

Communist Party Marxist - Kenya defends counter-revolutionary Maoist strategy against Trotskyism—Part 1

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This is the first of a four-part series.

Following Communist Party Marxist-Kenya (CPM-K) National Chairperson Mwaivu Kaluka's tirade against the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), "Trotsky's stock in trade: a counter revolutionary export unfit for the Kenyan market!!!", the party has issued its political programme, "Building the Vanguard Party in Kenya."

The two documents make clear the central axis of the CPM-K's politics: the defence of the counter-revolutionary Maoist-Stalinist strategy of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR). Littered with references to Stalin and Mao, the CPM-K insists that countries such as Kenya remain "semi-feudal", and therefore capitalism still has a historically progressive role to play within Africa's carved-up colonial borders and on the world arena. Socialist revolution is postponed for decades.

In Kenya, the working class is declared too small and too weak to take power independently; it must therefore subordinate itself to the peasantry, petty bourgeoisie and a supposedly "vacillating" national bourgeoisie. The aim of this bloc is to construct a capitalist "People's Democratic State" that will develop "national capital", supposedly in the interests of the masses. The central task of the working class, the documents insist, is to create the conditions for the national development of capitalism.

Bound up with this perspective is the CPM-K's promotion of capitalist China and the fraudulent assertion that a new "multipolar" world order is being created. China is the party's model of a sovereign "People's Democratic State"—a capitalist regime in which billionaires thrive and multiply, while brutal labour exploitation is administered by a bureaucratic police-state apparatus draped in the red flag of "socialism with Chinese characteristics."

The CPM-K presents Beijing as a counterweight to US and European imperialism and implies that Kenya could secure sovereignty by relying economically on China. Imperialism, they insist, will peacefully accept a "multipolar" world and stand by and accept the erosion of their domination over Africa's minerals, labour, ports, infrastructure and markets.

This is why the CPM-K is virulent in its denunciations of Trotskyism, represented by the ICFI. It is the only political tendency that rejects all nationalist-capitalist roads to liberation. Trotskyism insists that there is no possibility for a democratic and independent development of Kenyan capitalism in the imperialist epoch, in which the oppressed countries are subordinated to the dominant world powers and huge transnational corporations. This situation leaves the national bourgeoisie economically subordinate to imperialism and politically allied with it in suppressing any challenge to its rule and privileges from the working class.

On a world scale, capitalism has long ceased to play any progressive role, having plunged humanity into two world wars, countless colonial massacres, genocides and regional wars. Today, the imperialist powers are

again tobogganing toward a third world war.

The US and European powers in alliance with its proxy Israel are carrying out wars across the Middle East in Iran, Lebanon, Yemen and Palestine, while in Eastern Europe the imperialists are waging war against Russia in Ukraine. An even greater confrontation is being prepared against China, seen by the United States as a mortal threat to its global hegemony. At home, ruling classes everywhere are imposing austerity, slashing social spending, militarising society, expanding police-state powers and turning toward dictatorship.

However, this same crisis is provoking a growing eruption of class struggle worldwide: from strikes and mass protests in the imperialist centres to youth and worker uprisings across Africa, including Kenya's 2024 Gen Z protests, which brought millions into the streets against William Ruto's pro-IMF austerity programme.

In this struggle, the African working class is destined to play a decisive role in alliance with workers across the world. It is among the youngest, fastest-urbanising sections of the international working class, located on a continent whose labour, minerals and strategic resources are central to the imperialist world economy and its war machine. What is required is revolutionary leadership, fighting for a socialist and internationalist programme. That is the perspective advanced by the ICFI, and it is this perspective that the CPM-K opposes.

The CPM-K's counterrevolutionary National Democratic Revolution strategy for Kenya

In "Building the Vanguard Party in Kenya", the CPM-K presents the old Stalinist two-stage theory, insisting that Kenya must pass through two "dialectically linked stages". The first, it writes, "is the National Democratic Revolution [NDR]; to overthrow neo colonialism, feudalism, landlordism and bureaucrat capitalism". This is followed by a second socialist stage, in an unspecified though clearly distant future.

