shelters, and out onto the streets. Millions crowd in with anyone they can, and even a vehicle as a last stop before the street. The word 'homeless' is now attached to virtually anything we are — unemployed or employed, person or family, homeless college student, homeless "professional", homeless child. Churches during the year-end holidays have taken to reading long lists of the names of homeless people who have perished on the streets. Homelessness in America is urban, suburban and rural. Homeless encampments aren't confined to freeway overpasses or an abandoned building or two.

Homelessness isn't a category. It's the worst aspect of the economic crisis. It is connected to and a part of the rapidly declining standard of living of many millions more. Mass automation has made every job subject to lower wages and no benefits. Health care and public education are both "costs of production" in a capitalist system. In today's changing economy they are in decline and being destroyed.

In today's economy we don't just face a homeless crisis. Everywhere you turn the destruction of capitalism expresses itself.

Multiple and Multiplying Crises in the United States

cri-sis *noun*: a time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger.

Losing jobs or being driven toward slave wages are only the beginning, as wealth polarizes, and large masses of money are used to make more money. Wealth and property are concentrated into fewer hands. The ruling class, understanding the revolutionary change in the economy as well as we do, is prepared to abandon capitalism as long as they can rally around private property.

In the last 20 years, virtually everything has been pushed toward crisis, and is a source of revolutionary motion.

Studies from New York, Chicago and Los Angeles have described the development of a rent eviction epidemic. As people are pushed to the margins of the economy, their inability to pay rent and mortgages obviously increases. New ever-larger sections of the population are pushed toward homelessness.

Unleashed banking and financial institutions use hordes of cash and privatization to gain ownership and control of “public” utilities, gas, water and electricity. At any moment, falling income and rising prices can lead to shutoffs for tens of thousands.

Ownership and control of energy is tied to the actual base of U.S. power. Historically oil and gas are at the center of this strategy. Domestically the U.S. has an oil and gas system that includes almost one million active oil wells (1,300,000 have been drilled since 2010), and hydraulically fractured wells have increased 1,204 percent to over 300,000. This also includes a 2.4 million-mile underground pipeline system and 135 refineries. All of them are subject to ecological disaster, as a large number of them are in decline, like many other parts of the infrastructure.

The country has always suffered from the corporate dumping of cancer-causing toxins into the ground, rivers and streams. And the American people are suffering the effects of the toxic waste and poisoning that accompanied the old industrial system. The struggle over clean water is also a struggle against a system that guarantees legal theft of water by corporate giants.

There is an opioid death epidemic. The suicide rate has risen by almost 25 percent in the last 20 years. Suicide is the second-leading cause of death among Americans between the ages of 15 to 34. Parallel to the increases in suicide, the rate of overdose has doubled. Opioid overdose is a driver in this rising suicide rate. Prescriptions and sales of antidepressants have increased by 65 percent. Sales of opioids by the pharmaceutical industry are up over 700 percent. Like all the intensifying problems in America, this situation is about corporations, Wall Street, political influence, and a little bit of scapegoating — then pay for it all by producing, prescribing and selling more drugs.

With the rise of fascism in America, violence is becoming the weapon of choice against the people.

Police violence and brutality has long been a part of the methods of control. Over the last 5 years police have killed an estimated 5,000-plus people. Since 2015, police in the U.S. haven't gone more than two days without fatally shooting someone. Clearly the police will always be in the picture, defenders of property, always between the people themselves and a system that's not working. Social unrest is growing in many areas of the country. The police generally clash with this unstable and “unruly” new section of the population. A large section of the new class has had an untenable relation with police for decades, being targeted and jailed as in no other wealthy industrial nation on earth. Lack of trust at best, fear and resentment most likely. New oppressive fascist measures have intensified, coupled with people's sense of being marginalized. The result has been the intense conflict over recent police killings. Of the millions in the streets, a large percentage of those in the struggle are young and new participants.

Concentration camps exist in America. The United States government has a huge system of over 200 jails and detention centers across the country run by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). This system has expanded over three decades. It now captures and holds 500,000 immigrants each year. In total, over 5.6 million people have been imprisoned since 2004. There are countless incidents of death, abuse, and

mistreatment of those in immigration detention. Unaccompanied minor children in custody are routinely neglected and horribly mistreated by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and US Border Patrol. Children suffer verbal and physical abuse, and sexual assault. Beatings, deaths and sterilization are all part of the terror.

Worsening economic conditions, growing poverty, and social and ecological destruction have pushed a large section American people to the brink. They have responded, struggling for food, housing, education and health care. Teachers, students, families and communities clash with local governments over education, schools and the conditions they face. Almost 30 million are without healthcare. From Chicago to rural Texas, and in many other parts of the country, hospitals are closing.

These conditions have driven millions to act.

