

**NATIONAL LIBERATION AND  
NEO-COLONIALISM 101  
STUDY PACKET**

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## **COURSE 1: V.I. LENIN, The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination (1916)**

### **1. Imperialism, Socialism, and the Liberation of Oppressed Nations**

Imperialism is the highest stage of development of capitalism. Capital in the advanced countries has outgrown the boundaries of national states. It has established monopoly in place of competition, thus creating all the objective prerequisites for the achievement of socialism. Hence, in Western Europe and in the United States of America, the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat for the overthrow of the capitalist governments, for the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, is on the order of the day. Imperialism is forcing the masses into this struggle by sharpening class antagonisms to an immense degree, by worsening the conditions of the masses both economically—trusts and high cost of living, and politically—growth of militarism, frequent wars, increase of reaction, strengthening and extension of national oppression and colonial plunder.

Victorious socialism must achieve complete democracy and, consequently, not only bring about the complete equality of nations, but also give effect to the right of oppressed nations to self-determination, i.e., the right to free political secession. Socialist Parties which fail to prove by all their activities now, as well as during the revolution and after its victory, that they will free the enslaved nations and establish relations with them on the basis of a free union and a free union is a lying phrase without right to secession—such parties would be committing treachery to socialism.

Of course, democracy is also a form of state which must disappear when the state disappears, but this will take place only in the process of transition from completely victorious and consolidated socialism to complete communism.

### **2. The Socialist Revolution and the Struggle for Democracy**

The socialist revolution is not one single act, not one single battle on a single front; but a whole epoch of intensified class conflicts, a long series of battles on all fronts, i.e., battles around all the problems of economics and

politics, which can culminate only in the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. It would be a fundamental mistake to suppose that the struggle for democracy can divert the proletariat from the socialist revolution, or obscure, or overshadow it, etc. On the contrary, just as socialism cannot be victorious unless it introduces complete democracy, so the proletariat will be unable to prepare for victory over the bourgeoisie unless it wages a many-sided, consistent and revolutionary struggle for democracy.

It would be no less mistaken to delete any of the points of the democratic programme, for example, the point of self-determination of nations, on the ground that it is “infeasible,” or that it is “illusory” under imperialism. The assertion that the right of nations to self-determination cannot be achieved within the framework of capitalism may be understood either in its absolute, economic sense, or in the conventional, political sense.

In the first case, the assertion is fundamentally wrong in theory. First, in this sense, it is impossible to achieve such things as labour money, or the abolition of crises, etc., under capitalism. But it is entirely incorrect to argue that the self-determination of nations is likewise infeasible. Secondly, even the one example of the secession of Norway from Sweden in 1905 is sufficient to refute the argument that it is “infeasible” in this sense. Thirdly, it would be ridiculous to deny that, with a slight change in political and strategical relationships, for example, between Germany and England, the formation of new states, Polish, Indian, etc, would be quite “feasible” very soon. Fourthly, finance capital, in its striving towards expansion, will “freely” buy and bribe the freest, most democratic and republican government and the elected officials of any country, however “independent” it may be. The domination of finance capital, as of capital in general, cannot be abolished by any kind of reforms in the realm of political democracy, and self-determination belongs wholly and exclusively to this realm. The domination of finance capital, however, does not in the least destroy the significance of political democracy as the freer, wider and more distinct form of class oppression and class struggle. Hence, all arguments about the “impossibility of achieving” economically one of the demands of political

democracy under capitalism reduce themselves to a theoretically incorrect definition of the general and fundamental relations of capitalism and of political democracy in general.

In the second case, this assertion is incomplete and inaccurate, for not only the right of nations to self-determination, but all the fundamental demands of political democracy are “possible of achievement” under imperialism, only in an incomplete, in a mutilated form and as a rare exception (for example, the secession of Norway from Sweden in 1905). The demand for the immediate liberation of the colonies, as advanced by all revolutionary Social-Democrats, is also “impossible of achievement” under capitalism without a series of revolutions. This does not imply, however, that Social Democracy must refrain from conducting an immediate and most determined struggle for all these demands—to refrain would merely be to the advantage of the bourgeoisie and reaction. On the contrary, it implies that it is necessary to formulate and put forward all these demands, not in a reformist, but in a revolutionary way; not by keeping within the framework of bourgeois legality, but by breaking through it; not by confining oneself to parliamentary speeches and verbal protests, but by drawing the masses into real action, by widening and fomenting the struggle for every kind of fundamental, democratic demand, right up to and including the direct onslaught of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, i.e., to the socialist revolution, which will expropriate the bourgeoisie. The socialist revolution may break out not only in consequence of a great strike, a street demonstration, a hunger riot, a mutiny in the forces, or a colonial rebellion, but also in consequence of any political crisis, like the Dreyfus affair,<sup>[4]</sup> the Zabern incident,<sup>[5]</sup> or in connection with a referendum on the secession of an oppressed nation, etc.

The intensification of national oppression under imperialism makes it necessary for Social-Democracy not to renounce what the bourgeoisie describes as the “utopian” struggle for the freedom of nations to secede, but, on the contrary, to take more advantage than ever before of conflicts arising also on this ground for the purpose of rousing mass action and revolutionary attacks upon the bourgeoisie.

### **3. The Meaning of the Right to Self-Determination and its Relation to Federation**

The right of nations to self-determination means only the right to independence in a political sense, the right to free, political secession from the oppressing nation. Concretely, this political, democratic demand implies complete freedom to carry on agitation in favour of secession, and freedom to settle the question of secession by means of a referendum of the nation that desires to secede. Consequently, this demand is by no means identical with the demand for secession, for partition, for the formation of small states. It is merely the logical expression of the struggle against national oppression in every form. The more closely the democratic system of state approximates to complete freedom of secession, the rarer and weaker will the striving for secession be in practice; for the advantages of large states, both from the point of view of economic progress and from the point of view of the interests of the masses, are beyond doubt, and these advantages increase with the growth of capitalism. The recognition of self-determination is not the same as making federation a principle. One may be a determined opponent of this principle and a partisan of democratic centralism and yet prefer federation to national inequality as the only path towards complete democratic centralism. It was precisely from this point of view that Marx, although a centralist, preferred even the federation of Ireland with England to the forcible subjection of Ireland to the English.<sup>[6]</sup>

The aim of socialism is not only to abolish the present division of mankind into small states and all national isolation; not only to bring the nations closer to each other, but also to merge them. And in order to achieve this aim, we must, on the one hand, explain to the masses the reactionary nature of the ideas of Renner and Otto Bauer concerning so-called "cultural national autonomy"<sup>[7]</sup> and, on the other hand, demand the liberation of the oppressed nations, not only in general, nebulous phrases, not in empty declamations, not by "postponing" the question until socialism is established, but in a clearly and precisely formulated

political programme which shall particularly take into account the hypocrisy and cowardice of the Socialists in the oppressing nations. Just as mankind can achieve the abolition of classes only by passing through the transition period of the dictatorship of the oppressed class, so mankind can achieve the inevitable merging of nations only by passing through the transition period of complete liberation of all the oppressed nations, i.e., their freedom to secede.

#### **4. The Proletarian-Revolutionary Presentation of the Question of the Self-Determination of Nations**

Not only the demand for the self-determination of nations but all the items of our democratic minimum programme were advanced before us, as far back as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, by the petty bourgeoisie. And the petty bourgeoisie, believing in “peaceful” capitalism, continues to this day to advance all these demands in a utopian way, without seeing the class struggle and the fact that it has become intensified under democracy. The idea of a peaceful union of equal nations under imperialism, which deceives the people, and which the Kautskyists advocate, is precisely of this nature. As against this philistine, opportunist utopia, the programme of Social-Democracy must point out that under imperialism the division of nations into oppressing and oppressed ones is a fundamental, most important and inevitable fact.

The proletariat of the oppressing nations cannot confine itself to the general hackneyed phrases against annexations and for the equal rights of nations in general, that may be repeated by any pacifist bourgeois. The proletariat cannot evade the question that is particularly “unpleasant” for the imperialist bourgeoisie, namely, the question of the frontiers of a state that is based on national oppression. The proletariat cannot but fight against the forcible retention of the oppressed nations within the boundaries of a given state, and this is exactly what the struggle for the right of self-determination means. The proletariat must demand the right of political secession for the colonies and for the nations that “its own” nation oppresses. Unless it does this, proletarian

internationalism will remain a meaningless phrase; mutual confidence and class solidarity between the workers of the oppressing and oppressed nations will be impossible; the hypocrisy of the reformist and Kautskyan advocates of self-determination who maintain silence about the nations which are oppressed by “their” nation and forcibly retained within “their” state will remain unexposed. The Socialists of the oppressed nations, on the other hand, must particularly fight for and maintain complete, absolute unity (also organizational) between the workers of the oppressed nation and the workers of the oppressing nation. Without such unity it will be impossible to maintain an independent proletarian policy and class solidarity with the proletariat of other countries in the face of all the subterfuge, treachery and trickery of the bourgeoisie; for the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations always converts the slogan of national liberation into a means for deceiving the workers; in internal politics it utilizes these slogans as a means for concluding reactionary agreements with the bourgeoisie of the ruling nation (for instance, the Poles in Austria and Russia, who entered into pacts with reaction in order to oppress the Jews and the Ukrainians); in the realm of foreign politics it strives to enter into pacts with one of the rival imperialist powers for the purpose of achieving its own predatory aims (the policies of the small states in the Balkans, etc.).

The fact that the struggle for national liberation against one imperialist power may, under certain circumstances, be utilized by another “Great” Power in its equally imperialist interests should have no more weight in inducing Social Democracy to renounce its recognition of the right of nations to self-determination than the numerous case of the bourgeoisie utilizing republican slogans for the purpose of political deception and financial robbery, for example, in the Latin countries, have had in inducing them to renounce republicanism.[\[1\]](#)

## **5. Marxism and Proudhonism on the National Question**

In contrast to the petty-bourgeois democrats, Marx regarded all democratic demands without exception not as an absolute, but as a historical expression of



the struggle of the masses of the people, led by the bourgeoisie, against feudalism. There is not a single democratic demand which could not serve, and has not served, under certain conditions, as an instrument of the bourgeoisie for deceiving the workers. To single out one of the demands of political democracy, namely, the self determination of nations, and to oppose it to all the rest, is fundamentally wrong in theory. In practice, the proletariat will be able to retain its independence only if it subordinates its struggle for all the democratic demands, not excluding the demand for a republic, to its revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie.

On the other hand, in contrast to the Proudhonists, who “repudiated” the national problem “in the name of the social revolution,” Marx, having in mind mainly the interests of the proletarian class struggle in the advanced countries, put into the forefront the fundamental principle of internationalism and socialism, viz., that no nation can be free if it oppresses other nations.<sup>[8]</sup> It was precisely from the standpoint of the interests of the revolutionary movement of the German workers that Marx in 1898 demanded that victorious democracy in Germany should proclaim and grant freedom to the nations that the Germans were oppressing.<sup>[9]</sup> It was precisely from the standpoint of the revolutionary struggle of the English workers that Marx in 1869 demanded the separation of Ireland from England, and added: “...although after the separation there may come federation.”<sup>[10]</sup> Only by putting forward this demand did Marx really educate the English workers in the spirit of internationalism. Only in this way was he able to oppose the revolutionary solution of a given historical problem to the opportunists and bourgeois reformism, which even now, half a century later, has failed to achieve the Irish “reform.” Only in this way was Marx able—unlike the apologists of capital who shout about the right of small nations to secession being utopian and impossible, and about the progressive nature not only of economic but also of political concentration—to urge the progressive nature of this concentration in a non-imperialist manner, to urge the bringing together of the nations, not by force, but on the basis of a free union of the proletarians of all countries. Only in this way was Marx able, also in the sphere of the solution of national problems, to

oppose the revolutionary action of the masses to verbal and often hypocritical recognition of the equality and the self-determination of nations. The imperialist war of 1914-16 and the Augean stables of hypocrisy of the opportunists and Kautskyists it exposed have strikingly confirmed the correctness of Marx's policy, which must serve as the model for all the advanced countries; for all of them now oppress other nations.[\[2\]](#)

## **6. Three Types of Countries in Relation to Self-Determination of Nations**

In this respect, countries must be divided into three main types:

First, the advanced capitalist countries of Western Europe and the United States of America. In these countries the bourgeois, progressive, national movements came to an end long ago. Every one of these "great" nations oppresses other nations in the colonies and within its own country. The tasks of the proletariat of these ruling nations are the same as those of the proletariat in England in the nineteenth century in relation to Ireland.[\[3\]](#)

Secondly, Eastern Europe: Austria, the Balkans and particularly Russia. Here it was the twentieth century that particularly developed the bourgeois-democratic national movements and intensified the national struggle. The tasks of the proletariat in these countries—in regard to the consummation of their bourgeois-democratic reformation, as well as in regard to assisting the socialist revolution in other countries—cannot be achieved unless it champions the right of nations to self-determination. In this connection the most difficult but most important task is to merge the class struggle of the workers in the oppressing nations with the class struggle of the workers in the oppressed nations.

Thirdly, the semi-colonial countries, like China, Persia, Turkey, and all the colonies, which have a combined population amounting to a billion. In these countries the bourgeois-democratic movements have either hardly begun, or are far from having been completed. Socialists must not only demand the unconditional and immediate liberation of the colonies without compensation—and this demand in its political expression signifies nothing more nor less than

the recognition of the right to self-determination—but must render determined support to the more revolutionary elements in the bourgeois-democratic movements for national liberation in these countries and assist their rebellion—and if need be, their revolutionary war—against the imperialist powers that oppress them.

## **7. Social-Chauvinism and Self Determination of Nations**

The imperialist epoch and the war of 1914-16 have particularly brought to the forefront the task of fighting against chauvinism and nationalism in the advanced countries. On the question of the self-determination of nations, there are two main shades of opinion among the social-chauvinists, i.e., the opportunists and the Kautskyists, who embellish the reactionary, imperialist war by declaring it to be a war in “defence of the fatherland.”

On the one hand, we see the rather avowed servants of the bourgeoisie who defend annexations on the ground that imperialism and political concentration are progressive and who repudiate the right to self-determination on the ground that it is utopian, illusory, petty-bourgeois, etc. Among these may be included Cunow, Parvus and the extreme opportunists in Germany, a section of the Fabians and the trade union leaders in England, and the opportunists, Semkovsky, Liebman, Yurkevich, etc., in Russia.

On the other hand, we see the Kautskyists, including Vandervelde, Renaudel, and many of the pacifists in England, France, etc. These stand for unity with the first-mentioned group, and in practice their conduct is the same in that they advocate the right to self-determination in a purely verbal and hypocritical way. They regard the demand for the freedom of political secession as being “excessive” (“zu viel verlangt”—Kautsky, in the *Neue Zeit*, May 21, 1915); they do not advocate the need for revolutionary tactics, especially for the Socialists in the oppressing nations, but, on the contrary, they gloss over their revolutionary duties, they justify their opportunism, they make it easier to deceive the people, they evade precisely the question of the frontiers of a state which

forcibly retains subject nations, etc.

Both groups are opportunists who prostitute Marxism and who have lost all capacity to understand the theoretical significance and the practical urgency of Marx's tactics, an example of which he gave in relation to Ireland.

The specific question of annexations has become a particularly urgent one owing to the war. But what is annexation! Clearly, to protest against annexations implies either the recognition of the right of self-determination of nations, or that the protest is based on a pacifist phrase which defends the status quo and opposes all violence including revolutionary violence. Such a phrase is radically wrong, and incompatible with Marxism.

## **8. The Concrete Tasks of the Proletariat in the Immediate Future**

The socialist revolution may begin in the very near future. In that event the proletariat will be faced with the immediate task of capturing power, of expropriating the banks and of introducing other dictatorial measures. In such a situation, the bourgeoisie, and particularly intellectuals like the Fabians and the Kautskyists, will strive to disrupt and to hinder the revolution, to restrict it to limited democratic aims. While all purely democratic demands may—at a time when the proletarians have already begun to storm the bulwarks of bourgeois power—serve, in a certain sense, as a hindrance to the revolution, nevertheless, the necessity of proclaiming and granting freedom to all oppressed nations (i.e., their right to self-determination) will be as urgent in the socialist revolution as it was urgent for the victory of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, for example, in Germany in 1848, or in Russia in 1905.

However, five, ten and even more years may pass before the socialist revolution begins. In that case, the task will be to educate the masses in a revolutionary spirit so as to make it impossible for Socialist chauvinists and opportunists to belong to the workers' party and to achieve a victory similar to that of 1914-16. It will be the duty of the Socialists to explain to the masses that English Socialists who fail to demand the freedom of secession for the colonies

and for Ireland; that German Socialists who fail to demand the freedom of secession for the colonies, for the Alsatians, for the Danes and for the Poles, and who fail to carry direct revolutionary propaganda and revolutionary mass action to the field of struggle against national oppression, who fail to take advantage of cases like the Zabern incident to conduct widespread underground propaganda among the proletariat of the oppressing nation, to organize street demonstrations and revolutionary mass actions; that Russian Socialists who fail to demand freedom of secession for Finland, Poland, the Ukraine, etc., etc.—are behaving like chauvinists, like lackeys of the blood-and-mud-stained imperialist monarchies and the imperialist bourgeoisie.

## **9. The Attitude of Russian and Polish Social-Democracy and of the Second International to Self-Determination**

The difference between the revolutionary Social-Democrats of Russia and the Polish Social-Democrats on the question of self-determination came to the surface as early as 1903 at the congress which adopted the programme of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, and which, despite the protest of the Polish Social-Democratic delegation, inserted in that programme point 9, which recognizes the right of nations to self-determination. Since then the Polish Social Democrats have never repeated, in the name of their Party, the proposal to delete point 9 from our programme, or to substitute some other formulation for it.

In Russia—where no less than 57%, i.e., over 100,000,000 of the population, belong to oppressed nations, where those nations mainly inhabit the border provinces, where some of those nations are more cultured than the Great Russians, where the political system is distinguished by its particularly barbarous and mediaeval character, where the bourgeois-democratic revolution has not yet been completed—the recognition of the right of the nations oppressed by tsarism to free secession from Russia is absolutely obligatory for Social-Democracy in the interests of its democratic and socialist tasks. Our Party, which was re-established in January 1912, adopted a resolution in 1913<sup>[11]</sup> reiterating the right

to self-determination and explaining it in the concrete sense outlined above. The orgy of Great-Russian chauvinism raging in 1914-16 among the bourgeoisie and the opportunist Socialists (Rubanovich, Plekhanov, Nashe Dyelo, etc.) prompts us to insist on this demand more strongly than ever and to declare that those who reject it serve, in practice, as a bulwark of Great-Russian chauvinism and tsarism. Our party declares that it emphatically repudiates all responsibility for such opposition to the right of self-determination.

The latest formulation of the position of Polish Social-Democracy on the national question (the declaration made by Polish Social-Democracy at the Zimmerwald Conference) contains the following ideas:

This declaration condemns the German and other governments which regard the "Polish provinces" as a hostage in the forthcoming game of compensations and thus "deprive the Polish people of the opportunity to decide its own fate." The declaration says: "Polish Social-Democracy emphatically and solemnly protests against the recarving and partition of a whole country" . . . It condemns the Socialists who left to the Hohenzollerns "the task of liberating the oppressed nations." It expresses the conviction that only participation in the impending struggle of the revolutionary international proletariat, in the struggle for socialism, "will break the fetters of national oppression and abolish all forms of foreign domination, and secure for the Polish people the possibility of all-sided, free development as an equal member in a League of Nations." The declaration also recognizes the present war to be "doubly fratricidal" "for the Poles." (*Bulletin of the International Socialist Committee*, No. 2, September 27, 1915, p. 15.)

There is no difference in substance between these postulates and the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination except that their political formulation is still more diffuse and vague than the majority of the programmes and resolutions of the Second International. Any attempt to express these ideas in precise political formulae and to determine whether they apply to the capitalist system or only to the socialist system will prove still more strikingly the error committed by the Polish Social-Democrats in repudiating the self-determination of nations.

The decision of the International Socialist Congress held in London in 1896, which recognized the self-determination of nations, must, on the basis of the above-mentioned postulates, be supplemented by references to: (1) the particular urgency of this demand under imperialism; (2) the politically conditional nature and the class content of all the demands of political democracy, including this demand; (3) the necessity of drawing a distinction between the concrete tasks of the Social-Democrats in the oppressing nations and those in oppressed nations; (4) the inconsistent, purely verbal, and, therefore, as far as its political significance is concerned, hypocritical recognition of self-determination by the opportunists and Kautskyists; (5) the actual identity of the chauvinists and those Social-Democrats, particularly the Social-Democrats of the Great Powers (Great Russians, Anglo-Americans, Germans, French, Italians, Japanese, etc.) who fail to champion the freedom of secession for the colonies and nations oppressed by “their own” nations; (6) the necessity of subordinating the struggle for this demand, as well as for all the fundamental demands of political democracy, to the immediate revolutionary mass struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeois governments and for the achievement of socialism.

