

Questions about Anti-Imperialism

Daniel Seixo / Iñaki Gil de San Vicente

This interview by Daniel Seixo is a preview of the launch of Lume Vivo #0, a new anti-imperialist magazine to be released in September]. The roar of NATO guns in Ukraine, the tearing of a televised genocide from Palestine, the shadow of military intervention looming over the Sahel and the growing geostrategic tensions in the South China Sea are neither isolated phenomena nor whims of history. They are the most obvious and brutal manifestations of a systemic logic that, far from disappearing, is defining the map of the 21st century with renewed virulence. This logic has a name that for decades has been relegated to the attic of history by hegemonic thought, but which today reverberates with inescapable urgency: imperialism.

After the collapse of the Soviet bloc, the “end of history” was announced. In this new order, the concept of imperialism was emptied of its scientific and political content, turned into a relic or, at best, a vague insult. Postmodern currents, with their distrust of the “grand narratives,” contributed to this theoretical disarmament, fragmenting the critique and making it difficult for the working class to understand capitalist globality. The result was a strategic disorientation, an inability to connect the dots between economic exploitation, national oppression, war and ecological destruction.

It is precisely to combat this disorientation that the Lume Vivo (Su Bizia) project was born. It does not arise from an academic vacuum or from a conventional publishing initiative - it is not economic profit or prestige that moves us. It is the natural decantation of a collective process, forged in the gatherings and debates of the anti-imperialistas.com collective during the uncertain days of the quarantine. In that global confinement, while the system was showing its most fragile seams, a group of militants felt the imperious need to rearm theoretically, recovering the critical tools to understand a world in convulsion.

Lume Vivo is, therefore, the materialization of that need: a publication that aspires to be a flame for debate, a beacon for action. It is no coincidence that its journey begins with the publication of this in-depth interview with Iñaki Gil de San Vicente.

To inaugurate a project that seeks to lay the foundations of a rigorous and current anti-imperialist debate, it was necessary to turn to one of the most lucid and committed voices of contemporary Marxism. A thinker and militant of a vast trajectory, rooted in the most committed struggle of the Basque National Liberation Movement, Gil de San Vicente embodies the synthesis between the profound study of theory and the unwavering commitment to praxis. His thought, sharpened in the analysis of Capital and forged in the struggles of the Basque people, is not an abstract reflection, but a tool for political intervention.

The following conversation is much more than a simple interview, it is an intensive seminar, an exhaustive journey through the genealogy, the anatomy and the future of the anti-imperialist

struggle. The dialogue begins by laying the groundwork, exploring how Marx and Engels anticipated a theory that would be fully developed by later generations. It dives into Lenin's monumental contribution, analyzing Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism not as a sacred and immutable text, but as a living method of analysis, whose essence of the fusion of banking and industrial capital, the export of capital and the sharing of the world remains a master key to deciphering the present.

From there, our conversation moves on to show how the theory was enriched and transformed in the heat of concrete struggles. The crucial role of the Third International in its attempt to forge a world front that transcended the borders of Europe is examined and, above all, the decisive contributions of the liberation movements of the misnamed "Third World" are given due prominence.

The greatness of this interview lies in its ability to weave a red thread that connects European theory with the decolonizing praxis of Africa, Asia and Latin America. And following the path of our deepest traditions of struggle and resistance, we delve into the thought of Frantz Fanon, for whom revolutionary violence is not only a tactical act, but a cathartic process of psychological detoxification and rehabilitation of the colonized. We explore with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o how the "culture bomb," the imposition of the oppressor's language and worldview, constitutes a weapon as lethal as bayonets and how the struggle for one's own memory and culture becomes an indispensable battlefield.

The result is a conceptual map of extraordinary richness. Gil de San Vicente, with his characteristic militant pedagogy, unravels the indissoluble dialectic between class struggle and national liberation, demonstrating that a people that oppresses another cannot be free. He offers us the keys to understand why the self-determination of peoples is not an abstract concession, but a material condition to weaken imperialism. And finally, it questions us about the tasks of the present: what kind of organization, what forms of counter-power and, fundamentally, what political internationalism we need to confront a capital that in its senile and increasingly destructive phase is dragging us towards barbarism.

This text, therefore, is not only the brilliant inaugural issue of Lume Vivo. It is a fundamental document, a precise compass for navigating the storm of our time. It is an invitation to think dialectically in order to act accordingly, a tool for all those who understand that anti-imperialism is not an option, but a historical necessity. A living flame to illuminate the paths of emancipation in a world that urgently cries out to be transformed from its roots.

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1. How would you define anti-imperialism from a Marxist perspective?

Anti-imperialism is the profound synthesis of all the struggles against capital, it is the red thread that connects the resistances that directly or indirectly confront capitalism, and above all it connects those that overcome the phase of democratic-radical resistance to advance to that of

constructing communist forces. In present-day capitalism there is no situation or social area that is free from control by imperialism, either overt or covert, near or distant, as we shall see. This means that any demand that appears to be local and isolated nevertheless has an objective anti-imperialist content. This is true regardless of the subjective capacity of its participants, even if they deny and reject it.

In capitalism currently, anti-imperialism has many more fronts of struggle for socialism and the independence of peoples than ever before, for example more than existed in 1916, 109 years ago, when Lenin wrote his work, "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism," and self-censored it to circumvent tsarist repression. It is not that we are under another qualitatively different capitalism, something similar to the reactionary fashion that prattled on about "globalization," the "new economy," the "intelligent and immaterial economy," or about the "empire" and the "multitude" [of Toni Negri], or about the "empty signifiers" etc. No, there is no "new" capitalism that definitively nullifies the theoretical and political value of the Marxist theory of imperialism.

Capitalism today is still essentially the same as that of 1916, as that of 1900 when they began to study what was that new development called "imperialism," such as in 1894 when Engels noted the importance that what then called money-capital and now finance capital had acquired, compared to in 1867 when he edited *Capital* and its drafts to be published in 1885, 1894 and 1905.

The core of capitalism is none other than the exploitation of labor power to accumulate capital that will be reinvested in expanding that accumulation. The genetic-structural crises of capital arise precisely when this accumulation first slows down and then stops for various reasons. As we shall see, the leap from the colonialist phase to the imperialist phase was precisely a consequence of bourgeois measures to get out of the crisis of accumulation of the first Great Depression of 1873 - 1899 by means of a series of measures which, as a whole, show what imperialism was in the first third of the 20th century.

Since World War II ended in 1945, imperialism, as we shall see, has developed new forms without ceasing to be imperialism, in the same way that on a higher qualitative scale, capitalism has remained essentially the same since the 16th-17th centuries, although it has gone through successive expressions, forms and phases appropriate to the various exploitative areas through which it seeks to expand accumulation. It is true that the category of essence is fundamental here as in everything, in the same way as that of essence/phenomenon, but we cannot develop them now more than in the basics.

The essence is what identifies a process, a thing from other things, what determines its specific and different quality from other things and processes. The phenomenon is the external expression that the essence acquires in its growing movement and complexity. The phenomenon exhibits some of the characteristics of the essence to which it is united and from which it is inseparable, and the moment may come when essence and phenomenon unite and then separate so that the phenomenon is transformed into the essence of another new process and vice versa.

During World War II, imperialism began to show new phenomena, forms and continents that reflected the complexification of its essence, i.e., on the one hand, its essential characteristics were sharpened and, on the other hand, new ones hitherto non-existent were developed within it. It is very easy to resort to the invention of the atomic bomb as an example of the beginning of the new phase of imperialism, which is true, but insufficient because “the bomb” is only the most brutal expression of some transformations of capitalism that began in the wake of the second Great Depression of 1929, a genetic-structural crisis arising from the bowels of imperialism. Throughout the following pages we will see what is aging out, what is permanent and the new forms in which capitalism and imperialism present themselves.

2. How did Marx and Engels anticipate an anti-imperialist theory? What are the theoretical roots of imperialism within Marxism?

A good part of the work of Marx and Engels was elaborated while the word “imperialism” did not yet exist or was barely used from 1860 onwards neither by French nor above all by English politicians, who had already openly launched it to expand their capitalism at the expense of the peoples of the world, above all those who had suffered little or nothing from colonialist plunder, as the British Premier Disraeli brutally explained in 1878. But by then, Marx and Engels had already read, criticized and surpassed Hegel’s ideas on universality, and had already spoken of the tendency of capital to globalize its productive forces, and even in 1852 they used the term “imperialism,” but in its connotation of the political domination of Napoleon III. From 1860 France, the United States and later Germany began to protect their economies against British power.

