

**WHAT IS "CANADA"?** (*a concrete revolutionary communist analysis of Canadian society*)  
by PCR-RCP

### **Introduction**

Canada is a capitalist, settler-colonialist, and imperialist state. As such, Canada is a society that is divided into different social classes whose interests clash with one another. At the top, the bourgeoisie—the capitalists who own the means of production and appropriate, directly or indirectly, the surplus value they glean from the proletarian labour. Alongside these exploiters are their loyal agents who work to preserve this system. At the other end, there is the proletariat, the great majority, who can only survive by the sweat of their brow.

But since Canada is also a settler-colonial state that came into existence by colonizing Indigenous land and maintains internal colonies of the nations it massacred and displaced, its class structure is affected by this colonizer-colonized contradiction. White settler society in Canada experiences a level of development and socialization of its productive forces in a manner that is different than what is experienced by Indigenous communities living under colonial domination.

Finally, Canada is an imperialist state. Following the devastating course of systematic and organized theft of the lands of Indigenous peoples, and in tandem with its exploitation of the proletariat and the export of capital, Canada has become an important imperialist power in its own right. This too affects its class structure, leading to the existence and persistence of a *labour aristocracy*—a worker elite that sees its interests more-or-less aligned with the ruling classes, often willing to sell out the proletariat as a whole.

The class structure of Canada can thus be understood according to its existence as capitalist, settler-colonialist, and imperialist by the following vectors: i) the contradiction between the *proletariat* and the *bourgeoisie*; ii) the contradiction between the *colonized* and the *colonizer*; iii) the contradiction between the *hard core of the proletariat* and the *labour aristocracy*. The first two contradictions are antagonist; the third is sometimes antagonistic, sometimes non-antagonistic. The first contradiction defines capitalism in general, the second colonialism in general, and the third the way in which imperialist privilege produces a particular composition of the proletariat at the centres of capitalism that, in the case of Canada at least, might teach us something about the connection between the first and second contradictions.

## **Canada is Capitalist**

Capitalism is a system of exploitation and misery that cannot, due to its inherent logic, be humanized. Its over-arching class structure prevents humanization since one class is necessarily parasitical on the existence of another class that does all of the labour to produce the material basis for Canada's continued existence. The former class is the bourgeoisie; the latter is the proletariat. These two class positions are shot through with multiple contradictions due to the fact that Canada is also settler-colonialist and imperialist, as well as the fact that there are other sites of oppression (i.e. racism, sexism, heterosexism, etc.) that have either been inherited from this society's existence as settler-colonialist and imperialist, or have been retained from previous epochs. These sites of oppression affect the composition of the proletariat and bourgeoisie, but in the last instance we can make sense of Canada's exploitative and misery-generating existence due to the class contradiction (proletariat-bourgeoisie) that defines capitalism as a mode of production.

In Canada, 20% of the population lives in need on a permanent basis. Millions of people are left jobless or work in poor paying jobs, especially youth, women, immigrants and Indigenous peoples. The gap between the rich and the poor is continually increasing. In 1960, 20% of our richest citizens owned 30 times as much as the poorest 20%. In 1994, this ratio grew to 78.6 times as much. While the rich are always becoming wealthier, the poor are getting poorer. All of the wealth created in the past decade has been snatched up by 5% of the richest citizens so that, by 2014, the wealthiest 86 individuals control more wealth than the poorest 11.4 million people.

The capitalist factory is a prison where workers are exploited in order to make profit for their bosses. These workplaces cause mental illness and injuries. In the most exploitative work places, where we will find the hard core of the proletariat, workers do not have the right to express themselves; they must simply perform the tasks they are paid for. For capitalists, a harmed worker is nothing more than a broken piece of machinery. It is only a matter of replacing them through a mere increase in expenditure. The worker murdered by their job is nothing for a capitalist because they can be replaced by hundreds of thousands of unemployed.

The massive upheavals wrought by this system of misery explain the existence of an enormous "reserve army of labour." Such upheavals free entire populations and ready them for capitalist exploitation. Then there is a growth in firms that put to use an increasing amount of mechanized production, throwing more workers into the streets. It is not machinery, however, but

exploited human-power that allows capitalists to make profit. This means the rate of profit is on a steady decline as the development of technology follows its course. To counter this decline in profit, firms are forced to merge, which in turn creates more unemployment. As for the workers that avoid being laid off, they have to work harder to ensure profit. The hiring of new workers is stalled by this reality. In the meantime, other firms act in a similar manner to gain an edge on the competition.