To transplant to the International the point of view of some of the small nations—particularly the point of view of the Polish Social-Democrats, who, in their struggle against the Polish bourgeoisie which is deceiving the people with nationalist slogans, were misled into repudiating self-determination—would be a theoretical error. It would be the substitution of Proudhonism for Marxism and, in practice, would result in rendering involuntary support to the most dangerous chauvinism and opportunism of the Great Power nations.

Notes

[1] Needless to say, to repudiate the right of self-determination on the ground that logically it means “defence of the fatherland” would be quite ridiculous. With equal logic, i.e., with equal shallowness, the social-chauvinists of 1914-16 apply this argument to every one of the demands of democracy (for instance, to republicanism), and to every formulation of the struggle against national oppression, in order to justify “defence of the fatherland.” Marxism arrives at the recognition of defence of the fatherland, for example, in the wars of the Great French Revolution and the Garibaldi wars in Europe, and at the repudiation of defence of the fatherland in the imperialist war of 1914-16, from the analysis of the specific historical circumstances of each separate war, and not from some “general principle,” or some separate item of a programme. —*Lenin*

[2] [HUGE LENIN FOOTNOTE MISSING.] Reference is often made—e.g., recently by the

German [...]

*Die Glocke*<sup>[12]</sup> [...]

defend the latter.<sup>[13]</sup> [...] —*Lenin*

<sup>[3]</sup> [HUGE LENIN FOOTNOTE MISSING.] In some small states which have kept out of [...] —  
*Lenin*

<sup>[4]</sup> [PLACEHOLDER.]

<sup>[5]</sup> [PLACEHOLDER.]

<sup>[6]</sup> [PLACEHOLDER.]

<sup>[7]</sup> [PLACEHOLDER.]

<sup>[8]</sup> [PLACEHOLDER.]

<sup>[9]</sup> [PLACEHOLDER.]

<sup>[10]</sup> [PLACEHOLDER.]

<sup>[12]</sup> [PLACEHOLDER.]

<sup>[13]</sup> [PLACEHOLDER.]

<sup>[11]</sup> [PLACEHOLDER.]

## Draft Theses on National and Colonial Questions (1920)

1) An abstract or formal posing of the problem of equality in general and national equality in particular is in the very nature of bourgeois democracy. Under the guise of the equality of the individual in general, bourgeois democracy proclaims the formal or legal equality of the property-owner and the proletarian, the exploiter and the exploited, thereby grossly deceiving the oppressed classes. On the plea that all men are absolutely equal, the bourgeoisie is transforming the idea of equality, which is itself a reflection of relations in commodity production, into a weapon in its struggle against the abolition of classes. The real meaning of the demand for equality consists in its being a demand for the abolition of classes.

2) In conformity with its fundamental task of combating bourgeois democracy and exposing its falseness and hypocrisy, the Communist Party, as the avowed champion of the proletarian struggle to overthrow the bourgeois yoke, must base its policy, in the national question too, not on abstract and formal principles but, first, on a precise appraisal of the specific historical situation and, primarily, of economic conditions; second, on a clear distinction between the interests of the oppressed classes, of working and exploited people, and the general concept of national interests as a whole, which implies the interests of the ruling class; third, on an equally clear distinction between the oppressed, dependent and subject nations and the oppressing, exploiting and sovereign



nations, in order to counter the bourgeois-democratic lies that play down this colonial and financial enslavement of the vast majority of the world's population by an insignificant minority of the richest and advanced capitalist countries, a feature characteristic of the era of finance capital and imperialism.

3) The imperialist war of 1914-18 has very clearly revealed to all nations and to the oppressed classes of the whole world the falseness of bourgeois-democratic phrases, by practically demonstrating that the Treaty of Versailles of the celebrated "Western democracies" is an even more brutal and foul act of violence against weak nations than was the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk of the German Junkers and the Kaiser. The League of Nations and the entire post war policy of the Entente reveal this truth with even greater clarity and distinctness. They are everywhere intensifying the revolutionary struggle both of the proletariat in the advanced countries and of the toiling masses in the colonial and dependent countries. They are hastening the collapse of the petty-bourgeois nationalist illusions that nations can live together in peace and equality under capitalism.

4) From these fundamental premises it follows that the Communist International's entire policy on the national and the colonial questions should rest primarily on a closer union of the proletarians and the working masses of all nations and countries for a joint revolutionary struggle to overthrow the landowners and the bourgeoisie. This union alone will guarantee victory over capitalism, without which the abolition of national oppression and inequality is impossible.

5) The world political situation has now placed the dictatorship of the proletariat on the order of the day. World political developments are of necessity concentrated on a single focus—the struggle of the world bourgeoisie against the Soviet Russian Republic, around which are inevitably grouped, on the one hand, the Soviet movements of the advanced workers in all countries, and, on the other, all the national liberation movements in the colonies and among the oppressed nationalities, who are learning from bitter experience that their only salvation lies in the Soviet system's victory over world imperialism.

6) Consequently, one cannot at present confine oneself to a bare

recognition or proclamation of the need for closer union between the working people of the various nations; a policy must be pursued that will achieve the closest alliance, with Soviet Russia, of all the national and colonial liberation movements. The form of this alliance should be determined by the degree of development of the communist movement in the proletariat of each country, or of the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement of the workers and peasants in backward countries or among backward nationalities.

7) Federation is a transitional form to the complete unity of the working people of different nations. The feasibility of federation has already been demonstrated in practice both by the relations between the R.S.F.S.R. and other Soviet Republics (the Hungarian, Finnish<sup>[2]</sup> and Latvian<sup>[3]</sup> in the past, and the Azerbaijan and Ukrainian at present), and by the relations within the R.S.F.S.R. in respect of nationalities which formerly enjoyed neither statehood nor autonomy (e.g., the Bashkir and Tatar autonomous republics in the R.S.F.S.R., founded in 1919 and 1920 respectively).

8) In this respect, it is the task of the Communist International to further develop and also to study and test by experience these new federations, which are arising on the basis of the Soviet system and the Soviet movement. In recognising that federation is a transitional form to complete unity, it is necessary to strive for ever closer federal unity, bearing in mind, first, that the Soviet republics, surrounded as they are by the imperialist powers of the whole world—which from the military standpoint are immeasurably stronger—cannot possibly continue to exist without the closest alliance; second, that a close economic alliance between the Soviet republics is necessary, otherwise the productive forces which have been ruined by imperialism cannot be restored and the well-being of the working people cannot be ensured; third, that there is a tendency towards the creation of a single world economy, regulated by the proletariat of all nations as an integral whole and according to a common plan. This tendency has already revealed itself quite clearly under capitalism and is bound to be further developed and consummated under socialism.

9) The Communist International's national policy in the sphere of relations

within the state cannot be restricted to the bare, formal, purely declaratory and actually non-committal recognition of the equality of nations to which the bourgeois democrats confine themselves—both those who frankly admit being such, and those who assume the name of socialists (such as the socialists of the Second International).

In all their propaganda and agitation—both within parliament and outside it—the Communist parties must consistently expose that constant violation of the equality of nations and of the guaranteed rights of national minorities which is to be seen in all capitalist countries, despite their “democratic” constitutions. It is also necessary, first, constantly to explain that only the Soviet system is capable of ensuring genuine equality of-nations, by uniting first the proletarians and then the whole mass of the working population in the struggle against the bourgeoisie; and, second, that all Communist parties should render direct aid to the revolutionary movements among the dependent and underprivileged nations (for example, Ireland, the American Negroes, etc.) and in the colonies.

Without the latter condition, which is particularly important, the struggle against the oppression of dependent nations and colonies, as well as recognition of their right to secede, are but a false signboard, as is evidenced by the parties of the Second International.

10) Recognition of internationalism in word, and its replacement in deed by petty-bourgeois nationalism and pacifism, in all propaganda, agitation and practical work, is very common, not only among the parties of the Second International, but also among those which have withdrawn from it, and often even among parties which now call themselves communist. The urgency of the struggle against this evil, against the most deep-rooted petty-bourgeois national prejudices, looms ever larger with the mounting exigency of the task of converting the dictatorship of the proletariat from a national dictatorship (i.e., existing in a single country and incapable of determining world politics) into an international one (i.e., a dictatorship of the proletariat involving at least several advanced countries, and capable of exercising a decisive influence upon world politics as a whole). Petty-bourgeois nationalism proclaims as internationalism the mere

recognition of the equality of nations, and nothing more. Quite apart from the fact that this recognition is purely verbal, petty-bourgeois nationalism preserves national self-interest intact, whereas proletarian internationalism demands, first, that the interests of the proletarian struggle in any one country should be subordinated to the interests of that struggle on a world-wide scale, and, second, that a nation which is achieving victory over the bourgeoisie should be able and willing to make the greatest national sacrifices for the overthrow of international capital.

Thus, in countries that are already fully capitalist and have workers' parties that really act as the vanguard of the proletariat, the struggle against opportunist and petty-bourgeois pacifist distortions of the concept and policy of internationalism is a primary and cardinal task.

11) With regard to the more backward states and nations, in which feudal or patriarchal and patriarchal-peasant relations predominate, it is particularly important to bear in mind:

first, that all Communist parties must assist the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement in these countries, and that the duty of rendering the most active assistance rests primarily with the workers of the country the backward nation is colonially or financially dependent on;

second, the need for a struggle against the clergy and other influential reactionary and medieval elements in backward countries;

third, the need to combat Pan-Islamism and similar trends, which strive to combine the liberation movement against European and American imperialism with an attempt to strengthen the positions of the khans, landowners, mullahs, etc.

fourth, the need, in backward countries, to give special support to the peasant movement against the landowners, against landed proprietorship, and against all manifestations or survivals of feudalism, and to strive to lend the peasant movement the most revolutionary character by establishing the closest possible alliance between the West European communist proletariat and the revolutionary peasant movement in the East, in the colonies, and in the backward countries generally. It is particularly necessary to exert every effort to apply the

basic principles of the Soviet system in countries where pre-capitalist relations predominate—by setting up “working people’s Soviets”, etc.;

fifth, the need for a determined struggle against attempts to give a communist colouring to bourgeois-democratic liberation trends in the backward countries; the Communist International should support bourgeois-democratic national movements in colonial and backward countries only on condition that, in these countries, the elements of future proletarian parties, which will be communist not only in name, are brought together and trained to understand their special tasks, i.e., those of the struggle against the bourgeois-democratic movements within their own nations. The Communist International must enter into a temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in the colonial and backward countries, but should not merge with it, and should under all circumstances uphold the independence of the proletarian movement even if it is in its most embryonic form;

sixth, the need constantly to explain and expose among the broadest working masses of all countries, and particularly of the backward countries, the deception systematically practised by the imperialist powers, which, under the guise of politically independent states, set up states that are wholly dependent upon them economically, financially and militarily. Under present-day international conditions there is no salvation for dependent and weak nations except in a union of Soviet republics.

12) The age-old oppression of colonial and weak nationalities by the imperialist powers has not only filled the working masses of the oppressed countries with animosity towards the oppressor nations, but has also aroused distrust in these nations in general, even in their proletariat. The despicable betrayal of socialism by the majority of the official leaders of this proletariat in 1914-19, when “defence of country” was used as a social-chauvinist cloak to conceal the defence of the “right” of their “own” bourgeoisie to oppress colonies and fleece financially dependent countries, was certain to enhance this perfectly legitimate distrust. On the other hand, the more backward the country, the stronger is the hold of small-scale agricultural production, patriarchalism and

isolation, which inevitably lend particular strength and tenacity to the deepest of petty-bourgeois prejudices, i.e., to national egoism and national narrow-mindedness. These prejudices are bound to die out very slowly, for they can disappear only after imperialism and capitalism have disappeared in the advanced countries, and after the entire foundation of the backward countries' economic life has radically changed. It is therefore the duty of the class-conscious communist proletariat of all countries to regard with particular caution and attention the survivals of national sentiments in the countries and among nationalities which have been oppressed the longest; it is equally necessary to make certain concessions with a view to more rapidly overcoming this distrust and these prejudices. Complete victory over capitalism cannot be won unless the proletariat and, following it, the mass of working people in all countries and nations throughout the world voluntarily strive for alliance and unity.

#### Endnotes

[1] Notes to "Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions" were received by Lenin from G. V. Chicherin, N. N. Krestinsky, J. V. Stalin, M. G. Rafes, Y. A. Preobrazhensky, N. D. Lapinsky, and I. Nedelkov (N. Shablin), representative of the Bulgarian Communists, as well as from a number of leaders in Bashkiria, Kirghizia, and Turkestan. Along with correct ideas, the notes contained certain grave errors. Thus, Chicherin gave a wrong interpretation to Lenin's theses on the necessity of support for national liberation movements and on agreements with the national bourgeoisie, without due regard for Lenin's distinction between the bourgeoisie and the peasantry. With regard to this Lenin wrote: "I lay *greater* stress on the alliance with the peasantry (which does *not quite* mean the bourgeoisie)" (Central Party Archives of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the C.C. C.P.S.U.). Referring to the relations between the future socialist Europe and the economically underdeveloped and dependent countries, Preobrazhensky wrote: ". . . if it proves impossible to reach economic agreement with the leading national groups, the latter will inevitably be suppressed by force and economically important regions will be compelled to join a union of European Republics." Lenin decisively objected to this remark: ". . . it goes too far. It cannot be proved, and it is wrong to say that *suppression* by force is "inevitable". That is radically wrong" (see *Voprosy Istorii KPSS [Problems of the C.P.S.U. History]* 1958, No. 2, p. 16). A grave error was made by Stalin, who did not agree with Lenin's proposition on the difference between federal relations among the Soviet republics based on autonomy, and federal relations among independent republics. In a letter to Lenin, dated June 12, 1920, he declared that in reality "there is no difference between these two types of federal relations, or else it is so small as to be negligible". Stalin continued to advocate this later, when, in 1922, he proposed the "autonomisation" of the independent Soviet republics. These ideas were criticised in detail by Lenin in his article "The Question of Nationalities or 'Autonomisation'", and in his letter to members of the Political Bureau "On the Formation of the U.S.S.R." (see present edition, Vol. 36, and Lenin Miscellany XXXVI; pp. 496-98).

[2] As a result of the revolution which commenced in Finland on January 27, 1918, the bourgeois government of Svinhufvud was overthrown and the working class assumed power.

On January 29, the revolutionary government of Finland, the Council of People's Representatives was formed by Edvard Gylling, Yrjö Sirola, Otto Kuusinen, A. Taimi and others. The following were among the most important measures taken by the workers' government: the law on the transfer to landless peasants, without indemnification, of the land they actually tilled; tax-exemption for the poorest sections of the population; the expropriation of enterprises whose owners had fled the country; the establishment of state control over private banks (their functions being assumed by the State Bank).

On March 1, 1918, a treaty between the Finnish Socialist Workers' Republic and the R.S.F.S.R. was signed in Petrograd. Based on the principle of complete equality and respect for the sovereignty of the two sides, this was the first treaty in world history to be signed between two socialist countries.

The proletarian revolution, however, was victorious only in the south of Finland. The Svinhufvud government concentrated all counter-revolutionary forces in the north of the country, and appealed to the German Kaiser's government for help. As a result of German armed intervention, the Finnish revolution was put down in May 1918, after a desperate civil war. White terror reigned in the country, tens of thousands of revolutionary workers and peasants were executed or tortured to death in the prisons.

[3]As a result of mass action by the Lettish proletariat and peasantry against the German invaders and the counter-revolutionary government of Ulmanis, a provisional Soviet government was established in Latvia on December 17, 1918, which issued a Manifesto on the assumption of state power by the Soviets. Soviet Russia gave fraternal help to the Lettish people in their struggle to establish Soviet rule and strengthen the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Under the leadership of the Latvian Communist Party and the Latvian Soviet Government, a Red Army was formed, the landed estates were confiscated, the banks and big commercial and industrial enterprises were nationalised, social insurance and an eight-hour working day were introduced, and a system of public catering for working people was organised. In March 1919, German troops and the whiteguards, armed and equipped by the U.S. and the Entente imperialists, attacked Soviet Latvia. In May they captured Riga, the capital of Soviet Latvia. After fierce fighting the entire territory of Latvia had been overrun by the interventionists by the beginning of 1920. The counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie established a regime of bloody terror, thousands of revolutionary workers and peasants being killed or thrown into prison.

## **Study Questions:**

- **According to Lenin, why was support for national liberation part of the program for socialism?**
- **According to Lenin, what is significant about the struggle for national liberation and self-determination?**
- **How might Lenin's program for self-determination be applied today?**
- **In your own view, in what ways do today's nominal 'Leninists' uphold or reject Lenin's position in support of self-determination?**

## **COURSE 2: KWAME NKRUMAH- Introduction to 'Neo-Colonialism: the Last Stage of Imperialism' (1965)**

The neo-colonialism of today represents imperialism in its final and perhaps its most dangerous stage. In the past it was possible to convert a country upon which a neo-colonial regime had been imposed — Egypt in the nineteenth century is an example — into a colonial territory. Today this process is no longer feasible. Old-fashioned colonialism is by no means entirely abolished. It still constitutes an African problem, but it is everywhere on the retreat. Once a territory has become nominally independent it is no longer possible, as it was in the last century, to reverse the process. Existing colonies may linger on, but no new colonies will be created. In place of colonialism as the main instrument of imperialism we have today neo-colonialism.

The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside.

The methods and form of this direction can take various shapes. For example, in an extreme case the troops of the imperial power may garrison the territory of the neo-colonial State and control the government of it. More often, however, neo-colonialist control is exercised through economic or monetary means. The neo-colonial State may be obliged to take the manufactured products of the imperialist power to the exclusion of competing products from elsewhere. Control over government policy in the neo-colonial State may be secured by payments towards the cost of running the State, by the provision of civil servants in positions where they can dictate policy, and by monetary control over foreign exchange through the imposition of a banking system controlled by the imperial power.

Where neo-colonialism exists the power exercising control is often the State which formerly ruled the territory in question, but this is not necessarily so. For example, in the case of South Vietnam the former imperial power was France, but neo-colonial control of the State has now gone to the United States. It



is possible that neo-colonial control may be exercised by a consortium of financial interests which are not specifically identifiable with any particular State. The control of the Congo by great international financial concerns is a case in point. The result of neo-colonialism is that foreign capital is used for the exploitation rather than for the development of the less developed parts of the world. Investment under neo-colonialism increases rather than decreases the gap between the rich and the poor countries of the world.

The struggle against neo-colonialism is not aimed at excluding the capital of the developed world from operating in less developed countries. It is aimed at preventing the financial power of the developed countries being used in such a way as to impoverish the less developed.

Non-alignment, as practised by Ghana and many other countries, is based on co-operation with all States whether they be capitalist, socialist or have a mixed economy. Such a policy, therefore, involves foreign investment from capitalist countries, but it must be invested in accordance with a national plan drawn up by the government of the non-aligned State with its own interests in mind. The issue is not what return the foreign investor receives on his investments. He may, in fact, do better for himself if he invests in a non-aligned country than if he invests in a neo-colonial one. The question is one of power. A State in the grip of neo-colonialism is not master of its own destiny. It is this factor which makes neo-colonialism such a serious threat to world peace. The growth of nuclear weapons has made out of date the old-fashioned balance of power which rested upon the ultimate sanction of a major war. Certainty of mutual mass destruction effectively prevents either of the great power blocs from threatening the other with the possibility of a world-wide war, and military conflict has thus become confined to 'limited wars'. For these neo-colonialism is the breeding ground.

Such wars can, of course, take place in countries which are not neo-colonialist controlled. Indeed their object may be to establish in a small but independent country a neo-colonialist regime. The evil of neo-colonialism is that it prevents the formation of those large units which would make impossible 'limited

war'. To give one example: if Africa was united, no major power bloc would attempt to subdue it by limited war because from the very nature of limited war, what can be achieved by it is itself limited. It is, only where small States exist that it is possible, by landing a few thousand marines or by financing a mercenary force, to secure a decisive result.

The restriction of military action of 'limited wars' is, however, no guarantee of world peace and is likely to be the factor which will ultimately involve the great power blocs in a world war, however much both are determined to avoid it.

Limited war, once embarked upon, achieves a momentum of its own. Of this, the war in South Vietnam is only one example. It escalates despite the desire of the great power blocs to keep it limited. While this particular war may be prevented from leading to a world conflict, the multiplication of similar limited wars can only have one end-world war and the terrible consequences of nuclear conflict.