Marx and Engels had already fiercely criticized colonialism and studied fiercely the growing resistance of pre-capitalist peoples to Western invasions. They had already openly taken a stand for the revolutionary independence of Ireland and Poland, for the righteousness of the inhumanly crushed Indian anti-colonial rebellion of 1857 as well as that of other peoples. His view that Polish and Irish independence demanded a radical agrarian reform that would return power to the people is very illustrative, and in the Irish case this thesis is even more concrete: Ireland needs political independence from England, at the same time that it needs an agrarian revolution and a customs protection that would protect its economy from the English tentacles. Today these proposals are directly linked to the anti-imperialist and socialist independence struggles of the peoples.

Also very important for the subject that concerns us are Marx’s ideas on the capacity of anti-colonial resistance by peoples and States with communal properties, with peasant communes, and peoples who tenaciously defended them, resistances that advanced many of the current anti-imperialist struggles in defense or recovery of their collective resources. In the 1870s Marx and Engels came to the conclusion that revolutions would no longer begin in Europe but in Asia and especially in Russia.

Their vision of the world class struggle was being enriched by studying the anti-colonial resistances of pre-capitalist peoples, and the impact on the Western proletariat’s capacity for

alienation, bribery and integration thanks to the fact that the overprofits obtained from colonialism allowed it to make some small reforms and social concessions. In 1916 Lenin would call these social strata integrated into the bourgeois order the “labor aristocracy.”

These and other opinions of Marx and Engels were inseparable from the theoretical development that, for what interests us now, we can synthesize in the theory of crises, or more specifically in the general law of the accumulation of capital and in the tendential law of the fall of the average rate of profit. The unthinking need of capitalism to increase its profits, a need that suffers increasing obstacles due to the fall in profits, leads it to expand throughout the world at any price.

Marx revealed the countermeasures that slow down in the medium and long term the tendency of falling profits that we can now update as follows: increase exploitation; lower costs; increase productivity, expand markets, increase demand, relocate companies and export capital, etc., but ultimately, provoke wars with two basic purposes: to plunder, plunder, steal and destroy productive forces, destroy competition, to try to restart another expansive economic phase of accumulation of capital, which is decisive.

These and other critical reflections arose from the urgent need to discover the socio-economic causes of the atrocities committed by the great powers in their transition from colonialism to the imperialist phase that was about to definitively burst forth. Theoretical criticism went hand in hand with practical criticism, and from 1884 in Germany the debate on military expenditure and colonialism began to intensify. In 1885, two years after Marx’s death, and while Engels was immersed in deciphering his hieroglyphics, the socialist E. Belfort Bax published a pioneering book on imperialism and socialism which established central ideas such as that imperialism was looking for countries to invade with its surpluses. At the end of the 1880s, the American Wilshire, a radical socialist, began to study the origin and development of monopoly capital in the United States as an effect of the laws of concentration and centralization discovered by Marx a few years earlier, and in 1901 he published another pioneering book on the subject.

Meanwhile, Engels wrote “The Stock Exchange” in 1895 in the prologue to book III of Capital, a little text that is one of his last works, where Engels explains in seven points how capitalism has evolved since the first edition of “Capital,” almost thirty years before, when the Stock Exchange was a “*secondary* element” in italics by the author, as he indicates in point 2 in comparison with the decisive role of Banking at the end of the XIX century. In point 6 Engels argues that all foreign investments are in shares and in point 7 he says that the colonialism of the time is “a mere branch of the Stock Exchange” in the service of which the powers divide up the world.

The Stock Exchange is a radical critique of the new forms of capitalism, which could not be accepted by the reformist current growing in the Second International. That Engels was ahead of the bourgeois economists can be seen in the fact that one of his most important ones, the Yankee Paul Reinsch, published in 1900 an investigation that corroborated what Engels had said five years earlier: the role of the Bank in the financing of projects abroad. One of Lenin’s qualities was to pick up what was good in this author and integrate it into his work.

Meanwhile, in 1896, Bernstein attacked Marxist theory by defending “good colonialism,” ‘civilizing’, that which brings peace and welfare to the “backward and savages.” The discussion on colonialism intensified since then. In 1900 two debates on imperialism were held: the SPD in Germany and the Socialist International in Paris. In both Rosa Luxemburg stood out for her profound criticism of militarism as one of the new characteristics of the capitalism of the time. It was still twelve years before she wrote her work *The Accumulation of Capital*, as we will see, and she was already beginning to be pointed out as one of the most solid representatives of the Marxist left. By 1901 Kautski had made something concrete about the advance of colonialism and the trade union tasks in this respect, insinuating some points which later multiplied with imperialism.

In 1902 Hobson, who was not a Marxist but a kind of social democrat who wanted reforms for the benefit of the people, definitively popularized the term “imperialism” which, according to him, arose above all from the need of the enriched countries to place their surplus capital in other countries, thus reducing the possibility of internal crises. Lenin read Hobson in the same year on his trip to London and kept the quotations made until he retrieved them in 1915. Until then Hobson was little known to economic scholars. For Lenin this author was - “useful in general” - because he offered in his time a theoretical vision that brought together many partial views.

The debates on colonialism, militarism, war, and to an even lesser extent on imperialism in particular, were hardening and in 1905 Kautsky, to whom we will return, directly attacked Bernstein’s current when studying Japan’s victory over Russia. Also in 1905 and 1907 Otto Bauer, Austro-Marxist theoretician, published two texts on colonialism and national oppression in which he explicitly spoke of imperialism and the right of the nationalities to national-cultural autonomy, although without breaking with the dogma of the unitary state, politically centralized and culturally decentralized.

Meanwhile, the first genocide recorded under that name was that of the Herero people, in Namibia, carried out by Germany, which further heated up the debate in the Second International in 1907, a year in which other congresses and debates also took place, in which imperialism and militarism were already fully equated with colonialism. Because of their importance we will return to them in the answer to the next question.

Beneath these increasingly tense discussions, essential contradictions of capitalism boiled up from its embryonic origin, for example: from the inhuman ethno-national oppression of Portuguese slavery in Africa since the middle of the 15th century and the invasion of Our America since the end of the 15th century. From these brutalities to the genocide of the Hereros in Namibia by Germany, passing through the bloody history in between, there is a long and increasingly violent stretch marked by the dialectic between the internal class struggle and the wars of colonialist expansion. The 1905 revolution [in Russia] showed crudely the evolution of contradictions and at the same time opened a new practical and theoretical dynamic without which we would not understand part of Lenin’s impact.

3. What did Lenin contribute with his book “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism?”

The contradictions sharpened by the 1905 revolution within the Second International exploded in 1910 when those who defended the revolutionary general strike to seize power confronted those who, on the contrary, defended bourgeois parliamentarism as the only and exclusive peaceful and gradual road to socialism. Although at that time imperialism was not exclusively discussed, the positions which would later clash did begin to be marked.

The reformist side represented by Kautsky maintained that imperialism was not a unconscious socioeconomic necessity, arising from the essence of capital, objectively necessary to overcome its crises through superexploitation and unjust wars, but that it was a partial solution, limited to the moment, which could be reversed with agreements regarding disarmament and in favor of international conventions prohibiting these practices. The revolutionary side represented by Rosa Luxemburg argued that imperialism could only be defeated through socialist revolution, the destruction of the bourgeois army, the creation of the people in arms, etc.

The critical importance of the debate on imperialist militarization was seen in 1911 at the brink of war between France and Germany when the German ship Panther, curiously the same name as a 1943 Nazi tank, came close to firing on another French ship in the Moroccan port of Agadir. A less tense situation had occurred in 1906, resolved with some ease, but that of 1911 bordered on an explosion. The two powers were fighting for control of strategic areas from which to penetrate the Sahara and for control of the Western Mediterranean.

That crisis spurred debate in the Second International because the proximity of war became evident. The rightwing and reformism of the Second International, represented by Bernstein and Kautsky, insisted on their respective theses and the left further specified theirs which, on the theoretical plane, appeared published in 1913 in the book, “The Accumulation of Capital,” by Rosa Luxemburg, whose subtitle, suppressed in many editions, is “A Contribution to the Economic Explanation of Imperialism.” The last pages of this book are impressive.