The exploitation of workers has its physical limits: this is why new machinery is always being produced. Such a tactic allows capitalists to survive longer. For various firms, new investment becomes less and less profitable, often because they are incapable of selling their products on a clogged market. Bankruptcies ensue, more mergers and more unemployment. After an economic crisis, the stronger survive with enough capital to be able to reproduce the cycle that led them to this dead-end.

Moreover, the problem of environment management is tied to the prevailing capitalist order; every environmental disaster is provoked by economic interests related to profit-making. Despite claims of bourgeois environmentalists who say that environmental issues reach beyond class interests, that they are a “common cause” that we all share on an even basis and that all modes of production are equally destructive and polluting, we argue that the problem of environmental sustainability revolves solely around the capitalist mode of production. That capitalism destroys human life and the environment should not be surprising: its feverish quest for profit has no limits and does not shy away from destroying the ecosystem. Thousands of acres of forest are destroyed, rivers set off course, oceans polluted so that natural resources can be dredged up from their beds in order to generate more profit.

### **Canada is Settler-Colonialist**

Canada, like other states founded through European colonialism, was built on the violence, exploitation, and oppression of Indigenous nations. Before the arrival of the white settler in Canada, millions of people lived on these lands. The arrival of the French and the English, who brought war and disease, took its toll on the First Nation populations, genociding the vast majority. In some cases, 80%, 90%, and even 95% of Indigenous communities perished, their societies and ability to reproduce these societies almost completely obliterated.

The result is that now the original inhabitants of these lands have been forced into a precarious existence: their living conditions are determined by poverty and misery; their life

expectancy is eight years lower than that of the average Canadian; twice as many of their children die, as compared to the rest of the Canadian population; their youth are seven times more likely to commit suicide. In most regions, their level of unemployment is three, even four times higher than the Canadian average. The living conditions on the reserves are harsh, and the Canadian government has demonstrated that it is unwilling to solve this problem. The development of Indigenous struggles and their radicalization, as well as the constitutional stalemate and the dead-end in negotiations around their territorial rights have reached an explosive point.

Returning to the problem of capitalist-generated environmental devastation, in settler-colonialist countries such as Canada it is primarily the Indigenous peoples' territories that are plundered for natural resources: the Canadian state promotes oil extraction sites, uranium mines, hydro-electric dams, installations that often pollute Indigenous hunting and fishing grounds. After having prevented them from developing their own territory, and having destroyed their environment, Canadian colonial-capital offers these nations no other solution other than being crammed into reserves and reduced to even more misery.

All of this affects the class structure, and thus the class struggle, of Canada. In the case of white settler nations, because productive forces are socialized (though appropriation remains private), the class struggle is between the proletariat and the whole bourgeoisie. When productive forces are not yet socialized, class alliances are not the same. Because of the Indian Act and the (forced) economic dependence on the Canadian state, large Indigenous proletarian strata exist but they are all participating in economic activity.

The reserve system maintained by the Indian Act resulted in the creation of a bureaucratic bourgeoisie that derives its power not from the internal economic activity of Indigenous nations but rather from transfer payments that are made by the federal government. This bureaucratic bourgeoisie is made up of band chiefs, cadres and functionaries of administrative apparatuses on reserves and some business-people who trade essentially with band councils and/or the Canadian state. While it might be the case that in some communities, where small and local capital is stronger, there could be some emancipation from the federal government, it is also the case that local political authorities tend to dominate their communities.

This bureaucratic bourgeoisie is by-and-large a *comprador class* in that it adopts a pro-colonialist and pro-imperialist position. The Assembly of First Nations is a lobby group that puts pressure on the Canadian state; it does not seek to build new economic and political Indigenous institutions, let alone a revolutionary path towards the complete liberation of Indigenous peoples.

