

DYNAMICS OF WORLD REVOLUTION TODAY

September 1974

five classes

A five-class study guide based on the Pathfinder Press book, Dynamics of World Revolution Today (\$2.95).

Class 1. The World Situation at the Time of the 1963 Reunification

Required Reading: From Dynamics of World Revolution Today: "For Early Reunification of the World Trotskyist Movement," pp. 13-23; "Dynamics of World Revolution Today," pp. 25-73.

Questions

1. What are the three main sectors of the world revolution? How are these categories useful for analysis? How do the tasks and character of the proletarian revolution differ in each sector?

2. How do the three sectors interact on each other? Discuss and give examples.

3. What accounted for the post-World War II shift of the center of world revolutionary activity to the colonial world? Why would it be wrong to attribute this shift primarily to objective factors? What role did the crisis of proletarian leadership play in this shift?

4. Why was it possible in some instances for a revolution in a colonial country to triumph despite inadequate leadership? Why is this impossible in the advanced capitalist countries? Does this mean that the crisis of leadership has been overcome in the colonial world?

5. Why do objective circumstances tend to push the colonial revolution onto the path of permanent revolution? Is this an automatic process? Why hasn't the colonial revolution decisively undermined the economic stability of imperialism? How has the delay of the revolution in the imperialist countries and the Stalinized workers states affected the course of the colonial revolution?

6. According to the resolution, "Dynamics of World Revolution Today," the conditions that fostered political passivity of the masses in the Stalinized workers states have been steadily undermined. What were these conditions and how have they changed by 1963? Did this mean that the material conditions for Stalinist rule in the workers states had disappeared?

7. What is the difference between mass pressure, mass action, and political revolution in the deformed and degenerated workers states? Give examples. Can concessions prevent the antibureaucratic political revolution in these states? Why not?

8. What role was the Sino-Soviet split playing in the crisis of Stalinism in 1963? How did the Fourth International evaluate the positions of the two sides at that time?

9. Why is it incorrect to rely on outside forces alone -- like the colonial revolution or the economic progress of the workers states -- to overthrow capitalism in the advanced countries?

10. How has the analysis of economic trends in Europe and the U. S. that appears in "Dynamics of World Revolution Today" stood up over the past decade? Has the prediction of the contradictory role that could be played by the relatively high living standards of workers in the advanced countries been upheld?

11. What are the pitfalls in attempting to establish a timetable or a fixed order of precedence for the victory of the revolution in the three sectors?

12. What are the objective factors that produced the weakness of the world Trotskyist movement? Why didn't the correctness of its ideas produce a qualitative increase in its forces? What factors led to the conclusion that the tide was beginning to flow in favor of Trotskyism?

13. Why are the tasks of building mass Trotskyist parties essentially propagandistic at this point? What role do transitional slogans play in this process? What role can be played by entryist tactics?

14. Why is the danger of World War III inherent in the world situation? Why has it been postponed? How can it be definitively prevented?

15. Why would failure to reunify the Fourth International in 1963 have been politically unprincipled? What happened to groups that tried to find a political justification for not participating like Healy, Lambert, and Posadas?

Class 2. The Detente and the New World Situation

Required Reading: From Dynamics of World Revolution Today: "The Unfolding New World Situation," by Jack Barnes, pp. 75-99; "The World Political Situation and the Immediate Tasks of the Fourth International," pp. 156-162, 169-175
Supplementary Reading: From A Revolutionary Strategy for the 70s; Documents of the Socialist Workers Party: "The New Stage of World Revolution," by Joseph Hansen (report to 1971 SWP Convention), pp. 6-31

Questions

1. In 1971, Joseph Hansen noted that the effects of the Vietnam war (and not just the war itself) were moving to the center of the world stage. Give

examples of this tendency. How have the effects of the war continued to manifest themselves?

2. What are the main goals of U. S. imperialism in the detente? What are the goals of the Moscow and Peking bureaucrats? What were the key elements in U. S. strategy before the detente and what major shifts have occurred? What developments necessitated these shifts?

3. How has the detente been reflected in Vietnam? The Mideast? Has the prediction that "Moscow and Peking's assistance to imperialism will not be limited to the colonial world" been borne out?

4. What factors in the world situation prevent the detente from establishing class peace?

5. How does the Sino-Soviet conflict reflect the logic of the theory of socialism in one country? Why are such conflicts inevitable between deformed or degenerated workers states? How would a revolutionary regime in a workers state act to overcome such conflicts? How has U. S. imperialism made use of the Sino-Soviet conflict?