We have said above that the book bears the date 1912, and it is true, what happens is that the social democratic bureaucracy applied pressure to prevent its publication because its message was irreconcilable with reformism. After many attempts it was published in 1913, just a year before World War I. The fundamental reformist responses to Rosa Luxemburg came from two Austro-Marxists: Eckstein and Bauer, both supporters of Austria-Hungary, Germany’s ally in the imperialist war. Eckstein died in 1916 and Bauer died in exile in 1938, while Rosa was tortured and murdered by the alliance of her former Social-Democratic comrades and the protonazi Freikorps in 1918, together with thousands of revolutionaries. When Lenin wrote “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism” in 1916, some of Rosa’s theses were surpassed by the new

realities imposed by World War I. After her assassination, Lenin called her “a woman who had been murdered.” After her assassination, Lenin called her an Eagle despite having had no less than five great debates with her in less than two decades.

Another scholar who was widely read was Hilferding and his “Finance Capital” of 1910, its author murdered by the Gestapo in 1941 in Paris. His method of thought hardly took dialectics into account since he gave priority to “the economic,” the equilibrium and normal development of capitalism; his political conception was social democratic close to that of Kautsky, prioritizing like the latter the “economic analysis” over the rest of the components of the Marxist totality. It is from Hilferding that the concept of financial capital as a fusion of industrial and banking capital is popularized, something that was already being advanced by other researchers. None of this was an obstacle for Lenin to extract the good from his work, as he also extracted it from that of Hobson and so many others, including Rosa Luxemburg with whom, however, he had important debates.

It is said that Lenin contributes almost nothing of his own, original, in Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism of 1916, which is true, but at the same time it is totally erroneous. From common sense and from formal logic it is true, from dialectical logic and from the Marxist theory of knowledge, it is wrong. Lenin’s unsurpassed contribution to the understanding of imperialism was and still is, despite the 109 years that have passed, the vision of the concrete totality of imperialism moved by its internal contradictions which, in turn, refer us to the law of value which is the motor of capitalism.

But to analyze imperialism as a concrete totality requires seeing it in turn inserted in other relations which apparently have nothing to do with it, but which, nevertheless and from that perspective, its internal connections are discovered. One of Lenin’s virtues is to think dialectically and to demand that all Marxists do so. What is to think dialectically? It is to penetrate to the unity and struggle of opposites that moves reality, which requires a great theoretical effort based on the study of as much information as possible about the reality we want to revolutionize.

It is surprising the mass of information that Lenin at 25 years old used to write “The Development of Capitalism in Russia” in 1895 - 1896, in which he already speaks of the profitability obtained through the harsh exploitation in the colonies, with which the path is opened towards the theory of imperialism today, not only in 1916. Also surprising is the number of texts that support his work “Materialism and Empiriocriticism” of 1909. And what can we say of the 148 books, 232 articles and 49 specialized journals rigorously studied in a short time to write “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism” in 1916?

But it must be said that this last work is also part of a tremendous effort of theoretical creativity in crucial years, those from 1913 to 1917, that is, in World War I. From this perspective, “Imperialism, the Highest Phase of Capitalism” is one more part of the four fundamental bases that form the concrete theoretical totality that will sustain the international revolutionary wave

that was already in evidence in 1916. The other three we describe here that occurred in the historical development of this wave:

One, the liberation struggles of the peoples reinforced since 1913 and that in 1914 materialized in “**The Right of Nations to Self-determination**,” which in turn will be permanently enriched until a few days before Lenin’s death in January 1924.

Two, the dialectical method, which led him to dive into dozens of books on philosophy and science, stopping at Hegel’s “Science of Logic.”

And three, the crucial problem of the State and violence, a subject that led Lenin to study, among others, Clausewitz and his work, “On War.” Lenin intensified his studies of the theory of war starting in 1905 and since 1914, which allowed him to grasp the growing concern of a sector of the oligarchy, already in March 1915, that the war could end up provoking a “revolutionary chaos.”

In July 1915, while Lenin was immersed in thousands of pages and endless debates, Bukharin published “Imperialism and the World Economy,” which provided Lenin with important ideas for his work despite the differences they maintained on other questions. Two theses of Bukharin helped Lenin above all after adapting them to his thought: One was the thesis of the state capitalist trust, which expressed the capacity of the bourgeois state to impose order and centralize socio-political and economic life, a thesis that would help Lenin in his studies on “State and Revolution”; and the other, the problem of the relations between, on the one hand, the city and the workers’ struggle and, on the other, the countryside and the peasant struggle, a basic problem in the history of the anti-capitalist revolutions that is still current in several continents. This second contribution also helped Lenin in his studies on the State, the class struggle, the soviets of soldiers, workers and peasants, etc.

As we see, Lenin carried out a totalizing study of capitalism, that is, he analyzed **all** of its fundamental contradictions which were then expressed in the form of an atrocious world war: national oppression, the breakdown of formal logic and the need for the dialectical method; the most inhuman and savage irruption of imperialism as, for example, poison gas in battles; and the role of the State as the political-military form of capital. Analyzing imperialism as the concrete total form in which capitalism presented itself, allowed Lenin to be far above the theoretical level of the historical moment.

But what was fundamental was that this superiority allowed him to have a longer and deeper historical vision with its corresponding revolutionary strategy. For example, although he took and adapted ideas from Bukharin, he nevertheless had an overwhelming superiority of historical vision over Bukharin and therefore of revolutionary praxis.

For Lenin, imperialism was evidence that capitalist society had entered its declining phase. It was no longer a progressive mode of production but brutal and in decadence. Bukharin, on the contrary, insisted that the tendency to centralization and concentration of capital in large state

trusts left open the possibility of capitalism recovering thanks to the omnipotence of the bourgeois state.

Basically, what appears here is the abyss that separates them in the understanding and use of dialectics, very poor and limited in Bukharin as Lenin affirmed at the end of his days.

At this point, we must summarize the essentials of Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism:

First: the monopolies have been formed by the concentration of capital and production, acquiring so much power that they are decisive in economic life with clear political implications. We have seen that this characteristic had already been theorized since the beginning of the twentieth century, but reaffirmed as in the midst of World War I it showed its full force.

But let us read Lenin directly, referring to Germany: “Less than one hundredth part of the enterprises consume more than three quarters of the total amount of electrical and mechanical energy! And the 2,970,000 small enterprises (those with fewer than 5 workers), which are 91% of the total number of enterprises, consume only 7% of these energies! A few tens of thousands of large companies are everything; millions of small companies are nothing.”

Second: The new role of the banks, the merger of banking and industrial capital creating finance capital and its bourgeois faction:

“To the extent that banking operations become concentrated in a reduced number of entities, the banks cease to be the modest intermediaries they were before and become powerful monopolies that have at their disposal almost all the monetary capital of all capitalists and small businesspeople, as well as the greater part of the means of production and the sources of raw materials of one or many countries. This transformation of the numerous middlemen into a handful of monopolists is one of the fundamental processes in the evolution of capitalism into capitalist imperialism. That is why we must examine, in the first place, bank concentration... [...]

“The small banks are being displaced by the big ones, nine of which concentrate almost half of the total deposits. And we leave aside some important details, for example, the transformation of numerous small banks into simple branches of the big ones, etc., [...] the old capitalism, the capitalism of free competition, with its absolutely indispensable regulator, the stock exchange, is passing into history. In its place has arisen a new capitalism, with the obvious features of something transitory, representing a mixture of free competition and monopoly. A question arises: what is the outcome of the development of modern capitalism? But bourgeois scholars are afraid to ask it. [...] Thus, the 20th century marks the turning point between the old capitalism and the new, between the domination of capital in general and the domination of finance capital.

Third: Financial oligarchy:

We must point out that German bourgeois scholars, such as Riesser, Schulze-Gaevernitz, Liefmann, etc., - and not only German - are all apologists for imperialism and finance capital.

Instead of exposing the “mechanisms” of the formation of an oligarchy, its methods, the amount of its “licit and illicit” income, its relations with parliaments, etc., they embellish and conceal them. They evade the “controversial questions” by means of pompous and vague phrases, appeals to the “sense of responsibility” of the directors of the banks, praises to the “sense of duty” of the officials... [...] No rules of control, of publication of balance sheets, of standards for the balance sheets, of auditing of the accounts, etc., those things with which well-meaning professors and officials - that is, imbued with the good intention of defending and embellishing capitalism - distract the public, none of those things is of the slightest importance. Why? Because private property is sacred and no one can be forbidden to buy, sell, exchange or mortgage shares, etc. [...]

Financial capital, concentrated in very few hands and exercising a virtual monopoly, obtains enormous and growing profits from the launching of companies on the Stock Exchange, the issue of securities, loans to the State, etc., strengthens the dominion of the financial oligarchy and takes a toll on society as a whole for the benefit of the monopolists.

