

RALLY COMRADES!

THE VOICE OF THE LEAGUE OF REVOLUTIONARIES FOR A NEW AMERICA

Know Your Enemy, Know Yourself

"Therefore I say: Know your enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril. When you are ignorant of the enemy, but know yourself, your chances of winning or losing are equal. If ignorant both of your enemy and of yourself, you are certain in every battle to be in peril."

— Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

This well-known advice from Sun Tzu's *Art of War* holds many lessons for revolutionaries. Knowing one's enemy begins with an accurate assessment of the real processes underway that both determine what the adversary must do, what he can do, the forces at his disposal, as well as the areas where he is weak. Knowing oneself — oneself being the revolutionary forces in this country — is to understand how those same processes shape what can be done, what must be done, the forces at our disposal, as well as the areas where we are weak. By basing political conclusions on the accurate estimate of the processes underway — from both sides of the table — revolutionaries can begin to develop the strategy and tactics that can most effectively teach our class its true interests and move the process toward the conclusion that benefits our class.

This accurate assessment begins with the understanding that the economy and society are undergoing a leap. This leap is the transformation from a system of production and distribution based on the exploitation of labor power as a commodity — and the productive relations that arose on that basis — to one where production without labor, and therefore value, is emerging. Yet, new productive relations do not arise spontaneously. They must be fought for.

As the crisis advances, and political polarization deepens, both the ruling class and the workers will be forced to fight for a political solution that is dictated by the objective character of the changes underway. If the ruling class wants to survive as a ruling class and preserve private property under their control, it will have to fight for a fascist political solution. If the workers want to survive at all, they will have to fight for a communist political solution.

In the period of the leap the battle shifts to the subjective. All of society is dragged into a fight to align thinking with the actual changing conditions, and into the struggle to enforce their interests. Without a unity of the subjective understanding of what is objectively possible nothing can move for-

ward. This is as true for the fascists as it is for the communists.

Today, we see the objective impulses toward fascism developing from within the actual process far ahead of, and without a cohesive or unified, subjective side. The fascist forces are scattered and divided. The task of the ruling class is to create the subjective unity necessary for the process to move forward.

STATE TRANSFORMED IN CAPITALISTS' INTEREST

While universal laws inform its motion, the development of fascism today is not unfolding in the same way as it did in the past. The main distinctive difference is the existence of the actual, objective basis for political revolution.

In the past period, fascism was not objectively necessary to protect capitalism as a system. In the Nazi period, for example, fascism protected the national interests of a section of the larger section of finance capitalists under very specific historical conditions. These conditions were the worsening economic crisis, the weakening of social democratic influence and the rising strength of revolutionary forces in Germany, Italy and Austria, as well as the influence of the newly formed Soviet Union. If these forces had taken power, certainly they would have attempted to put an end to capitalist property relations. It was in this sense only that a threat to capitalism existed, not because of the introduction of qualitatively new technology as today. In this sense, fascism arose first as a subjective movement. The fascists seized power first, then created the conditions for changes in the economy and society.

Today, the foundation for fascism is emerging from the actual processes of destruction, polarization and the battle to determine how society will be reconstructed. Objectively, the ruling class cannot solve the problems it faces within the existing order.

History teaches us that a ruling class is capable of changing economic foundations to remain a ruling class. The feudal class in Europe transformed itself into the land-owning section of the bourgeoisie. In Japan, they transformed themselves from feudal lords to the industrial section of the bourgeoisie. Their content was to remain a ruling class.

We do not know what today's ruling class will become, but they have to endorse

change — and unite around that change — in order to remain as a ruling class.

They cannot allow the interests of individual corporations, or even industries, or sections of the economy, to interfere with this overarching, and what is for them life or death, long term goal. All of their efforts are towards stabilizing the economy and bringing the vast capitalist economic and political order under control. Only the state can intercede to impose this kind of stability. The transformation that is taking place in the state is itself becoming the vehicle to reconstruct society around the interests of the ruling class in the new epoch.

This is no more apparent than in the 180 degree turnaround in ruling class actions over the past year. From fighting for decentralization, the free market and unregulated commerce they have mobilized the power of the state to dominate and lead the restructuring of the economy. The virtual nationalization of the banks, to the nationalization of Chrysler and General Motors, express steps in the transformation of the state from the mere facilitator of corporate will to its taking a direct role as the guardian of private property.

