

Discussion Bulletin

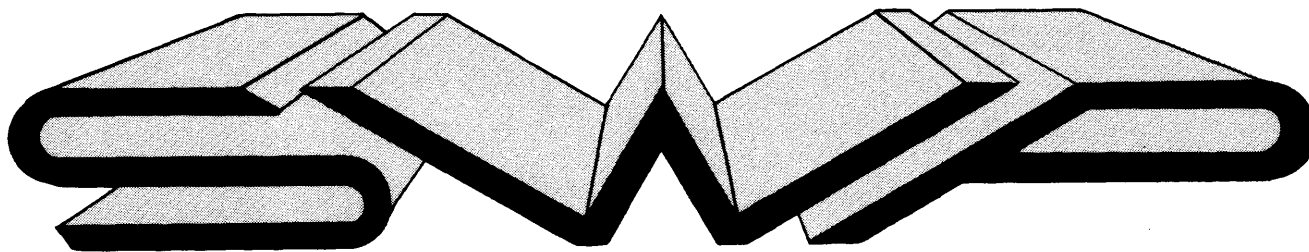
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ON THE CONVERGENCE OF THE WORLD REVOLUTION

by Jan G.

1. The historical materialist method has gone through its own evolution since it was first formulated by Marx and Engels in the 1840's. The first, most obvious contribution was the elaboration of a theory of historical stages, a theory which many have incorrectly come to understand as the sum and substance of Marxism. Having thoroughly absorbed the method and spirit of historical dialectics, Marx avoided a mechanical application of the theory of stages; he actually applied what has come to be known as the law of uneven and combined development long before the name was dreamed up and the principle was made explicit.

2. Nonetheless, it was definitely a step forward when Trotsky focused on the subject and put a stress on a refinement of Marxist method beyond its popular application as the theory of stages. There was an historic necessity for this, however, with the coming to power of the proletariat and the Bolshevik party in a backward country, and then the conditions allowing the rise of Stalinism.

3. The deepening crisis of imperialism since 1917, and again since 1945 -- the contradictions caused by the rise of a series of deformed workers states, the conquest of the world market by the United States and the satellitization of the European imperialist powers -- all these processes have resolved the somewhat scattered, relatively isolated antagonisms of the many countries, subcontinents and continents into a single, tightly knit, excruciatingly agonizing antagonism. It is the contradiction of capitalism as a world system which has become qualitatively more rotten-ripe for negation than ever before. The system has survived many a past crisis which might have led to revolution because it still possessed superstructural resources (i.e. the ability to buy off, brainwash and/or demoralize what might otherwise have been the vanguard of the proletariat). These resources are running out.

4. The process of resolution of this One Final Contradiction has certain unique features which justify giving it a label, perhaps even the title of a law, like its more general uncle the law of uneven and combined development, or the title of theory, like its sociological parent the theory of permanent revolution. Rather than hassle about inessentials, we give simply its name: the convergence of world revolution. Quite simply put, it means that all the contradictions of the world capitalist system will tend to come crashing down on the main imperialist power and that partial solutions, such as the establishment of a workers state in any one country,

have become increasingly less feasible ... until a point has been reached (it probably already has been) where U.S. imperialism must be destroyed, especially from within, before any new workers state can stabilize itself.

5. The convergence of world revolution stresses the combined resolution of contradictions which have risen out of the uneven development of various sectors of the class struggle and the "lag" on the part of the consciousness of the revolutionary class. The combined development here stressed must be two-fold however: not only must each uneven (i.e. contradictory) aspect be resolved, but there must be a large element of simultaneity in the resolution of the various aspects of the whole. Convergence also stresses the fact that, while history has set itself what might appear to be a large order in this requirement, it also is setting the stage for just such a inextricably interlinked resolution. (We shall return to this.)