6. What are the likely effects of the present world situation on the development of the political revolution in the Stalinized workers states?

7. What effect have economic difficulties had on imperialist strategy? Why are the actions imperialism takes to deal with these difficulties sure to undermine the search for class peace?

8. How have relationships between U. S. capitalism and its West European and Japanese allies changed since World War II? What conflicts of interest now exist? What factors assure the U. S. of continued dominance in the capitalist sphere despite increased competition? How was this dominance reflected during the energy crisis? During the October, 1973 Mideast War?

9. What are the limits of efforts to create European economic institutions like the Common Market?

10. Jack Barnes projects the development of "more complex relations between the three sectors of the world revolution. There is likely to be much more interpenetration of ideas, models, conflicts, and the emulation of examples." Why is this the case? Give examples of such developments. What was the relationship of the Vietnam war to struggles in all three sectors?

Class 3. The Spreading Radicalization: Oppressed Nationalities, Students, and Women

Required Reading: From Dynamics of World Revolution Today: "The World Political Situation and the Immediate Tasks of the Fourth Interna-

tional," pp. 111-118, 136-151. From The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution: "Transitional and Democratic Slogans as Bridges to the Socialist Revolution," by Joseph Hansen, pp. 32-37
Supplementary Reading: "Socialist Revolution and the Struggle for Women's Liberation," draft resolution in International Internal Discussion Bulletin, Volume X, Number 22, November 1973; "Comrade Germain's Errors on the National Question," by Gus Horowitz, in International Internal Discussion Bulletin, Volume X, Number 10, July 1973; From The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution (Pathfinder Press, \$2.45): "A Strategy for Revolutionary Youth," pp. 181-203; "The Role of the Transitional Program in the Revolutionary Process," by George Novack, pp. 51-63

Questions

1. Why can't the proletariat take power without allies in other sectors of the population? How can it win their allegiance? What dangers exist if it fails to do so?

2. What are some of the reasons for the prominence of democratic demands in the current radicalization? Why would it be fatal to ignore struggles around such demands? Why is it wrong to downplay democratic demands in favor of "more advanced" demands?

3. How does a revolutionary party distinguish itself from bourgeois or reformist trends in struggles around democratic demands? How does this differ from the way sectarians or ultralefts try to differentiate themselves?

4. How do the crises and sudden breakdowns of capitalism create opportunities to bring transitional demands to the fore? Give examples.

5. Why is it incorrect to say that national oppression of the colonies and semicolonies can be abolished by formal independence? How is the fallacy of this reasoning revealed by events in the Arab East? Latin America? What does the theory of permanent revolution indicate in this regard?

6. What are factors that are bringing struggles of oppressed nationalities to the fore in advanced capitalist countries? Give examples. Why do we regard the compulsory assimilation of oppressed nationalities by capitalism as reactionary? How is this position consistent with our goal of an international socialist society unencumbered by national boundaries?

7. What is the role played by struggles of the oppressed nationalities in the workers' states?

8. What has been the role played by students in the worldwide radicalization? How has this role been reaffirmed by struggles in Greece, Thailand, and elsewhere?

9. What are some of the basic weaknesses of the

student movement? How can a revolutionary party combat them? What does a revolutionary party have to gain by work in this arena? What advantages do revolutionary youth organizations offer in carrying out this work?

10. Why is it incorrect to restrict the potential of the women's liberation movement to "middle class women" or even to the advanced capitalist countries? What demands have been raised by this movement that have applicability in all three sectors of the world revolution?

11. How do struggles such as those of students, women, and oppressed nationalities aid the proletarian struggle for socialism? How can the revolutionary movement be damaged by a sectarian attitude toward these movements?

12. What is the attitude of the Stalinist and social-democratic parties toward the struggles of oppressed nationalities in the three sectors? To the struggles of women? What accounts for this stance and what opportunities does it present for a revolutionary party?

Class 4. The World Revolution Resumes Its Main Course

Required Reading: From Dynamics of World Revolution Today: "The World Political Situation and the Immediate Tasks of the Fourth International," pp. 119-135; "The Unfolding New World Situation," by Jack Barnes, pp. 102-109

Supplementary Reading: "The Social Transformations in Eastern Europe, China, and Cuba," by Joseph Hansen in Education for Socialists Bulletin The Workers and Farmers Government, pp. 20-30

Questions

1. What key aspects of the Russian Revolution represent an indispensable model for the world revolution? Why haven't these been superseded by the creation of workers states by other means in Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia, China, North Vietnam, and Cuba?