A huge social motion will arise on these changes. Auto is the harbinger of things to come. As nationalization proceeds in the interests of the capitalists, the workers are objectively thrown up against the state. The workers who keep their jobs can only protect that toehold against disaster by inevitably moving closer to the ruling class, while a larger section will be cast adrift. This growing polarization will create greater motion, instability and provide fertile ground for fascist propaganda.

The growing economic crisis is bound to bring on political crisis — the clash of two antagonistic processes, with one forced to destroy the other to survive. The developing crisis is the impossibility of maintaining the bourgeois democratic superstructure with the qualitatively new economic foundation that is being created.

BATTLE TO CONTROL STATE EMERGING

This is not a matter of forces from the right against which the "left" must fight.

Any dictionary, any book on politics will state that politics expresses economics — it clears the way for the economy or a section of the economy to develop. Thus, prior to the Civil War, the Democratic Party was the

political expression of the agrarian bourgeoisie, and the rising industrial class had to create a new party, the Republican Party, to represent its interests. In later times, the Roosevelt coalition, which dominated the Democratic party, was the political expression of international finance capital, and it stood against the Republicans, which were the expression of national finance capital. Political right and left expressed definite sections of the capitalist class. Today, there is no objective foundation for a split in the ruling class today, as there was in the past epoch.

Of course, there is an ideological right and left, and people drift in and out as they choose. There are all kinds of ideas out there — pro-slavery, anti-black, anti-immigrant, neo-confederates, religious dominionists and reconstructionists to name a few — and they are beginning to get into scattered, and sometimes violent (if still isolated) motion. They are dangerous and have to be fought.

The key thing is revolutionaries have different tactics to fight a right that is based in the economy and a right based in abstract ideology.

Today, our starting point has to be the qualitatively new conditions — a leap in the economy, and the dissolution of that economic system and its relations. The struggle has moved from a struggle between two groups within the ruling class to a struggle

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Editorial: Auto Workers' Fight Signals Battles Ahead

The papers and news shows are filled with talk about the General Motor's bankruptcy and how terrible it is going to be for the corporations, the bondholders, the rich and powerful.

Almost nothing is being said about the workers – except, that is, endless recriminations about their so-called lavish benefits, plush working conditions, and fat paychecks that, if you believe what you hear, are almost singlehandedly responsible for the plight of the Big 3 today.

The goal of this campaign is to marginalize their plight and turn the rest of the workers against them. In this distraction, the capitalist class can obscure the underlying cause of these problems and blunt the leadership this section of the workers has historically exercised over the entire working class.

Neither the autoworker – nor any other worker – created the economic system of capitalism. Nor do they have power over it or the state that oversees it. They were not the ones who created the robotic production lines, or laid off the workers it replaced. They didn't have any control over the vast system of buying and selling within which

they are enmeshed. Like every other worker they can only live as long as they can work.

The same technology that is decimating the lives of American workers has the po-

open the shop floor and skilled trades to minorities and women, to clean up the conditions on the job, and to garner raises in pay and benefits. These improvements rippled

few prospects.

Working for the time being or cut loose, these workers are now joining the ever expanding ranks of the new class being created by robotics.

It is not only their numbers, or even their concentration, which makes these workers decisive to the cause of revolution in this country. It is also their continuity in the communities of the region – generations in the plants, and in the unions – and their collective class experience of their battles for a better life raising up the living standards for all. It is their skills, their knowledge of organization, their ties, by a million different threads, to the same stratum of the class throughout the country.

Conscious of their class interests, and armed with a battle plan to achieve their immediate needs, they can be turned toward revolution, and can bring the rest of the class with them.

This decisive section is already moving into activity, and the ruling class is already waging a fight for not simply their organizational leadership, but to shape their minds and vision to side with ruling class against their own class interests. If this bid is left unchallenged, not only the workers of the Rust Belt, but all of society will fall prey to the fascist forces coalescing to restructure society around the fascist corporate state.

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tential to provide for all. The problem is our class doesn't control that technology, or the state that protects those who do. That control is in the hands of the capitalist class and they wield it in their class interests, not in ours.