Protests, climate strikes, job actions, fighting in the streets against the police, the national guard, the Army and “security forces”: the struggle is rising and the potential for outbreak exists all around the country. As revolutionaries we must assess the situation around us, develop plans, and organize to carry them out. We must connect with people and help to unite our class.

Revolutionary Change in the Economy, Revolutionary Change in Society

The reality is that the abundance created by the new means of production, and the resulting economic revolution, make it possible to meet the needs of hundreds of millions, and solve society’s problems. But not under capitalism. An economic paradise of abundance for all is a new possibility — one that must be fought for. Class, wealth and power, and the capitalist state, stand in the way.

Sixty-two percent of Americans agree that the U.S. government’s handling of the Coronavirus crisis is going badly. No community is untouched by this devastating pandemic.

The havoc can be seen in the numbers suffering from the social and economic blows to families and individuals. According to an analysis of census data released by the Hamilton Project, nearly 14 million children in the United States went hungry in June. That’s an increase of more than 10 million since 2018, and almost three times the number of children who went hungry during the Great Recession of 2007. Three in ten Black families don’t have enough food for their children. The relief measures from the federal government are running out, abandoning millions of Americans.

You won’t find any of the One Percent among them. In its own way the novel coronavirus found and exposed a society with deep economic polarization. This has greatly exacerbated the existing inequality. The poorer you are the more likely you are to catch the disease, the less likely you are to receive medical help, and the more likely you are to die. In addition, job loss and layoffs, as well as forced labor deemed “essential”, are attacks on the most vulnerable workers. Economic difficulty and pain quickly developed into crisis as the pandemic settled in.

Well before COVID-19, the country's landscape was changing, with more of us pushed into hunger, homelessness and illness. Society is undergoing revolutionary change, and a new class is being born, with most of us rapidly becoming a part of that class. The transformation from industry to robotics is the cause of the misery we see all around us.

New digital electronic devices are increasingly being introduced into succeeding sectors of the economy. Self-serve kiosks are everywhere, trash is sorted by and offices are cleaned by robots, packages are delivered by drones, and driverless cars and trucks are being developed. It is projected that up to 20 million manufacturing jobs around the world could be replaced by robots by 2030, according to the analysis firm Oxford Economics.

Millions didn't choose to go hungry, lose their jobs, homes, health care, and access to real education. Society, the whole world really, has entered a new stage of development. Given the fundamental changes in the economy, all struggles today are related to the question of how to change society. An economy based in industry, with huge factories employing millions, required a certain level of education, health care, housing, and overall stability to guarantee a workforce. An economy based on automated production needs fewer and fewer workers with each advance.

The struggles over COVID-19, immigration, and murders and police terror and killings, are really over what kind of society America is going to have. The new economy calls for a new society that distributes the abundance of food, homes, and clothing according to need rather than the ability to pay. However, the ruling class is determined to keep the private property system, the ownership of the means to produce all that is required for human survival, in their own hands.

Economic Revolution

An economic revolution is the substituting of one productive process by another. The problem is that an economy cannot change without changing the society. Society cannot change without changing all the class relations, and a change in class relations means ending the privileges that one class has over others. Ruling classes are prepared to accept new machinery, but they will resist to the death any attempt to change society in such a way as threatens their privilege. Thus, economic changes have historically always ended in revolution.

We must use revolutionary change as the context and frame of reference for discussion about the situation we face and develop class consciousness and strategic thinking to deal with it.

It is helpful to present a context, a frame of reference for the discussion. All of us sense or understand in one way or another that the accelerating development of electronics is the basis of this world-wide economic and social disorganization. We are impacted by and involved in grappling with the immediate problems of homelessness, unemployment, the rise of a new racism, police terror and more. We must develop a mechanism and

structure that allows us to study, discuss and understand the historic implications of our time. To develop and embed this understanding into the motion of our new class.

The terms electronics, chips, computers, robots, digital and artificial intelligence may mean different things to many people. To us, their development is a new quality in the process of producing our means of life. This economic revolution is a new quality that is emerging and forming the basis of not any particular aspect of life but is creating, or has the potential to create, a whole new quality of life.

The sum total of the electronic revolution has created matter other than the brain that processes knowledge. This revolution can be compared to the discovery of fire. Fire was more than a means of production — it was the foundation for the quantitative separation of humans from animals. Everything that the following social and economic formations created was based on the discovery of fire. Steel and the steam engine, to name just two things basic to our civilization, are unthinkable without fire.

The scope of the electronic revolution should be viewed in the same way. It's not a "Third Wave" — qualitatively there are no 3rd and 4th industrial revolutions in the production of social wealth. A launching pad for the second great leap for humanity is being created. The result will be humankind's complete separation from the animal world and its restrictive, brutal systems of natural law. Unfettered by such restraints, humanity will begin the journey toward its full realization.

Between the dangerous jungle of our time and that wonderful future lies an epoch of struggle, destruction, revolution and change.