This perspective dictates the false designation of Kenya and other former colonial countries as "semi feudal". Each argument is directed against the struggle for socialism.

This is summarised in Kaluka's diatribe against the WSWs. "In Western Europe, capitalism had heralded a new society that had defeated feudalism", he states. However, in the colonies and semi-colonies, "Imperialism sustained semi-feudal relations, and the majority of the people remained engaged in petty-commodity production in agriculture, and handicraft was not transformed into modern industry. The national bourgeoisie that could arise here and in this epoch was spineless and

weak, and the rule of finance capital inhibited the development of national capital and a home market".^[1]

The claim that Kenya is "semi-feudal" rests first of all on a historical fiction. Feudalism has never existed as the dominant social structure within the territory of present-day Kenya. Unlike Buganda Kingdom in Uganda, or other regions of Africa where feudal-type relations emerged, Kenya did not pass through a classical feudal formation. The only partial exception was the coastal strip, where Swahili city states such as Gede, Mombasa, Malindi and Lamu developed urban Islamic settlements integrated into Indian Ocean trade prior to British colonial conquest. But even there, social relations were rapidly drawn into the early circuits of capitalist world trade and accumulation through ivory, spices and the slave trade. These coastal formations did not mature into a feudal order, but were subordinated to the early stages of commercial capitalism.

Across much of Kenya, as in many parts of Africa, pre-colonial societies were organised through communal forms of land use and non-wage forms of labour. These were violently wrenched into the capitalist world economy by imperialism and colonial conquest, through land seizures, taxation, forced labour, cash-crop production, migrant labour systems, markets and colonial state repression.

The CMP-K's feudal schema was refuted long ago by Trotsky's law of uneven and combined development. In the opening chapter of *The History of the Russian Revolution* (1930), Trotsky explained that backward countries do not mechanically retrace the path of the advanced capitalist powers:

Although compelled to follow after the advanced countries, a backward country does not take things in the same order. The privilege of historic backwardness—and such a privilege exists—permits, or rather compels, the adoption of whatever is ready in advance of any specified date, skipping a whole series of intermediate stages... The development of historically backward nations leads necessarily to a peculiar combination of different stages in the historic process. Their development as a whole acquires a planless, complex, combined character.

Trotsky then formulated the general law that demolishes the CPM-K's entire schema:

Unevenness, the most general law of the historic process, reveals itself most sharply and complexly in the destiny of the backward countries. Under the whip of external necessity their backward culture is compelled to make leaps. From the universal law of unevenness thus derives another law which, for the lack of a better name, we may call the law of combined development—by which we mean a drawing together of the different stages of the journey, a combining of the separate steps, an amalgam of archaic with more contemporary forms.^[2]

Kenya is an example of this law. One need only look at the major urban centres of Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu, Nakuru or Eldoret.

The skyline of Nairobi is dominated by banks, insurance firms, real estate corporations, global logistics companies, telecom giants, hotels, shopping malls, construction firms and regional headquarters of multinational corporations. Nairobi hosts the African headquarters or regional offices of global banks such as Citibank, Standard Chartered, and JPMorgan Chase, alongside multinational corporations including Google, Microsoft, General Electric, Maersk, and Coca-Cola. Next to them stand

thousands of kiosks, motorbike taxi stages, food stalls, second-hand clothes sellers, mechanics, domestic workers, security guards and casual labourers.

A casual construction worker may leave a site in Westlands, where he has spent the day building high-rises in which two-bedroom apartments sell for over US\$100,000, having been paid just US\$3.90 for the day. He may then buy eggs and chapati from a roadside vendor using M-Pesa mobile money on a smartphone, send a few shillings to relatives in the countryside, and return to sleep in an informal settlement, where rent is collected by a landlord tied to the same urban property market. This is capitalism in its most naked, brutal and unequal form.

Agriculture provides a sharper refutation of the CPM-K's "semi-feudal" fantasy. Kenya's countryside is not outside capitalism, but subordinated to it through the market. Smallholders account for roughly 65 percent of marketed agricultural produce and more than 70 percent of domestic food production. A small farmer will cultivate a few acres with maize, beans or potatoes while having a kitchen garden next to the house to support the daily family needs, buying fertiliser, seed, pesticides and animal feed at market prices, often on credit, and selling through traders, cooperatives, processors or brokers.

