The Future – We Build It Now

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By **Kwesi Pratt Jnr**

The Marxist law of motion leaves no doubt that the future is already under construction. The only question is: who is building it, and in whose interest?

To confront this question, we must speak honestly. The future is not a mystery waiting to be revealed. It is not a prophecy. It is not a dream floating above society. The future is produced by struggle. It is shaped by power. It is built by social forces acting in the present. Every policy adopted today, every resource extracted today, every wage denied today, every school underfunded today, every river poisoned today, every public asset privatised today, every worker silenced today, is already preparing a particular future.

If we leave the future to monopoly capital, imperialism, war, ecological destruction and inequality, then the future will be one of deeper misery for the majority. But if working people organise, if youth organise, if women organise, if farmers organise, if students organise, if trade unions organise, if communities organise, then the future can become one of dignity, justice, sovereignty, equality and socialism.

That is why our theme, 'The Future – We Build It Now' is not merely a slogan. It is a profound call not only to action, but to responsibility.

The Future is Produced by Struggle

Marxism teaches us that society is always in motion. No social system is permanent. No ruling class rules forever. No form of exploitation is eternal. Human society develops through contradictions, conflicts and struggles. The Marxist law of motion helps us to understand that the future grows out of the contradictions of the present.

Under capitalism, workers produce wealth, but capital appropriates it. Farmers grow food, yet remain trapped by markets they do not control, too often going hungry or undernourished. Miners extract gold, but live in poverty. Teachers educate children, yet struggle to secure decent futures for their own. Nurses protect life, but work under relentless pressure. Young graduates are told to be innovative, yet find no decent work. Women carry unpaid labour in the home and underpaid labour in the market, factory, office and farm – both invisible to the accountants of capital. Society produces more than enough to meet human needs, yet millions remain hungry, homeless, unemployed and insecure.

This is not because humanity lacks resources. It is not because the world lacks knowledge. It is because

production is organised for profit and not for human need.

A hungry worker does not experience freedom as a flag. A jobless graduate does not experience sovereignty as a national anthem. A farmer cheated by the market does not experience independence as a parade. For working people, freedom must mean bread, land, shelter, dignity, power and control over the conditions of life.

The future, therefore, is not determined by wishful thinking. It is determined by struggle: the struggle between labour and capital, between imperialism and national liberation, between private profit and public need, between ecological destruction and social survival, between the domination of the few and the power of the many.



Ablade Glover (Ghana), *Market*, 2020.

A World in Crisis

Look at the world today.

We are living through a deep crisis of the capitalist system. It is a crisis of livelihood, because workers everywhere face low wages, insecure employment, rising prices and attacks on social protection. It is a crisis of sovereignty, because many countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean are trapped by debt, unequal trade, foreign domination and the dictates of international finance. It is a crisis of survival, because war, militarisation, racism, migration crises, environmental destruction and climate change threaten the very conditions of human life.

The world has enough food, but hunger persists. The world has enough knowledge, but ignorance is reproduced. The world has enough medical science, but people die because healthcare is treated as a commodity. The world has enough technology to reduce human suffering, but technology is increasingly used to intensify exploitation, surveillance, monopoly control and war. The world has enough wealth to guarantee a dignified life for all, but that wealth is concentrated in the hands of a tiny minority.

This is the madness of capitalism.

Africa: Wealth Without Sovereignty

Africa knows this madness very well. Our continent is rich in gold, oil, gas, lithium, bauxite, manganese, cobalt, cocoa, timber, water, land, sunshine, wind, culture and human talent. Yet Africa remains poor in the global division of labour. We export raw materials and import finished goods. We produce wealth and import poverty. We are praised for our resources but punished when we demand control over them. We are told to open our markets while others protect theirs. We are told to privatise while powerful states protect their strategic industries. We are told to cut public spending while the same global system spends endlessly on weapons, wars and the rescue of banks.