Fourth: The export of capital:

A characteristic of old capitalism, when free competition reigned supreme, was the export of goods. A characteristic of modern capitalism, where monopoly rules, is the export of capital. [...] Finance capital has created the epoch of monopolies. And monopolies always carry with them monopolistic principles: the use of “relations” for profitable transactions replaces competition in the open market. It is very common that among the clauses regulating the loan is one requiring that part of the loan is used for the purchase of products from the creditor country, particularly of weapons, ships, etc. [...] The capital-exporting countries have figuratively divided the world among themselves. But finance capital has carried out the real division of the world.

Fifth: The division of the world among capitalists and great powers:

“The monopolistic associations of capitalists (cartels, consortiums, trusts) divide among themselves, in the first place, the domestic market, taking over more or less the total production of the country. But under capitalism, the domestic market is inevitably linked to the foreign market. Capitalism has long since created a world market. And as the export of capital has increased and the “spheres of influence” and the foreign and colonial connections of the great monopoly associations have expanded, the “natural” course of things has led to international agreement between them, to the formation of international cartels. [...]

Some bourgeois writers (who have now been joined by Kautsky, who had completely betrayed his Marxist position of, for example, 1909) have expressed the opinion that international cartels, since they are one of the most outstanding expressions of the internationalization of capital, give hope for peace among the peoples under capitalism. From a theoretical point of view, this view is totally absurd and, from a practical point of view, it is sophistic [...] Finance capital is so powerful a force, one may say so decisive, in all economic and international relations, that it is

capable of subduing, and actually does subdue, even States that enjoy the most complete political independence, as we shall soon see.

Of course, finance capital finds it much more “convenient” and advantageous if its domination involves the loss of the political independence of the subjected countries and peoples. In this respect, the semi-colonial countries provided a good example of an “intermediate phase.” It is natural, therefore, that the struggle over these semi-dependent countries becomes particularly acute in the epoch of finance capital, when the rest of the world was already divided up.

4. What use is Lenin’s theory of imperialism today for understanding the world? How has imperialism changed from Lenin to the present day?

At the end of the July 1920 preface to the German and French editions Lenin writes:

“Without understanding the economic roots of this phenomenon and appreciating its political and social importance, it is impossible to take any steps towards the fulfillment of the practical tasks of the communist movement and the impending social revolution. Imperialism is the anteroom of the social revolution of the proletariat. This has been confirmed on a world scale since 1917.”

Here is the answer Lenin gives to the fourth question. Leninist anti-imperialism is the best and fullest form of struggle against capitalism because, as we shall see right now, this anti-imperialism leads us directly to the struggle against the law of value and for communism. By 1920 Lenin had already specified in a debate with Bukharin in 1919 that the basis of imperialism is capitalism, that imperialism is a “superstructure” of capitalism and that the law of competition continued to determine “old capitalism.” Let us remember that the law of competition refers us to the law of labor-value which, together with other laws, such as the law of productivity, the law of surplus value, etc., are fundamental in the capitalist mode of production. This reaffirmation by Lenin of the objective importance of the contradictions and tendential laws of capital, which are its essence, is necessary to contextualize in the present, what he defined as “semi-colonial” and “semi-dependent” countries in the framework of 1916.

In 1916 finance capital was imposing itself on bank capital and even more on merchant capital, but now it is the many forms that finance capital takes, as well as the uncontrollable development of high-risk speculation, of the immense masses of fictitious capital without material basis, of the forms of “washing money” coming, for example, from the “criminal economy” which, according to reports of June 2025, exceeds more than 19 trillion US dollars, more than the GDP of People’s China. The U.S. GDP in 2024 was just over \$29 trillion. The vast majority of these superprofits, especially the “dirty” superprofits, go to imperialism. The “criminal economy” also generates reactionary power, terror, crime and submission, and is a military mafia that reinforces imperialism and the accumulation of capital, which is the critical point on which Lenin insists.

Moreover, monopolies, trusts and other higher expressions of finance capital have already jumped to holding companies, to the closest and most powerful alliances of the old trusts and monopolies thanks, among other things, to the impact of deregulation and the near disappearance

of state controls on finance capital, as well as to the new computer technologies that allow moving immense masses of capital in real time bypassing and circumventing the sovereignty and fiscal controls of a large part of the states. In Lenin's time none of this was even imaginable. It goes without saying that the great impunity of the holding companies and of the many forms of "gray business" multiplies the exploitation of nations and states even though many of them are formally independent.

Therefore, imperialism must be seen not only in the economic aspect, as the vast majority of political analysts do, but at the same time in the social and political aspects, that is to say in and for all forms of class struggle. This includes above all in most cases in and for the anti-imperialist liberation struggles. Moreover, developing Lenin's indications, we must study imperialism as a concrete totality because it is a practical demand of the communist movement and of the social revolution given that: "Imperialism is the antechamber of the social revolution of the proletariat." History has proved him right, as we shall see.

A political, social, and economic study of imperialism, the highest phase of capitalism, and of its praxis, demands integrating in a militant whole, as a minimum, the anti-imperialist liberation struggles, the struggle against metaphysics and bourgeois idealism using the dialectical method, the struggles against all the brutalities of imperialism and against the essence of how imperialism exploits, and the implacable struggles against the State as the political-military form of capital. This totalizing vision integrates in its studies new forms of exploitation that coming from afar - patriarchal, racist exploitation, slavery in its various forms, cultural and scientific exploitation, etc. - are intensifying and interrelated as the difficulties of accumulation of capital increase. The current imperialism has been reinforced and strengthened, especially militarily, to guarantee the necessary exploitative order to overcome the crisis.

From this perspective, the criticisms made of Imperialism, the superior phase of capitalism, centered above all on four questions that refer us to its supposed forgetfulness of the law of value, are partial. Let us look at them:

One, that competition is now much more exacerbated and therefore monopolies no longer have so much power. On the contrary, the power of the monopolies has been reinforced by the even greater power of the holding companies, multifaceted powers closely related to the imperialist state and the interests of its various enterprises. The underlying trend described by Lenin is confirmed day by day in many issues: the tariff war launched by the United States is the most recent. Brazil's refusal to allow Venezuela to join the BRICS is another of them because multiple levels are at stake, not only economic but also political, social, national, cultural and, of course, military, which will increase in importance.

Two, that the concept of financial capital is valid in part because there are many large companies in which the merger between their industrial capital and their banking capital is but little developed. This criticism is very partial and mechanistic, only quantitative, because it ignores the quality of imperialism and even more does it ignore that capitalism continues to exist below

finance capital, which explains why there are enterprises in which industrial capital has not yet merged with banking capital.

But in reality, the correctness of Lenin and of the general Marxist theory on imperialism, with its nuances and obvious differences, is being confirmed in 2025 with the project of Amazon, Apple, Walmart, Paypal and other mega-corporations that want to create their own **cryptocurrencies** to multiply their profits by building something like a “political-financial monopoly” that chains customers. These macro-corporations will thus become more powerful, in every way, than many impoverished states with GDPs far below those of these giants.

Three, the export of capital is still important, but foreign investment to set up industries in the country concerned is on the rise. This criticism is also partially true, it is quantitative as is the previous one, but it errs in the qualitative vision of imperialism as a part subordinated to the law of value that moves capitalism. It is this law, accepted by Lenin as the basis of imperialism, which explains why after 1916 the Western bourgeoisie began to invest in creating industries to increase the transfer of value using its political-military and cultural force to ensure the obedience and passivity of those countries in the face of superexploitation multiplied by the creation of foreign industries.

It is the law of competition, an expression of the law of value, which leads imperialism to create industries in the so-called Third World. Moreover, to create industries was and is a political-military decision to deactivate the anti-imperialist struggles and the advance of socialism, creating a collaborationist strata/cushion with imperialism interested in maintaining its wages above the very low average existing in its impoverished country.

And, four, there have been no more major wars between imperialist powers to divide up the world, although there are more and more “minor wars.” This criticism forgets the total change that took place in capitalism, not only in imperialism, with the victory of the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 and all the subsequent struggles. This absolute change in the political-military and socio-cultural spheres to defeat communism is the reason why since 1949, with the creation of the atomic bomb by the USSR, no more “classic” world wars have broken out, but “minor wars” of atrocious imperialist savagery have proliferated.

The Soviet nuclear bomb has prevented unilateral nuclear wars, launched only by the US and its allies against almost defenseless peoples. But the implosion of the USSR and the extreme aggravation of the capitalist crisis from 2007 onwards has put on the agenda the leap from the possible to the probable of a new world war which for many peoples has already begun.