Neo-colonialism is also the worst form of imperialism. For those who practise it, it means power without responsibility and for those who suffer from it, it means exploitation without redress. In the days of old-fashioned colonialism, the imperial power had at least to explain and justify at home the actions it was taking abroad. In the colony those who served the ruling imperial power could at least look to its protection against any violent move by their opponents. With neo-colonialism neither is the case.

Above all, neo-colonialism, like colonialism before it, postpones the facing of the social issues which will have to be faced by the fully developed sector of the world before the danger of world war can be eliminated or the problem of world poverty resolved.

Neo-colonialism, like colonialism, is an attempt to export the social conflicts of the capitalist countries. The temporary success of this policy can be seen in the ever widening gap between the richer and the poorer nations of the world. But the internal contradictions and conflicts of neo-colonialism make it certain that it cannot endure as a permanent world policy. How it should be brought to an end is a problem that should be studied, above all, by the

developed nations of the world, because it is they who will feel the full impact of the ultimate failure. The longer it continues the more certain it is that its inevitable collapse will destroy the social system of which they have made it a foundation. The reason for its development in the post-war period can be briefly summarised. The problem which faced the wealthy nations of the world at the end of the second world war was the impossibility of returning to the pre-war situation in which there was a great gulf between the few rich and the many poor. Irrespective of what particular political party was in power, the internal pressures in the rich countries of the world were such that no post-war capitalist country could survive unless it became a 'Welfare State'. There might be differences in degree in the extent of the social benefits given to the industrial and agricultural workers, but what was everywhere impossible was a return to the mass unemployment and to the low level of living of the pre-war years.

From the end of the nineteenth century onwards, colonies had been regarded as a source of wealth which could be used to mitigate the class conflicts in the capitalist States and, as will be explained later, this policy had some success. But it failed in 'its ultimate object because the pre-war capitalist States were so organised internally that the bulk of the profit made from colonial possessions found its way into the pockets of the capitalist class and not into those of the workers. Far from achieving the object intended, the working-class parties at times tended to identify their interests with those of the colonial peoples and the imperialist powers found themselves engaged upon a conflict on two fronts, at home with their own workers and abroad against the growing forces of colonial liberation.

The post-war period inaugurated a very different colonial policy. A deliberate attempt was made to divert colonial earnings from the wealthy class and use them instead generally to finance the 'Welfare State'. As will be seen from the examples given later, this was the method consciously adopted even by those working-class leaders who had before the war regarded the colonial peoples as their natural allies against their capitalist enemies at home.

At first it was presumed that this object could be achieved by maintaining

the pre-war colonial system. Experience soon proved that attempts to do so would be disastrous and would only provoke colonial wars, thus dissipating the anticipated gains from the continuance of the colonial regime. Britain, in particular, realised this at an early stage and the correctness of the British judgement at the time has subsequently been demonstrated by the defeat of French colonialism in the Far East and Algeria and the failure of the Dutch to retain any of their former colonial empire.

The system of neo-colonialism was therefore instituted and in the short run it has served the developed powers admirably. It is in the long run that its consequences are likely to be catastrophic for them.

Neo-colonialism is based upon the principle of breaking up former large united colonial territories into a number of small non-viable States which are incapable of independent development and must rely upon the former imperial power for defence and even internal security. Their economic and financial systems are linked, as in colonial days, with those of the former colonial ruler.

At first sight the scheme would appear to have many advantages for the developed countries of the world. All the profits of neo-colonialism can be secured if, in any given area, a reasonable proportion of the States have a neo-colonialist system. It is not necessary that they *all* should have one. Unless small States can combine they must be compelled to sell their primary products at prices dictated by the developed nations and buy their manufactured goods at the prices fixed by them. So long as neo-colonialism can prevent political and economic conditions for optimum development, the developing countries, whether they are under neo-colonialist control or not, will be unable to create a large enough market to support industrialisation. In the same way they will lack the financial strength to force the developed countries to accept their primary products at a fair price.

In the neo-colonialist territories, since the former colonial power has in theory relinquished political control, if the social conditions occasioned by neo-colonialism cause a revolt the local neo-colonialist government can be sacrificed and another equally subservient one substituted in its place. On the other hand,

in any continent where neo-colonialism exists on a wide scale the same social pressures which can produce revolts in neo-colonial territories will also affect those States which have refused to accept the system and therefore neo-colonialist nations have a ready-made weapon with which they can threaten their opponents if they appear successfully to be challenging the system.

These advantages, which seem at first sight so obvious, are, however, on examination, illusory because they fail to take into consideration the facts of the world today.

The introduction of neo-colonialism increases the rivalry between the great powers which was provoked by the old-style colonialism. However little real power the government of a neo-colonialist State may possess, it must have, from the very fact of its nominal independence, a certain area of manoeuvre. It may not be able to exist without a neo-colonialist master but it may still have the ability to change masters.

The ideal neo-colonialist State would be one which was wholly subservient to neo-colonialist interests but the existence of the socialist nations makes it impossible to enforce the full rigour of the neo-colonialist system. The existence of an alternative system is itself a challenge to the neo-colonialist regime. Warnings about 'the dangers of Communist subversion are likely to be two-edged since they bring to the notice of those living under a neo-colonialist system the possibility of a change of regime. In fact neo-colonialism is the victim of its own contradictions. In order to make it attractive to those upon whom it is practised it must be shown as capable of raising their living standards, but the economic object of neo-colonialism is to keep those standards depressed in the interest of the developed countries. It is only when this contradiction is understood that the failure of innumerable 'aid' programmes, many of them well intentioned, can be explained.

In the first place, the rulers of neo-colonial States derive their authority to govern, not from the will of the people, but from the support which they obtain from their neo-colonialist masters. They have therefore little interest in developing education, strengthening the bargaining power of their workers employed by

expatriate firms, or indeed of taking any step which would challenge the colonial pattern of commerce and industry, which it is the object of neo-colonialism to preserve. 'Aid', therefore, to a neo-colonial State is merely a revolving credit, paid by the neo-colonial master, passing through the neo-colonial State and returning to the neo-colonial master in the form of increased profits.

Secondly, it is in the field of 'aid' that the rivalry of individual developed States first manifests itself. So long as neo-colonialism persists so long will spheres of interest persist, and this makes multilateral aid — which is in fact the only effective form of aid — impossible.

Once multilateral aid begins the neo-colonialist masters are faced by the hostility of the vested interests in their own country. Their manufacturers naturally object to any attempt to raise the price of the raw materials which they obtain from the neo-colonialist territory in question, or to the establishment there of manufacturing industries which might compete directly or indirectly with their own exports to the territory. Even education is suspect as likely to produce a student movement and it is, of course, true that in many less developed countries the students have been in the vanguard of the fight against neo-colonialism.

In the end the situation arises that the only type of aid which the neo-colonialist masters consider as safe is 'military aid'.

Once a neo-colonialist territory is brought to such a state of economic chaos and misery that revolt actually breaks out then, and only then, is there no limit to the generosity of the neo-colonial overlord, provided, of course, that the funds supplied are utilised exclusively for military purposes.

Military aid in fact marks the last stage of neo-colonialism and its effect is self-destructive. Sooner or later the weapons supplied pass into the hands of the opponents of the neo-colonialist regime and the war itself increases the social misery which originally provoked it.

Neo-colonialism is a mill-stone around the necks of the developed countries which practise it. Unless they can rid themselves of it, it will drown them. Previously the developed powers could escape from the contradictions of neo-colonialism by substituting for it direct colonialism. Such a solution is no

longer possible and the reasons for it have been well explained by Mr Owen Lattimore, the United States Far Eastern expert and adviser to Chiang Kai-shek in the immediate post-war period. He wrote:

'Asia, which was so easily and swiftly subjugated by conquerors in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, displayed an amazing ability stubbornly to resist modern armies equipped with aeroplanes, tanks, motor vehicles and mobile artillery.

'Formerly big territories were conquered in Asia with small forces. Income, first of all from plunder, then from direct taxes and lastly from trade, capital investments and long-term exploitation, covered with incredible speed the expenditure for military operations. This arithmetic represented a great temptation to strong countries. Now they have run up against another arithmetic, and it discourages them.'

The same arithmetic is likely to apply throughout the less developed world. This book is therefore an attempt to examine neo-colonialism not only in its African context and its relation to African unity, but in world perspective. Neo-colonialism is by no means exclusively an African question. Long before it was practised on any large scale in Africa it was an established system in other parts of the world. Nowhere has it proved successful, either in raising living standards or in ultimately benefiting countries which have indulged in it.

Marx predicted that the growing gap between the wealth of the possessing classes and the workers it employs would ultimately produce a conflict fatal to capitalism in each individual capitalist State.

This conflict between the rich and the poor has now been transferred on to the international scene, but for proof of what is acknowledged to be happening it is no longer necessary to consult the classical Marxist writers. The situation is set out with the utmost clarity in the leading organs of capitalist opinion. Take for example the following extracts from *The Wall Street Journal*, the newspaper which perhaps best reflects United States capitalist thinking.

In its issue of 12 May 1965, under the headline of 'Poor Nations' Plight', the paper first analyses 'which countries are considered industrial and which backward'. There is, it explains, 'no rigid method of classification'. Nevertheless, it points out:

'A generally used breakdown, however, has recently been maintained by the International Monetary Fund because, in the words of an IMF official, "the economic demarcation in the world is getting increasingly apparent."' The break-down, the

official says, "is based on simple common sense."

In the IMF's view, the industrial countries are the United States, the United Kingdom, most West European nations, Canada and Japan. A special category called "other developed areas" includes such other European lands as Finland, Greece and Ireland, plus Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. The IMF's "less developed" category embraces all of Latin America and nearly all of the Middle East, non-Communist Asia and Africa.'

In other words the 'backward' countries are those situated in the neo-colonial areas.

After quoting figures to support its argument, *The Wall Street Journal* comments on this situation:

'The industrial nations have added nearly \$2 billion to their reserves, which now approximate \$52 billion. At the same time, the reserves of the less-developed group not only have stopped rising, but have declined some \$200 million. To analysts such as Britain's Miss Ward, the significance of such statistics is clear: the economic gap is rapidly widening "between a white, complacent, highly bourgeois, very wealthy, very small North Atlantic elite and everybody else, and this is not a very comfortable heritage to leave to one's children."

"Everybody else" includes approximately two-thirds of the population of the earth, spread through about 100 nations.'

This is no new problem. In the opening paragraph of his book, *The War on World Poverty*, written in 1953, the present British Labour leader, Mr Harold Wilson, summarised the major problem of the world as he then saw it:

'For the vast majority of mankind the most urgent problem is not war, or Communism, or the cost of living, or taxation. It is hunger. Over 1,500,000,000 people, some-thing like two-thirds of the world's population, are living in conditions of acute hunger, defined in terms of identifiable nutritional disease. This hunger is at the same time the effect and the cause of the poverty, squalor and misery in which they live.'

Its consequences are likewise understood. The correspondent of *The Wall Street Journal* previously quoted, underlines them:

'... many diplomats and economists view the implications as overwhelmingly — and dangerously — political. Unless the present decline can be reversed, these analysts fear, the United States and other wealthy industrial powers of the West face the distinct possibility, in the words of British economist Barbara Ward, "of a sort of international class war".'



What is lacking are any positive proposals for dealing with the situation. All that *The Wall Street Journal's* correspondent can do is to point out that the traditional methods recommended for curing the evils are only likely to make the situation worse.

It has been argued that the developed nations should effectively assist the poorer parts of the world, and that the whole world should be turned into a Welfare State. However, there seems little prospect that anything of this sort could be achieved. The so-called 'aid' programmes to help backward economies represent, according to a rough U.N. estimate, only one half of one per cent of the total income of industrial countries. But when it comes to the prospect of increasing such aid the mood is one of pessimism:

'A large school of thought holds that expanded share-the-wealth schemes are idealistic and impractical. This school contends climate, undeveloped human skills, lack of natural resources and other factors — not just lack of money — retard economic progress in many of these lands, and that the countries lack personnel with the training or will to use vastly expanded aid effectively. Share-the-wealth schemes, according to this view, would be like pouring money down a bottomless well, weakening the donor nations without effectively curing the ills of the recipients.'

The absurdity of this argument is demonstrated by the fact that every one of the reasons quoted to prove why the less developed parts of the world cannot be developed applied equally strongly to the present developed countries in the period prior to their development. The argument is only true in this sense. The less developed world will not become developed through the goodwill or generosity of the developed powers. It can only become developed through a struggle against the external forces which have a vested interest in keeping it undeveloped.

Of these forces, neo-colonialism is, at this stage of history, the principal. I propose to analyse neo-colonialism, first, by examining the state of the African continent and showing how neo-colonialism at the moment keeps it artificially poor. Next, I propose to show how in practice African Unity, which in itself can only be established by the defeat of neo-colonialism, could immensely raise African living standards. From this beginning, I propose to examine neo-colonialism generally, first historically and then by a consideration of the great

international monopolies whose continued stranglehold on the neo-colonial sectors of the world ensures the continuation of the system.

## **The Mechanisms of Neo-Colonialism (1965)**

In order to halt foreign interference in the affairs of developing countries it is necessary to study, understand, expose and actively combat neo-colonialism in whatever guise it may appear. For the methods of neo-colonialists are subtle and varied. They operate not only in the economic field, but also in the political, religious, ideological and cultural spheres.

Faced with the militant peoples of the ex-colonial territories in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America, imperialism simply switches tactics. Without a qualm it dispenses with its flags, and even with certain of its more hated expatriate officials. This means, so it claims, that it is 'giving' independence to its former subjects, to be followed by 'aid' for their development. Under cover of such phrases, however, it devises innumerable ways to accomplish objectives formerly achieved by naked colonialism. It is this sum total of these modern attempts to perpetuate colonialism while at the same time talking about 'freedom', which has come to be known as *neo-colonialism*.

Foremost among the neo-colonialists is the United States, which has long exercised its power in Latin America. Fumblingly at first she turned towards Europe, and then with more certainty after world war two when most countries of that continent were indebted to her. Since then, with methodical thoroughness and touching attention to detail, the Pentagon set about consolidating its ascendancy, evidence of which can be seen all around the world.

Who really rules in such places as Great Britain, West Germany, Japan, Spain, Portugal or Italy? If General de Gaulle is 'defecting' from U.S. monopoly control, what interpretation can be placed on his 'experiments' in the Sahara desert, his paratroopers in Gabon, or his trips to Cambodia and Latin America?

Lurking behind such questions are the extended tentacles of the Wall Street octopus. And its suction cups and muscular strength are provided by a phenomenon dubbed 'The Invisible Government', arising from Wall Street's

connection with the Pentagon and various intelligence services. I quote:

'The Invisible Government ... is a loose amorphous grouping of individuals and agencies drawn from many parts of the visible government. It is not limited to the Central Intelligence Agency, although the CIA is at its heart. Nor is it confined to the nine other agencies which comprise what is known as the intelligence community: the National Security Council, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, Army Intelligence, Navy Intelligence and Research, the Atomic Energy Commission and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

'The Invisible Government includes also many other units and agencies, as well as individuals, that appear outwardly to be a normal part of the conventional government. It even encompasses business firms and institutions that are seemingly private.

'To an extent that is only beginning to be perceived, this shadow government is shaping the lives of 190,000,000 Americans. An informed citizen might come to suspect that the foreign policy of the United States often works publicly in one direction and secretly through the Invisible Government in just the opposite direction.

'This Invisible Government is a relatively new institution. It came into being as a result of two related factors: the rise of the United States after World War II to a position of pre-eminent world power, and the challenge to that power by Soviet Communism...

'By 1964 the intelligence network had grown into a massive hidden apparatus, secretly employing about 200,000 persons and spending billions of dollars a year. [*The Invisible Government*, David Wise and Thomas B. Ross, Random House, New York, 1964.]

Here, from the very citadel of neo-colonialism, is a description of the apparatus which now directs all other Western intelligence set-ups either by persuasion or by force. Results were achieved in Algeria during the April 1961 plot of anti-de Gaulle generals; as also in Guatemala, Iraq, Iran, Suez and the famous U-2 spy intrusion of Soviet air space which wrecked the approaching Summit, then in West Germany and again in East Germany in the riots of 1953, in Hungary's abortive crisis of 1959, Poland's of September 1956, and in Korea, Burma, Formosa, Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam; they are evident in the trouble in Congo (Leopoldville) which began with Lumumba's murder, and continues till now; in events in Cuba, Turkey, Cyprus, Greece, and in other places too numerous to catalogue completely.

And with what aim have these innumerable incidents occurred? The

general objective has been mentioned: to achieve colonialism in fact while preaching independence.

On the economic front, a strong factor favouring Western monopolies and acting against the developing world is inter-national capital's control of the world market, as well as of the prices of commodities bought and sold there. From 1951 to 1961, without taking oil into consideration, the general level of prices for primary products fell by 33.1 per cent, while prices of manufactured goods rose 3.5 per cent (within which, machinery and equipment prices rose 31.3 per cent). In that same decade this caused a loss to the Asian, African and Latin American countries, using 1951 prices as a basis, of some \$41,400 million. In the same period, while the volume of exports from these countries rose, their earnings in foreign exchange from such exports decreased.

Another technique of neo-colonialism is the use of high rates of interest. Figures from the World Bank for 1962 showed that seventy-one Asian, African and Latin American countries owed foreign debts of some \$27,000 million, on which they paid in interest and service charges some \$5,000 million. Since then, such foreign debts have been estimated as more than £30,000 million in these areas. In 1961, the interest rates on almost three-quarters of the loans offered by the major imperialist powers amounted to more than five per cent, in some cases up to seven or eight per cent, while the call-in periods of such loans have been burdensomely short.

While capital worth \$30,000 million was exported to some fifty-six developing countries between 1956 and 1962, 'it is estimated that interest and profit alone extracted on this sum from the debtor countries amounted to more than £15,000 million. This method of penetration by economic aid recently soared into prominence when a number of countries began rejecting it. Ceylon, Indonesia and Cambodia are among those who turned it down. Such 'aid' is estimated on the annual average to have amounted to \$2,600 million between 1951 and 1955; \$4,007 million between 1956 and 1959, and \$6,000 million between 1960 and 1962. But the average sums taken out of the aided countries by such donors in a sample year, 1961, are estimated to amount to \$5,000 million in profits, \$1,000

million in interest, and \$5,800 million from non-equivalent exchange, or a total of \$11,800 million extracted against \$6,000 million put in. Thus, 'aid' turns out to be another means of exploitation, a modern method of capital export under a more cosmetic name.

Still another neo-colonialist trap on the economic front has come to be known as 'multilateral aid' through international organisations: the International Monetary Fund, the Inter-national Bank for Reconstruction and Development (known as the World Bank), the International Finance Corporation and the International Development Association are examples, all, significantly, having U.S. capital as their major backing. These agencies have the habit of forcing would-be borrowers to submit to various offensive conditions, such as supplying information about their economies, submitting their policy and plans to review by the World Bank and accepting agency supervision of their use of loans. As for the alleged development, between 1960 and mid-1963 the International Development Association promised a total of \$500 million to applicants, out of which only \$70 million were actually received.

In more recent years, as pointed out by Monitor in *The Times*, 1 July 1965, there has been a substantial increase in communist technical and economic aid activities in developing countries. During 1964 the total amount of assistance offered was approximately £600 million. This was almost a third of the total communist aid given during the previous decade. The Middle East received about 40 per cent of the total, Asia 36 per cent, Africa 22 per cent and Latin America the rest.

Increased Chinese activity was responsible to some extent for the larger amount of aid offered in 1964, though China contributed only a quarter of the total aid committed; the Soviet Union provided a half, and the East European countries a quarter.

Although aid from socialist countries still falls far short of that offered from the west, it is often more impressive, since it is swift and flexible, and interest rates on communist loans are only about two per cent compared with five to six per cent charged on loans from western countries.

Nor is the whole story of 'aid' contained in figures, for there are conditions which hedge it around: the conclusion of commerce and navigation treaties; agreements for economic co-operation; the right to meddle in internal finances, including currency and foreign exchange, to lower trade barriers in favour of the donor country's goods and capital; to protect the interests of private investments; determination of how the funds are to be used; forcing the recipient to set up counterpart funds; to supply raw materials to the donor; and use of such funds a majority of it, in fact to buy goods from the donor nation. These conditions apply to industry, commerce, agriculture, shipping and insurance, apart from others which are political and military.