6. The objective basis for the convergence of the world revolution in our epoch is precisely that which in the previous one led the various sectors of the world to take divergent paths: namely, imperialism. The essence of imperialism is this: that the colonial or neocolonial countries have been forced to "develop" through methods of intensification and concentration of labor (slavery, forced labor, etc.) and the centers (now center) of imperialism have partaken of the fruits of industrialization and increased productivity; so that, in "free exchange" on the world market, the colonial countries part with their commodities at prices below their value and the imperialist centers part with their commodities by selling them above their value.

Although investment in the colonial world is undoubtedly an aspect of imperialism, it is not the type of investment that would reproduce the industrial structure of the mother country. The first form of imperialist investment was in railroads, port facilities, etc. the means to get the raw materials mined in labor-intensive fashion out of the country; later, perhaps, some first-phase processing industries, whose purpose is to reduce the bulk of the raw material which has to be exported, are added. But no heavy industry (steel, auto, etc.) on any scale. Of late, another form of investment -- at the other end of the producing process -- such as finishing industries, may appear in a colonial or semicolonial country. In any case, the main industries between the beginning and the end of the productive process are left out and these are the bases for a healthy national economy. This vast middle ground is also the industrial arena in which the bulk of technological advances have their impact.

7. This metropolis-colony divergence has had a strategic value for the preservation of capitalism; it has enabled the imperialist bourgeoisie to make a temporary junior partner of the majority of the working classes in the imperialist

centers. Likewise, in the cities of the colonial world, the strategic question has been well considered by the master class; a good deal of attention has been paid to buying off and misleading the urban proletariat, while the proletarians of the mines and plantations have been viciously exploited.

8. The driving force in the world today is the contradiction between the profit motive, i.e. the struggle against the falling rate of profit, and the defense of the humanity of labor. In the workers states, the latter consists of the process of primitive socialist accumulation, not to mention the struggle for workers democracy; in the capitalist countries, it necessitates a struggle to maintain the worker's share of his product, i.e. to increase his standard of living as fast as productivity in spite of inflation, speed-up, taxes, etc. -- necessarily an uphill fight.

9. Because of the increasing resistance of the colonial peoples -- reflecting the fact that the colonial world will no longer serve as a willing dumping ground for the contradictions of capitalism -- imperialism has to try to resolve its problems on its home base. The result will be increasing resistance (more strikes, black insurrections, etc.) on the part of the American people. This is above and beyond the already great opposition of the American people to Johnson's Vietnam adventure, through which the problems the U.S. has so long dumped on other peoples are coming home to roost.

10. Imperialism has created a geographically distributed divergence, and in the process of convergence, aspects of the exploited pole appear within the body of the exploiter pole. An example of this is the rise of national oppression within the imperialist centers themselves; the Afro-American in the midst of urban America; the West Indian in urban Britain. Another example is the appearance of student radicalism in the colonial countries in the late 1950's through 1960 (not to mention the Cuban Revolution), only to be soon reflected in the appearance of a radical student movement in the U.S. itself. Along with all this, and its motor force, is the role of the colonial revolution in restimulating revolutionary sentiment in the imperialist centers, as well as antiwar sentiment, civil rights struggles and even increased labor combativity. Not the least aspect of this convergence is the spillover of the violence of the class struggle from the colonial world to the metropolitan centers.

11. As the day of the showdown with imperialism approaches, it becomes less and less accurate for the vanguard forces to look for the crisis in terms of a purely military, or purely economic, or purely political crisis. The Vietnam war, for example, is a crisis for imperialism, but it is not purely a military one; it is much more than that: it is part of the general crisis of the system and all the crisis aspects are becoming increasingly clear. The same caveat holds in the

analysis of the economic crisis of capitalism: we should not look for a pure-and-simple depression, or a pure run-away inflation; there is, rather, a tendency for both to take place. Moreover, there is no law that says a depression has to be as abrupt as in 1929 (in fact, it is not likely). Finally, it becomes more and more necessary to analyze the economic situations in various capitalist countries for the elements of a general, international economic crisis, inasmuch as capitalism has avoided such crises over the past two decades by "spacing" recessions, etc. in various countries so that they didn't occur simultaneously and thus set off international depression.