American industrial workers hold an historic place in the American working class. In the 1930s they played crucial roles in unionization, and in the 1960s in fights to

throughout the entire working class, paving the way for better working conditions and pay for all workers.

Ultimately, it was their labor that was the foundation for the American capitalist class to rise to its dominant position in the world. For this reason, for a time, the capitalist class conceded to the industrial worker a relatively good standard of living, decent benefits, and a stable living.

No more. Who can deny that the 840 robots to be installed in GM's Lordstown plant will do anything other than eliminate the need for labor there as well? And multiply that a thousand times, a hundred thousand times over, around the world in every industry, shop, and office.

In 1966, Chrysler employed 66,000 workers in Detroit alone. Today, it employs 35,000 nationwide. Sixty-five thousand workers are at GM, but due to the bankruptcy conditions it will be less than half that by the time they are through.

Those few who remain have been forced to swallow the government's demands for more cutbacks: loss of vacation time and cost of living raises, reduced break time, and reductions in wages in some cases to \$14 an hour. Besides accepting worsening work conditions and terrible pay, Chrysler and GM workers were forced to give up the right to strike to 2015. We say forced because when a person is looking at cuts or no job at all, there isn't much choice.

Thousands more are being cut adrift as plants close and production is slashed in those that remain. They join thousands of those before them laid off, fired, and downsized from plants throughout the region, and now scrambling to make it on food stamps, minimum wage jobs, or living on nothing at all, destitute and homeless. All that will be left is a life of instability and

EDITORIAL POLICY

Rally: to bring back together and put in a state of order, as retreating troops [to return to attack]

Comrade: a person with whom one is allied in a struggle or cause

Rally, Comrades! is the political paper of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America. In this period of growing motion and developing polarization, *Rally, Comrades!* provides a strategic outlook for the revolutionaries by indicating and illuminating the line of march of the revolutionary process. It presents a pole of scientific clarity to the conscious revolutionaries, examines and analyzes the real problems of the revolutionary movement, and draws political conclusions for the tasks of revolutionaries at each stage of development in order to prepare for future stages.

It is a vehicle to reach out and communicate with revolutionaries both within the League and outside of the League to engage them in debate and discussion and to provide a forum for these discussions. Articles represent the position and policies of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America.

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Communism: Practical resolution to immediate problems

Socialism is becoming more popular in America. According to an April 9, 2009 poll by Rasmussen Reports, only 53% of American adults believe capitalism is better than socialism. The same poll found that younger Americans are most favorably inclined with 33% of adults under 30 preferring socialism. Americans today are changing their minds about socialism and capitalism, but without a clear understanding of what socialism is.

At a moment in history when the transition from industrial to electronic production is forcing global economic and social reorganization, understanding the difference between capitalism, socialism and communism helps us envision a future society that meets the needs of all and a strategy to achieve it.

After decades in which socialism has been painted as evil, lawless, and totalitarian to forestall criticism of capitalism as an economic system, people's minds have been opened by the turmoil of the economic crisis and the government's bailout of the banks, not the people.

The ruling class has discredited alternative economic systems – socialism and communism – as unpatriotic or impossible by equating socialism and communism with dictatorship while treating capitalism and democracy as one and the same. In fact, both democracy and dictatorship are forms of political systems. Capitalism, socialism and communism are economic systems.

SOCIALISM AN ECONOMIC SYSTEM

Economic systems are the set of relations between people and classes in social production, essentially who owns the means of production and how the product is distributed.

Under the economic system of capitalism, the capitalist class owns the means of production (factories, transport, etc.) as private property – in contrast to public property (like schools and fire stations), or personal property (like homes and cars). The basic law of capitalism – competition in the production of commodities to maximize profits – results in poverty, war, colonial exploitation, monopolies, and crisis.

Capitalists hire workers to produce commodities, which are socially produced, but privately owned by the capitalists, and then sold for profit. The state provides an infrastructure to assist the capitalist class in maximizing profit and towards this end provides some basic necessities (such as

schools, unemployment insurance, and social security) to maintain a workforce and ward off starvation, social chaos, and revolution.

Under the economic system of socialism, the means of production are not in the private hands of the capitalists, but are socially owned by the state or by cooperatives. Production is planned by the state with the goal of satisfying the constantly rising requirements of society through expanding production.