So-called 'invisible trade' furnishes the Western monopolies with yet another means of economic penetration. Over 90 per cent of world ocean shipping is controlled by the imperialist countries. They control shipping rates and, between 1951 and 1961, they increased them some five times in a total rise of about 60 per cent, the upward trend continuing. Thus, net annual freight expenses incurred by Asia, Africa and Latin America amount to no less than an estimated \$1,600 million. This is over and above all other profits and interest payments. As for insurance payments, in 1961 alone these amounted to an unfavourable balance in Asia, Africa and Latin America of some additional \$370 million.

Having waded through all this, however, we have begun to understand only the *basic* methods of neo-colonialism. The full extent of its inventiveness is far from exhausted.

In the labour field, for example, imperialism operates through labour arms like the Social Democratic parties of Europe led by the British Labour Party, and through such instruments as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), now apparently being superseded by the New York Africa-American Labour Centre (AALC) under AFL-CIO chief George Meany and the well-known CIA man in labour's top echelons, Irving Brown.

In 1945, out of the euphoria of anti-fascist victory, the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) had been formed, including all world labour except the U.S. American Federation of Labor (AFL). By 1949, however, led by the British Trade

Union Congress (TUC), a number of pro-imperialist labour bodies in the West broke away from the WFTU over the issue of anti-colonialist liberation, and set up the ICFTU.

For ten years it continued under British TUC leadership. Its record in Africa, Asia and Latin America could gratify only the big international monopolies which were extracting super-profits from those areas.

In 1959, at Brussels, the United States AFL-CIO union centre fought for and won control of the ICFTU Executive Board. From then on a flood of typewriters, mimeograph machines, cars, supplies, buildings, salaries and, so it is still averred, outright bribes for labour leaders in various parts of the developing world rapidly linked ICFTU in the minds of the rank and file with the CIA. To such an extent did its prestige suffer under these American bosses that, in 1964, the AFL-CIO brains felt it necessary to establish a fresh outfit. They set up the AALC in New York right across the river from the United Nations.

'As a steadfast champion of national independence, democracy and social justice', unblushingly stated the April 1965 Bulletin put out by this Centre, 'the AFL-CIO will strengthen its efforts to assist the advancement of the economic conditions of the African peoples. Toward this end, steps have been taken to expand assistance to the African free trade unions by organising the African-American Labour Centre. Such assistance will help African labour play a vital role in the economic and democratic upbuilding of their countries.'

The March issue of this Bulletin, however, gave the game away: 'In mobilising capital resources for investment in Workers Education, Vocational Training, Co-operatives, Health Clinics and Housing, the Centre will work with both private and public institutions. It will also *encourage labour-management co-operation to expand American capital investment in the African nations.*' The italics are mine. Could anything be plainer?

Following a pattern previously set by the ICFTU, it has already started classes: one for drivers and mechanics in Nigeria, one in tailoring in Kenya. Labour scholarships are being offered to Africans who want to study trade unionism in of all places-Austria, ostensibly by the Austrian unions.

Elsewhere, labour, organised into political parties of which the British Labour Party is a leading and typical example, has shown a similar aptitude for encouraging 'Labour-management co-operation to expand . . . capital investment in African nations.'

But as the struggle sharpens, even these measures of neo-colonialism are proving too mild. So Africa, Asia and Latin America have begun to experience a round of coups d'etat or would-be coups, together with a series of political assassinations which have destroyed in their political primes some of the newly emerging nations best leaders. To ensure success in these endeavours, the imperialists have made widespread and wily use of ideological and cultural weapons in the form of intrigues, manoeuvres and slander campaigns.

Some of these methods used by neo-colonialists to slip past our guard must now be examined. The first is retention by the departing colonialists of various kinds of privileges which infringe on our sovereignty: that of setting up military bases or stationing troops in former colonies and the supplying of 'advisers' of one sort or another. Sometimes a number of 'rights' are demanded: land concessions, prospecting rights for minerals and/or oil; the 'right' to collect customs, to carry out administration, to issue paper money; to be exempt from customs duties and/or taxes for expatriate enterprises; and, above all, the 'right' to provide 'aid'. Also demanded and granted are privileges in the cultural field; that Western information services be exclusive; and that those from socialist countries be excluded.

Even the cinema stories of fabulous Hollywood are loaded. One has only to listen to the cheers of an African audience as Hollywood's heroes slaughter red Indians or Asiatics to understand the effectiveness of this weapon. For, in the developing continents, where the colonialist heritage has left a vast majority still illiterate, even the smallest child gets the message contained in the blood and thunder stories emanating from California. And along with murder and the Wild West goes an incessant barrage of anti-socialist propaganda, in which the trade union man, the revolutionary, or the man of dark skin is generally cast as the villain, while the policeman, the gum-shoe, the Federal agent — in a word, the CIA



— type spy is ever the hero. Here, truly, is the ideological under-belly of those political murders which so often use local people as their instruments.

While Hollywood takes care of fiction, the enormous monopoly press, together with the outflow of slick, clever, expensive magazines, attends to what it chooses to call 'news. Within separate countries, one or two news agencies control the news handouts, so that a deadly uniformity is achieved, regardless of the number of separate newspapers or magazines; while internationally, the financial preponderance of the United States is felt more and more through its foreign correspondents and offices abroad, as well as through its influence over inter-national capitalist journalism. Under this guise, a flood of anti-liberation propaganda emanates from the capital cities of the West, directed against China, Vietnam, Indonesia, Algeria, Ghana and all countries which hack out their own independent path to freedom. Prejudice is rife. For example, wherever there is armed struggle against the forces of reaction, the nationalists are referred to as rebels, terrorists, or frequently 'communist terrorists'!

Perhaps one of the most insidious methods of the neo-colonialists is evangelism. Following the liberation movement there has been a veritable riptide of religious sects, the overwhelming majority of them American. Typical of these are Jehovah's Witnesses who recently created trouble in certain developing countries by busily teaching their citizens not to salute the new national flags. 'Religion' was too thin to smother the outcry that arose against this activity, and a temporary lull followed. But the number of evangelists continues to grow.

Yet even evangelism and the cinema are only two twigs on a much bigger tree. Dating from the end of 1961, the U.S. has actively developed a huge ideological plan for invading the so-called Third World, utilising all its facilities from press and radio to Peace Corps.

During 1962 and 1963 a number of international conferences to this end were held in several places, such as Nicosia in Cyprus, San Jose in Costa Rica, and Lagos in Nigeria. Participants included the CIA, the U.S. Information Agency (USIA), the Pentagon, the International Development Agency, the Peace Corps and others. Programmes were drawn up which included the systematic use of

U.S. citizens abroad in virtual intelligence activities and propaganda work. Methods of recruiting political agents and of forcing 'alliances' with the U.S.A. were worked out. At the centre of its programmes lay the demand for an absolute U.S. monopoly in the field of propaganda, as well as for counteracting any independent efforts by developing states in the realm of information.

The United States sought, and still seeks, with considerable success, to coordinate on the basis of its own strategy the propaganda activities of all Western countries. In October 1961, a conference of NATO countries was held in Rome to discuss problems of psychological warfare. It appealed for the organisation of combined ideological operations in Afro-Asian countries by all participants.

In May and June 1962 a seminar was convened by the U.S. in Vienna on ideological warfare. It adopted a secret decision to engage in a propaganda offensive against the developing countries along lines laid down by the U.S.A. It was agreed that NATO propaganda agencies would, in practice if not in the public eye, keep in close contact with U.S. Embassies in their respective countries.

Among instruments of such Western psychological warfare are numbered the intelligence agencies of Western countries headed by those of the United States 'Invisible Government'. But most significant among them all are Moral Re-Armament (MRA), the Peace Corps and the United States Information Agency (USIA).

Moral Re-Armament is an organisation founded in 1938 by the American, Frank Buchman. In the last days before the second world war, it advocated the appeasement of Hitler, often extolling Himmler, the Gestapo chief. In Africa, MRA incursions began at the end of World War II. Against the big anti-colonial upsurge that followed victory in 1945, MRA spent millions advocating collaboration between the forces oppressing the African peoples and those same peoples. It is not without significance that Moise Tshombe and Joseph Kasavubu of Congo (Leopoldville) are both MRA supporters. George Seldes, in his book *One Thousand Americans*, characterised MRA as a fascist organisation 'subsidised by . . . Fascists, and with a long record of collaboration with Fascists the world over. . . .' This description is supported by the active participation in MRA of

people like General Carpentier, former commander of NATO land forces, and General Ho Ying-chin, one of Chiang Kai-shek's top generals. To cap this, several newspapers, some of them in the Western world, have claimed that MRA is actually subsidised by the CIA.

When MRA's influence began to fail, some new instrument to cover the ideological arena was desired. It came in the establishment of the American Peace Corps in 1961 by President John Kennedy, with Sargent Shriver, Jr., his brother-in-law, in charge. Shriver, a millionaire who made his pile in land speculation in Chicago, was also known as the friend, confidant and co-worker of the former head of the Central Intelligence Agency, Allen Dulles. These two had worked together in both the Office of Strategic Services, U.S. war-time intelligence agency, and in the CIA.

Shriver's record makes a mockery of President Kennedy's alleged instruction to Shriver to 'keep the CIA out of the Peace Corps'. So does the fact that, although the Peace Corps is advertised as a voluntary organisation, all its members are carefully screened by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

Since its creation in 1961, members of the Peace Corps have been exposed and expelled from many African, Middle Eastern and Asian countries for acts of subversion or prejudice. Indonesia, Tanzania, the Philippines, and even pro-West countries like Turkey and Iran, have complained of its activities.

However, perhaps the chief executor of U.S. psychological warfare is the United States Information Agency (USIA). Even for the wealthiest nation on earth, the U.S. lavishes an unusual amount of men, materials and money on this vehicle for its neo-colonial aims.

The USIA is staffed by some 12,000 persons to the tune of more than \$130 million a year. It has more than seventy editorial staffs working on publications abroad. Of its network comprising 110 radio stations, 60 are outside the U.S. Programmes are broadcast for Africa by American stations in Morocco, Eritrea, Liberia, Crete, and Barcelona, Spain, as well as from off-shore stations on American ships. In Africa alone, the USIA transmits about thirty territorial and

national radio programmes whose content glorifies the U.S. while attempting to discredit countries with an independent foreign policy.

The USIA boasts more than 120 branches in about 100 countries, 50 of which are in Africa alone. It has 250 centres in foreign countries, each of which is usually associated with a library. It employs about 200 cinemas and 8,000 projectors which draw upon its nearly 300 film libraries.

This agency is directed by a central body which operates in the name of the U.S. President, planning and coordinating its activities in close touch with the Pentagon, CIA and other Cold War agencies, including even armed forces intelligence centres.

In developing countries, the USIA actively tries to prevent expansion of national media of information so as itself to capture the market-place of ideas. It spends huge sums for publication and distribution of about sixty newspapers and magazines in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The American government backs the USIA through direct pressures on developing nations. To ensure its agency a complete monopoly in propaganda, for instance, many agreements for economic co-operation offered by the U.S. include a demand that Americans be granted preferential rights to disseminate information. At the same time, in trying to close the new nations to other sources of information, it employs other pressures. For instance, after agreeing to set up USIA information centres in their countries, both Togo and Congo (Leopoldville) originally hoped to follow a non-aligned path and permit Russian information centres as a balance. But Washington threatened to stop all aid, thereby forcing these two countries to renounce their plan.

Unbiased studies of the USIA by such authorities as Dr R. Holt of Princeton University, Retired Colonel R. Van de Velde, former intelligence agents Murril Dayer, Wilson Dizard and others, have all called attention to the close ties between this agency and U.S. Intelligence. For example, Deputy Director Donald M. Wilson was a political intelligence agent in the U.S. Army. Assistant Director for Europe, Joseph Philips, was a successful espionage agent in several Eastern European countries.

Some USIA duties further expose its nature as a top intelligence arm of the U.S. imperialists. In the first place, it is expected to analyse the situation in each country, making recommendations to its Embassy, thereby to its Government, about changes that can tip the local balance in U.S. favour. Secondly, it organises networks of monitors for radio broadcasts and telephone conversations, while recruiting informers from government offices. It also hires people to distribute U.S. propaganda. Thirdly, it collects secret information with special reference to defence and economy, as a means of eliminating its international military and economic competitors. Fourthly, it buys its way into local publications to influence their policies, of which Latin America furnishes numerous examples. It has been active in bribing public figures, for example in Kenya and Tunisia. Finally, it finances, directs and often supplies with arms all anti-neutralist forces in the developing countries, witness Tshombe in Congo (Leopoldville) and Pak Hung Ji in South Korea. In a word, with virtually unlimited finances, there seems no bounds to its inventiveness in subversion.

One of the most recent developments in neo-colonialist strategy is the suggested establishment of a Businessmen Corps which will, like the Peace Corps, act in developing countries. In an article on 'U.S. Intelligence and the Monopolies' in *International Affairs* (Moscow, January 1965), V. Chernyavsky writes: 'There can hardly be any doubt that this Corps is a new U.S. intelligence organisation created on the initiative of the American monopolies to use Big Business for espionage. It is by no means unusual for U.S. Intelligence to set up its own business firms which are merely thinly disguised espionage centres. For example, according to Chernyavsky, the C.I.A. has set up a firm in Taiwan known as Western Enterprises Inc. Under this cover it sends spies and saboteurs to South China. The New Asia Trading Company, a CIA firm in India, has also helped to camouflage U.S. intelligence agents operating in South-east Asia.'

Such is the catalogue of neo-colonialism's activities and methods in our time. Upon reading it, the faint-hearted might come to feel that they must give up in despair before such an array of apparent power and seemingly inexhaustible resources.

Fortunately, however, history furnishes innumerable proofs of one of its own major laws; that the budding future is *always* stronger than the withering past. This has been amply demonstrated during every major revolution throughout history.

The American Revolution of 1776 struggled through to victory over a tangle of inefficiency, mismanagement, corruption, outright subversion and counter-revolution the like of which has been repeated to some degree in every subsequent revolution to date.

The Russian Revolution during the period of Intervention, 1917 to 1922, appeared to be dying on its feet. The Chinese Revolution at one time was forced to pull out of its existing bases, lock stock and barrel, and make the unprecedented Long March; yet it triumphed. Imperialist white mercenaries who dropped so confidently out of the skies on Stanleyville after a plane trip from Ascension Island thought that their job would be 'duck soup'. Yet, till now, the nationalist forces of Congo (Leopoldville) continue to fight their way forward. They do not talk of *if* they will win, but only of *when*.

Asia provides a further example of the strength of a people's will to determine their own future. In South Vietnam 'special warfare' is being fought to hold back the tide of revolutionary change. 'Special warfare' is a concept of General Maxwell Taylor and a military extension of the creed of John Foster Dulles: let Asians fight Asians. Briefly, the technique is for the foreign power to supply the money, aircraft, military equipment of all kinds, and the strategic and tactical command from a General Staff down to officer 'advisers', while the troops of the puppet government bear the brunt of the fighting. Yet in spite of bombing raids and the immense build-up of foreign strength in the area, the people of both North and South Vietnam are proving to be unconquerable.

In other parts of Asia, in Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, and now the Philippines, Thailand and Burma, the peoples of ex-colonial countries have stood firm and are winning battles against the allegedly superior imperialist enemy. In Latin America, despite 'final' punitive expeditions, the growing armed insurrections in Colombia, Venezuela and other countries continue to consolidate gains.

In Africa, we in Ghana have withstood all efforts by imperialism and its

agents; Tanzania has nipped subversive plots in the bud, as have Brazzaville, Uganda and Kenya. The struggle rages back and forth. The surging popular forces may still be hampered by colonialist legacies, but nonetheless they advance inexorably.

All these examples prove beyond doubt that neo-colonialism is *not* a sign of imperialism's strength but rather of its last hideous gasp. It testifies to its inability to rule any longer by old methods. Independence is a luxury it can no longer afford to permit its subject peoples, so that even what it claims to have 'given' it now seeks to take away.

This means that neo-colonialism *can* and *will* be defeated. How can this be done?

Thus far, all the methods of neo-colonialists have pointed in one direction, the ancient, accepted one of all minority ruling classes throughout history — *divide and rule*.

Quite obviously, therefore, *unity* is the first requisite for destroying neo-colonialism. Primary and basic is the need for an all-union government on the much divided continent of Africa. Along with that, a strengthening of the Afro-Asian Solidarity Organisation and the spirit of Bandung is already under way. To it, we must seek the adherence on an increasingly formal basis of our Latin American brothers.

Furthermore, all these liberatory forces have, on all major issues and at every possible instance, the support of the growing socialist sector of the world.

Finally, we must encourage and utilise to the full those still all too few yet growing instances of support for liberation and anti-colonialism inside the imperialist world itself.

To carry out such a political programme, we must all back it with national plans designed to strengthen ourselves as independent nations. An external condition for such independent development is neutrality or *political non-alignment*. This has been expressed in two conferences of Non-Aligned Nations during the recent past, the last of which, in Cairo in 1964, clearly and inevitably showed itself at one with the rising forces of liberation and human dignity.

And the preconditions for all this, to which lip service is often paid but activity seldom directed, is to develop ideological clarity among the anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist, pro-liberation masses of our continents. They, and they alone, make, maintain or break revolutions.

With the utmost speed, neo-colonialism must be analysed in clear and simple terms for the full mass understanding by the surging organisations of the African peoples. The All-African Trade Union Federation (AATUF) has already made a start in this direction, while the Pan-African Youth Movement, the women, journalists, farmers and others are not far behind. Bolstered with ideological clarity, these organisations, closely linked with the ruling parties where liberatory forces are in power, will prove that neo-colonialism is the symptom of imperialism's weakness and that it is defeatable. For, when all is said and done, it is the so-called little man, the bent-backed, exploited, malnourished, blood-covered fighter for independence who decides. And he invariably decides for freedom.

## **Study Questions**

- **According to Nkrumah, what is neo-colonialism, why did it arise, and how does it operate?**
- **According to Nkrumah, how could neo-colonialism be struggled against?**
- **How does Nkrumah's analysis of neo-colonialism apply today?**



### **COURSE 3: AMILCAR CABRAL- The Weapon of Theory (1966)**

If any of us came to Cuba with doubts in our mind about the solidity, strength, maturity and vitality of the Cuban Revolution, these doubts have been removed by what we have been able to see. Our hearts are now warmed by an unshakeable certainty which gives us courage in the difficult but glorious struggle against the common enemy: no power in the world will be able to destroy this Cuban Revolution, which is creating in the countryside and in the towns not only a new life but also — and even more important — a New Man, fully conscious of his national, continental and international rights and duties. In every field of activity the Cuban people have made major progress during the last seven years, particularly in 1965, Year of Agriculture.

We believe that this constitutes a particular lesson for the national liberation movements, especially for those who want their national revolution to be a true revolution. Some people have not failed to note that a certain number of Cubans, albeit an insignificant minority, have not shared the joys and hopes of the celebrations for the seventh anniversary because they are against the Revolution. It is possible that others will not be present at the celebrations of the eighth anniversary, but we would like to state that we consider the 'open door' policy for enemies of the Revolution to be a lesson in courage, determination, humanity and confidence in the people, another political and moral victory over the enemy; and to those who are worried, in a spirit of friendship, about the dangers which many be involved in this exodus, we guarantee that we, the peoples of the countries of Africa, still completely dominated by Portuguese colonialism, are prepared to send to Cuba as many men and women as may be needed to compensate for the departure of those who for reasons of class or of inability to adapt have interests or attitudes which are incompatible with the interests of the Cuban people. Taking once again the formerly hard and tragic path of our ancestors (mainly from Guinea and Angola) who were taken to Cuba as slaves, we would come now as free men, as willing workers and Cuban patriots, to fulfill a productive function in this new, just and multi-racial society, and to help and defend with our own lives the

victories of the Cuban people. Thus we would strengthen both all the bonds of history, blood and culture which unite our peoples with the Cuban people, and the spontaneous giving of oneself, the deep joy and infectious rhythm which make the construction of socialism in Cuba a new phenomenon for the world, a unique and, for many, unaccustomed event.

We are not going to use this platform to rail against imperialism. An African saying very common in our country says: "When your house is burning, it's no use beating the tom-toms." On a Tricontinental level, this means that we are not going to eliminate imperialism by shouting insults against it. For us, the best or worst shout against imperialism, whatever its form, is to take up arms and fight. This is what we are doing, and this is what we will go on doing until all foreign domination of our African homelands has been totally eliminated.

Our agenda includes subjects whose meaning and importance are beyond question and which show a fundamental preoccupation with *struggle*. We note, however, that one form of struggle which we consider to be fundamental has not been explicitly mentioned in this programme, although we are certain that it was present in the minds of those who drew up the programme. We refer here to *the struggle against our own weaknesses*. Obviously, other cases differ from that of Guinea; but our experience has shown us that in the general framework of daily struggle this battle against ourselves — no matter what difficulties the enemy may create — is the most difficult of all, whether for the present or the future of our peoples. This battle is the expression of the internal contradictions in the economic, social, cultural (and therefore historical) reality of each of our countries. We are convinced that any national or social revolution which is not based on knowledge of this fundamental reality runs grave risk of being condemned to failure.