Among the Indigenous bureaucratic bourgeoisie, however, there are some elements that are not comprador. These elements could even support struggles that are essentially revolutionary, like what happened in 1990 when the band council of Kahnawake rallied itself to the armed resistance led by the Warriors. This being said, in the case of the Mohawk nation, it is important to recognize that these elements are already part of an alliance composed of six Iroquois nations, thus participating in some power structures (*Haudenosaunee*) that go well beyond and against structures imposed by the Canadian state, which is already a break with the conservatism described above.

In any case, it is clear that Canada is invested in remaining settler-colonialist, and thus its capitalism is also a colonial-capitalism. To cease being a settler-colonialist state Canada would either have to continue its crimes against humanity by annihilating its colonized populations altogether, or surrender all of the lands and natural resources upon which the remaining Indigenous nations reside. The former option, a heinous final solution that was possible in the early days of colonialism, would offend the majority of Canadian citizens due to a liberal ideology of “humanitarianism” promoted by the 20<sup>th</sup> Century event of the Nazi Holocaust where Europeans turned their genocidal practice upon other Europeans. This does not mean that Canadian colonial-capitalism would not dare to complete the genocide it began in the early days of settlement, only that it is forced to do so in a creeping and slow manner: poisoning water supplies, forcing integration, destroying Indigenous institutions, and everything that the radical elements of Indigenous communities are heroically reducing. The latter option, to surrender the lands and national resources to the colonies by finally agreeing to recognize the Indigenous peoples’ right to full and unqualified national self-determination, is also blocked by colonial-capitalist logic since it would mean that Canada would cease being Canada, losing large portions of the natural resources upon which its ruling class is dependent.

This is why we argue that national self-determination is an unqualified right for Indigenous nations. Other communists still make the mistake of thinking that only Quebec possesses this right, in some cases trying to figure a way to negotiate Indigenous rights with the “more important” right of Quebecois secession, but they are trapped in an outdated analysis of Canada that is divorced from the current and concrete facts of the Canadian settler-colonialist state. Quebec is now fully integrated in the Canadian state, even if language chauvinism persists here and there, and possesses its own bourgeoisie which is aligned with the anglo-bourgeoisie as well as a proletariat that has no interest in Quebecois secession. All of the recent failures of the

Parti Quebecois, demonstrated in its cultural chauvinism, proves that Quebec is currently not an oppressed nation but, at best, a losing colonizer.

### **Canada is Imperialist**

We are in the era of imperialism, the latest stage of decaying capitalism, where capitalism has reached the limits of its development and can no longer foster the development of human productive forces. The longer it continues to exist, the more it wreaks worldwide havoc: destruction of the environment and human life through wars, unemployment, intensification of exploitation, famine.

In the imperialist era some states emerge as *central* while others, dominated by the central states, are forced into a *peripheral* status. The most powerful capitalist states that are capable of exporting their capital to the peripheries--placing these other nations into subject positions similar to settler-colonies, and thus locating resources and surplus value in these regions--are the imperialist powers. Canada is one of these powers, even if some might pretend that it is not (because, for example, its military power does not appear as spectacular as that of the US), and is able to reproduce the power of its ruling classes through imperialist domination and exploitation.

There is a core of big imperialist Canadian bourgeoisie who control large portions of finance capital, the type of capital that defines imperialist strength. Canadian finance capital is one of the most concentrated in the world: the five biggest Canadian charter banks control 80% of the market; moreover, barely 1% of all Canadian companies (which total less than a thousand) control more than 80% of the country's assets. In 1992, 42 groups out of the 988 biggest Canadian corporations were controlling two thirds of all Canadian direct investments abroad. Seven years later, these investments added up to 240 billion dollars and have continued to grow. In the last quarter century, the Canadian monopolist bourgeoisie made considerable gains. The assets of big Canadian corporations abroad (i.e. Scotiabank, Barrick Gold, etc.) surpass domestic assets. In light of this reality, to imagine that Canada is not an imperialist state is absurd.

As below, so above, an vice versa: settler-colonialism on the ground, neo-colonialism abroad; neo-colonialism abroad reinforcing settler-colonialism on the ground--an oppressor nation at home will, if it possesses the means, be an oppressor nation abroad. Just as the persistence of settler-colonialism affects the class structure of Canada, so does its position in the imperialist world system. On the level of the imperialist world system, then, there is a global

contradiction between imperialism and the oppressed masses. This global contradiction is echoed by an internal contradiction within the Canadian working class itself.