Kenya's agriculture remains overwhelmingly rain-fed, with irrigated agriculture accounting for only about 2.4 percent of cultivated area, but this backwardness coexists with highly advanced capitalist agriculture. Around Naivasha, Thika, Nanyuki and Athi River, flower and vegetable farms operate with greenhouses, irrigation, cold chains, grading sheds, air-freight logistics and export contracts tied to global markets. Kenya's flower industry contributes roughly 1.25 to 1.6 percent of national GDP, earns hundreds of millions of dollars in export revenue annually, mostly from the European Union, and employs over 200,000 workers directly, with around 500,000 jobs indirectly dependent on the sector.

Workers in these sectors are not trapped in feudal relations. They are wage workers producing surplus value for agribusiness capital integrated into global supply chains. The coexistence of export greenhouses and rain-fed plots is evidence of uneven and combined capitalist development under imperialist domination.

Nor does the growth of the informal sector prove semi-feudalism, as claimed by the CPM-K. It proves rather the proletarianisation of the population under conditions where capitalism cannot provide stable, secure employment. Last year's Economic Survey reported that Kenya created 782,300 new jobs in 2024, of which fully 703,700 were in the informal sector.

This is why the CPM-K's claim that Kenya has a "tiny urban working class" is false to the point of absurdity. It identifies the working class only with a narrow layer of formal industrial workers, as though capitalism exists only where there are large factories on the model of nineteenth-century Manchester.

But the working class in Kenya includes formal and informal wage labourers, casual workers, transport workers, teachers, nurses, construction workers, dockers, logistics workers, domestic workers, security guards, plantation workers, service workers, platform workers, industrial workers and millions of semi-proletarianised people moving between wage labour, petty trade and small plots of land. Kenya's labour force is around 24 million, and its urban population is now nearly a third of the country.

This Kenyan working class is part of a continent-wide process of rapid proletarianisation. Africa has the youngest population in the world, with about 70 percent of sub-Saharan Africa under the age of 30, while more than 600 million people are expected to enter the working-age population by 2050. Africa is also undergoing one of the fastest urban transformations in history: sub-Saharan Africa's urban population rose from 32 million in 1960 to 458 million in 2020, and the continent's urbanisation rate is projected to reach around 60 percent by 2050.

Every year, 10 to 12 million young Africans enter the labour market, while only about 3 million formal jobs are created. This proves the explosive growth of a precarious and informalised working class. Africa is not languishing in feudalism but being violently proletarianised under capitalism.

The false “semi-feudal” thesis serves a clear political function. The CPM-K invents a backward social stage in order to declare the struggle for workers’ power premature, portray capitalist development as historically progressive, and subordinate the Kenyan working class to the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces that profit from its exploitation.

To be continued.

Mwaiyu Kaluka (2026), “Trotsky’s Stock-in-Trade: A Counter-Revolutionary Export Unfit for the Kenyan Market!!!,” Communist Party Marxist-Kenya. Available at: <https://cpmk.org/87-recent-news/417-trotsky%E2%80%99s-20-stock-in-trade-a-counter-revolutionary-export-unfit-for-the-kenyan-market>.

Leon Trotsky (1930), *The History of the Russian Revolution*, Vol. 1, Chapter 1, “Peculiarities of Russia’s Development,” 1930. Available at Marxists Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/hrr/index.htm>.

[1] Mwaivu Kaluka (2026), “Trotsky’s Stock-in-Trade: A Counter-Revolutionary Export Unfit for the Kenyan Market!!!,” Communist Party Marxist-Kenya. Available at: <https://cpmk.org/87-recent-news/417-trotsky%E2%80%99s-20-stock-in-trade-a-counter-revolutionary-export-unfit-for-the-kenyan-market>.

[2] Leon Trotsky (1930), *The History of the Russian Revolution*, Vol. 1, Chapter 1, “Peculiarities of Russia’s Development,” 1930. Available at Marxists Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/hrr/index.htm>.



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