When the African peoples say in their simple language that "no matter how hot the water from your well, it will not cook your rice," they express with singular simplicity a fundamental principle, not only of physics, but also of political science. We know that the development of a phenomenon in movement, whatever its external appearance, depends mainly on its internal characteristics. We also know

that on the political level our own reality — however fine and attractive the reality of others may be — can only be transformed by detailed knowledge of it, by our own efforts, by our own sacrifices. It is useful to recall in this Tricontinental gathering, so rich in experience and example, that however great the similarity between our various cases and however identical our enemies, national liberation and social revolution are not exportable commodities; they are, and increasingly so every day, the outcome of local and national elaboration, more or less influenced by external factors (be they favorable or unfavorable) but essentially determined and formed by the historical reality of each people, and carried to success by the overcoming or correct solution of the internal contradictions between the various categories characterising this reality. The success of the Cuban revolution, taking place only 90 miles from the greatest imperialist and anti-socialist power of all time, seems to us, in its content and its way of evolution, to be a practical and conclusive illustration of the validity of this principle.

However we must recognize that we ourselves and the other liberation movements in general (referring here above all to the African experience) have not managed to pay sufficient attention to this important problem of our common struggle.

The ideological deficiency, not to say the total lack of ideology, within the national liberation movements — which is basically due to ignorance of the historical reality which these movements claim to transform — constitutes one of the greatest weaknesses of our struggle against imperialism, if not the greatest weakness of all. We believe, however, that a sufficient number of different experiences has already been accumulated to enable us to define a general line of thought and action with the aim of eliminating this deficiency. A full discussion of this subject could be useful, and would enable this conference to make a valuable contribution towards strengthening the present and future actions of the national liberation movements. This would be a concrete way of helping these movements, and in our opinion no less important than political support or financial assistance for arms and suchlike. It is with the intention of making a contribution, however modest, to this debate that we present here our opinion of *the foundations and*

*objectives of national liberation in relation to the social structure.* This opinion is the result of our own experiences of the struggle and of a critical appreciation of the experiences of others. To those who see in it a theoretical character, we would recall that every practice produces a theory, and that if it is true that a revolution can fail even though it be based on perfectly conceived theories, nobody has yet made a successful revolution without a revolutionary theory.

Those who affirm — in our case correctly — that the motive force of history is the class struggle would certainly agree to a revision of this affirmation to make it more precise and give it an even wider field of application if they had a better knowledge of the essential characteristics of certain colonized peoples, that is to say peoples dominated by imperialism. In fact in the general evolution of humanity and of each of the peoples of which it is composed, classes appear neither as a generalized and simultaneous phenomenon throughout the totality of these groups, nor as a finished, perfect, uniform and spontaneous whole. The definition of classes within one or several human groups is a fundamental consequence of the progressive development of the productive forces and of the characteristics of the distribution of the wealth produced by the group or usurped from others. That is to say that the socio-economic phenomenon 'class' is created and develops as a function of at least two essential and interdependent variables — the level of productive forces and the pattern of ownership of the means of production. This development takes place slowly, gradually and unevenly, by quantitative and generally imperceptible variations in the fundamental components; once a certain degree of accumulation is reached, this process then leads to a *qualitative jump*, characterized by the appearance of classes and of conflict between them.

Factors external to the socio-economic whole can influence, more or less significantly, the process of development of classes, accelerating it, slowing it down and even causing regressions. When, for whatever reason, the influence of these factors ceases, the process reassumes its independence and its rhythm is then determined not only by the specific internal characteristics of the whole, but also by the resultant of the effect produced in it by the temporary action of the external factors. On a strictly internal level the rhythm of the process may vary, but

it remains continuous and progressive. Sudden progress is only possible as a function of violent alterations — mutations — in the level of productive forces or in the pattern of ownership. These violent transformations carried out within the process of development of classes, as a result of mutations in the level of productive forces or in the pattern of ownership, are generally called, in economic and political language, *revolutions*.

Clearly, however, the possibilities of this process are noticeably influenced by external factors, and particularly by the interaction of human groups. This interaction is considerably increased by the development of means of transport and communication which has created the modern world, eliminating the isolation of human groups within one area, of areas within one continent, and between continents. This development, characteristic of a long historical period which began with the invention of the first means of transport, was already more evident at the time of the Punic voyages and in the Greek colonization, and was accentuated by maritime discoveries, the invention of the steam engine and the discovery of electricity. And in our own times, with the progressive domesticization of atomic energy it is possible to promise, if not to take men to the stars, at least to humanize the universe.

This leads us to pose the following question: does history begin only with the development of the phenomenon of 'class', and consequently of class struggle? To reply in the affirmative would be to place outside history the whole period of life of human groups from the discovery of hunting, and later of nomadic and sedentary agriculture, to the organization of herds and the private appropriation of land. It would also be to consider — and this we refuse to accept — that various human groups in Africa, Asia, and Latin America were living without history, or outside history, at the time when they were subjected to the yoke of imperialism. It would be to consider that the peoples of our countries, such as the Balantes of Guinea, the Coaniamas of Angola and the Macondes of Mozambique, are still living today — if we abstract the slight influence of colonialism to which they have been subjected — outside history, or that they have no history.

Our refusal, based as it is on concrete knowledge of the socio-economic reality of our countries and on the analysis of the process of development of the phenomenon 'class', as we have seen earlier, leads us to conclude that if class struggle is the motive force of history, it is so only in a specific historical period. This means that *before* the class struggle — and necessarily *after* it, since in this world there is no before without an after — one or several factors was and will be the motive force of history. It is not difficult to see that this factor in the history of each human group is the *mode of production* — the level of productive forces and the pattern of ownership — characteristic of that group. Furthermore, as we have seen, classes themselves, class struggle and their subsequent definition, are the result of the development of the productive forces in conjunction with the pattern of ownership of the means of production. It therefore seems correct to conclude that the level of productive forces, the essential determining element in the content and form of class struggle, is the true and permanent motive force of history.

If we accept this conclusion, then the doubts in our minds are cleared away. Because if on the one hand we can see that the existence of history before the class struggle is guaranteed, and thus avoid for some human groups in our countries — and perhaps in our continent — the sad position of being peoples without any history, then on the other hand we can see that history has continuity, even after the disappearance of class struggle or of classes themselves. And as it was not we who postulated — on a scientific basis — the fact of the disappearance of classes as a historical inevitability, we can feel satisfied at having reached this conclusion which, to a certain extent, re-establishes coherence and at the same time gives to those peoples who, like the people of Cuba, are building socialism, the agreeable certainty that they will not cease to have a history when they complete the process of elimination of the phenomenon of 'class' and class struggle within their socio-economic whole. Eternity is not of this world, but man will outlive classes and will continue to produce and make history, since he can never free himself from the burden of his needs, both of mind and of body, which are the basis of the development of the forces of production.

The foregoing, and the reality of our times, allow us to state that the history of one human group or of humanity goes through at least three stages. The first is characterized by a low level of productive forces — of man's domination over nature; the mode of production is of a rudimentary character, private appropriation of the means of production does not yet exist, there are no classes, nor, consequently, is there any class struggle. In the second stage, the increased level of productive forces leads to private appropriation of the means of production, progressively complicates the mode of production, provokes conflicts of interests within the socio-economic whole in movement, and makes possible the appearance of the phenomena 'class' and hence of class struggle, the social expression of the contradiction in the economic field between the mode of production and private appropriation of the means of production. In the third stage, once a certain level of productive forces is reached, the elimination of private appropriation of the means of production is made possible, and is carried out, together with the elimination of the phenomenon 'class' and hence of class struggle; new and hitherto unknown forces in the historical process of the socio-economic whole are then unleashed.

In politico-economic language, the first stage would correspond to the communal agricultural and cattle-raising society, in which the social structure is horizontal, without any state; the second to feudal or assimilated agricultural or agro-industrial bourgeois societies, with a vertical social structure and a state; the third to socialist or communist societies, in which the economy is mainly, if not exclusively, industrial (since agriculture itself becomes a form of industry) and in which the state tends to progressively disappear, or actually disappears, and where the social structure returns to horizontality, at a higher level of productive forces, social relations and appreciation of human values.

At the level of humanity or of part of humanity (human groups within one area, of one or several continents) these three stages (or two of them) can be simultaneous, as is shown as much by the present as by the past. This is a result of the uneven development of human societies, whether caused by internal reasons or by one or more external factors exerting an accelerating or slowing-

down influence on their evolution. On the other hand, in the historical process of a given socio-economic whole each of the above-mentioned stages contains, once a certain level of transformation is reached, the seeds of the following stage.

We should also note that in the present phase of the life of humanity, and for a given socio-economic whole, the time sequence of the three characteristic stages is not indispensable. Whatever its level of productive forces and present social structure, a society can pass rapidly through the defined stages appropriate to the concrete local realities (both historical and human) and reach a higher stage of existence. This progress depends on the concrete possibilities of development of the society's productive forces and is governed mainly by the nature of the political power ruling the society, that is to say, by the type of state or, if one likes, by the character of the dominant class or classes within the society.

A more detailed analysis would show that the possibility of such a jump in the historical process arises mainly, in the economic field, from the power of the means available to man at the time for dominating nature, and, in the political field, from the new event which has radically changed the face of the world and the development of history, *the creation of socialist states*.

Thus we see that our peoples have their own history regardless of the stage of their economic development. When they were subjected to imperialist domination, the historical process of each of our peoples (or of the human groups of which they are composed) was subjected to the violent action of an exterior factor. This action — the impact of imperialism on our societies — could not fail to influence the process of development of the productive forces in our countries and the social structures of our countries, as well as the content and form of our national liberation struggles.

But we also see that in the historical context of the development of these struggles, our peoples have the concrete possibility of going from their present situation of exploitation and underdevelopment to a new stage of their historical process which can lead them to a higher form of economic, social and cultural existence.



The political statement drawn up by the international preparatory committee of this conference, for which we reaffirm our complete support, placed imperialism, by clear and succinct analysis, in its economic context and historical co-ordinates. We will not repeat here what has already been said in the assembly. We will simply state that imperialism can be defined as a worldwide expression of the search for profits and the ever-increasing accumulation of *surplus value* by monopoly financial capital, centered in two parts of the world; first in Europe, and then in North America. And if we wish to place the fact of imperialism within the general trajectory of the evolution of the transcendental factor which has changed the face of the world, namely capital and the process of its accumulation, we can say that imperialism is piracy transplanted from the seas to dry land piracy reorganized, consolidated and adapted to the aim of exploiting the natural and human resources of our peoples. But if we can calmly analyze the imperialist phenomenon, we will not shock anybody by admitting that imperialism — and everything goes to prove that it is in fact the last phase in the evolution of capitalism — has been a historical necessity, a consequence of the impetus given by the productive forces and of the transformations of the means of production in the general context of humanity, considered as one movement, that is to say a necessity like those today of the national liberation of peoples, the destruction of capital and the advent of socialism.

The important thing for our peoples is to know whether imperialism, in its role as capital in action, has fulfilled in our countries its historical mission: the acceleration of the process of development of the productive forces and their transformation in the sense of increasing complexity in the means of production; increasing the differentiation between the classes with the development of the bourgeoisie, and intensifying the class struggle; and appreciably increasing the level of economic, social and cultural life of the peoples. It is also worth examining the influences and effects of imperialist action on the social structures and historical processes of our peoples.

We will not condemn nor justify imperialism here; we will simply state that as much on the economic level as on the social and cultural level, imperialist

capital has not remotely fulfilled the historical mission carried out by capital in the countries of accumulation. This means that if, on the one hand, imperialist capital has had, in the great majority of the dominated countries, the simple function of multiplying surplus value, it can be seen on the other hand that the historical capacity of capital (as indestructible accelerator of the process of development of productive forces) depends strictly on its freedom, that is to say on the degree of independence with which it is utilized. We must however recognize that in certain cases imperialist capital or moribund capitalism has had sufficient self-interest, strength and time to increase the level of productive forces (as well as building towns) and to allow a minority of the local population to attain a higher and even privileged standard of living, thus contributing to a process which some would call dialectical, by widening the contradictions within the societies in question. In other, even rarer cases, there has existed the possibility of accumulation of capital, creating the conditions for the development of a local bourgeoisie.

On the question of the effects of imperialist domination on the social structure and historical process of our peoples, we should first of all examine the general forms of imperialist domination. There are at least two forms: the first is direct domination, by means of a power made up of people foreign to the dominated people (armed forces police, administrative agents and settlers); this is generally called *classical colonialism* or *colonialism* is indirect domination, by a political power made up mainly or completely of native agents; this is called neocolonialism.

In the first case, the social structure of the dominated people, whatever its stage of development, can suffer the following consequences: (a) total destruction, generally accompanied by immediate or gradual elimination of the native population and, consequently, by the substitution of a population from outside; (b) partial destruction, generally accompanied by a greater or lesser influx of population from outside; (c) apparent conservation, conditioned by confining the native society to zones or reserves generally offering no possibilities of living, accompanied by massive implantation of population from outside.

The two latter cases are those which we must consider in the framework of

the problematic national liberation, and they are extensively present in Africa. One can say that in either case the influence of imperialism on the historical process of the dominated people produces paralysis, stagnation and even in some cases regression in this process. However this paralysis is not complete. In one sector or another of the socio-economic whole in question, noticeable transformations can be expected, caused by the permanent action of some internal (local) factors or by the action of new factors introduced by the colonial domination, such as the introduction of money and the development of urban centers. Among these transformations we should anticipate a progressive loss of prestige of the ruling native classes or sectors, the forced or voluntary exodus of part of the peasant population to the urban centers, with the consequent development of new social strata; salaried workers, clerks, employees in commerce and the liberal professions, and an instable stratum of unemployed. In the countryside there develops, with very varied intensity and always linked to the urban milieu, a stratum made up of small landowners. In the case of neo-colonialism, whether the majority of the colonized population is of native or foreign origin, the imperialist action takes the form of creating a local bourgeoisie or pseudo-bourgeoisie, controlled by the ruling class of the dominating country.

The transformations in the social structure are not so marked in the lower strata, above all in the countryside, which retains the characteristics of the colonial phase; but the creation of a native pseudo-bourgeoisie which generally develops out of a petty bourgeoisie of bureaucrats and accentuates the differentiation between the social strata and intermediaries in the commercial system (compradores), by strengthening the economic activity of local elements, opens up new perspectives in the social dynamic, mainly by the development of an urban working class, the introduction of private agricultural property and the progressive appearance of an agricultural proletariat. These more or less noticeable transformations of the social structure, produced by a significant increase in the level of productive forces, have a direct influence on the historical process of the socio-economic whole in question. While in classical colonialism this process is paralyzed, neo-colonialist domination, by allowing the social

dynamic to awaken (conflicts of interests between native social strata or class struggles), creates the illusion that the historical process is returning to its normal evolution. This illusion will be reinforced by the existence of a political power (national state) composed of native elements. In reality it is scarcely even an illusion, since the submission of the local 'ruling' class to the ruling class of the dominating country limits or prevents the development of the national productive forces.

But in the concrete conditions of the present-day world economy this dependence is fatal and thus the local pseudo-bourgeoisie, however nationalist it may be, cannot effectively fulfill its historical function; it cannot freely direct the development of the productive forces; in brief it cannot be a national bourgeoisie. For as we have seen, the productive forces are the motive force of history, and total freedom of the process of their development is an indispensable condition for their proper functioning.

We therefore see that both in colonialism and in neo-colonialism the essential characteristic of imperialist domination remains the same: the negation of the historical process of the dominated people by means of violent usurpation of the freedom of development of the national productive forces. This observation, which identifies the essence of the two apparent forms of imperialist domination, seems to us to be of major importance for the thought and action of liberation movements, both in the course of struggle and after the winning of independence.

On the basis of this, we can state that national liberation is the phenomenon in which a given socio-economic whole rejects the negation of its historical process. In other words, the national liberation of a people is the regaining of the historical personality of that people, its return to history through the destruction of the imperialist domination to which it was subjected.

We have seen that violent usurpation of the freedom of the process of development of the productive forces of the dominated socio-economic whole constitutes the principal and permanent characteristic of imperialist domination, whatever its form. We have also seen that this freedom alone can guarantee the normal development of the historical process of a people. We can therefore

conclude that national liberation exists only when the national productive forces have been completely freed from every kind of foreign domination.

It is often said that national liberation is based on the right of every people to freely control its own destiny and that the objective of this liberation is national independence. Although we do not disagree with this vague and subjective way of expressing a complex reality, we prefer to be objective, since for us the basis of national liberation, whatever the formulas adopted on the level of international law, is the inalienable right of every people to have its own history, and the objective of national liberation is to regain this right usurped by imperialism, that is to say, to free the process of development of the national productive forces.

For this reason, in our opinion, any national liberation movement which does not take into consideration this basis and this objective may certainly struggle against imperialism, but will surely not be struggling for national liberation.

This means that, bearing in mind the essential characteristics of the present world economy, as well as experiences already gained in the field of anti-imperialist struggle, the principal aspect of national liberation struggle is the struggle against neo-colonialism. Furthermore, if we accept that national liberation demands a profound mutation in the process of development of the productive forces, we see that this phenomenon of national liberation necessarily corresponds to a revolution. The important thing is to be conscious of the objective and subjective conditions in which this revolution can be made and to know the type or types of struggle most appropriate for its realization.

We are not going to repeat here that these conditions are favorable in the present phase of the history of humanity; it is sufficient to recall that unfavorable conditions also exist, just as much on the international level as on the internal level of each nation struggling for liberation.

On the international level, it seems to us that the following factors, at least, are unfavorable to national liberation movements: the neo-colonial situation of a great number of states which, having won political independence, are now tending to join up with others already in that situation; the progress made by neo-

capitalism, particularly in Europe, where imperialism is adopting preferential investments, encouraging the development of a privileged proletariat and thus lowering the revolutionary level of the working classes; the open or concealed neo-colonial position of some European states which, like Portugal, still have colonies; the so-called policy of 'aid for undeveloped countries' adopted by imperialism with the aim of creating or reinforcing native pseudo-bourgeoisies which are necessarily dependent on the international bourgeoisie, and thus obstructing the path of revolution; the claustrophobia and revolutionary timidity which have led some recently independent states whose internal economic and political conditions are favorable to revolution to accept compromises with the enemy or its agents; the growing contradictions between anti-imperialist states; and, finally, the threat to world peace posed by the prospect of atomic war on the part of imperialism. All these factors reinforce the action of imperialism against the national liberation movements.

If the repeated interventions and growing aggressiveness of imperialism against the peoples can be interpreted as a sign of desperation faced with the size of the national liberation movements, they can also be explained to a certain extent by the weaknesses produced by these unfavorable factors within the general front of the anti-imperialist struggle.

On the internal level, we believe that the most important weaknesses or unfavorable factors are inherent in the socio-economic structure and in the tendencies of its evolution under imperialist pressure, or to be more precise in the little or no attention paid to the characteristics of this structure and these tendencies by the national liberation movements in deciding on the strategy of their struggles.

By saying this we do not wish to diminish the importance of other internal factors which are unfavorable to national liberation, such as economic underdevelopment, the consequent social and cultural backwardness of the popular masses, tribalism and other contradictions of lesser importance. It should however be pointed out that the existence of tribes only manifests itself as an important contradiction as a function of opportunistic attitudes, generally on the part of

detribalised individuals or groups, within the national liberation movements. Contradictions between classes, even when only embryonic, are of far greater importance than contradictions between tribes.

Although the colonial and neo-colonial situations are identical in essence, and the main aspect of the struggle against imperialism is neo-colonialist, we feel it is vital to distinguish in practice these two situations. In fact the horizontal structure, however it may differ from the native society, and the absence of a political power composed of national elements in the colonial situation make possible the creation of a wide front of unity and struggle, which is vital to the success of the national liberation movement. But this possibility does not remove the need for a rigorous analysis of the native social structure, of the tendencies of its evolution, and for the adoption in practice of appropriate measures for ensuring true national liberation. While recognizing that each movement knows best what to do in its own case, one of these measures seems to us indispensable, namely, the creation of a firmly united vanguard, conscious of the true meaning and objective of the national liberation struggle which it must lead. This necessity is all the more urgent since we know that with rare exceptions the colonial situation neither permits nor needs the existence of significant vanguard classes (working class conscious of its existence and rural proletariat) which could ensure the vigilance of the popular masses over the evolution of the liberation movement. On the contrary, the generally embryonic character of the working classes and the economic, social and cultural situation of the physical force of most importance in the national liberation struggle-the peasantry-do not allow these two main forces to distinguish true national independence from fictitious political independence. Only a revolutionary vanguard, generally an active minority, can be aware of this distinction from the start and make it known, through the struggle, to the popular masses. This explains the fundamentally political nature of the national liberation struggle and to a certain extent makes the form of struggle important in the final result of the phenomenon of national liberation.

