

# Imperialist domination and the popular masses

Miami Autonomy & Solidarity

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In consolidating the Haitian dominant classes and their state apparatus, imperialism plays a direct and indirect role in maintaining the dictatorship of the dominant classes on the masses. Imperialism intervenes directly on class struggles in the Haitian social formation. Its principal form of intervention is the consolidation of repression and oppression on the popular masses. Imperialists use many structural apparatus to directly partition and control the popular masses. They use religious apparatus under the control of, mostly, the US embassy. In popular zones, they use all kinds of NGOs, political gangs, drug gangs, smuggling gangs and paramilitary forces to control the popular masses. The leaders of FRAHP were on CIA payroll, and Aristide appointed one of these leaders as Mayor of Cité Soleil, a major slum in Port-au-Prince.

Under Duvalier, the leaders of the second Haitian Communist Party [PCH], were CIA agents or in contact with the CIA. The PCH was calling for the unity of the “middle class” with the Duvalier regime against the comprador bourgeoisie. Any members disavowing that line were either assassinated or exiled.

French and US imperialists tried to control the popular masses politically and ideologically. In the mid 60's, in particular 1965, in the general strike by university students, the moments of heightened anti-communist repression, Francois Duvalier dropped all nationalist positions by promoting rock and roll as an alternative to cultural alternatives offered by communist and progressives at the time. Radio stations such as Radio Haiti and Radio Metropole played a very important role in introducing imperialist culture and cultural agents of imperialism such as Elvis Presley of the US and Johnny Holliday of France while simultaneously ignoring the repression and keeping total silence and downplaying the alternatives offered by the popular movements.

Imperialists worked ardently in the countryside to control the masses. Catholic churches, protestant churches were and are popping up like wild mushrooms and at the same time introducing a brutal form of capitalist penetration, thru so-called non-profit ventures. These cooperatives, now called NGO's, transform the peasants as workers, use the land of the peasant as part of a totally deformed capitalist productive force, introducing a capitalist mode of production in parallel to the existing feudal mode of production, in the same process and in the same units of production. The peasants, under the disguise of cooperatives donate part of their land to build roads and schools while bypassing the State Apparatus and masking the failure of the State. The

peasants become workers producing honey, peanut butter, arts and crafts, but they have no or only minimal control on the distribution process. The director of the NGO gets his initial capital investment thru grants, and continues to get grants and at the same time control the process of distribution. The comprador bourgeoisie is enlarged in that process.

A new, very parasitic, dependent and totally domesticated breed of capitalist elements emerges in that process. Although there are nuances in industrial production, the result is equal to producing a totally domesticated breed of capitalism and a totally dependent form of capital accumulation directly connected to grants outside the State Apparatus but not in the same form and manner as the bureaucratic bourgeoisie. A study of that new breed of capitalism, due to imperialist domination, is still at a level of empirical analysis; more study is needed to achieve a better rational understanding. Yet, it's important to mention these considerations at this moment, even if we are not able to draw many conclusions.

It is important to point out, that since 1990, with the ascension of Aristide as head of state, it is this breed of capitalism that has dominated the political scene. They headed most of the governments with some minor exceptions. They are very present in other state institutions such as in Parliament and in cabinet offices. This breed of capitalism propagated by NGOs is also present, in its own format and type, in the non-productive sector, and is also very dependent on foreign donations. Partners in Health, once directed by Paul Farmer, now UN special envoy, has 4,000 employees.

These institutions are one of the largest private employers in Haiti. Again, besides giving employment, even if they are paid a decent wage, and even if they do provide much needed help, this form of presence is totally detrimental to the Haitian economy. The country's dependency is reinforced and this dependency is being reproduced everyday. The drugs are not being produced in Haiti, materials, such as cotton swabs, alcohol and others for basic healthcare are not being produced in Haiti. Not only is the dependency produced and created everyday, this type of presence also offsets the responsibilities of the State apparatus and the dominant classes. It also consolidates the policies of structural adjustment, mainly privatization. Healthcare is being objectively privatized. The alleviation of State responsibilities increases constantly therefore facilitating privatization. In fact, it creates the need for more NGOs to pursue this objective of serving as crutches for the State apparatus. Paradoxically, the capital for these endeavors comes not only from public funding but also, and sometimes principally, from private funding by people of good intentions wanting to show solidarity with the popular masses. So imperialism takes on a humanitarian cover with other people's money to mask its policies of destruction.

In general, Churches are mostly American protestant sects that receive help from American imperialism and that are politically and ideologically surrounding the masses. They are spreading the belief that communism is the devil. Andrew Young, in his visit to Haiti in the Carter administration, saw the important role of these churches in popular neighborhoods.