But there is another criticism to the whole of the general Marxist theory of imperialism and specifically to that of Lenin, which argues that both the concepts of the law of value and imperialism no longer serve to understand the capitalism of the XXI century because semi-powers have emerged and even powers that have also become imperialist as Russia, Brazil, People’s China, India, etc., that is to say, the core of the BRICS would be imperialist that obtain

profits by exploiting other countries and, therefore, the wars that “the West” has been launching for some time against these and other countries would be “inter-imperialist wars.”

Here what is directly denied is not only imperialism but the very essence of the capitalist mode of production which is the theory of value, with which we enter into a decisive debate. For example, the differences within the BRICS are reflected in their diverse and even contradictory geopolitical alliances in favor or against imperialism, but these options only reflect the strategic dominance of the social class in power in those countries, which brings us to their position with respect to the law of value: some fight it with greater or lesser intensity as are the peoples who attempt the transition to socialism according to their conditions, others try to control it with social policies that slow and/or reverse the innate tendency of capital to harden the exploitation of the workers and there are those who shamelessly push it to strengthen their bourgeoisies. In what follows, we will analyze concretely these differences, oppositions and contradictions that can make the BRICS explode.

There are many proofs of the historical validation of Leninist anti-imperialism. In order not to lengthen this text we will cite only one of them: the “golden chains” of the debt contracted with imperialism. Great empires like the Tsarist and Ottoman empires, for example, exploded at the beginning of the 20th century because, among other things, they could not pay the debts that were suffocating them, which led them to a policy of savage superexploitation at home and in the nations they occupied. The Bolshevik revolution of 1917 broke the “golden noose” by refusing to pay the debt and publishing the aberrant bourgeois concessions to obtain more loans, among them that of continuing to participate in World War I. The Turkish war of liberation against the European powers that had occupied Constantinople in 1920 sought to create a Republic, to democratize the country and to renegotiate in an advantageous way the payment of the debt that was choking the country, but did not want to destroy capitalism.

Now, debt is one of the most powerful and effective weapons of imperialism to super-exploit the peoples, a weapon with many edges - IMF, WB, WTO, special laws against debt, sanctions, threats and political-military attacks in the form of “soft coups,” parliamentary, judicial and even military when necessary. In this tangled web woven by capitalism, there are also other weapons of imperialism such as those that justify the theft from Russia of 300,000 billion dollars, the more than 1,000 million dollars in gold stolen from Venezuela, and a long etc.

At present, imperialist pressures are multiplying so that the impoverished countries pay the debts contracted by their corrupt bourgeoisies because the aggravation of the genetic-structural crisis from 2007 onwards, plus the irrational increase of military expenditures to prepare the definitive outbreak of World War III, obliges capital to tighten the hangman’s noose as much as possible. In the seventies imperialism committed itself to devote 0.7% of its GDP to “development aid,” today almost nobody fulfills it. In 2023 the impoverished countries paid \$25 billion more for their financial obligations than they received for new loans, that is to say they were more indebted than in 2022. In 2024 they paid imperialism \$921 billion.

In this same year (2024), the great power — the U.S., British, French and German states fundamentally reduced “development aid” by more than 7% with respect to 2023, while military expenditure increased by 2.5%, totalling more than twelve times the expenditure for “development aid.” The United States is the power that has cut this “aid” the most and the one that is increasing the most its waste in the industry of human slaughter. Africa is the most squeezed continent, its vampirization increases as the “aid” it receives decreases: in 2013 it received 38% of world “aid,” which plummeted to 27% in 2023. By 2025, “aid” is expected to fall by 9% to 17% of the worldwide total, while no less than 45 countries are already having to pay more in debt repayment than for the health of their people.

Such inhumanity is inherent to the unfolding of the law of value and to the task of imperialism to, among other things, force at any price, whatever it may be, the repayment of the debts of its corrupt bourgeoisies. This pillage can only be understood from the Leninist theory of imperialism and can only be destroyed through Leninist anti-imperialism, like that which refused to pay the tsarist and bourgeois debt in 1917, which was a courageous human decision that was one of the excuses for the invasion of the USSR by 14 imperialist armies in 1918.

5. How does Marxism connect class struggle with anti-imperialism? What did the national liberation movements of the Third World contribute to the anti-imperialist struggle? How did the theory of anti-imperialism change after the decolonization of Africa and Asia? What role did the Komintern play in putting together a world anti-imperialist theory?

The connection between anti-imperialism and class struggle is internal to Marxism, that is, it is a unity in itself which in turn is within the revolutionary totality. Since the class struggle revolves in essence around the destruction of bourgeois property and surplus value, for that very reason it objectively favors the anti-imperialist struggle and vice versa: The emancipation of oppressed peoples is a material spur to the class struggle in capitalist societies. Dionisio Inca Yupanqui, representative of native nations in the Cortes de Cadiz of 1811, affirmed that a people that oppresses another people will never be free.

Dionisio could not be a Marxist because in that mercantile capitalism the objective conditions for the emergence of communist theory did not yet exist, but his life experience had taught him a truth that Marxism would assume as its own when he said that the independence of Ireland was the first requisite for the revolution in England. Later, the Leninist theory of the right to self-determination of peoples, including that of independence [separation], would go a step further by radically rejecting the reactionary nonsense espoused by a broad sector of the Second International regarding “good colonialism,” thus already updating the ideas of Inca Yupanqui within the imperialist context.

The anti-imperialist struggles after World War II undermined from within the euphoria of developmentalism from 1945-75, being one of the engines of the deep and lasting socio-economic crisis that with ups and downs and different forms has worsened since 2007. The victory of Vietnam over imperialism [1975] demonstrated how a long war of liberation whips up

and takes to the extreme the capitalist contradictions, intensifying the class struggle within it and aggravating the socio-economic crisis.

The reason for this dialectic is very simple: Marx insisted that the workers' and popular struggle, specifically the trade union struggle, should be oriented towards the destruction of the wage system, that is, the destruction of the law of value. We have resorted to the historical function of the trade union struggle against the essence of capital because it runs through the entire class struggle, whether within the enriched states or among the peoples exploited by imperialism. We have previously spoken of Africa, the continent most sacrificed on the altar of the dollar god, which since the summer of 2024 cheers up our lives with an upward trend of struggles against all forms of oppression and domination.

The class struggle referred to by Marx, to continue with this example, is also being waged inside Africa. Its peoples have understood that they must create a Pan-Africanism that multiplies their anti-imperialist force. In the same way that in Europe and everywhere else, however, where the bourgeois bloc confronts the revolutionary bloc, also in Pan-Africanism there is the unity and struggle of opposites. Once the wars of liberation have begun, the bourgeoisies of the oppressed peoples that proposed and propose simple reforms that soften oppression, but do not put an end to it, sooner rather than later opt for imperialism (with very honorable individual exceptions) because their own existence as an exploiting class depends on the continuity of world capitalism.

This recurrent anti-imperialist experience confirms the essence of the class struggle in capitalism, but at the same time provides very valid lessons arising from the non-Western history of these peoples. The words of Dionisio Inca in 1811 were the synthesis of the experience of struggle of the Andean nations that went beyond Tupac Amaru of 1781 to link very probably with the Mapuche resistance against the Incas and Spaniards, without forgetting the rebellions since 1492. Our America is no exception. The Amazigh people of North Africa have resisted the Arab invasion since the second half of the 7th century, in defense of their communal social norms in which the warrior queen Dahia stood out. In 1830, the Algerian people rose up like a spring against the French invasion until they regained their independence in 1962. The list is almost inexhaustible.

One thing that more or less unites the bulk of these struggles is the struggle for the defense of the remnants of communal property in its various forms and/or for the defense of their social norms that somehow maintained levels of reciprocity and mutual aid. Colonialism and imperialism brought harsher exploitation, disease and starvation as well as forced expropriation, very violent in most cases, of their lands, herds and natural resources. The Western invaders sought the support of chieftains, big families, castes and wealthy elites, and of the landowning classes when they already existed. In one of his early texts, Marx came out in defense of customary [unwritten] law that recognized the legitimacy of the peasantry to collectively use communal goods according to just social norms, all of which was irreconcilable with the bourgeois right to their private property.

The contributions of the anti-imperialist struggles at the theoretical and political level are based on the defense of the communal, in addition to other contributions that we will see. Famous utopias prior to utopian socialism were based on the uncritical and idealized reading of the social forms of cooperation and on the myth of the “good savage” of the peoples of Latin America. But the West abandoned them when it saw that this myth concealed the harsh reality of tenacious armed resistance, passive disobedience and bloody rebellions. Racism annulled the “good savage” by turning him into a criminal enemy of civilization who had to be exterminated.