We are Changing

Look at the extreme changes that have taken place in just the last few months. Forty-three Forbes-certified billionaires "grew" their collective wealth by an estimated \$685 billion. The richest 0.00019 percent of the US population now hold \$3.6 trillion. That wealth will actually allow them to empower and then enrich themselves to an even greater extent. And they will.

Over 12 million have contracted the Covid-19. 250,000 and rising have died. Approximately 55 million workers have been declared "essential"- health care, food service, food production, and public transportation, construction, public services, among others. Essential workers are not receiving even the most basic health and safety equipment to combat the spread of the coronavirus, and are dying as a result. Some are walking off the job in protest of unsafe conditions, and demanding personal protective equipment (PPE). They are essential — essentially forced labor. They have no effective rights. Essential workers are an expression of the greatest time of labor-replacing automation in world history. Virtually every form of labor takes on the characteristic of being "throwaway."

At the same time some 25-45 million Americans are not working. Those that are not receiving some form of unemployment benefits, more than 31 million, are not paying bills, not paying rent, not going back to work.

Millions are going to food giveaways for the first time. They are also speaking out! In one form or another they are “protesting.” There are many forms of protest and motion taking place. Up to 20-25 million have participated in protests.

At times during the last 6 months up to 25 percent of the country was under a curfew order. Tens of thousands have been arrested while protesting. In some cases, people are physically fighting police.

People are being attacked, and also detained by elite Customs and Border Patrol units, by Department of Homeland Security’s Tactical Terrorism Response Teams, by Predator drones, helicopters, planes operated by an array of agencies of the state, national guard, the U.S. Army.

Some of the people are beginning to understand that government and the State are buffered by the police. Many are beginning to understand that police respond to protests about policing with violence. The last 6 months have given people a sense that those in power may not respond to their needs.

Many, many things are beginning to change. People are doing different things and thinking different things.

Great social problems do not happen out of the context of a particular time. To understand any problem, we must understand the period of time in which it occurred. It is not possible to understand a period of time simply by describing a series of events. It’s necessary to understand the crucial content of a time in order to understand it. There have been times of mass social movements in the U.S. We are in a time of social revolution.

The content of our time is the historic shift from production by electro-mechanics, that is, production by human labor aided by electrically-driven machinery, to production by robotics, or production by computer-controlled machinery with no or very little human labor involved. This ongoing economic revolution shapes and determines the social destruction we see around us. It is bringing to the forefront a political struggle unknown up to now in our country.

Everything that’s happening is an expression of the fundamental, qualitative changes that are taking place. The important thing is to understand why this is happening and what the political results are bound to be. If this is the process we are going through, if this is the content of our time, it is important for us to see how it plays out in real life — because that is where the battle must be fought.

Break in Continuity

Electronic production has introduced a radically new means of production into the economy, not only destroying the current stage of private property, “capitalism,” but, creating the possibility of a break in the continuity of private property itself.

As one society crumbles, another must be constructed. In whose interest will the new society be constructed? This is the essential problem of all historical “moments” of transition. All manner of forces emerge in the battle for resolution. History shows that the class that understands its independent interests, that has a vision of the desired outcome, and that organizes its forces to achieve the political means to enforce those interests in favor of that outcome, creates the means to politically enforce its class interests. Preparing the class of growing dispossessed to take on this historic role constitutes revolutionaries’ work in this time of epochal transition.

A deepening economic crisis; intensifying competition for markets; an increasingly unstable geopolitical world order in which the U.S. is fighting to remain dominant; the further unraveling of the old political party alignments; and a growing clash within the institutions of government and society are all interacting with one another, and pushing and pulling on one another.

The resolution of this dilemma will have to take a political form. As capitalism as an economic system continues to disintegrate, and the political system of rule becomes increasingly unable to solve the problems of either the workers or the capitalists, the various tendencies are going to separate, and come out with their own programs. Up to this point, we have only had conservative (such as, right-wing Republicans) or reactionary (such as the Ku Klux Klan) motions in the U.S. We will need to sharpen our ability to recognize the nature of these programs from those of the fascists and not be deceived by misconceptions or old categories of the past.

The objective conditions create the possibility, but it will take political revolution – a subjective act — to determine the outcome. The League’s mission, strategy and tactics aim to achieve the first necessary stage in the line of march toward the final outcome – uniting the scattered revolutionaries on the basis of the demands of the new class, to educate them and win them over to the cooperative, communist resolution of the problem.

Discussion

1. Discuss the reality of today’s situation. How is it an expression of the underlying revolutionary process we’ve assessed?
2. How does the shift from labor-saving to labor-replacing tools of production “change the game,” and create the conditions for social revolution?
3. How does electronic production create a break in continuity of private property?
4. Please discuss “Preparing the class of growing dispossessed to take on this historic role constitutes revolutionaries’ work in this time of epochal transition.”