12. Capitalism's unified character necessitates and produces the unity, in the long run, of all those processes which contradict it and requires their mutual resolution in a single, more or less simultaneous world socialist revolution.

13. There has been growing recognition of this fact since 1964 among vanguard elements in the guerrilla struggles of Latin America, in the call by Cuba and North Korea for unified socialist defense of Vietnam and perhaps most dramatically by Che Guevara in his recent article.

14. But something else flows from all this: the conscious factor (the revolutionary party and the vanguard of the world working-class) and the really decisive agents (workers of U.S. and Europe), now apparently far behind the revolutionary agents and insurgent classes in other parts of the world, will only fully live up to their role and duty at the moment of the revolution itself. Everything we do now -- outside of our elementary duties of solidarity with our fighting, oppressed brothers and sisters elsewhere -- is preparation for this, building towards it. In other words, the advanced, leading role of the Western proletariat and the Fourth International, with their vanguard contributions, will develop as the final conflict approaches, but their actual leadership of the world's toilers will be decided only at the moment they take the power.

July 1, 1967

ADDENDA

A. There are mechanisms by which U.S. imperialism can force the masses in other imperialist countries besides its own to pay for its war against the Vietnamese (and the colonial revolution in general). Simply through raising the prices of its own industrial goods and the prices of goods of its subsidiaries, the result will be to shrink the real wages through inflation throughout North America and Western Europe. The surplus profits thereby accruing to U.S. investors form a source of taxable revenue which the U.S. government can get

its hands on. This is just one mechanism among many through which the U.S. can and does, to a greater extent than ever before, pace its crisis-causing measures so that it doesn't precipitate a political crisis of unsolvable proportions in any one country before it has exhausted its potential in all countries.

B. As the moment of showdown with imperialism gets closer, the greater the gap between the need felt by potentially revolutionary forces for revolutionary ideology and organization, and the ability of the organized revolutionists to fill that need.* The dissolution of the reformists and Stalinists and their inability to intervene grows faster than the numbers and quality of the revolutionary Marxists, the only ones who could conceivably fill the vacuum left by the dissolution of the former tendencies. This means that only by the stretching of its resources to the utmost can the Fourth International attain a size and influence capable of moving the lever of history at the decisive moment.

July 11, 1967

* One does not have to look far for examples of the gap between this "felt need" and our ability to meet it. The recent experiences of the Canadian youth movement and the coming experience of the U.S. movement in the election campaign provide them. In Canada, all the left competitors of the YS have lost a good deal of ground; we have grown a little; but the radicalism does not diminish, rather it increases. In this country, the peace politicians have a chance now if they ever did, to make hay, but they seem incapable of fielding a national ticket in 1968!

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PROPOSAL TO CHANGE SECTION 3 OF ARTICLE VII OF THE
CONSTITUTION

by Barbara Doritty

Proposal that Unemployed Dues be raised from twenty cents (20 cents) per month to one dollar (\$1.00) per month:

Under Article VII. Section 3, the Constitution as ratified by the convention of June 1961 reads as follows: "Unemployed members or housewives, not otherwise employed, shall pay twenty cents (20 cents) per month."

With the proposed change the Constitution would read as follows: "Unemployed members or housewives, not otherwise employed, shall pay one dollar (\$1.00) per month."

No change is proposed for Section 4 which states that dues of unemployed members shall go in full to the National Office.

Twenty cents a month for unemployed members is a hang-over from the 1930's. It was a period of mass unemployment and depression, the standard of living for the average person was extremely low. The cost of a meal wasn't much higher than the twenty cents comrades paid for dues. And the American working class did not have unemployment insurance to collect when they were out of work. Jobs were scarce and living was tough.

Prices, wages and the increased income of the unemployed are all far higher today. An increase in dues would only reflect the increased ability of unemployed members to contribute financially.

July 19, 1967