However, the fierce criticisms of colonialism by Marx and Engels from 1851 until their death, of which we have spoken, plus the general theoretical development led them to the study of the role of pre-capitalist peoples in at least five decisive issues:

One, to show new social realities that shattered Western dogmatic viewpoints and that were still embedded in all leftist visions, also in Marxism. The impressive participation of masses and indigenous, peasant, artisan and even some sectors of the petty bourgeoisie in the liberation struggles, with the outstanding participation of women, showed that the European debates on the relations between the peasantry and the proletariat had not yet reached the core. Since then, the concept of the world working class is being enriched day by day by integrating into its midst millions of women, native peoples, artisans and even swathes of the former ruined, proletarianized petty bourgeoisie.

Two, to discover the negative or positive impact of the anti-colonial struggles on the class struggle in the colonial and imperialist center. Relatively early, Marx and Engels understood that colonialism, besides superprofits, also idiotized its exploited classes by giving them a very small part of the spoils, tying them materially and morally to capital and its public or private armies, scabs, strikebreakers, bonapartists, fascists, mafiosi, criminals... and, above all, “democratic voters.” But at the same time they understood that the anti-colonial struggles facilitated workers’ radicalization if the left explained to them how these struggles weaken the bourgeois exploiters and that, therefore, it was essential to support them through internationalism, which must go beyond European borders to expand throughout the world.

Three, one of the debates that all this provoked was about the possibility of these peoples freeing themselves from the capitalist horrors by making a “leap to socialism,” also accelerating the revolution in the West. The debate intensified with the experience of the Russian peasant commune at the end of the 19th century and has been growing ever since. The truth is that it is a multiple problem because it affects the basic forms of popular resistances, from daily solidarity in mutual aid to popular and workers’, trade union, political and even parliamentary self-organization in certain conditions, to maintain or conquer collective rights that have a relation with the old communal goods and with customary law.

Four, to analyze the effects of all this in and for the theoretical-political elaboration of socialism and internationalism not only on a Eurocentric scale but fundamentally on a planetary scale. On a

Eurocentric scale, the lessons that were and are being drawn from the ill-named Global South continue to meet with much resistance, often insurmountable because progressivism and reformism have a mixture of psychological and even racist rejection, as well as lucidly selfish for the posts of all kinds that guarantee them a comfortable life.

But the unstoppable brutality of imperialism led, since the 1970s, generally small Eurocentric left groups to integrate the lessons of anti-imperialism into their committed political activity. However, the weakening, if not the extinction of many of these small groups, together with other factors, meant that between the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century the learning of these lessons in the so-called West plummeted. Even so, the current contradictions have not only updated those lessons but also provide new and very current lessons.

And five, after what we have seen, it was inevitable that such an explosion of empirical new developments would enrich historical materialism and overcome the linear and deterministic mechanical view of the obligatory succession of modes of production, which would condemn the peoples to suffer the horrors of Western capitalism. All anti-imperialist liberation struggles have since been guided by that possibility — so difficult to imagine at the end of the 19th century, but increasingly feasible since 1917, since the first triumphant revolution, the Bolshevik. “To be spared the capitalist hell” that is about to lead humanity to the sixth extinction is impossible without making a “historic leap to socialism.”

The national liberation struggles of Asia and Africa confirm in general terms the value of the five points briefly enunciated above, they also confirm the value of the Marxist defense of customary law, although the non-European peoples did not use that term but practiced it in their social essence, giving it different names.

The Third International or Communist International -Komintern- was founded in 1919 to accelerate the “historic leap” in an absolutely new context in capitalist history: a revolutionary wave spreading through the capitalist societies and rapidly gaining strength in the countries colonized and crushed by imperialism. From its very foundation, the Komintern paid more and more attention to imperialist crimes. We would like to illustrate this practice with three examples up to May 1943, the moment of its dissolution.

The first is the decisive and therefore hidden Baku meeting organized by the Third International in September 1920 between Bolsheviks and Muslims from Turkey, Kurdistan, Armenia, Persia, India, China, Palestine..., with about 2,850 delegates. British imperialism did its utmost to abort the international meeting by attacking all delegates passing through or close to the territories occupied by London. In an atmosphere of full freedom of expression — and with simultaneous translation — the relations between Islam and Marxism, the emancipation of women and the hijab or veil, the Zionist occupation, social justice according to the Koran and socialism, national and colonial oppression, etc., were debated. It must be said that in 1920 Lenin ordered the return to the mosques of all the objects of Muslim worship plundered for centuries by Tsarism, as well as other goods, land, houses, etc.

The second refers to the advance of the Third International in the Indian subcontinent and East Asia, countries that instantly understand that the Bolshevik revolution is a “shortcut” that can allow them a “historic leap.” In India and thanks to the practical and theoretical effectiveness of militants like M.N. Roy, radical nationalist defender of the anti-British armed struggle, exiled since 1916 in the United States and Mexico where he helped found the Mexican Communist Party (MCP), and where he met leaders of the Communist International like Borodin. Present at the 1920 Congress, he debated at length with Lenin on national oppression and was in charge of the organization of communism in India, an immense and complex country in which the communists suffered periods of illegality. In China and Mongolia, above all, the Third International had to overcome, not without tensions, the theses on social classes based on European capitalism, until its leadership understood that in those societies the peasantry comprised the bulk of the revolutionary force.

The third and last example gained strength just after World War II, but thanks to the task carried out earlier by the Third International when working in the training of several thousand cadres in Africa, who saw in their struggles how the socialism created in Europe had fundamental similarities with ideals of justice of African culture. Collective ownership of land was the dominant form of property existing in Africa before the European invasions.

Cultural traditions and myths of origins were largely egalitarian, although there were also hierarchical, gerontocratic and forms of prestige earned by elders. If we add to this the great real autonomy of African women, we can understand why “African socialism” easily caught on and caught fire among the exploited masses when Senghor [Senegal], Dia, Kwame Nkrumah [Ghana], Nyerere [Tanzania], Amilcar Cabral [Guinea-Bissau], Sekou Touré [Guinea-Conakry], Patrice Lumumba [Congo], Thomas Sankara [Burkina Faso], Traoré [Mali] and many others explained and practiced it according to the socio-historical conditions.

For reasons of space we leave aside the task of the Third International in Our America and also its role in imperialist capitalism.

6. How does Franz Fanon connect violence with the revolutionary theory of anti-imperialism? What is the link between cultural struggle and anti-imperialism in authors such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o?

To quickly answer the question about Fanon’s vision of anti-imperialist violence we have chosen four short quotations from “The Damned of the Earth,” his seminal work:

One: “Each statue, that of Faidherbe or Lyautey, that of Bugeaud or that of Sergeant Blandan, all these conquerors perched on colonial soil do not fail to signify one and the same thing: ‘We are here by the force of bayonets....’” Fanon says a lot with few words. Imperialist art exists, it is not just neutral art, but atrocious art that praises French mass murderers so that the invaded people end up admiring the invader. Moreover, it is the use of urbanism as a weapon of intimidation and order guarded not only by the invading forces but also by the symbolic terror concentrated in its

statues. But what is decisive appears in this sentence: “ ‘We are here by the force of bayonets...’.”

Two: “The development of violence within the colonized people will be proportional to the violence exercised by the challenged colonial regime.” Fanon reminds us here of one of the principles of the Marxist theory of violence: the dialectic between ends and means. Capital, imperialism, NATO... apply the maximum unjust violence against any just struggle in order to impose such terror that no one will ever again desire freedom. The people measure their defensive violence with values antagonistic to those of the invader: Just violence seeks to expel the invader and at the same time to increase popular consciousness, so it must reject any excess, any arbitrariness, measuring the just and indispensable dose, speaking clearly and pedagogically to the people, without ever lying to them. Truth and revolutionary violence form a unity.

Three: “For the colonized people this violence, as its only work, has positive, formative characters. This violent praxis is totalizing, since each action becomes a violent link of the great chain, of the great violent organism that arises as a reaction to the initial violence of the colonialist. The groups recognize each other and the future nation is already indivisible. The armed struggle mobilizes the people, that is to say, it launches them in the same direction, in a single direction.”

The “initial violence of colonialism” causes the defensive response of the people to organize and centralize to expel imperialism. It is not possible to defeat the occupier with a half-war, a semi-war, but it is only possible to achieve it with total war, with the “totalizing violent praxis” in the course of which the people builds itself, creates itself by walking “in the same direction, in a single direction.” But it is a creation that is realized with qualitative new actions since the war of liberation generates by itself previously unknown realities, creates and potentiates feelings of solidarity integrated in the “unique direction” of national and class liberation.