In Ghana, this contradiction is visible everywhere. We have gold, yet mining communities are poor. We have rivers, yet many are poisoned. We have fertile land, yet food insecurity grows. We have oil, yet fuel prices burden workers. We have educated youth, yet unemployment and underemployment destroy hope. We have public institutions, yet public services are weakened. We have elections, yet the economy remains under the pressure of debt, creditors, conditionalities and the interests of local and foreign capital.

This is why class struggle must remain at the centre of our politics.

Class struggle is not an abstract phrase. It is the daily reality of the worker negotiating wages. It is the struggle of the farmer against exploitation. It is the struggle of the unemployed youth against exclusion. It is the struggle of the teacher for decent conditions. It is the struggle of the nurse for proper equipment and respect. It is the struggle of the informal worker for protection. It is the struggle of the pensioner for security. It is the struggle of communities against floods, poor roads, bad drainage, pollution and neglect.

The struggle for wages is not a narrow struggle. When workers demand living wages, they are demanding the

right to live with dignity. When workers defend trade union rights, they are defending democracy where wealth is produced. When workers demand safe working conditions, they are demanding the right to return home alive. The workplace is not outside politics. It is one of the most important sites of politics because it is where exploitation is organised and where wealth is created.

But the struggle cannot end with wages. We must fight for social services as rights. Education, healthcare, housing, transport, water, sanitation, electricity and social protection are not gifts from benevolent governments. They are not charity. They are rights won through struggle and sustained by public investment.

A child should not be denied quality education because their parents are poor. A patient should not die because healthcare is unaffordable. A worker should not spend a large part of daily income simply travelling from home to work. A family should not live in fear whenever the clouds gather because drains are choked, settlements are unplanned and public investment has failed. A society that abandons public services abandons its people.



Serge Attukwei Clottey (Ghana), *Appreciate and Value*, 2019.

Against All Forms of Oppression

We must also take seriously the struggles against racism, gender oppression, youth exclusion, ethnic manipulation, attacks on trade union rights and all forms of discrimination. These are not secondary struggles. Racism was central to slavery, colonialism and imperial domination. Women suffer exploitation both in production and in the unpaid labour that sustains families and society. Youth are praised as the future while being denied work, land, education, credit and meaningful participation. Trade unions are attacked because capital fears organised labour.

But these struggles must not be separated from class struggle or turned into weapons for dividing the people.

A socialist approach recognises specific forms of oppression while uniting all the oppressed around their common material interests. We reject any politics that turns workers against workers, men against women, citizens against migrants, ethnic groups against one another, formal workers against informal workers, or youth against elders. The enemy is not the poor person beside us. The enemy is the system that exploits us all in different ways.

The environmental struggle must also be central to the future we build. We cannot build a just future on poisoned rivers, destroyed forests, polluted air, degraded land and flooded communities. In Ghana, galamsey has shown us what happens when land and water are sacrificed for private greed, corruption and weak public control. Floods in our cities show us what happens when planning is subordinated to profit and neglect. Environmental destruction is not simply a technical problem. It is a class question. It is a question of ownership, control, accountability and the purpose of production.

Ecological justice requires democratic public control over natural resources. It requires planning. It requires science. It requires community participation. It requires that production be organised to protect life, not destroy it for profit.

Unity Without Confusion

This brings us to the question of unity.

No single struggle can win the future alone. Workers cannot fight alone. Farmers cannot fight alone. Students cannot fight alone. Women cannot fight alone. Trade unions cannot fight alone. Environmental movements cannot fight alone. Pan-African organisations cannot fight alone. Socialist forces cannot speak only to themselves and expect society to change.

The ruling class survives partly because it divides the people. It tells the unemployed youth that workers are privileged. It tells formal workers that informal workers are disorderly. It tells citizens that migrants are the problem. It tells men that women's liberation is a threat. It tells ethnic groups that their neighbours are enemies. It tells Africans that our problems are only national, when in fact they are also continental and global.

Against this, we must build broad fronts: broad fronts of workers, farmers, youth, women, students, intellectuals, trade unions, cooperatives, community organisations, environmental movements, anti-racist movements, Pan-African organisations and socialist forces.