A level of production has been achieved through electronics that makes communism possible. This is the turning point at which we stand today. With the political power to transition private to public property, American creativity, efficiency and "can-do" spirit will make short work of the transition to an economic system in which the abundance we produce is held in common and benefits all.

Under socialism, the product is distributed to those who work either directly in the form of payment for work or socially through public goods and services and the development of public industry. Money and exchange based on the value of commodities – which is the essence of capitalist production – continue to operate in some spheres and influence economic planning.

Under the economic system of communism, the means of production are publicly owned and capable of producing abundance sufficient to meet the needs of all of society. The use of money disappears because commodities are no longer produced for a market, but for distribution on the basis of need.

SOCIALISM A STAGE

At every stage in the history of society, the development of the means of production make possible certain kinds of economic systems. The basic implements of animal husbandry and seasonal planting of crops made possible the economic system of slavery. The steam engine, factories, and ocean-going ships opened up the era of industrial production, which made possible the economic systems of socialism and capitalism.

The socialist movement was born in the

period of transition from agriculture to industry as serfs and peasants were driven off the land to seek survival as wage-slaves in the miserable conditions of the earliest factories. In many countries political parties of the working class organized and led this new class in a political battle for power to control the state and their own destiny.

The Bolshevik Party of Russia was the clearest example of this struggle for socialism. It succeeded in leading the Russian proletariat to victory against the Tsar and

or possible. In the 21st century, the global capitalist system has reached a stage where goods can be produced with little or no labor. The global capitalist system is no longer growing and expanding and is in a deep crisis as a result. The transition from industrial capitalism to electronic production is forcing global economic and social reorganization.

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Humanity today faces the choice: will we do away with private property and build a future for all or will a system of private property be preserved at the expense of human beings and the planet? Electronics is reducing a class that was once an essential element of industrial production to redundancy. Attempts to do no more than blunt the worst effects of capitalism may be well-meaning, but they divert energy from the tasks ahead.

More and more Americans are joining the ranks of those dispossessed by capitalism world-wide. A class that has nothing to gain from private ownership of the means of production has to take the reins of power and construct an economic system that can sustain a better world. The struggle today is not the struggle of the last century to expand industrial production. Nor is it the social-democratic struggle to increase the crumbs that fall from the table of the world's billionaires. Though people may have different ideas about and different ways of describing it, at this moment in history, the essence of every struggle for a better life is objectively the struggle for communism. Communism is not just an idea, but the practical resolution to immediate problems. Nationalization of health care is a matter of survival for millions. The people of Detroit must take over the water corporations or go without water in their homes. Either we control the corporations or they control us.

In the U.S., the working class is skilled and educated. It has one of the highest levels of production in the world. It has two centuries of experience in the world's first democratic republic. It is the inheritor of the American Revolution, a civil war that ended slavery, and broad movements for labor and civil rights. With the political power to transition private to public property, American creativity, efficiency and "can-do" spirit will make short work of the transition to an economic system in which the abundance we produce is held in common and benefits all.

the new capitalist class to win state power for the working people of Russia in 1917. This political victory enabled the Russian working class to establish socialism. After taking power they faced the challenge of wrenching a backward, agrarian economy out of semi-feudalism and building a domestic industry in the aftermath of WWI and the destruction of WWII. Socialism in the Soviet Union – and other socialist countries – was understood to be the first stage toward communism.

In the era of industrial production, the vision of a world without exploitation, hunger and war galvanized the working class movement for communism, but industrial production was unable to create the material conditions required for a communist economic system. The idea of communism preceded the possibility.

Today, in this era of electronic production, the reverse is true. Now, the material conditions for communism exist, but the ideas are lagging behind.

COMMUNISM POSSIBLE TODAY

The introduction of electronics into production has created the conditions for this abundance and thus Soviet style socialism of the 20th Century is no longer necessary

New Conditions Demand New Doctrine

Doctrine is a guide to dealing, in a general way, with some aspect of objective reality. As that reality changes, doctrine must change accordingly. For example, until the end of the Civil War, mass infantry attack was the basic military doctrine. The invention and use of the machine gun forced the military to abandon that doctrine and adopt the doctrine of dispersal.