Four: “Violence detoxifies. It frees the colonized people from their inferiority complex, from their contemplative or desperate attitudes. It makes them fearless, rehabilitates them in their own eyes. Even if the armed struggle has been symbolic and even if it has been demobilized by a rapid decolonization, the people have time to convince themselves that liberation has been the work of each and every one of them, that the leader has no special merit. Violence elevates the people to the level of the leader. Hence that kind of aggressive aversion towards the protocol machinery that the young governments hasten to install.”

The people are intoxicated, doped, by the myth of the absolute superiority of the colonizer. They cannot even imagine any other life than the one imposed by the master, whom they thank for his efforts in the same way that junkies thank the dealer on whom they depend. What is called “passing the monkey,” detoxification, always demands sacrifice and a lot of material and symbolic, subjective determination. It is the dialectic of the revolutionary totality that stands against the counterrevolutionary totality. Nothing can exist outside that unity and struggle of opposites. Independence from the trafficker, the break with colonialism confirms to the people that they are the owners of themselves, that they must build their future relying on their resources

and with the anti-imperialist help of other peoples and working classes. They address themselves.

Without further details now, Fanon wrote these ideas in 1961, in the third wave of liberation wars. The first was that of the emancipation of the [U.S.] American colonies [from Britain] since the end of the 18th century. The second was that of defensive violence against the colonial invasion of Africa and Asia in the 19th century. The third began with the Chinese revolution and is the one in which Fanon inscribes himself, theoretically synthesizing the experiences since the first resistances to Portuguese and Spanish colonialism in the second half of the 15th century. But Fanon's relevance is reconfirmed in the current fourth phase, initiated at the end of the 20th century and which, not without problems due to the savage opposition of imperialism, advances with new modalities and contents as is logical, which do not annul but enrich his contributions to the Marxist theory of violence, as can be seen for example in his beloved Africa.

The death of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o at the end of May 2025 brings Fanon up to date again especially in what we should call "cultural liberation war," which, to say it in a more synthetic way, would be part of what Fanon has defined above as "symbolic armed struggle." For many of us, the author has two particularly important works; one is "Decolonizing the Mind," from 1986 and in Spanish language in 2015, and the other is "Displacing the Center," from 1993 edited in Spanish in 2017. We should begin with the first work, Decolonizing the Mind, which we will try to summarize in four paragraphs.

One: "In the 18th and 19th centuries Europe stole countless African art treasures to decorate its houses and museums. In the 20th century Europe is stealing the treasures of the mind to enrich its languages and cultures. Africa needs to regain control of its economy, its politics, its culture, its languages and all its patriotic writers."

Ngũgĩ is right to refer us to the 18th century as the moment from which cultural plundering became widespread because it is the century in which the European bourgeoisie became aware of its exploitative power and decided to embellish its daily life with "exotic things." In the seventeenth century, Baroque art was hardly suitable to decorate the house of the new Dutch and English colonialist bourgeoisie, and the neoclassical did allow some more facilities in that sense. The rich merchants wanted to show their new status in their homes and meeting places, and the possession of African, Indian, Persian, Chinese, [Indo]American... art also showed economic-military power and aesthetic exuberance. Since the twentieth century the robbery encompasses the mind, the "brain drain," because to overcome the growing difficulties of accumulation of capital it is essential to increase the constant capital, the techno-science, which requires the de-skilling of the colonized mind to reduce it to productive force [that can be exploited].

Two: "The imperialist tradition in Africa is maintained today by the international bourgeoisie using the multinationals and, of course, by the native ruling classes, waving the national flags. The economic and political dependence of this African neocolonial bourgeoisie is reflected in its culture of imitation and repetition, which it imposes on a population numbed by police boots, barbed wire and compliant clerical and judicial establishments. They spread their ideas through a

group of state intellectuals, the academics and laureate journalists of the neocolonial establishment.”

The culture of repetition and imitation is a dead culture because it cannot be critical or creative since it assumes and reproduces the economic chains that bind it to imperialism, it assumes the walls that prevent it from seeing the horizon beyond the dogmas introjected in the colonized mind and especially reinforces the logic of exploitation, of private property. African culture has its roots in the great extension of communal goods, as we have said. Its expropriation and privatization through western invasions has been reinforced as a matter of necessity by the gradual destruction of the communal culture and the imposition first of the foreign culture of obedience to imperialist property and secondly, of the collaborationist and servile culture with respect to the invader. Christian sects and Western justice imposed on Africa play their part in all this.

Three: “The tradition of resistance is maintained by the workers (the peasants and the urban proletariat), with the help of patriotic students, intellectuals (whether academics or not), soldiers and other progressive elements of the less privileged middle classes. The resistance is reflected in its patriotic defense of the peasant and proletarian origins of national cultures, in its defense of the democratic struggle of all nationalities inhabiting the same territory.”

Ngũgĩ reactivates here the classic debate on the revolutionary subject in societies in which industrialization has not yet taken hold and in which the majority component is the one described by him. We have already discussed this debate above, but what interests us now is the participation of this collective subject in the “cultural war” and in the development of popular culture that recovers communal traditions by re-creating them as decisive weapons of anti-imperialist liberation. The patriotism presented here is the one that runs through the working nations that, assuming their logical differences, confront their collaborationist bourgeoisies with and for the same historical objectives.

Four: “The most dangerous weapon wielded and, in fact, used every day by imperialism against this collective challenge is the culture bomb. The effect of a culture bomb is to annihilate a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their natural environment, in their tradition of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and, ultimately, in themselves. It makes them see their past as a wasteland devoid of achievements and makes them want to distance themselves from it. It makes them want to identify with that which is more distant to them, for example with the languages of other peoples instead of their own. It makes them identify with that which is decadent and reactionary, all forces that would willingly choke the sources of their life. It even raises deep doubts about the moral legitimacy of the struggle.”

The occupying power is driven to destroy the identity of the working nation, above all its memory, tradition and morality of its struggle, which always reminds it that it was free in the past and that if it wants to be free again it must fight against the imperialist “culture bomb.” Ngũgĩ could not say it more directly: The “cultural bomb” seeks to annihilate names, languages, identifications with the natural environment built over centuries under the protection of

communal production and sharing. Razing of the collective personality to impose languages, names, norms and referents of the invader, brought from far away and that can only grow through the material and symbolic violence necessary to sow obedient submission to the foreign master in the mental desert of early childhood.

In 1993 Ngũgĩ writes “Displace the Center,” in which he speaks of the “linguistic cage” that oppresses African language and culture to show the terrible and unbearable reality that led him to become aware that his novel, “A Grain of Wheat,” from the mid-1960s, could be read by only 5% of the population and that with a little luck. He writes: “Writers were part of the educated elite and there was no way they could escape these contradictions. Almost all, for example, opted for European languages as a form of expression for their creativity. English, French and Portuguese became the languages of the new African literature. But these languages were spoken by only 5% of the population.”

We have to take into account that basic education, health, administration, etc., when they existed, were based on foreign languages that were mastered by 5%, which slowed down or prevented the peoples from learning and creating these decisive means themselves if they had not previously internalized the language and culture of the occupier. The problem worsened when we analyze the functioning of the native repressive forces, armed collaborationists who defended the master by massacring their own family if necessary. Great Britain, Portugal and France, and to a lesser extent Germany, Belgium and Italy, killed tens of thousands of Africans who murdered each other in World War I and World War II in defense of the imperialisms that plundered them. We can hardly get an idea of how this extermination of young people has delayed for generations the pan-Africanist awareness.

All liberation movements have understood the critical importance of the literacy of their peoples in their languages and cultures as a simultaneous advance in their self-organization as a revolutionary force fighting for independence against imperialism. Literacy was and is linked not only to self-organization but to theoretical, political and ethical preparation for creating counter-powers wherever possible, defending and expanding them, networking them. Counterpowers, as we shall see, fulfill a very pedagogical and cumulative task, but their scope is very limited and uncertain because they are always subject to repression. They are indispensable but insufficient.

Ngũgĩ gives an unquestionable reason for the necessity of administrative, ethical and technical preparation, but above all with a very solid revolutionary objective oriented to the seizure of power, always realized during the liberation struggle: “But the independence of many African countries has not always brought as a consequence the empowerment of the peoples. Economic power remains in the hands of multinationals and political power in the hands of a tiny elite that governs under the dictates of the dominant interests in the West. These elites, who have been provided with a military machine with which to impose themselves on the resistance of the population, have turned entire countries into gigantic penitentiaries.”