Part of the super-profits derived from imperialist exploitation are used to buy-off large sections of the Canadian working-class—permitting social democracy, legal union bodies, and a comfortable lifestyle—thus producing a *labour aristocracy* that has a conscious reason to align itself with the continued existence of the Canadian state. Even though the situation of these workers is insecure (being linked as they are to the highly competitive and shifting character of imperialism), they can eventually join the revolutionary camp—but for now they have a definite interest in defending the capitalist system and it would be a mistake to see them as *the hard core of the proletariat*.

### **Organize the Proletarian Hard Core**

As revolutionary communists we seek to organize the hard core of the proletariat. What is this hard core? That strata of the proletariat that have nothing to lose but their chains: the poor and exploited workers without union protection at the very bottom of the social ladder; the workers excluded from the labour market, who form the industrial reserve army; the new strata of proletarians that come from recent immigration; women who continue to massively integrate the labour market, overexploited through sexism and discrimination; the youth who are, more than in any other generation, confronted with precarious and underpaid work; the Indigenous workers for whom unemployment is the rule and who are subjected to the worst forms of discrimination. The big trade unions rarely look out for this strata. For the most part, the worker elite defends the privileges of the upper sections of the proletariat and the salaried petty-bourgeoisie; they do not represent the interests of the lower and most exploited strata of the proletariat. We, as communists, must devote our attention to these exploited workers. We must target our agitation and our propaganda towards them. They are the ones that, once in motion and unified, will be able to make the revolution we desire: they will be the most determined and militant.

We refer to this *hard core* because we are aware that other social strata will and must join the struggle if and when it extends its revolutionary circumference. But we must first and foremost organize and reinforce this hard core who will, first and foremost, take the lead in revolutionary struggle. Otherwise, the more privileged social classes or strata will undermine any class alliance for their own benefit, becoming the grave-diggers of revolution rather than capitalism.

Here again we find a revolutionary class that is shot through with the multiple contradictions of Canada's specific form of colonialist/imperialist capitalism, as well the older structures of oppression it has inherited from the past. The hard core of the proletariat is not primarily defined by a predominantly white and male population of workers who dominate the official unions, the stereotypical "proletariat" of the 1950s, but is also a racialized and feminized population. This hard core must unite in a revolutionary *party of the new type*--theoretically and practically mobilized according to Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, the revolutionary communist ideology that has allowed us to even concretely assess the concrete situation of Canada--if its conscious rejection of the system is to be articulated in a revolutionary rather than simply rebellious manner. The party of the new type is a *comprehensive fighting party*, meaning a party that is not simply agitational or academic, but one that seeks to incorporate all forms of activity into a single structure: a party that is militant, agitational, propagandizing, etc. Only such a party can gather in the disparate elements of the revolutionary masses.

*It is right to rebel*, as Mao reminds us, *But better to make revolution*. Disconnected by either different experiences of oppression or different locations amongst society, all rebellions that are not part of a broader revolutionary unity will result be suppressed or co-opted by the organized might of the Canadian state and its institutions of repression (the police and military). To wave the red flag is not simply to see who falls under it, but to locate the most revolutionary forces in Canadian society and, by serving their interests and learning from them, accumulating them into the party of the new type that we must seek to become.

Moreover, finding itself not just in relationship to Canadian capitalism but to Canadian settler-colonialism as well, even an organized hard core of the proletariat must connect with the revolutionary struggles of Indigenous nations for self-determination. To refuse to become an unqualified ally of the most revolutionary elements of these anti-colonial struggles--or to even declare that it shall be in charge of leading these national struggles in the manner of a colonial saviour--a communist movement will surely become chauvinist and fail to even approach socialism. It is obvious that the Indigenous proletariat, active and inactive, has an interest in the development of Indigenous social productive forces, but it must be said that other classes and social strata amongst Indigenous nations possess the same interest. These strata are not aspiring to socialism as a transition towards a communist society but they would like the constitution of a modern society with an endogenous political, economic, and social development. They aspire to

put a final end to the colonial relation and feudal laws, as well as developing Indigenous culture and identity. Those strata could be part, at least for the moment, of the revolutionary camp.