We could present many examples, but the point is that failure to change doctrine with changing reality condemns a political organization to failure as a doctrinaire sect. For revolutionaries, doctrine is a general policy or set of principles that guides political activity to accomplish a definite political goal. During these rapidly changing times we must almost daily challenge and examine our doctrine to make sure we are keeping up with reality.

In 1848 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels startled the intellectual world with the statement, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." This overarching statement has withstood the test of time and the assault of subjective ideologues. In Europe, where class definition was rigid, it was inevitable that that statement would be transformed into "the doctrine of the class struggle." Thus, all po-

litical tactics or inquiry proceeded from the understanding that no matter how remote, class struggle was the determining factor. This doctrine became the guiding light under all circumstances and at all times. The

terrible price for not constantly adjusting doctrine to the changing circumstances and class relations. We are again entering a period when changing conditions demand we re-examine doctrine.

around and will be around for some time. However, it is not developing. All new developments today are in the realm of electronics or robotics. Production by a combination of labor and electro-mechanics is less efficient and more expensive than robotics. Therefore, further development of that process ended.

Old relations are disappearing and new ones are coming into being. These changing relations and instability affect "class struggle" as well. Unions, formed to protect the workers from the corporations, become major shareholders and guardian angels of these corporations. The government has gone from a policy of hands-off the economy to massive intervention. Public debt and private profit have replaced private debt and public profit. The examples of instability and transformation are endless.

This transition is disrupting every aspect of our lives. Education, health care, production and distribution, employment, personal relations – every aspect of our lives is breaking loose from its moorings and becoming unstable as society struggles to create new foundations compatible with the new means of production. This instability and unpredictability is the leading characteristic of this time.

During this period, we must be guided by a doctrine that reflects that reality, the "doctrine of the leap." This means that we do not proceed politically from the stability of class struggle, but from the instability of transition. Instability demands much more from revolutionaries than eras of stability. The doctrine of the leap demands the constant summing up of experience and the thinking through of the revolutionary process in this new period. It demands that every single revolutionary make her or his individual contributions. We all have the sense that our chance is coming. The doctrine of the leap demands we close ranks with maximum contribution and activity.

Doctrine is a guide to dealing, in a general way, with some aspect of objective reality. Every aspect of our lives is breaking loose from its moorings and becoming unstable as society struggles to create new foundations compatible with the new means of production. During this period, we must be guided by a doctrine that reflects this reality, the "doctrine of the leap." This means that we do not proceed politically from the stability of class struggle, but from the instability of transition.

revolutionary's main problem is the true believer who attempts to impose an historically correct statement on all transitory situations. The revolutionaries have paid a

The struggle between classes to achieve the political power to impose its will on society is at the heart of social motion. Social history is more than class struggle. It is also the record of the spontaneous quantitative and qualitative development of the means of production and the consequent broad struggle of society to reorganize itself – its production and distribution – in a way compatible with these new instruments. The class struggle is about in whose interests this reorganization takes place.

There are long periods within and between qualitative stages of history when there is social motion and its leading characteristic is not class struggle for political power. An example would be the massive social struggles such as the Freedom Movement of the 1960s. In such times, serious revolutionary organizations must identify the overwhelming characteristic of the moment and develop doctrine to guide them during that period.

What is the content of our moment, its fundamental characteristic, and what should be the doctrine that reflects this reality? The content of our time - the determining factor of this moment in history - is the transition from production by electro-mechanics and human labor into electronic production without or with very little human labor. Humanity has begun a leap from one social system to another. What is a leap? It is the sudden ending of the development of one process and the beginning of the development of another. The development of the industrial era ended with the introduction of electronics. Electro-mechanics is still

You Need *Rally, Comrades!* *Rally, Comrades!* Needs You

The world is in the midst of rapid change. You or those close to you might have been threatened with or suffered loss of job and home. You are deeply concerned about what's happening to our world.

You read, listen to the radio, and watch TV to understand what's happening, but the answers aren't there. There's plenty of news and analysis, but all of it comes to describing problems and proposals for fixing capitalism. None of it points the way to a new society.

Rally, Comrades! stands out, offering a sound and clear analysis of the way forward. *Rally, Comrades!* shows how capitalism is coming to an end. It clearly describes the emerging struggle over what will replace capitalism: a new form of private property enforced through fascism, or a new communal society for the well being of all peoples.