In the neo-colonial situation the more or less vertical structure of the native society and the existence of a political power composed of native elements-

national state-already worsen the contradictions within that society and make difficult if not impossible the creation of as wide a front as in the colonial situation. On the one hand the material effects (mainly the nationalization of cadres and the increased economic initiative of the native elements, particularly in the commercial field) and the psychological effects (pride in the belief of being ruled by one's own compatriots, exploitation of religious or tribal solidarity between some leaders and a fraction of the masses) together demobilize a considerable part of the nationalist forces. But on the other hand the necessarily repressive nature of the neo-colonial state against the national liberation forces, the sharpening of contradictions between classes, the objective permanence of signs and agents of foreign domination (settlers who retain their privileges, armed forces, racial discrimination), the growing poverty of the peasantry and the more or less notorious influence of external factors all contribute towards keeping the flame of nationalism alive, towards progressively raising the consciousness of wide popular sectors and towards reuniting the majority of the population, on the very basis of awareness of neo-colonialist frustration, around the ideal of national liberation. In addition, while the native ruling class becomes progressively more bourgeois, the development of a working class composed of urban workers and agricultural proletarians, all exploited by the indirect domination of imperialism, opens up new perspectives for the evolution of national liberation. This working class, whatever the level of its political consciousness (given a certain minimum, namely the awareness of its own needs), seems to constitute the true popular vanguard of the national liberation struggle in the neo-colonial case. However it will not be able to completely fulfill its mission in this struggle (which does not end with the gaining of independence) unless it firmly unites with the other exploited strata, the peasants in general (hired men, sharecroppers, tenants and small farmers) and the nationalist petty bourgeoisie. The creation of this alliance demands the mobilization and organization of the nationalist forces within the framework (or by the action) of a strong and well-structured political organization.

Another important distinction between the colonial and neo-colonial situations is in the prospects for the struggle. The colonial situation (in which the



nation class fights the repressive forces of the bourgeoisie of the colonizing country) can lead, apparently at least, to a nationalist solution (national revolution); the nation gains its independence and theoretically adopts the economic structure which best suits it. The neo-colonial situation (in which the working classes and their allies struggle simultaneously against the imperialist bourgeoisie and the native ruling class) is not resolved by a nationalist solution; it demands the destruction of the capitalist structure implanted in the national territory by imperialism, and correctly postulates a socialist solution.

This distinction arises mainly from the different levels of the productive forces in the two cases and the consequent sharpening of the class struggle.

It would not be difficult to show that in time the distinction becomes scarcely apparent. It is sufficient to recall that in our present historical situation — elimination of imperialism which uses every means to perpetuate its domination over our peoples, and consolidation of socialism throughout a large part of the world — there are only two possible paths for an independent nation: to return to imperialist domination (neo-colonialism, capitalism, state capitalism), or to take the way of socialism. This operation, on which depends the compensation for the efforts and sacrifices of the popular masses during the struggle, is considerably influenced by the form of struggle and the degree of revolutionary consciousness of those who lead it. The facts make it unnecessary for us to prove that the essential instrument of imperialist domination is violence. If we accept the principle that the liberation struggle is a revolution and that it does not finish at the moment when the national flag is raised and the national anthem played, we will see that there is not, and cannot be national liberation without the use of liberating violence by the nationalist forces, to answer the criminal violence of the agents of imperialism. Nobody can doubt that, whatever its local characteristics, imperialist domination implies a state of permanent violence against the nationalist forces. There is no people on earth which, having been subjected to the imperialist yoke (colonialist or neo-colonialist), has managed to gain its independence (nominal or effective) without victims. The important thing is to determine which forms of violence have to be used by the national liberation forces in order not only to

answer the violence of imperialism, but also to ensure through the struggle the final victory of their cause, true national independence. The past and present experiences of various peoples, the present situation of national liberation struggles in the world (especially in Vietnam, the Congo and Zimbabwe) as well as the situation of permanent violence, or at least of contradictions and upheavals, in certain countries which have gained their independence by the so-called peaceful way, show us not only that compromises with imperialism do not work, but also that the normal way of national liberation, imposed on peoples by imperialist repression, is *armed struggle*.

We do not think we will shock this assembly by stating that the only effective way of definitively fulfilling the aspirations of the peoples, that is to say of attaining national liberation, is by armed struggle. This is the great lesson which the contemporary history of liberation struggle teaches all those who are truly committed to the effort of liberating their peoples.

It is obvious that both the effectiveness of this way and the stability of the situation to which it leads after liberation depend not only on the characteristics of the organization of the struggle but also on the political and moral awareness of those who, for historical reasons, are capable of being the immediate heirs of the colonial or neo-colonial state. For events have shown that the only social sector capable of being aware of the reality of imperialist domination and of directing the state apparatus inherited from this domination is the native petty bourgeoisie. If we bear in mind the aleatory characteristics and the complexity of the tendencies naturally inherent in the economic situation of this social stratum or class, we will see that this specific inevitability in our situation constitutes one of the weaknesses of the national liberation movement.

The colonial situation, which does not permit the development of a native pseudo-bourgeoisie and in which the popular masses do not generally reach the necessary level of political consciousness before the advent of the phenomenon of national liberation, offers the petty bourgeoisie the historical opportunity of leading the struggle against foreign domination, since by nature of its objective and subjective position (higher standard of living than that of the masses, more

frequent contact with the agents of colonialism, and hence more chances of being humiliated, higher level of education and political awareness, etc.) it is the stratum which most rapidly becomes aware of the need to free itself from foreign domination. This historical responsibility is assumed by the sector of the petty bourgeoisie which, in the colonial context, can be called revolutionary, while other sectors retain the doubts characteristic of these classes or ally themselves to colonialism so as to defend, albeit illusorily, their social situation.

The neo-colonial situation, which demands the elimination of the native pseudo-bourgeoisie so that national liberation can be attained, also offers the petty bourgeoisie the chance of playing a role of major and even decisive importance in the struggle for the elimination of foreign domination. But in this case, by virtue of the progress made in the social structure, the function of leading the struggle is shared (to a greater or lesser extent) with the more educated sectors of the working classes and even with some elements of the national pseudo-bourgeoisie who are inspired by patriotic sentiments. The role of the sector of the petty bourgeoisie which participates in leading the struggle is all the more important since it is a fact that in the neo-colonial situation it is the most suitable sector to assume these functions, both because of the economic and cultural limitations of the working masses, and because of the complexes and limitations of an ideological nature which characterize the sector of the national pseudo-bourgeoisie which supports the struggle. In this case it is important to note that the role with which it is entrusted demands from this sector of the petty bourgeoisie a greater revolutionary consciousness, and the capacity for faithfully interpreting the aspirations of the masses in each phase of the struggle and for identifying themselves more and more with the masses.

But however high the degree of revolutionary consciousness of the sector of the petty bourgeoisie called on to fulfill this historical function, it cannot free itself from one objective of reality: the petty bourgeoisie, as a service class (that is to say that a class not directly involved in the process of production) does not possess the economic base to guarantee the taking over of power. In fact history has shown that whatever the role — sometimes important — played by individuals

coming from the petty bourgeoisie in the process of a revolution, this class has never possessed political control. And it never could possess it, since political control (the state) is based on the economic capacity of the ruling class, and in the conditions of colonial and neo-colonial society this capacity is retained by two entities: imperialist capital and the native working classes.

To retain the power which national liberation puts in its hands, the petty bourgeoisie has only one path: to give free rein to its natural tendencies to become more bourgeois, to permit the development of a bureaucratic and intermediary bourgeoisie in the commercial cycle, in order to transform itself into a national pseudo-bourgeoisie, that is to say in order to negate the revolution and necessarily ally. In order not to betray these objectives the petty bourgeoisie has only one choice: to strengthen its revolutionary consciousness, to reject the temptations of becoming more bourgeois and the natural concerns of its class mentality, to identify itself with the working classes and not to oppose the normal development of the process of revolution. This means that in order to truly fulfill the role in the national liberation struggle, the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie must be capable of committing suicide as a class in order to be reborn as revolutionary workers, completely identified with the deepest aspirations of the people to which they belong.

This alternative — to betray the revolution or to commit suicide as a class — constitutes the dilemma of the petty bourgeoisie in the general framework of the national liberation struggle. The positive solution in favor of the revolution depends on what Fidel Castro recently correctly called *the development of revolutionary consciousness*. This dependence necessarily calls our attention to the capacity of the leader of the national liberation struggle to remain faithful to the principles and to the fundamental cause of this struggle. This shows us, to a certain extent, that if national liberation is essentially a political problem, the conditions for its development give it certain characteristics which belong to the sphere of morals.

We will not shout hurrahs or proclaim here our solidarity with this or that people in struggle. Our presence is in itself a cry of condemnation of imperialism

and a proof of solidarity with all peoples who want to banish from their country the imperialist yoke, and in particular with the heroic people of Vietnam. But we firmly believe that the best proof we can give of our anti-imperialist position and of our active solidarity with our comrades in this common struggle is to return to our countries, to further develop this struggle and to remain faithful to the principles and objectives of national liberation.

Our wish is that every national liberation movement represented here may be able to repeat in its own country, arms in hand, in unison with its people, the already legendary cry of Cuba: Patria O Muerte, Venceremos! Death to the Forces of Imperialism! Free, Prosperous and Happy Country for Each of our Peoples! Venceremos!

### **CHE GUEVARA- Message to the Tricontinental (1967)**

Twenty-one years have already elapsed since the end of the last world conflagration; numerous publications, in every possible language, celebrate this event, symbolized by the defeat of Japan. There is a climate of apparent optimism in many areas of the different camps into which the world is divided.

Twenty-one years without a world war, in these times of maximum confrontations, of violent clashes and sudden changes, appears to be a very high figure. However, without analyzing the practical results of this peace (poverty, degradation, increasingly larger exploitation of enormous sectors of humanity) for which all of us have stated that we are willing to fight, we would do well to inquire if this peace is real.

It is not the purpose of these notes to detail the different conflicts of a local character that have been occurring since the surrender of Japan, neither do we intend to recount the numerous and increasing instances of civilian strife which have taken place during these years of apparent peace. It will be enough just to name, as an example against undue optimism, the wars of Korea and Vietnam.

In the first one, after years of savage warfare, the Northern part of the country was submerged in the most terrible devastation known in the annals of modern warfare: riddled with bombs; without factories, schools or hospitals; with

absolutely no shelter for housing ten million inhabitants.

Under the discredited flag of the United Nations, dozens of countries under the military leadership of the United States participated in this war with the massive intervention of U.S. soldiers and the use, as cannon fodder, of the South Korean population that was enrolled. On the other side, the army and the people of Korea and the volunteers from the Peoples' Republic of China were furnished with supplies and advised by the Soviet military apparatus. The U.S. tested all sort of weapons of destruction, excluding the thermo-nuclear type, but including, on a limited scale bacteriological and chemical warfare.

In Vietnam, the patriotic forces of that country have carried on an almost uninterrupted war against three imperialist powers: Japan, whose might suffered an almost vertical collapse after the bombs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; France, who recovered from that defeated country its Indo-China colonies and ignored the promises it had made in harder times; and the United States, in this last phase of the struggle.

There were limited confrontations in every continent although in our America, for a long time, there were only incipient liberation struggles and military coups d'etat until the Cuban revolution resounded the alert, signaling the importance of this region. This action attracted the wrath of the imperialists and Cuba was finally obliged to defend its coasts, first in Playa Giron, and again during the Missile Crisis.

This last incident could have unleashed a war of incalculable proportions if a US-Soviet clash had occurred over the Cuban question.

But, evidently, the focal point of all contradictions is at present the territory of the peninsula of Indo-China and the adjacent areas. Laos and Vietnam are torn by a civil war which has ceased being such by the entry into the conflict of U.S. imperialism with all its might, thus transforming the whole zone into a dangerous detonator ready at any moment to explode.

In Vietnam the confrontation has assumed extremely acute characteristics. It is not our intention, either, to chronicle this war. We shall simply remember and point out some milestones.

In 1954, after the annihilating defeat of Dien-Bien-Phu, an agreement was signed at Geneva dividing the country into two separate zones; elections were to be held within a term of 18 months to determine who should govern Vietnam and how the country should be reunified. The U.S. did not sign this document and started maneuvering to substitute the emperor Bao-Dai, who was a French puppet, for a man more amiable to its purposes. This happened to be Ngo-Din-Diem, whose tragic end - that of an orange squeezed dry by imperialism — is well known by all.

During the months following the agreement, optimism reigned supreme in the camp of the popular forces. The last pockets of the anti-French resistance were dismantled in the South of the country and they awaited the fulfillment of the Geneva agreements. But the patriots soon realized there would be no elections -unless the United States felt itself capable of imposing its will in the polls, which was practically impossible even resorting to all its fraudulent methods. Once again the fighting broke out in the South and gradually acquired full intensity. At present the U.S. army has increased to over half a million invaders while the puppet forces decrease in number and, above all, have totally lost their combativeness.

Almost two years ago the United States started bombing systematically the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, in yet another attempt to overcome the belligerence [sic] of the South and impose, from a position of strength, a meeting at the conference table. At first, the bombardments were more or less isolated occurrences and were adorned with the mask of reprisals for alleged provocations from the North. Later on, as they increased in intensity and regularity, they became one gigantic attack carried out by the air force of the United States, day after day, for the purpose of destroying all vestiges of civilization in the Northern zone of the country. This is an episode of the infamously notorious "escalation".

The material aspirations of the Yankee world have been fulfilled to a great extent, regardless of the unflinching defense of the Vietnamese anti-aircraft artillery, of the numerous planes shot down (over 1,700) and of the socialist countries aid in war supplies.

There is a sad reality: Vietnam — a nation representing the aspirations, the

hopes of a whole world of forgotten peoples — is tragically alone. This nation must endure the furious attacks of U.S. technology, with practically no possibility of reprisals in the South and only some of defense in the North — but always alone.

The solidarity of all progressive forces of the world towards the people of Vietnam today is similar to the bitter irony of the plebeians coaxing on the gladiators in the Roman arena. It is not a matter of wishing success to the victim of aggression, but of sharing his fate; one must accompany him to his death or to victory.

When we analyze the lonely situation of the Vietnamese people, we are overcome by anguish at this illogical moment of humanity.

U.S. imperialism is guilty of aggression — its crimes are enormous and cover the whole world. We already know all that, gentlemen! But this guilt also applies to those who, when the time came for a definition, hesitated to make Vietnam an inviolable part of the socialist world; running, of course, the risks of a war on a global scale-but also forcing a decision upon imperialism. And the guilt also applies to those who maintain a war of abuse and snares — started quite some time ago by the representatives of the two greatest powers of the socialist camp.

We must ask ourselves, seeking an honest answer: is Vietnam isolated, or is it not? Is it not maintaining a dangerous equilibrium between the two quarrelling powers?

And what great people these are! What stoicism and courage! And what a lesson for the world is contained in this struggle! Not for a long time shall we be able to know if President Johnson ever seriously thought of bringing about some of the reforms needed by his people - to iron out the barbed class contradictions that grow each day with explosive power. The truth is that the improvements announced under the pompous title of the "Great Society" have dropped into the cesspool of Vietnam.

The largest of all imperialist powers feels in its own guts the bleeding inflicted by a poor and underdeveloped country; its fabulous economy feels the



strain of the war effort. Murder is ceasing to be the most convenient business for its monopolies. Defensive weapons, and never in adequate number, is all these extraordinary soldiers have - besides love for their homeland, their society, and unsurpassed courage. But imperialism is bogging down in Vietnam, is unable to find a way out and desperately seeks one that will overcome with dignity this dangerous situation in which it now finds itself. Furthermore, the Four Points put forward by the North and the Five Points of the South now corner imperialism, making the confrontation even more decisive.

Everything indicate [sic] that peace, this unstable peace which bears that name for the sole reason that no worldwide conflagration has taken place, is again in danger of being destroyed by some irrevocable and unacceptable step taken by the United States.

What role shall we, the exploited people of the world, play? The peoples of the three continents focus their attention on Vietnam and learn their lesson. Since imperialists blackmail humanity by threatening it with war, the wise reaction is not to fear war. The general tactics of the people should be to launch a constant and a firm attack in all fronts where the confrontation is taking place.

In those places where this meager peace we have has been violated which is our duty? To liberate ourselves at any price.

The world panorama is of great complexity. The struggle for liberation has not yet been undertaken by some countries of ancient Europe, sufficiently developed to realize the contradictions of capitalism, but weak to such a degree that they are unable either to follow imperialism or even to start on its own road. Their contradictions will reach an explosive stage during the forthcoming years- but their problems and, consequently, their own solutions are different from those of our dependent and economically underdeveloped countries.

The fundamental field of imperialist exploitation comprises the three underdeveloped continents: America, Asia, and Africa. Every country has also its own characteristics, but each continent, as a whole, also presents a certain unity.

Our America is integrated by a group of more or less homogeneous countries and in most parts of its territory U.S. monopolist capitals maintain an

absolute supremacy. Puppet governments or, in the best of cases, weak and fearful local rulers, are incapable of contradicting orders from their Yankee master. The United States has nearly reached the climax of its political and economic domination; it could hardly advance much more; any change in the situation could bring about a setback. Their policy is to maintain that which has already been conquered. The line of action, at the present time, is limited to the brutal use of force with the purpose of thwarting the liberation movements, no matter of what type they might happen to be.

The slogan "we will not allow another Cuba" hides the possibility of perpetrating aggressions without fear of reprisal, such as the one carried out against the Dominican Republic or before that the massacre in Panama — and the clear warning stating that Yankee troops are ready to intervene anywhere in America where the ruling regime may be altered, thus endangering their interests. This policy enjoys an almost absolute impunity: the OAS is a suitable mask, in spite of its unpopularity; the inefficiency of the UN is ridiculous as well as tragic; the armies of all American countries are ready to intervene in order to smash their peoples. The International of Crime and Treason has in fact been organized. On the other hand, the autonomous bourgeoisies have lost all their capacity to oppose imperialism — if they ever had it — and they have become the last card in the pack. There are no other alternatives; either a socialist revolution or a make-believe revolution.

Asia is a continent with many different characteristics. The struggle for liberation waged against a series of European colonial powers resulted in the establishment of more or less progressive governments, whose ulterior evolution have brought about, in some cases, the deepening of the primary objectives of national liberation and in others, a setback towards the adoption of pro-imperialist positions.

From the economic point of view, the United States had very little to lose and much to gain from Asia. These changes benefited its interests; the struggle for the overthrow of other neocolonial powers and the penetration of new spheres of action in the economic field is carried out sometimes directly, occasionally

through Japan.

But there are special political conditions, particularly in Indo-China, which create in Asia certain characteristics of capital importance and play a decisive role in the entire U.S. military strategy.

The imperialists encircle China through South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, South Vietnam and Thailand at least.

This dual situation, a strategic interest as important as the military encirclement of the Peoples' Republic of China and the penetration of these great markets — which they do not dominate yet — turns Asia into one of the most explosive points of the world today, in spite of its apparent stability outside of the Vietnamese war zone.

The Middle East, though it geographically belongs to this continent, has its own contradictions and is actively in ferment; it is impossible to foretell how far this cold war between Israel, backed by the imperialists, and the progressive countries of that zone will go. This is just another one of the volcanoes threatening eruption in the world today.

Africa offers an almost virgin territory to the neocolonial invasion. There have been changes which, to some extent, forced neocolonial powers to give up their former absolute prerogatives. But when these changes are carried out uninterruptedly, colonialism continues in the form of neocolonialism with similar effects as far as the economic situation is concerned.

The United States had no colonies in this region but is now struggling to penetrate its partners' fiefs. It can be said that following the strategic plans of U.S. imperialism, Africa constitutes its long range reservoir; its present investments, though, are only important in the Union of South Africa and its penetration is beginning to be felt in the Congo, Nigeria and other countries where a violent rivalry with other imperialist powers is beginning to take place (in a pacific manner up to the present time).

So far it does not have there great interests to defend except its pretended right to intervene in every spot of the world where its monopolies detect huge profits or the existence of large reserves of raw materials.

All this past history justifies our concern regarding the possibilities of liberating the peoples within a long or a short period of time.