Imperialist practices have had other negative effects on the masses. Many people are saying, even in the masses, that imperialism is bringing jobs, that they are helping poor people. Even so-called progressives, in their defense of the Lavalas regime, are repeating like parrots that imperialism is creating jobs. The same ideas are being circulated among the ultra-reactionary pro-imperialist opposition. They are the opposition simply because they are the ones domestically serving imperialism. It is an objective fact that more factories, in some cases, are opening their doors. We have already argued that these factories have nothing to do with Haiti's real development. Even a blind person would be able to see that. Now we need to look at their effect

on the masses.

This new employment is enlarging the working class. This enlargement should not be overestimated nor underestimated. This is a very limited enlargement. The new added labor force, although positive, is very unstable. In many cases, the span of employment is very short. This type of unstable enrollment is allowing imperialism to super-exploit workers. Most of these factories are run as sweatshops. It's a quick way to make a quick buck, since the State apparatus through high-interest loans or aid provides most of the initial investment. This results in keeping a high level of unemployment.

The Haitian working class is super-exploited. Workers sell their labor force way under the cost required to reproduce it, as many studies have shown. Based on many studies by state agencies, in 2010, Haitian workers need about \$20 a day to provide for a family of four. That is way, way below the \$3 a day they are now getting in the assembly sector. **For our peddlers of false hope, imperialism doesn't bring work. It brings exploitation and misery.**

In many cases, finding work doesn't translate to money in your pocket. One of the super-exploitative practices of imperialism is to create a period of unpaid training. This period can last up to 6 months and after these 6 months these workers can be quickly let go to be replaced by another crew of free labor. Now for this free labor to go to work they have to spend money. These workers are now indebted. **In these repetitive instances, imperialism doesn't bring work. All it does is bring misery.**

Imperialism also brings techniques of high intensity exploitation. These techniques are called quotas and modules. These quotas are designed for workers to produce a certain amount of goods in exchange for a salary. These quotas are inhumane and most of the times impossible to meet in an 8 hour shift. Even after a decree passed by the Aristide government to guarantee the daily minimum wage, the bourgeoisie and imperialism openly violated this decree by posting on poster boards in their factory entrance 'WHAT YOU DO IS WHAT YOU GET'. No bourgeois elements have ever been penalized for violating this law, even after many unanswered written complaints by combative worker organizations to the Haitian labor institutions, denouncing this practice as well as their refusal to pay new adjustments to the minimum wage.

Many potential workers, dispossessed peasants, poor peasants, agricultural workers leave the countryside to find jobs in these new factories, in Port au Prince, and are left with their arms hanging. They will either enlarge the ranks of potential workers, the permanent unemployed or enlarge the most disfavored sector of the petit bourgeoisie.

Again, in the countryside, when a peasant is being expropriated, it is usually in favor of imperialist multi-nationals. These two factors, pauperization and displacement, have affected mostly the poor peasant fraction of the peasantry. Many poor peasants transfer to the sub-proletariat [permanently unemployed, poor street peddlers and daily laborers] and go on living a sub-human lifestyle in the slums of Port-au-Prince, Cap Haïtien, and Les Cayes.

Imperialist domination played a big role in the migration of sectors of the popular masses. This migration is contributing to the degradation of the living standard of the masses, but it is coupled with imperialist propaganda that their own social formation is paradise, that money grows on trees. It is important to point out that imperialist propaganda is determined by historically determined contradictions in various conjunctures facing imperialism. During the Vietnam War, the US Border was open for young Haitian men, potential recruits for their anti-national anti-popular imperialist army, and for women as potential recruits as workers in the garment industry.

External migration played another role for imperialism and the dominant classes. External migration appeased the antagonistic social contradictions inside the Haitian social formation. For example, it rendered certain class social contradictions less acute. The explosive social contradictions became less intense while at the same time it created a totally mythical alternative for the masses, the possibility of a better life in another social formation. The migration process, whether by boat, as tourists with the intent to stay, and applying for “legal” documentation, is not in the interest of the masses even if it temporally ameliorates the condition of a few. The migration process, in the final analysis, is in the interest of the dominant classes and imperialism because it creates a false sentiment, a fictitious hope for a better life so why struggle? Why resist? Additionally, it releases tensions in the powdered keg of class conflicts. The migration process also functions in a contradictory reality; it also creates explosive contradictions in the receiving imperialist countries especially in the period of crises that the imperialist system is currently undergoing.

Immigrants, in vast majority, face mostly exploitation and humiliation in the new social formation. It is the responsibility of the proletarian revolutionary movement to organize immigrants that are integrating the masses, so these immigrants can become integral parts of the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggle in their new social formation.

In fact, whether in Haiti, whether in the new social formation, it is the same bourgeoisie that is exploiting the masses, it is the same international bourgeoisie in unison with the Haitian dominant classes that are exploiting them. The proletarian revolutionary movement needs to develop a political line that encompasses these two aspects: struggles in the dominated countries and struggles in the imperialist country, in order to coordinate and plan our struggle against the dominant classes and imperialism.

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