But let us be clear. Unity does not mean confusion. A broad front must have political direction. It must be rooted in working-class leadership, ideological clarity, discipline and organisation. It must connect the immediate struggles of the people to the larger struggle for socialism. The fight for wages must be connected to the fight for public ownership. The fight for schools must be connected to the fight for national planning. The fight against galamsey must be connected to the fight for control over resources. The fight against debt must be connected to the fight against imperialism. The fight for African unity must be connected to the fight for control over Africa's wealth.

The question before us is not only whether Ghana needs roads, schools, hospitals, factories and jobs. Of course we need them. The deeper question is: who owns them, who controls them, who benefits from them,

and whose class interests do they serve?

That is why we need a programme for the reconstruction of society.



Carlos Idun-Tawiah (Ghana), *Greener Pastures*, 2023.

Towards a Socialist Programme

Capitalism cannot solve the problems it has created. It cannot abolish exploitation because exploitation is the source of profit. It cannot end inequality because inequality is built into private ownership of the means of production. It cannot protect the environment because nature is subordinated to accumulation. It cannot guarantee peace because imperialist competition produces war. It cannot give Africa full sovereignty because African dependency is profitable to the global capitalist system.

We must therefore struggle for a society in which the working class ultimately controls the means of production and distribution. This means democratic public ownership of strategic sectors. It means planned development. It means industrialisation based on national and continental needs. It means food sovereignty. It means decent work. It means universal education, accessible healthcare, public housing, reliable public transport, clean water, sanitation and electricity. It means workers' rights, cooperative production, scientific development, cultural renewal and Pan-African economic integration.

Socialism is not merely a slogan. It is the practical reorganisation of society around human need instead of

private profit. It is democracy extended into the economy, the workplace, the farm, the school, the hospital, the community and the state. It is the insistence that those who produce wealth must have power over how wealth is used.

Ghana, Nkrumah, and Pan-Africanism

In Ghana, this struggle has deep historical roots. The anti-colonial struggle was not simply a demand for political office. It was a demand for dignity, development and African emancipation. Osagyefo Dr Kwame Nkrumah understood that Ghana's independence would be meaningless unless linked to the total liberation of Africa. That warning remains urgent today.

Ghana cannot be truly free while Africa is divided, exploited, indebted and militarised. Ghana cannot be prosperous while Africa's resources are controlled from outside. Ghana cannot build a socialist future in isolation from the struggles of Africa and the Global South.

To build the future now, we must revive Pan-Africanism as a programme of action. We must fight for African control over African resources. We must build continental industries, transport networks, scientific institutions, media platforms, educational systems and mechanisms for defending sovereignty. We must stand with peoples resisting imperialism, occupation, racism, sanctions and exploitation. Solidarity is not charity. Solidarity is a weapon of liberation.



Olasunkanmi Oyelusi (Nigeria), *Kwame Nkrumah*, 2024.

The Future Belongs to Those Who Organise

Comrades, capital is building its future. Imperialism is building its future. The arms industry is building its future. The banks are building their future. The mining corporations are building their future. The technology monopolies are building their future. Political elites are building their future.

The question is: are working people building ours?

We cannot wait for history to save us. History does not move by wishes. It moves through organised forces. It moves when people study, organise, mobilise, sacrifice and struggle. It moves when workers discover their power. It moves when youth reject despair and embrace discipline. It moves when women's struggles become central to transformation. It moves when intellectuals place knowledge at the service of the people. It moves when trade unions rise beyond narrow economism and become schools of class consciousness. It moves when communities cease to be victims and become organised centres of resistance. It moves when we act in solidarity with the peoples of Cuba, Iran, Venezuela, and the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic in their confrontation with imperialism in all its forms.

The future will not be handed to us. It will not be donated by the powerful. It will not be delivered by imperialism, by capital, or by the charity of the ruling class. The future belongs to those who organise to build it. And for the working people of Ghana, Africa and the world, that work must begin now.

Warmly,

Kwesi

This text is adapted from the keynote address delivered by Kwesi Pratt Jnr at Tricontinental's webinar, 'The Future: We Build It Now', held on 4 July 2026. The webinar marked sixty years since the Tricontinental Conference and ten years of Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research.



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