Unity between the national democratic revolution of Indigenous peoples and the revolution of the hard core of the proletariat permits us to imagine that the power of the imperialist Canadian bourgeois may be destroyed and replaced by a genuinely *red power*.

### **Strategy and Protracted People's War**

When we say that *protracted people's war* [PPW] is the only strategy of making revolution we are not arguing that the particular form it took in China, for example, is its universal aspect. That is, to dispense immediately with the asinine “arguments” made by others who have not bothered to really think through the problem of revolutionary strategy, we do not believe that Canada possesses a “peasantry” that must be organized in the “countryside” so as to “surround the cities.” As noted at the outset of this document, we did not define Canada’s class structure according to a peasantry that does not exist. Rather, our understanding of the application of PPW to the Canadian context is based on the very class structure we articulated, particularly the existence of a proletarian hard core and the contradictions of colonial-capitalism.

We can best understand the viability of PPW by examining the deficiencies of the theory of insurrection, accepted as a doctrine of faith (if any strategy is accepted all) by those who imagine that PPW is some form of hair-brained adventurism. Insurrectionism holds, basing its pattern on the October Revolution in Russia, that revolutionaries must engage in legal agitation, spreading themselves into the most organized proletarian structures (i.e. the unions) so as, when the time is right, to launch a general strike that will cause society to ground to a halt. If these revolutionaries have done their job, then an insurrection will result where the masses will arm themselves for a direct confrontation with the state. Faced with this uprising, now commanded by the most organized revolutionary elements (i.e. the Leninist vanguard party), the police and military ranks will be split, with many going over to the proletarian side, and a civil war led by the party that helped initiate the uprising can be carried through to the creation of socialism.

A number of problems are immediately encountered by this strategic theory: 1) the assumption that the police and the military will be split, something that only happened in the October Revolution but has never been repeated; 2) the assumption that an insurrection composed of untrained revolutionaries will not be slaughtered by state forces trained in putting down rebellions, as we have seen every time an insurrection has happened since 1917; 3) the

assumption that the proletariat can be organized so easily in a frontal assault on the state; 4) the fact that this strategy is doing the proverbial “putting all of its eggs in one basket.”

Canada’s class composition, however, tells us that PPW is more viable than insurrection because the proletariat is not primarily located in those structures that can easily be directed, through a protracted period of legal agitation, to create an insurrection. Scattered throughout society as a whole, the revolutionary forces of the Canadian state--i.e. the hard core of the proletariat and Indigenous militants (who are also sometimes part of the hard core)--are not so easily found amongst those structures that could easily be pushed towards the confrontation of insurrection. The already-organized workers in unions and other legal labour organizations are, as aforementioned, determined by a consciousness that is more reformist than revolutionary; the labour aristocracy will not be convinced of the necessity of an insurrection without some larger understanding of strategy that may, perhaps, even take moments of insurrection as part of a larger chain of revolutionary warfare.

To unite the proletarian hard core, and to unite this hard core with anti-colonial struggles, a protracted and fragmented process is required, a strategy that spreads its tendrils throughout every part of society and uses everything in order to combat the might of the Canadian state. If there is only a one in one hundred chance that, after a general strike, the state will wait until the proletariat arms itself and begins a civil war, then we should not neglect the other ninety-nine ways in which to make revolution.

What are the general aspects of PPW that can be applied everywhere, even to Canada? First, *the accumulation of revolutionary forces*: going further and deeper into the masses so as to unite, through mass work and the mass-line, the proletarian hard core into a comprehensive party; developing a revolutionary counter-hegemony, nascent institutions that will be useful later. Second, *strategic defensive*: when a guerrilla battle can be launched, when the counter-hegemony established by the first stage has reached a point that will provide base areas and the ability to continue to glean more revolutionary forces by linking the military aspect of the theory with the demands of the masses as a whole, a slow construction of counter-institutions (some that may be destroyed, others that may last) that prefigure a new revolutionary order. Third, *strategic equilibrium*: the moment of dual power where the revolutionary forces are equal to the counter-revolutionary forces and where some insurrections might even be useful--the protracted process of the previous two stages, the revolutionary hegemony that is being established through multiple counter-institutions, will have succeeded in re-proletarianizing many unions. Fourth, *strategic*

*offensive*: the moment where the revolutionary forces have established enough hegemony, and have grown to such a size, that the state is pushed on the defensive.