If we stop to analyze Africa we shall observe that in the Portuguese colonies of Guinea, Mozambique and Angola the struggle is waged with relative intensity, with a concrete success in the first one and with variable success in the other two. We still witness in the Congo the dispute between Lumumba's successors and the old accomplices of Tshombe, a dispute which at the present time seems to favor the latter: those who have "pacified" a large area of the country for their own benefit — though the war is still latent.

In Rhodesia we have a different problem: British imperialism used every means within its reach to place power in the hands of the white minority, who, at the present time, unlawfully holds it. The conflict, from the British point of view, is absolutely unofficial; this Western power, with its habitual diplomatic cleverness — also called hypocrisy in the strict sense of the word — presents a facade of displeasure before the measures adopted by the government of Ian Smith. Its crafty attitude is supported by some Commonwealth countries that follow it, but is attacked by a large group of countries belonging to Black Africa, whether they are or not servile economic lackeys of British imperialism.

Should the rebellious efforts of these patriots succeed and this movement receive the effective support of neighboring African nations, the situation in Rhodesia may become extremely explosive. But for the moment all these problems are being discussed in harmless organizations such as the UN, the Commonwealth and the OAU.

The social and political evolution of Africa does not lead us to expect a continental revolution. The liberation struggle against the Portuguese should end victoriously, but Portugal does not mean anything in the imperialist field. The confrontations of revolutionary importance are those which place at bay all the imperialist apparatus; this does not mean, however, that we should stop fighting for the liberation of the three Portuguese colonies and for the deepening of their revolutions.

When the black masses of South Africa or Rhodesia start their authentic

revolutionary struggle, a new era will dawn in Africa. Or when the impoverished masses of a nation rise up to rescue their right to a decent life from the hands of the ruling oligarchies.

Up to now, army putsches follow one another; a group of officers succeeds another or substitute a ruler who no longer serves their caste interests or those of the powers who covertly manage him — but there are no great popular upheavals. In the Congo these characteristics appeared briefly, generated by the memory of Lumumba, but they have been losing strength in the last few months.

In Asia, as we have seen, the situation is explosive. The points of friction are not only Vietnam and Laos, where there is fighting; such a point is also Cambodia, where at any time a direct U.S. aggression may start, Thailand, Malaya, and, of course, Indonesia, where we can not assume that the last word has been said, regardless of the annihilation of the Communist Party in that country when the reactionaries took over. And also, naturally, the Middle East.

In Latin America the armed struggle is going on in Guatemala, Colombia, Venezuela and Bolivia; the first uprisings are cropping up in Brazil [sic]. There are also some resistance focuses which appear and then are extinguished. But almost all the countries of this continent are ripe for a type of struggle that, in order to achieve victory, can not be content with anything less than establishing a government of socialist tendencies.

In this continent practically only one tongue is spoken (with the exception of Brazil, with whose people, those who speak Spanish can easily make themselves understood, owing to the great similarity of both languages). There is also such a great similarity between the classes in these countries, that they have attained identification among themselves of an international americano type, much more complete than in the other continents. Language, habits, religion, a common foreign master, unite them. The degree and the form of exploitation are similar for both the exploiters and the men they exploit in the majority of the countries of Our America. And rebellion is ripening swiftly in it.

We may ask ourselves: how shall this rebellion flourish? What type will it be? We have maintained for quite some time now that, owing to the similarity of

their characteristics, the struggle in Our America will achieve in due course, continental proportions. It shall be the scene of many great battles fought for the liberation of humanity.

Within the frame of this struggle of continental scale, the battles which are now taking place are only episodes — but they have already furnished their martyrs, they shall figure in the history of Our America as having given their necessary blood in this last stage of the fight for the total freedom of man. These names will include Comandante Turcios Lima, padre Camilo Torres, Comandante Fabricio Ojeda, Comandantes Lobaton and Luis de la Puente Uceda, all outstanding figures in the revolutionary movements of Guatemala, Colombia, Venezuela and Peru.

But the active movement of the people creates its new leaders; Cesar Montes and Yon Sosa raise up their flag in Guatemala; Fabio Vazquez and Marulanda in Colombia; Douglas Bravo in the Western part of the country and Americo Martin in El Bachiller, both directing their respective Venezuelan fronts.

New uprisings shall take place in these and other countries of Our America, as it has already happened in Bolivia, and they shall continue to grow in the midst of all the hardships inherent to this dangerous profession of being modern revolutionaries. Many shall perish, victims of their errors, others shall fall in the touch battle that approaches; new fighters and new leaders shall appear in the warmth of the revolutionary struggle. The people shall create their warriors and leaders in the selective framework of the war itself - and Yankee agents of repression shall increase. Today there are military aids in all the countries where armed struggle is growing; the Peruvian army apparently carried out a successful action against the revolutionaries in that country, an army also trained and advised by the Yankees. But if the focuses of war grow with sufficient political and military insight, they shall become practically invincible and shall force the Yankees to send reinforcements. In Peru itself many new figures, practically unknown, are now reorganizing the guerrilla. Little by little, the obsolete weapons, which are sufficient for the repression of small armed bands, will be exchanged for modern armaments and the U.S. military aids will be substituted by actual fighters until, at

a given moment, they are forced to send increasingly greater number of regular troops to ensure the relative stability of a government whose national puppet army is desintegrating before the impetuous attacks of the guerrillas. It is the road of Vietnam it is the road that should be followed by the people; it is the road that will be followed in Our America, with the advantage that the armed groups could create Coordinating Councils to embarrass the repressive forces of Yankee imperialism and accelerate the revolutionary triumph.

America, a forgotten continent in the last liberation struggles, is now beginning to make itself heard through the Tricontinental and, in the voice of the vanguard of its peoples, the Cuban Revolution, will today have a task of much greater relevance: creating a Second or a Third Vietnam, or the Second and Third Vietnam of the world.

We must bear in mind that imperialism is a world system, the last stage of capitalism — and it must be defeated in a world confrontation. The strategic end of this struggle should be the destruction of imperialism. Our share, the responsibility of the exploited and underdeveloped of the world is to eliminate the foundations of imperialism: our oppressed nations, from where they extract capitals, raw materials, technicians and cheap labor, and to which they export new capitals — instruments of domination — arms and all kinds of articles; thus submerging us in an absolute dependance [sic].

The fundamental element of this strategic end shall be the real liberation of all people, a liberation that will be brought about through armed struggle in most cases and which shall be, in Our America, almost indefectibly, a Socialist Revolution.

While envisaging the destruction of imperialism, it is necessary to identify its head, which is no other than the United States of America.

We must carry out a general task with the tactical purpose of getting the enemy out of its natural environment, forcing him to fight in regions where his own life and habits will clash with the existing reality. We must not underrate our adversary; the U.S. soldier has technical capacity and is backed by weapons and resources of such magnitude that render him frightful. He lacks the essential

ideologic motivation which his bitterest enemies of today — the Vietnamese soldiers — have in the highest degree. We will only be able to overcome that army by undermining their morale — and this is accomplished by defeating it and causing it repeated sufferings.

But this brief outline of victories carries within itself the immense sacrifice of the people, sacrifices that should be demanded beginning today, in plain daylight, and which perhaps may be less painful than those we would have to endure if we constantly avoided battle in an attempt to have others pull our chestnuts out of the fire.

It is probable, of course, that the last liberated country shall accomplish this without an armed struggle and the sufferings of a long and cruel war against the imperialists — this they might avoid. But perhaps it will be impossible to avoid this struggle or its effects in a global conflagration; the suffering would be the same, or perhaps even greater. We cannot foresee the future, but we should never give in to the defeatist temptation of being the vanguard of a nation which yearns for freedom, but abhors the struggle it entails and awaits its freedom as a crumb of victory.

It is absolutely just to avoid all useless sacrifices. Therefore, it is so important to clear up the real possibilities that dependent America may have of liberating itself through pacific means. For us, the solution to this question is quite clear: the present moment may or may not be the proper one for starting the struggle, but we cannot harbor any illusions, and we have no right to do so, that freedom can be obtained without fighting. And these battles shall not be mere street fights with stones against tear-gas bombs, or of pacific general strikes; neither shall it be the battle of a furious people destroying in two or three days the repressive scaffolds of the ruling oligarchies; the struggle shall be long, harsh, and its front shall be in the guerrilla's refuge, in the cities, in the homes of the fighters - where the repressive forces shall go seeking easy victims among their families — in the massacred rural population, in the villages or cities destroyed by the bombardments of the enemy.

They are pushing us into this struggle; there is no alternative: we must



prepare it and we must decide to undertake it.

The beginnings will not be easy; they shall be extremely difficult. All the oligarchies' powers of repression, all their capacity for brutality and demagoguery will be placed at the service of their cause. Our mission, in the first hour, shall be to survive; later, we shall follow the perennial example of the guerrilla, carrying out armed propaganda (in the Vietnamese sense, that is, the bullets of propaganda, of the battles won or lost — but fought — against the enemy). The great lesson of the invincibility of the guerrillas taking root in the dispossessed masses. The galvanizing of the national spirit, the preparation for harder tasks, for resisting even more violent repressions. Hatred as an element of the struggle; a relentless hatred of the enemy, impelling us over and beyond the natural limitations that man is heir to and transforming him into an effective, violent, selective and cold killing machine. Our soldiers must be thus; a people without hatred cannot vanquish a brutal enemy.

We must carry the war into every corner the enemy happens to carry it: to his home, to his centers of entertainment; a total war. It is necessary to prevent him from having a moment of peace, a quiet moment outside his barracks or even inside; we must attack him wherever he may be; make him feel like a cornered beast wherever he may move. Then his moral fiber shall begin to decline. He will even become more beastly, but we shall notice how the signs of decadence begin to appear.

And let us develop a true proletarian internationalism; with international proletarian armies; the flag under which we fight would be the sacred cause of redeeming humanity. To die under the flag of Vietnam, of Venezuela, of Guatemala, of Laos, of Guinea, of Colombia, of Bolivia, of Brazil — to name only a few scenes of today's armed struggle — would be equally glorious and desirable for an American, an Asian, an African, even a European.

Each spilt drop of blood, in any country under whose flag one has not been born, is an experience passed on to those who survive, to be added later to the liberation struggle of his own country. And each nation liberated is a phase won in the battle for the liberation of one's own country.

The time has come to settle our discrepancies and place everything at the service of our struggle.

We all know great controversies rend the world now fighting for freedom; no one can hide it. We also know that they have reached such intensity and such bitterness that the possibility of dialogue and reconciliation seems extremely difficult, if not impossible. It is a useless task to search for means and ways to propitiate a dialogue which the hostile parties avoid. However, the enemy is there; it strikes every day, and threatens us with new blows and these blows will unite us, today, tomorrow, or the day after. Whoever understands this first, and prepares for this necessary union, shall have the people's gratitude.

Owing to the virulence and the intransigence with which each cause is defended, we, the dispossessed, cannot take sides for one form or the other of these discrepancies, even though sometimes we coincide with the contentions of one party or the other, or in a greater measure with those of one part more than with those of the other. In time of war, the expression of current differences constitutes a weakness; but at this stage it is an illusion to attempt to settle them by means of words. History shall erode them or shall give them their true meaning.

In our struggling world every discrepancy regarding tactics, the methods of action for the attainment of limited objectives should be analyzed with due respect to another man's opinions. Regarding our great strategic objective, the total destruction of imperialism by armed struggle, we should be uncompromising.

Let us sum up our hopes for victory: total destruction of imperialism by eliminating its firmest bulwark: the oppression exercised by the United States of America. To carry out, as a tactical method, the peoples gradual liberation, one by one or in groups: driving the enemy into a difficult fight away from its own territory; dismantling all its sustenance bases, that is, its dependent territories.

This means a long war. And, once more we repeat it, a cruel war. Let no one fool himself at the outstart and let no one hesitate to start out for fear of the consequences it may bring to his people. It is almost our sole hope for victory. We cannot elude the call of this hour. Vietnam is pointing it out with its endless lesson

of heroism, its tragic and everyday lesson of struggle and death for the attainment of final victory.

There, the imperialist soldiers endure the discomforts [sic] of those who, used to enjoying the U.S. standard of living, have to live in a hostile land with the insecurity of being unable to move without being aware of walking on enemy territory: death to those who dare take a step out of their fortified encampment. The permanent hostility of the entire population. All this has internal repercussion in the United States; propitiates the resurgence of an element which is being minimized in spite of its vigor by all imperialist forces: class struggle even within its own territory.

How close we could look into a bright future should two, three or many Vietnams flourish throughout the world with their share of deaths and their immense tragedies, their everyday heroism and their repeated blows against imperialism, impelled to disperse its forces under the sudden attack and the increasing hatred of all peoples of the world!

And if we were all capable of uniting to make our blows stronger and infallible and so increase the effectiveness of all kinds of support given to the struggling people — how great and close would that future be!

If we, in a small point of the world map, are able to fulfill our duty and place at the disposal of this struggle whatever little of ourselves we are permitted to give: our lives, our sacrifice, and if some day we have to breathe our last breath on any land, already ours, sprinkled with our blood let it be known that we have measured the scope of our actions and that we only consider ourselves elements in the great army of the proletariat but that we are proud of having learned from the Cuban Revolution, and from its maximum leader, the great lesson emanating from his attitude in this part of the world: "What do the dangers or the sacrifices of a man or of a nation matter, when the destiny of humanity is at stake."

Our every action is a battle cry against imperialism, and a battle hymn for the people's unity against the great enemy of mankind: the United States of America. Wherever death may surprise us, let it be welcome, provided that this, our battle cry, may have reached some receptive ear and another hand may be

extended to wield our weapons and other men be ready to intone the funeral dirge with the staccato singing of the machine-guns and new battle cries of war and victory.

## **Study Questions**

- **What two aspects of the anti-imperialist struggle for national liberation and socialism are Cabral and Guevara discussing?**
- **How do these two aspects relate to each other; why are they important?**

## **COURSE 4: BILL FLETCHER JR.- Race, the National Question, Empire, and Socialist Strategy (2009)**

It is almost a cliché to speak in terms of "race" as a socio-political construct, nevertheless, "race", as we have come to know it since the 1500s, is undeniably so. For the purposes of this essay the critical features of an understanding of contemporary race and racism in the USA include:

- The lack of scientific relationship to biology since there is only the human race.
- The creation of categories of inferior and superior based upon arbitrary characteristics and definitions.
- The creation and perpetuation of a system of oppression of the "inferior" group in all aspects.
- The reinforcement of a relative differential in treatment—and its ideological justification—between those considered inferior and those considered superior.
- The use of race as a principal means for social control.
- Rendering irrelevant the experiences and viewpoint of the subordinated population except and insofar as interpreted by dominant population. This specifically has been applied to African descendents, Indigenous peoples, Asians and Latinos, those usually referenced as "people of color."

Race is, then, not a state of mind, but a socio-political reality. Even though there is no scientific basis for race, it occupies a real space and the institutions of the racial-capitalist society reinforce this reality every day.

Much of the Left, particularly what is described as the "white Left", has failed to appreciate the significance of race. The dominant approach has been to either attempt to ignore it or to attempt to inoculate against race and racism. These two approaches are often linked. In the popular movements and the Left notions of avoidance, either through "see no evil" or "inoculation" mediums, are recurring themes. In either case, the mistake comes from viewing race and

racism as matters of the mind, or perhaps of the imagination, rather than being the mortar of US capitalism.

"Inoculation" generally takes the form of concentrating on so-called common economic issues as a way of taking everyone's eyes (and minds) off of race. This practice is very common in the labor union movement, but it is not restricted to organized labor. The Alinskyist approach to community organizing also contains this feature. In addition, this obsession with common economic issues was associated with the old Socialist Labor Party, the Socialist Party, and the early Communist Party. The Industrial Workers of the World, a revolutionary syndicalist labor federation, had a complicated understanding of race, on the other hand. More than most other US radicals, particularly white radicals, they appreciated the significance of race as a divisive force and held that racism must be opposed. At the same time, their understanding of race and racism was limited to a 'divide and conquer' analysis and, as such, was not at all linked to national oppression and self-determination.

The white Left's failure to appreciate the significance of racist oppression also could be found in their misappraisal of the importance of Reconstruction and its ultimate overthrow. The white Left in the 19th century was not only divided on the question of slavery, but later divided over how to interpret Reconstruction. It did not see in Reconstruction a revolutionary moment in which Black freedom could have been won and which represented a challenge to class forces dominating the USA. In fact, for much of the white Left, Reconstruction was, at best, a footnote. Standing in contrast, W.E.B. Dubois' *Black Reconstruction in America* (a leftist challenge to the maligning of Reconstruction) is a must-read, even today, for any radicals attempting to understand the historical reality of race and social control.

Another important example of both the construction of race and the inconsistent approach of the white Left towards it revolves around Asian immigrants. It is ironic that as intense as was racist oppression against African Americans, Asians were regularly excluded from otherwise progressive formations that would include African Americans. In the mass movements this

was in evidence in organized labor with the exclusion of Asians from the Knights of Labor, and later their exclusion from many unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. [Note: There is the infamous example in the AFL of the effort by the Japanese Mexican Labor Union of California to affiliate only to be told that the Mexicans would be accepted but the Japanese must be left out. The Mexicans rejected this "offer."]

The capitulation to anti-Japanese bias during World War II is one of the more ignominious moments in the history of the Communist Party, USA. This capitulation, taking the form of support for the interning of Japanese and Japanese Americans, did not come out of nowhere, however. It was rooted in the demonization of Asians and a stereotypical portrayal as being sly, sneaky and otherwise untrustworthy. The betrayal, later acknowledged and self-criticized, nevertheless undercut the important work that the CPUSA had carried out over the years to organize Asian immigrants.

Thus, if there were one feature or characteristic of the US Left that can be identified as being at the root of its dilemma, it would be a form of "economism," to borrow Lenin's term, i.e., the belief that the pure economic struggle is the road to the emergence of revolutionary consciousness. This economism, by the way, played itself out both with regard to race but also with the matter of empire, as shall be discussed below.

### **Settlerism and the National Question**

The USA is not only characterized by a racial capitalism, but a racial-settler capitalism. Specifically, capitalism in the USA was constructed within the context of a settler state. By a settler state we mean a state based upon the forceful imposition of an alien population onto an indigenous population. Settler states are always racial, but not all racial states are settler states as such. Northern Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Israel and Canada can be described as settler states. The settlers did not seek to accommodate the indigenous population at all, absorb them, nor did they simply set up outposts

and attempt to control indirectly. The aim of the settler state is generally to remove the indigenous entirely, by whatever means is necessary. This may or may not involve extermination (Note: in the case of the USA there was a combination of displacement and extermination).

With a settler state comes the assumption of who is civilized and who is not. It is also accompanied by a variety of myths, most of which are religious or quasi-religious. The settler state acts on behalf of the settler, seeking the territory that it believes that the alien population is entitled to control. As such two (or more) different worlds come into existence; the world of the settler and the world of the indigenous, this resulting in a complete distortion in any notion of class struggle or democratic struggle. It is not an exaggeration to speak of two worlds. An examination of Israel, for instance, reveals that there are political forces that are on the right, center and left WITHIN the world of Israel, nevertheless with regard to the Palestinian Question may adjust where they fall dramatically on the ideological spectrum. An example of this was the "Black Panther" movement that arose in Israel in the early 1970s. Adopting their name from the Black Panther Party of the USA, this was a movement within Israel largely of Jews from the Arab World. Their principal claim was that Afro-Asian Jews were being discriminated against by the European Jews. While this may appear to be a progressive struggle, the irony was that the "Black Panthers" were in no way sympathetic to the plight of the Palestinians! Thus, as settlers they were on the "left" within the context of the settler state and the settler world, but with regard to the Palestinians, their position was far from being on the Left.

It is in the context of the creation and expansion of a settler state that the national question and US imperialism can better be understood. Each of these, of course, is linked with race and racist oppression, however, they also have their own respective identities. Most of the US Left has chosen to ignore the matter of a settler state and the national question entirely, or to submerge it within the broad category of race; the assumption being that the borders of the USA are the borders and, in effect, that which was done—Manifest Destiny and the like—was done and there is no turning the clocks back. This is why, unfortunately, so many



people on the Left (and not just the white Left) see the demand for reparations as both fanciful and unrealistic, not to mention, lacking relevance to the contemporary struggle.

The construction of a settler state complicates the matter of the determination of what actually constitutes a "nation." Most definitions of a "nation" diverge little from the notion that they are a people, usually the inhabitants of a specific territory, who share common customs, origins, history and frequently language or related languages. (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language). In Marxism the notion of nations is identified with the emergence of capitalism, recognizing that other forms of organization and relationship preceded (and often overlap) its development (e.g., tribes; ethnic groups).