And the fact is that a war of liberation that does not prepare the exploited classes for the simultaneous task of destroying the occupying power and building revolutionary power will

sooner rather than later be swept away by the alliance between the “national” bourgeoisie and imperialism, an alliance in which the dominant force is imperialist capital. Worse, that alliance will repress, arrest, detain, imprison, torture and even assassinate anti-imperialist forces once it the conditions to do so exist. Even worse, the elite military machine, armed and trained by imperialism, is psyched and organized to strike the first murderous blow, having sufficient information and the necessary means to turn their countries into “gigantic penitentiaries.”

Ngũgĩ also provides us with another unquestionable reason like the previous ones with which we consider the answer to the sixth question finished, since it opens the door to enter the seventh and last:

A few shareholders in the City [of London] or on Wall Street, through a simple manipulation in the buying and selling of stocks and shares and thanks to the power of their almost monopolistic force of capital, can determine the location, death and subsistence of entire industries; they can decide, in short, who eats, what they eat and where they eat it. They can create famines, deserts, pollution and wars. The peasant in the farthest part of the planet is affected by the power of people who accumulate billions, even if their billionaires’ wealth is only visible in numbers on a computer screen in these financial institutions we call banks. Today, the IMF and the World Bank determine the lives and deaths of many, many people in Africa, Asia and South America.

7. How important is it that the peoples can decide for themselves within anti-imperialism? What are the basic elements to build a revolutionary theory of anti-imperialism? What kind of political internationalism does anti-imperialist theory need today?

Ngũgĩ’s last words perfectly center the three answers to this last block of questions because they uncover for us the core, the essence of imperialism, the why and how of the destruction of human lives in places far away from the centers of capitalist power and, above all, the why of those daily crimes. Ngũgĩ wrote them in 1993 and the third of a century elapsed so far has only multiplied them while adding new components to the genetic-structural crises of capital. Above we have tried to explain the category of essence/phenomenon and now we could speak of the universal/particular/singular. We resort to both to know why the working peoples must decide for themselves their anti-imperialist struggle always within the internationalist strategic unity for communism.

Among many other valid things, Ngũgĩ says that the WB, the IMF, the big corporations and a few shareholders, decide who die of hunger or are massacred in wars thousands of kilometers away from their comfortable offices. This is the essence of imperialism, its universal characteristics. How do the peoples combat and defeat them? Only with certain but general statements, or through concrete struggles that destroy the forms with which the essential, the universal of imperialism is presented, so that in each particular country or region anti-imperialist collectives capable of reaching the singular are generated?

For example, the struggle against “ecological imperialism” in its universal essence that destroys nature must materialize in the particular in and of Galiza [one of the nations in the Spanish state]

through the defeat of the monstrosity of Altri [Chemical Corporation, that has been polluting a pristine area in Galiza], which has singularities that differentiate it from other barbarities, but which can only be fully understood thanks to the Marxist critique of capitalist ecocide.

The list of examples is almost inexhaustible: the Castilian struggle against the falsification and historical lie to impose its supposed Spanishness is the same as the Catalan struggle against that same violent imposition, but it would be a blunder to copy mechanically the arguments and forms of mobilization. The struggle against the NATO bases in Andalusia, for example, is the same struggle as that waged against imperialist bases elsewhere, but the form of that Andalusian struggle will only be effective if it starts from its history and context, in the same way that the Basque struggle for amnesty has the same objectives as those of other working [oppressed] nations but in Euskal Herria [Basque Country] it is sustained on the specificity and singularity of its national class liberation struggle.

We want to say that anti-imperialism will be all the more effective only if it recognizes and applies historical lessons: Ho Chi Minh was neither Tito nor Fidel, nor was Mao the same as Sankara, Santucho applied a method in Uruguay different from the Soviet guerrillas behind the Nazi lines, the same as the 1917 insurrection in St. Petersburg was done according to its circumstance, conjuncture and context, but in 1928 the Communist International published that jewel entitled “The Armed Insurrection” that dialectically united in a theoretical whole the insurrections that had taken place until then showing what identified them underneath their many differences. Any militant acting in a trade union or popular or cultural movement, etc., knows that the class struggle is one in itself, but that it acquires as many expressions as forms of exploitation, oppression and domination applied by capital.

Therefore, the basic elements of the anti-imperialist struggle are those that attack at the root what is the essential unavoidable nature of imperialism, which regardless of its many external forms in which it presents itself always reappears in the background of the clash to the death between capitalism and socialism: the superexploitation of the working nations and, especially, of their women as a special trophy and multiple labor force; their national oppression in all aspects; the plunder of their resources; the unequal exchange; the imposition of unpayable interest on the debt of their bourgeoisies; the blatant or covert military occupation; the cultural war and intellectual plunder, the subtle or gross restrictions of diplomatic sovereignty; the legal impunity of imperialist companies in the dominated country, the submission of judges, and a long etc.

As can be seen, we have cited various imperialist practices, the extent and intensity of which must be analyzed in each case, which goes beyond the scope of this text. However, this small list with quite a lack of detail does serve to give us an idea of the great number of oppressions, dominations and exploitations, more and more complex and interactive, which we must confront with clear objectives that never silence or hide the deadly antagonism, the irreconcilability between socialism/communism and imperialism/capitalism.

The pedagogical theoretical, political and ethical explanation of that antagonism has to be made also in those struggles for partial, tactical, punctual, so-called “minor” demands, which can even

be conquered by methods of legal pressure, with peaceful mobilizations, using the increasingly weakened bourgeois democracy, etc. But in these cases, more and more rare, it must always be clear that the small conquest achieved has been thanks to mass action, to the threat of passing to harsher methods, to the political independence of the proletariat and never to its folding to passive litanies and reformist invocations. It must be clear that if the defense of what has been conquered declines, if it is not extended to more demands, sooner rather than later the bourgeoisie will counterattack until it destroys them. For this reason, the smallest victory must be a springboard for greater victories.

The irreconcilability between imperialist oppression and national class liberation shows that any small victory is only part of an all-encompassing social war, in which the stagnation of the working people is a sign of weakness and doubt that imperialism immediately takes advantage of to harden and extend its counter-offensive. In this give and take with permanent ups and downs, it is decisive that the proletariat turns to the creation of counter-powers that multiply its strength, that allow it to organize better, that expand networks and class structures and independence as far as possible under national oppression.

We all know what counter-powers are: they are the gaztetxes — the self-organized social centers [in the Basque country] — the headquarters of revolutionary parties and organizations; the premises of free and critical press media; the more or less stable movements created by the working people to build a way of life, of praxis, contrary in everything to the oppressor, such as the struggle against narco-capitalism, fascism, police infiltrations, patriarchal terrorism, the destruction of the urban environment and with it the destruction of educational systems, health, transportation, quality social housing, the invasion of hypermarkets and the destruction of the popular social fabric, the organization of non-commercialized popular festivals, and a long etcetera. Recovering, building, coordinating, extending and defending these counter-powers is vital, as is providing them with strategic unity towards the objectives of class independence, socialism and communism.

And an indispensable and always permanent objective is to unite proletarian internationalism with socialist independence in the fight to the death against capital and its imperialist atrocities. The ways of doing so are multiple because there are multiple threads connecting the resistances against imperialism. It is essential that the militancy [organized political activists] knows the Marxist theory of imperialism and that of the crisis of capital, which go together as we have seen. From here it is very easy to show that an advance in socialist independence is a retreat of imperialism. Cuba is an example, but also many other peoples who now join in one way or another the growing opposition to imperialism.

Knowing the tendential laws and contradictions of capitalism, we know what function the imperialist war has against the peoples. From here to demonstrate that a strike in a company that Zionism is linked to, or a boycott of transport companies that carry arms to NATO, or the mass opposition against military spending, or the radical rejection of the culture that legitimizes imperialism in any of its forms, or the collection of money and other goods to help peoples under attack, or the creation of networks for the reception of threatened refugees, or the permanent

denunciation of the imperialist servility of the autochthonous [local] bourgeoisie and its docile parties, all this and much more, are practical and understandable demonstrations of the union between the struggle for socialist independence and the anti-imperialist struggle. Galiza, Euskal Herria, July 12, 2025

Translation: John Catalinotto, August 20, 2025

Spanish text: <https://boltxe.eus/2025/08/preguntas-sobre-el-antiimperialismo-entrevista-a-inaki-gil-de-san-vicente/>