2. Why was the key to the victory of the Russian revolution political in character? Didn't military conflicts play an important role? What was the relationship between military and political factors in the outcome of the Russian revolution?

3. What was the "long detour"? What were its causes? What were the contradictory effects of the detour on the world revolution?

4. What are the origins of the strategy of guerrilla warfare? How does it differ from the concept of guerrilla warfare as a tactic? Why are guerrilla struggles often a part of revolutionary struggles in the colonial world?

5. Why has the guerrilla strategy been unable to produce any new socialist revolutions since Cuba? What are its fundamental weaknesses?

6. What is substitutionism? What are the role of leadership and masses in the guerrilla warfare strategy and in the Leninist strategy?

7. What was the position taken on guerrilla warfare in the light of the Cuban revolution in "For Early Reunification of the World Trotskyist Movement"? How is this position consistent with the analysis in "The World Political Situation and the Immediate Tasks of the Fourth International"? What new experiences and problems does the latter document take into account?

8. What factors have helped to produce the shift back to the urban proletariat as the center of revolutionary struggles? Give some illustrations of this shift. Is this trend limited to the industrialized countries? How have the pro-guerrilla warfare tendencies responded to this shift?

9. Why is the political hegemony of the cities over the countryside a fundamental tendency of the world revolution rather than a temporary shift?

10. Why hasn't this shift toward the classical pattern yet produced a new October revolution?

11. Why does this shift offer increased opportunities for building revolutionary Marxist parties? Why does it make a proletarian program appear more "realistic" to radicalizing layers than was the case in the past?

12. Why is a correct understanding of the "long detour" important for Trotskyists? What errors have misunderstandings about this led to in the past in the cases of Pablo and Healy?

Class 5. The Crisis of Proletarian Leadership and the Immediate Tasks of the Fourth International

Required Reading: From Dynamics of World Revolution Today: "The World Political Situation and the Immediate Tasks of the Fourth International," pp. 152-188

Supplementary Reading: From The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution: "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International," pp. 72-112; From What Is To Be Done? by V. I. Lenin: "The 'Plan' For An All-Russian Newspaper," available in Lenin, Collected Works, Volume 5 (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1961 and numerous other editions).

Questions

1. What is the crisis of revolutionary leadership and what are its causes? Why can't it be overcome spontaneously by a powerful world revolutionary upsurge?

2. What are the objective and subjective factors

in the world revolution? How have these changed since the founding of the Fourth International in 1938? Has either factor changed qualitatively? Why is the distinction between the degree of ripeness of the objective and subjective factors of such vital importance for revolutionists?

3. How does the evolution of the Castro leadership demonstrate the need for a revolutionary Marxist party even where a non-Stalinist leadership has taken power? How has the absence of a clear revolutionary program affected the domestic and foreign policies of the Castro regime? What effect have these policies had on the Latin American revolution?

4. What are the essential characteristics of a people's front? What is the fundamental difference between a people's front and a reformist workers party? Why is it tactically permissible to call for critical support to a reformist workers party, but a violation of principle to give any support to a people's front? What value does a peoples front have for the bourgeoisie? Can it play this role even if no major sector of the bourgeoisie supports it?

5. Why does the Transitional Program refer to the historical period as "prerevolutionary" rather than "revolutionary"? Was this because objective conditions were not ripe for revolution in 1938? What was lacking to make the period fully revolutionary?

6. Why does "The World Political Situation and the Immediate Tasks of the Fourth International" describe the immediate tasks of Trotskyists as propa-

gandistic? Why is the central goal the accumulation of cadres? What is the relationship between the objective conditions, the level of development of the Trotskyist movement, and the tasks of Trotskyists? If the period is objectively revolutionary, why isn't the central immediate task to make the revolution?

7. What is the concept of propaganda outlined by "The World Political Situation and the Tasks of the Fourth International"? How does it differ from mere commentary on events? In what ways can the activities of the French Trotskyists in May-June 1968, of the SWP in the antiwar movement, and of the Minneapolis Trotskyists in the 1934 truckers' strikes be regarded as propaganda actions? When can Trotskyist parties move qualitatively beyond the level of propaganda?

8. What errors can result from overestimating the ability of a small group of cadres to determine the course of the class struggle? How does the concept of "minority violence" reflect such errors? Why doesn't it offer a way to overcome the weakness of Trotskyist forces?

9. How do the suggestions for action in "The World Political Situation and the Immediate Tasks of the Fourth International" fit in with its conception of the nature of the period and the tasks of Trotskyists?

10. What is the importance of a regularly issued newspaper for a revolutionary party? Why will the failure to publish such a paper lead to stagnation?