Human society is at a critical juncture in history where what people understand and what people choose to do will determine the fate of future generations.

Rally, Comrades! and the League receive no donations from corporations, foundations or government. We rely completely on volunteers and donations from readers like you to carry out this urgent work.

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between two hostile classes. The process of nationalization is underway — the question is in whose interests. The battle that is emerging today is who will control the state. The ruling class has to control the state if they are going to protect private property. The workers have to control the state if they are going to gain control of their lives. That struggle is not "fight the right". It is the beginning of revolution.

FASCISTS' NEXT STEP: UNITE SCATTERED FORCES

Without the unity of the subjective and the objective, the process cannot move forward. New ideas have to be introduced — and have to be broadly accepted — to facilitate the objective changes taking place. Today, the radical changes on the objective side are outrunning the subjective side. There is talk about anti-communism and anti-socialism. But at the moment, fascism has not been put forward openly as the political solution to facilitate the objective changes that are already taking place.

We can see how the unity of the objective and the subjective pushed forward events in our own history. The defeat of Reconstruction, for example, was only possible with the unity of the southern plantation owners and a section of white workers and small producers united ideologically to stop the blacks and re-enslave them by the millions. This would not have been possible without the unity of the objective and subjective. That kind of unity does not exist today.

There is motion, social upheaval and developing polarization, flux, contradiction. The fascist movement is scattered and divided. At its core are serious, conscious fascists. All kinds of people and groups with all kinds of ideas gravitate toward this fascist core as a means of accomplishing their own goals. For this disparate movement to unite around a fascist solution and into cohesive political force will require some kind of general line that pulls them all together, regardless of their individual programs.

FUTURE IS UP TO US

Although the objective side of the process is quite advanced, fascist political revolution is not inevitable. The fascists must fight to impose it. Conversely, it can be, it must be, defeated. How can this be done? What is the first step, and the next one after that? These are the questions which every revolutionary is grappling with today.

The revolutionary process is moving into uncharted territory. We must leave behind the preconceptions of the past period and begin to grapple with the new conditions. Our starting point as revolutionaries is to

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describe as accurately as possible the situation faced by our class, where it is in its development, and use that information to constantly examine and reexamine our political conclusions, and the strategy and tactics that flow from those conclusions. The answers to the questions revolutionaries face are not the purview of this or that person, or this or that organization. They are questions of the revolution, and as such involve all who seek to end the destruction around us and build a new world.

Political Report of the Standing Committee of League of Revolutionaries for a New America, June 2009.

The League of Revolutionaries for a New America: what We Stand For

Tens of thousands of socially conscious people declare themselves revolutionaries in opposition to the degenerating social and economic conditions. The League's mission is to unite these scattered revolutionaries on the basis of the demands of the new class, to educate and win them over to the co-operative, communist resolution of the problem. 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 co-operative society. The new class must have political power to achieve these goals. In the effort to achieve this po-

litical power the League supports all political organizations and sections of society that fight against the growing poverty, social and ecological destruction, fascism and war. Nothing can be accomplished until the American people hold a vision of where they want to go and what they want to be. Creating and imbuing them with such vision is the overriding task of revolutionaries and the foundation of our organization. We in the League face the future with confidence. We call upon all revolutionaries to abandon sectarian differences, to unite around the practical demands of the new class and to secure that imperiled future.

Book Reviews

Neal Bascomb, *Red Mutiny: Eleven Fateful Days on the Battleship Potemkin*, 2007. The mutiny of the Russian battleship Potemkin in 1905 was part of the revolutionary wave that swept Russia that year. This exciting and fast paced book provides valuable lessons from history of how the spontaneous revolution erupts, shows the back and forth of its struggle to achieve its immediate aims, and explores the indispensable role that conscious revolutionaries play in developing the class perspective necessary to move the struggle forward.

John Christian, *Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History*, 2005. Christian begins with the origins of the universe and travels all the way through the evolution of planetary and human life, the development of civilization, and into our possible future. No one can read this book without getting a sense of the vast sweep of history, the dialectical thread of qualitative and quantitative change, of interconnection, and constant motion.