Yet the notion of a "nation" is more often than not associated with the development of nations in Europe, and ultimately with the development of the European nation-state. In its attempts to look at the development of nations, the Russian Bolsheviks did not alter this basic view until the 1930s, at which time they elaborated an intriguing notion called "national-territorial delimitation." The theory in essence proposed—under socialism—the creation of modern nations out of peoples who existed as tribes or ethnic groups, but had not yet approached the contemporary notion of a nation. [Note: among other groups, national-territorial delimitation was applied toward Jews in the USSR who had been viewed by most Russian Marxists as not a nation but a national minority. Nevertheless a Jewish republic was established in Birobizhan, though by all accounts it was a failure.]

European colonialism, a subset of which was the settler state, encountered existing peoples who lived as tribes, ethnic groups, kingdoms and empires. In some cases, these peoples were developing or near developing capitalism. In other cases they lived in what Samir Amin has described as "tributary social formations" (e.g., feudalism); and in still other situations their social formations were less developed. In any case, the entrance of European colonialism, to borrow from Amilcar Cabral, took these peoples out of their own history. Among other things this meant that their economic and social

development was shaped around the needs and aspirations of colonialism rather than their internal needs.

In this sense, nations in what we today term the "global South" (Asia, Africa, Latin America) developed very differently than in Europe. In some cases one could argue that nations, as such, did not develop even though nation-states did.

Settler capitalism in the thirteen colonies in North America and then in the USA created a nation-state, initially through the amalgamation of many European peoples who came to be defined as "white." The characteristic of the settler state was that of being a "white" settler state whose *raison d'être* was the protection of the interests of the white bloc, i.e., the settlers.

The settler state found itself defining its existence largely through a definition of the "Other." The first clear "Others" were the African slaves and the Native Americans. The racial settler state acted in the interests of the white settlers on multiple levels including land acquisition. The racial settler state, through its aggression, forced the annihilation, removal or amalgamation of peoples. In the case of African Americans it forced a reconfiguration among hitherto separate peoples; what had not existed—a nation—slowly came into existence.

The oppressed nations that emerged in the USA over the last two hundred years did so as a direct result of the calculations of the settler state. This does not mean that the settler state set out to create oppressed nations. More accurately, it means that a binary system exists between settler states and oppressed nations. Ethnic groups, tribes, and similar kinships take on a different existence and, indeed, are transformed through the mechanisms of the oppressor/settler state. They are forced to assume an identity (not in a post-modern sense) and a collective history that they may not have once thought possible.

In the case of the Native American, the great Shawnee leader from the early 19th century, Tecumseh, attempted to articulate the path toward Indian nationhood as a necessary and conscious step. His was not a vision simply of an alliance of tribes against the white USA but rather the development of a structure

to counter the invasion—an Indian nation-state. In certain respects Tecumseh's vision was not altogether different from that of the Japanese elite that pursued the Meiji Restoration later in the 19th century in response to the aggressiveness of the USA and Western Europe. From the standpoint of the Native American and other oppressed peoples, Tecumseh's efforts unfortunately failed.

In the US Southwest, the Mexicano/Chicano people developed an independent history from Mexico with the annexation of the northern part of Mexico by the United States in 1848. The US settler state constructed a de facto Jim Crow existence for the annexed population, subordinating them to white settlers. Ironically, while the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo of 1848 classified the annexed Mexicans as "whites" [the alternative was to be classified as Black (slave) or Indian] and guaranteed them their land rights, they were treated as anything but white. Though annexed, the soon-to-become Chicanos did not cease to have contact or a relationship with Mexico. Nevertheless, their existence was to be defined by their relationship with the settler state and its efforts to shape the annexed population (or displace them) to meet the needs of the settler state. The defining feature of the annexed population, then, was (a) their annexation, and (b) their relationship with the settler state. To that extent efforts undertaken by many theorists to define the independent identity of the Chicano people, while historically important, are in many respects secondary to the question of annexation.

Puerto Rico, on the other hand, was annexed wholesale. A population that was moving toward nationhood with the fusion of European, African and Taino blood, was recast when turned over to the USA by Spain and deprived of its right to self-determination. Within the borders of the USA, Puerto Rico, and Hawaii provides examples of more of the classic colonial mold, whereas the development of African American, Chicano, and Native American nations has come about for the most part due to their relationship to the racial settler state. With national oppression emerge forms of national consciousness, not all of which are progressive. Yet the development of national consciousness is a critical step in the development of nationhood and the possibility for emancipatory

action. During the post war period and through the 1970s the revolutionary aspect of national consciousness was very much apparent (and as noted by Frantz Fanon, was a step towards internationalism). This was true both domestically and internationally. Again drawing from Cabral, national consciousness sought to return oppressed and marginalized people to their own histories. As such it represents an effort to create a new 'identity' for peoples that had existed, hitherto, as isolated (and often hostile) pockets within a given territory.

National consciousness in the USA was very much linked with this international phenomenon (the rise of anti-colonial and pro-national liberation movements). It was, to a great extent, racial/national in that it represented the rejection of racism and racist oppression. It represents the rejection of racist categories and subordination, and the rejection of even the notion of racial privilege. It was (and is) also racial in that it did not always conform to specific ethnic groups. African American national consciousness was/is at the same time "Black" [i.e., not white; being of the Diaspora] and African American [of the population that had been brought to the USA as slaves, added to which were Cape Verdeans and Caribbeans who integrated into the greater fabric of the African American people]. National consciousness among Asians did not necessarily conform to their individual identities as Chinese, Filipino, etc., but overlapped both the individual national identities as well as the broader "racial" category of "Asian". [Note: Asians in the USA would not correspond, in either numbers or their relationship with the settler state, to one or several oppressed nations. Nonetheless, this does not make them in any sense less important social movements. It is simply a different categorization.]

Frantz Fanon pointed out what he termed the "pitfalls of national consciousness." There are many. In the USA it became evident from the 1970s on, that among oppressed nationalities there was a devolution away from a radical national consciousness. Our movements have tended more in the direction of an ethno-nationalist consciousness where the particular ethnic group, nation or nationality counterposes its interests to other groupings, including but

not limited to other oppressed groupings, rather than against the oppressor state. Among African Americans this could be seen earlier, for sure, in the contention between African Americans whose roots lay in North American slavery vs. those from the Caribbean (and in a different way, those from the Cape Verde Islands). Nevertheless, "Black America" underwent significant demographic changes and racial/national consciousness served as something of a unifying force. By the 1970s, however, the devolution had begun such that—and despite progressive efforts such as Rev. Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition—African American racial/national consciousness (or at least a segment of this consciousness) was being counterposed to the interests of other oppressed groups, most notably more recent Latin American immigrants.

A final point about racial/national consciousness. Racial/National consciousness in the context of the USA has historically both a domestic and international character in that it offers a challenge to domestic racism, as well as to global imperialism. Pan Africanism, in general, serves as one example, having promoted various solidarity movements with struggles against colonialism and imperialism over the years. Forms of Indigismo and Raza consciousness have represented an analogous tendency in opposing domestic national/racial oppression, but also US imperialism in Latin America. The relationship, then, between race and empire were and are keen elements in racial/national consciousness.

A significant section of the US Left has failed to appreciate these features of the "national movements" in the USA. For much of the white Left (and a small numbers of leftists from among oppressed nationalities), any form of racial/national consciousness is perceived as threatening, if not divisive. Thus, the fact that racial/national oppression results in the potential for a multi-class anti-imperialist project can be portrayed by segments of the Left as class collaboration (in the obviously negative sense, as opposed to class alliances). For example, despite the vigilance of their anti-racism, the IWW nevertheless failed to get the national character of the struggles of African Americans, or for that matter the Chicanos (Note: though as internationalists they did seem to

recognize that the Chicano struggle and the Mexican struggle—in Mexico—were interrelated.] For the IWW, the only struggle was the class struggle, therefore making the IWW allies of a component of the struggle against racist and national oppressions.

## **The Empire**

The westward expansion of the settler state was deeply linked to the development of empire. As noted elsewhere, the Founding Fathers saw no necessary contradiction between a [white] democratic republic and an empire. The first steps towards empire involved, in fact, the westward expansion and the defeat of the Native Americans. This is not simply a historical footnote. Often, it is stated that the USA did not seek a territorial empire (with colonies). That was true at a certain moment and to a certain extent. The expansion westward, much like the Russian expansion eastward toward and into Siberia (and actually into Alaska and northern California), did not involve the absorption of uninhabited territories. Territories and peoples were forcefully absorbed into the USA and concurrently the construction of a system was undertaken to ensure the suppression, passivity or complacency of the indigenous population. It was after the securing of the continental USA that the ruling circles could generally agree to an overseas expansion, albeit a complicated one that did not place a priority on the direct rule of significant numbers of colonies.

The point is that for the USA, the settler state and its expansion was linked to the development of empire. It is not the case in every settler state. Moreover, it is historically accurate that the vast expansion did not go unchallenged, even from within the settler population. The US war of aggression against Mexico, for instance, and certainly the war of aggression against the Philippines witnessed significant domestic opposition, coupled with the resistance from the victims of the aggression. The reasons for the domestic opposition were not always noble, but resistance it was nevertheless.

Particularly because the US empire did not rely, primarily, on direct

colonies, defense of empire was less about territory and more about 'mission.' Mission was treated as being equivalent to patriotism. As a result, each action by the USA overseas was supposed to be accepted as having a righteous objective. What compounded this was a particular form of isolationism that became quite popular in the USA whereby there would be tolerance for US activity overseas particularly when it did not necessitate the deployment (and loss of lives) of US troops.

The US Left has historically been very divided over whether and how to challenge empire, in part because challenging empire has been portrayed by the mainstream as precisely the challenging of patriotism. When challenges are mounted they tend to be at times of military conflict, but much less attention is devoted to non-military involvement, or for that matter, even covert military operations. The accumulation of wealth that results in the centers of capitalism from imperialism is, as an issue, either sidestepped or is the source of moralizing. The US Left rarely engages in a concrete discussion concerning the need for a global wealth redivision. Rather, it is more likely to engage in the assumption that wealth redivision need not be discussed because with the advent of a post-capitalist society everything will be taken care of for everyone. This is the global counterpart to domestic economism when it comes to matters of race (related, indeed, to what Lenin termed "imperialist economism" during World War I when he was pressing Marxists to address the national question). That is, in recognizing that the matter of global wealth redistribution (and how the wealth came to be so unequally divided in the first place!) is a hot-button matter, much of the Left would rather take a pass or reserve such discussions for study groups rather than to ascertain a means to make that a significant component of the mass left politics that need to be articulated and practiced.

The US Left, then, is challenged by the need to take on, that is confront, imperial consciousness, something that it cannot do successfully through an 'economist' framework. Empire will not be challenged by promoting the notion that a rising tide raises all boats. Global wealth redistribution will necessitate a different way of living in the global North, and throughout the entire world for that

matter. The need for wealth redistribution does not necessitate poverty, although it will indeed represent a frontal assault on capitalist consumerism. Further, it will necessitate a challenge to the manner in which wealth is distributed within the capitalist states of the global North.

### **Implications for Socialist Strategy**

Socialism, at least according to its original theorists, was/is to represent an expansion of democracy. For Lenin and those Marxists who followed him, socialists were to be those upholding the struggle for what he termed "consistent democracy," the basic notion being that democratic capitalism is, by definition, wholly inconsistent. This ranges from the division of wealth to the control over the means of production. It also, and all too often overlooked, relates to other features of society, particularly areas of gender and nationality/race. Therefore, socialists should be the ones that are at the forefront of struggles against the unjust and undemocratic practices of capitalism and through such struggles represent in practice the sort of world that we wish to bring into being.

When it comes to racist oppression and national oppression, 20th century socialism (and now 21st century socialism)—and not just in the USA—was been inconsistent. While generally better than practices in the capitalist states, socialists—in and out of power—often stumbled when it comes to race and national oppression (not to mention gender and sexuality), often in the name of keeping issues of class central. The reality is that rather than keeping matters of class central, these socialists have fallen prey to the economism and economic determinism that Lenin and others warned about so long ago.

In reviewing the successes and failures of US socialists in addressing race, national oppression and empire since the 19th century, there are important conclusions that need to be placed squarely on the table for further examination:

(1) *Race and the national question keep "getting in the way"*: Attempts by those on the Left to avoid race and national oppression are doomed to failure. Similarly, focusing exclusively on economics or in the post-modern framework



putting all "oppressions" on the same plane, are approaches that are doomed to failure. The history of the USA should demonstrate the particular power that exists when it comes to race and national oppression. Not only does ambivalence on racist oppression and national oppression lead to alienating groups historically victimized by racism and national oppression, but it ensures that whites continue to live in a dream world that ignores the realities of structural oppression.

*(2) Right-wing populism and imperial consciousness will block the revolutionary potential of a significant percentage, if not a majority of whites:* This is a controversial point but one that needs serious attention. The US Left has generally assumed that most whites can, eventually, be won to be part of the historic bloc that brings into being a revolutionary post-capitalist (what I would describe as socialist) system. This may not be the case. Right-wing populism and imperial consciousness exert a very strong pull on white America. It is very much wrapped up with the myth of US history and the blindspots that have continue to exist when it comes to racism, national oppression and empire. Challenging these myths and embracing what can be described as a counter-narrative regarding US history will be central to uniting with a Left historic bloc by whites in the USA. Thus, a historic bloc in the USA may be a majority of its people, but it may not be a majority of whites.

A second aspect of this point is that right-wing populism and imperial consciousness exist as a cancer in the US political scene. This particular cancer can metastasize into significant right-wing social movements, one of which could be neo-fascist. Concretely, this means that active work against right-wing populism—at the ideological and practical level—must be a central component of the work of the Left.

*(3) Anti-racism must be more than diversity, and instead go to the heart of power:* In an age when mainstream discourse revolves around the myth of "post-racialism" it is critical for the Left to identify the concrete manifestations of structural racist and national oppression. The political Right is doing all that it can to redefine racism as an abstract concept that is equivalent to personal prejudice. We, on the other hand, must demonstrate that racist and national oppressions

are real world and manifest themselves in a differential in treatment in all spheres, including but not limited to education, health, jobs, housing and political participation. Demonstrating this differential involves more than policy papers. Progressive struggles must be conducted that identify these sites and forms of oppression and work to demolish them.

*(4) Movements of internal oppressed nations in the USA will continue to be waged for self-determination, even if the demand for self-determination is not explicit: "Self-determination" is a term that has a very broad usage in popular language, but in this instance it refers to the right of a nation to determine its own destiny, including matters of sovereignty. It goes way beyond the notion of 'we can do it on our own.'*

There are not currently major movements in the USA, with the exception of Native Americans, that have made territorial sovereignty a plank of their central demands. This does NOT mean that the demand for land has disappeared. In both the African American and Chicano movements there continue to be demands for land (e.g., African American farmers; Chicano land and water rights demands). In the case of African Americans and Chicanos, however, while there are political tendencies that have and continue to demand secession and the establishment of an independent homeland, these tendencies are small.

The limited discussion regarding the matter of land and sovereignty may lead many to believe, mistakenly, that the demand for self-determination is outdated or otherwise inappropriate. Self-determination, in the sense of national sovereignty, is more complicated today due to the realities of globalization. For those of us in the USA, it is further complicated by being in the heart of the empire. Despite this, self-determination remains a critical demand for nationally oppressed groups. In the 21st century, the form that it takes may change a great deal from struggles that have taken place in other countries and at other times.

The USA, unlike Czarist Russia (which contained many oppressed nations), has geographic areas that have large concentrations of oppressed nationalities, e.g., the Black Belt South (African Americans); the Southwest (Chicanos), however, these areas are not so separate nor so overwhelmingly

populated by these respective nationalities that territorial separation can be viewed as a realistic option in the foreseeable future unless dramatic political and demographic changes take place. [Note: Puerto Rico is an obvious exception to this, where in fact, there is an independence movement, albeit weaker than it once was.] Those geographic areas can, however, be major base areas for these national movements as well as for democratic and left-wing multi-racial/multi-national movements. In Czarist Russia, for instance and by contrast, the territory that is now known as Uzbekistan had few ethnic Russians (though those there existed in a relatively privileged position over the native Uzbeks) and was clearly controlled by the Czarist regime. In effect, it was colonized. The expansion of the US settler state created the conditions for an African American and Chicano nation but never allowed those areas of concentration to be significantly separate from both the Anglo/white population (except in a Jim Crow sense) and their integration into the overall US political system.

Self-determination in a US context may more take the form of the demand for reparations, whether or not the term "reparations" is used. It may take the form of concrete demands and struggles around the end to structural oppression. Within that the demand for land will be important, but not necessarily as a demand for a separate national-territorial existence. Reparations, then, is part of a global struggle for a re-division of the wealth as well as being a demand of the nationally oppressed groups in the USA who have been robbed of their histories, land and labor.

*(5) Movements of racially/nationally oppressed peoples in the USA can challenge imperialism domestically as well as building alliances with external anti-imperialist movements:* The demands of the racially and nationally oppressed peoples are counter to the inconsistencies that are contained in democratic capitalism, but also to the external practices of US imperialism. These movements have seen the underside of the "American Dream" and their demands challenge the myths of US history. Insofar as their demands call for an expansion of democracy, they are key allies of other progressive social movements. Indeed, these movements are generally the leading forces in the

cause of consistent democracy.

Yet, these are multi-class movements, a fact with which sections of the Left—as noted earlier—have difficulty. They are multi-class because the various classes within these racially and nationally oppressed peoples have an interest in the end of racism and national oppression. The situation has changed dramatically, however, since the 1970s, as desegregation partially materialized. Desegregation led to erosion in the economic barriers—in place since slavery, and certainly since Jim Crow segregation was established—that had often allowed a weak 'internal' bourgeoisie to develop among these peoples that was based almost exclusively on the market created by these racially/nationally oppressed groups. An example would be the African American cosmetics firm Johnson Products that, for years, was protected from competition from the larger white firms because the latter had no interest in the African American market. This changed in the 60s and 70s when the white firms discovered the 'green' in the African American market. Resistance was futile, forcing firms such as this to adjust their entire strategies, or in some cases, to be absorbed into larger white and transnational firms, or go out of business altogether. In political terms, the change was evident in the declining support by the Black elite for progressive social movements after the victories against legal segregation (and externally, in the victory over white minority rule in southern Africa). We should be clear that for the Left, multi-class alliances within these national movements can be particularly tricky and, therefore, must be approached carefully.

The conclusion from all of this is that the movements of the racially and nationally oppressed must be recognized as central to the historic bloc the Left needs to win socialism.

*(6)Challenging imperial consciousness means challenging the empire:*

Socialist strategy, which is always purported to be internationalist, must identify at least three key components in the struggle against empire:

Ø Immigration: The fight is not simply for improved immigration policies. There has to be a broader recognition in the US public that current immigration is largely the direct result of imperialism. The massive waves of migrants are

directly related to the legacy of colonialism, neo-colonialism, and the destruction of economies in the global South. Far from an external invasion, immigrants are refugees from the literal and figurative battles carried out over more than two hundred years by imperialism. In fact, the current migratory patterns and the anticipation of its increase the world over require that immigration policies must reflect the current objective conditions.

Ø Democratic foreign policy: The immediate struggle must be for a dramatic shift in US foreign policy, a shift that actually speaks to matters of respect for national self-determination and global governance. This includes the closing of US military bases around the world; de-nuclearization; commitment to international agreements to address the global environmental crisis; revising or rewriting trade agreements; and the end to US bullying. While, as Leftists, we realize that imperialism cannot change its spots, at the same time we recognize that there can be significant policy changes that give other countries the requisite breathing room in order to exert their sovereignty.

Ø Reparations and global wealth redistribution: Reparations is not only a domestic demand, but an international one as well. It is a demand that falls before the countries of the global North and particularly the main centers of historic imperialism, e.g., the so-called G-8 nations, which have enriched themselves directly through the suppression, pillage and rape of the global South. The demand for reparations and global wealth redistribution is not a demand that can await socialism, but must be one that we act upon now through our struggles for reform in the international arena.

## Study Questions

- Fletcher states that the early US' expansionism was not “simply a historical footnote.” What is the significance of settler-colonialism in the US.
- Fletcher discusses at length super-structural aspects of national oppression and settler colonialism (i.e., those involving culture, ideology, state policy, etc). However, he only briefly touches on structural aspects of national oppression (i.e., the productive relations between groups under which societies reproduce and develop). What might additionally be stated about the structural aspects of national oppression in US history?
- Fletcher takes a contradictory position on national liberation and self-determination. In what way or ways might one find fault with his position?
- Fletcher identifies three key components of the domestic struggle against imperialism (immigration, democratic foreign policy, and global redistribution of wealth)? Outline these further or describe other key parts of the struggle against imperialism within Occupied North America.
- Is Fletcher's analysis lacking or sufficient? In what ways?