One critique of PPW is that it relies on the building of counter-institutions (i.e. guerrilla zones, red bases) that not only enable the revolutionaries to hide amongst the masses but are, most importantly, those areas where a revolutionary counter-order is first demonstrated. But this is yet another complaint that is based on an understanding that such red bases should be built in a peasant hinterland that doesn't exist in Canada. What are the red bases that can exist, demonstrated by history, in contexts that are not "semi-feudal, semi-colonial"? We have witnessed them already in multiple partisan wars that happened in advanced capitalist states, in the cities themselves: the resistance within large cities in Italy and France during WW2, the fact of the "no-go zones" in Belfast during the troubles.

Histories of other PPWs demonstrate that there are times when the revolutionary forces are pushed back into previous stages; it is a "jigsaw" method of warfare, as Mao claimed, rather than a frontal and simple line of flight between agitation and civil war. We cannot suppose that once a revolutionary situation appears the masses will spontaneously follow the leadership of a communist party that is only a party because of agitation and propaganda work. By acting in such a way, and failing to develop a strategy based on a comprehensive fighting party, we will put any and every proletarian rebellion at risk.

## Conclusion

Canada cannot survive as Canada in a possible world of socialist production; this is why it fights to survive and strengthen itself. Canada will never give revolution an opportunity; the masses must snatch it from the hands of the enemy.

Instead of looking deeply into the facts and discovering what it would take to incite the revolutionary action of the proletariat in order to conquer political power today, many routine-minded communists have become trapped by a particular concept of *the revolutionary situation* that, by itself, is imprecise and vague. Particularly since it emerges from an equally vague analysis of Canada that cannot explain its concrete nature and vectors of class struggle where we are exhorted to wait until “the time is right”, a time that may never come since it is always pushed into the future.

Lenin used the notion of *the revolutionary situation* many times, but did not do so in the way in which it is often employed. Indeed, in *The Collapse of the Second International* Lenin wrote: “it is not every revolutionary situation that gives rise to a revolution; revolution arises only out of a situation in which the the above-mentioned objective changes are accompanied by a subjective change, namely, the ability of the revolutionary class to take revolutionary mass action strong enough to break (or dislocate) the old government, which never, not even in a period of crisis, ‘falls,’ if it is not toppled over.”

In Canada today, if we want to fight for socialism in conditions which are ours, we cannot wait until a vague revolutionary situation emerges. Rather, Lenin’s understanding of the revolutionary situation should force us to ask *how do we make sure that, once a revolutionary situation is upon us, we will have the capacity to lead mass actions which will bring the government down?* The key word, here, is **capacity**—we might even say **all capacities**. Both scientific and ideological capacities, and the capacities of propaganda. The capacity to mobilize millions of people. The capacity for protecting, defending and organizing the proletarian masses throughout a long period of maturation and growth of class struggle. The capacity to wage underground and illegal actions that can weaken the bourgeois apparatuses. The capacity of facing the bourgeoisie on the military front, using the appropriate means. It is fundamental to possess all of these capacities (and so much more) during revolutionary situations; they will not just create themselves when such a situation appears.

These capacities can only be developed in a comprehensive fighting party that, basing itself on this concrete analysis of a concrete situation, is capable of deploying the struggle for

socialism to every corner of the country so as to end Canada as Canada. This vast deployment is fundamental. It should wait no more; it has already been delayed for far too long.

*Most of the above document was condensed from the following sources:*

- 1) PCR-RCP Party Programme (<http://www.pcr-rcp.ca/en/archives/category/programme>)
- 2) Can Red Power Exist In Canada (<http://www.pcr-rcp.ca/en/archives/1282>)
- 3) Protracted People's War is the Only Way to Make Revolution (<http://www.pcr-rcp.ca/en/archives/1123>)
- 4) More on the Question of Waging Revolutionary War in The Imperialist Countries (<http://www.pcr-rcp.ca/en/archives/1164>)
- 5) The Canadian Proletariat and the World Situation: How We Intend to Fight (<http://www.pcr-rcp.ca/en/archives/1165>)
- 6) It is Right to Rebel: Maoist manual for serving the struggles of the masses (<http://www.pcr-rcp.ca/en/archives/1304>)