James McPherson, *Tried by War: Abraham Lincoln as Commander in Chief*, 2008. In this study of Abraham Lincoln as a military leader, McPherson shows that leaders are not free to do whatever they want, but are constrained by a myriad of factors. Effective leadership lies in recognizing this fact, and thinking through the steps that will lead to the desired goal. Abraham Lincoln was hemmed in politically by broad support for slavery, battles within his own cabinet, and resistance from his generals to formulating a coherent military strategy. Yet no matter the attacks, the ridicule, or the resistance, Lincoln step by step doggedly pursued the goal of preserving the Union and holding back the flood of reaction.

Sterling Seagrave, *The Soong Dynasty*, 1985. Seagrave presents a fascinating history of a remarkable family's coldblooded rise to wealth and power in early 20th century China. Of the six children of Charlie Soong, one daughter became the powerful wife of Chiang Kai-shek, another married the principal banker of Nationalist China, and Soong's son T.V. Soong became the economic wizard of China's rise to power. Standing alone, one daughter married Sun Yat Sen and later supported the Chinese Communists. It describes the complex struggle for power within the Chinese nationalist movement, and reveals how the Soongs with the support of Henry Luce and his Time/Life media empire dominated America's policies in Asia for decades.

Private or Public Property? It's Up to Us

This Building Block article is one of a series which explains a basic concept of the revolutionary process, challenging readers to explore its meaning for political work in today's environment.

Since the rise of classes and the domination of one class over another, private property has existed in one form or another.

The popular notion of private property is that it is personal property, one's individual possessions. This is not what is meant by the concept. The propaganda of the owning class deliberately confuses or obscures this. The intent is to frighten people and make them believe that the abolition of private property means the loss or confiscation of what little they personally own.

In reality, the term "private property," when used in the context of an economic system, refers to private control by a dominant class over the productive forces, that is, over the tools that create the necessities of life. Private property is controlled by the few for the benefit of the few; in contrast to public property which is owned and controlled by all of society for the benefit of all.

Private property arose in human history when society had developed to a point where communities produced enough surplus (especially of food) so that one section, or class, of society could be freed from subsistence labor (hunting, gathering, etc), and live off the labor of another class. This priv-

ileged position, and the exploitation it depended on, was enforced by violence and

the threat of violence through development of the means of control and coercion, including the military, police, and various organs of propaganda and mind control. This has been true through the various stages of society, whether slaveholding systems, feudalism, or capitalism.

Whatever the economic system, the dom-

inant class built up its superstructure, resting on those economic relations, to guarantee that property and the power to hold onto it remain in the hands of the dominant class. This owning class uses all means at its disposal – whether through laws that protect

world's majority, the growing class of the poor and dispossessed. Their struggle for survival – for the basics that capitalism can no longer provide, and, beyond that, for all we need for a materially, culturally, and spiritually abundant life – is objectively a fight for the abolition of private property.

In such a revolutionary time, there is no turning back. The question for revolutionaries is in whose interest these new tools and the abundance they make possible are used: the corporations and the small class that controls them, who increasingly impose misery, starvation, incarceration, and fascism to maintain private property, or the peaceful sharing of this abundance through publically owned communal property – the communist resolution.

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these property relations, or through violence and war – to guarantee its continued control over that which creates what people need to survive.

Today, electronics and automation is eliminating human labor, destroying the source of all value, and ending that which makes capitalism what it is: a system of buying and selling based on the exploitation of human labor power and the expropriation by the exploiting class of the profit from the surplus value created from that labor power. The very relations that make capitalism function are being torn apart and dissolving. Without the exploitation of labor power, profit cannot be realized, and without profit, capitalism cannot survive as a system. Something new is struggling to be born.

That can only be one of two things: either the maintenance of private property by the ruling class under some other non-capitalist system; or communism, the public ownership of the productive forces as public property, used and distributed for the good of all.

The ruling class cannot save capitalism, but they are maneuvering to save private property under some new economic system. Fascism is developing to guarantee that whatever takes the place of capitalism is a system that maintains private property in the hands of this small exploiting class.

Neither the capitalists nor the rest of humanity can stay where they are. All must move to something beyond capitalism, as capitalism crumbles, devours itself, and dies. What this will be, and in whose interest it will be or ganized, will be determined by the consciousness, will, and clarity of the

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