

On whether there is a fourth stage of Marxism

Maoist Information Web Site

Maoism is the third stage of Marxism. After four decades in which there have been advances in revolutionary science and developments in the class struggle, and in the midst of a global struggle against sham Maoism, the question has been raised of whether there is a new stage of Marxism and what to call it. Central to this question is the line that there is no revolutionary working class in the First World oppressor nations.

Until now, MIWS has not discussed recent use of the label "Third Worldism," to designate a new stage of Marxism, among Maoists on the Internet. MIWS is not here to intervene in organizing or networking struggles and has explained why it thinks that scientific education should be a greater priority on the Internet than struggles that have the potential to diverge from promoting science in making rapid movement-building a priority. MIWS has documented its policies and its reasoning at great length, and when MIWS has criticized lines and practices that may happen to belong to others on the Internet, MIWS has consistently done that only in detailed articles of substance. MIWS means for its writing to be relevant and useful in the future and not require readers to know about specific struggles, at the time articles were written, in order to comprehend those articles.

To its knowledge, MIWS's writing here is the only writing in English on the Internet responding in a reflective, substantive and comprehensive way with a document introducing "Third Worldism" as a way of designating advances specifically of Marxism, while others have chosen to adopt the label. To the extent that the label is effectively functioning as a name for a new movement and a way of unifying people, MIWS is not particularly interested in struggling over use of the label.

However, there is a valid question about what is new and universal in scientific communism since Maoism was formulated and consolidated as a new stage of Marxism, and how to designate advances. MIWS cannot imagine anyone seriously splitting over the use or non-use of "Third Worldism" at this time, but there are some scientific questions involved.

The use of "Third-Worldism" has a long history, including a history of positive, non-

disparaging usage that MIWS has not yet studied thoroughly.

There is much in favor of Third-Worldism as an orientation emphasizing Third World unity and self-determination, and the centrality of Third World struggles. In contrast to Third-Worldism are Liberal, pseudo-Liberal, Trotskyist and crypto-Trotskyist attacks on oppressed nation nationalism, on anti-imperialist united fronts, and on people's war and proletarian dictatorship -- and support for imperialist country majority unity with Third World lackeys. Third-Worldism used to have more currency in the First World. Because of setbacks in struggles against imperialism and revisionism, Third-Worldism gave way partly to a right-wing bourgeois internationalism and neo-Trotskyism, sometimes in combination.

"Third-Worldism," as it has actually been used by activists and intellectuals, has historically referred to different trends and forces, many of which might co-exist in a united front. This is both what makes the label uncontroversial, in a way, and what makes it potentially unsuitable for naming a new stage of Marxism, as opposed to a united front or mass organization. At the same time, since "Third Worldism" in recent Maoist context reflects an emphasis on a particular analysis and strategy, it may serve as a designation for a current within Maoism if clearly and properly defined.

Recent usage of "Third-Worldism" on the Internet in a Maoist context suggests a certain concrete analysis and certain strategies. But a stage of Marxism is supposed to be universal, and strategy is supposed to vary by country and with concrete conditions. In the course of applying Maoism, new theory and strategy may be developed that is globally applicable at the moment, but only the most overarching theories and strategies demarcate stages in the development Marxism.

Concrete analysis

First, MIWS will address the issue of concrete analysis as it may be distinguished from the formulation of strategy. Specifically, it has been put forward that a certain concrete analysis of the First World is central to Third Worldism as a development of Maoism. It has also been put forward that the principal contradiction is between exploited nations and imperialism, particularly u.\$ imperialism, and that this, also, is central to Maoism-Third Worldism.

Marxism is concrete and a living, scientific practice that integrates changing concrete conditions at various scales, from the neighborhood to the globe. But a stage of Marxism is not concentrated in a concrete analysis that possibly will not apply in the

future. The principal contradiction may change, and even parasitic flows may change such that some countries that are currently considered First-World may cease to be First-World.

In September 2007, MIWS said that the principal contradiction was potentially a question that might be the subject of line struggle. Shortly thereafter, a document appeared on the Internet ("The sun rises in the East and sets in the West," monkeysmaashesheaven.wordpress.com, 2008 January) saying that the principal contradiction is imperialism, but particularly u.\$. imperialism, and that this was central to a new stage of Marxism, by MIWS's interpretation. MIWS does not object to anyone's just putting forward a strong position on the principal contradiction, but MIWS would ask readers to consider the implications of suggesting that a certain position is central to a new stage of Marxism. There is not just a question of possible premature judgment, but a question of what characterizes a stage of Marxism.

Neither "Marxism," "Leninism," nor "Maoism," in "Marxism-Leninism-Maoism," designates a particular concrete analysis of contradiction or class structure other than a theoretically located era of history and revolution, an era with characteristic motions and structures. It may help to put "Third Worldism" in the context of "Marxism." Marxism is always concrete, and Marxism before Leninism was concrete. But Marxism as a stage on which later practice is built does not supply communists with any concrete analysis today, only scientific concepts. Those concepts are based on concrete analysis, but that analysis was turned into a universal theory. And so communists have concepts about surplus value and the features of capitalism, for example, but it is not that communists today can see proletarians as Marx did when he was living and studying. Revisionists have only twisted the universality of Marxism to mean that there is a national bourgeoisie and proletariat in every nation. These revisionists do not correctly locate the place of concrete analysis in a developing scientific practice.

Similarly, Lenin provides communists with a certain idea about imperialism's being the highest stage of capitalism, defining imperialism in a certain way. Imperialism will always be the highest stage of capitalism, one thing that makes Leninism universal, but scientific concrete analysis of imperialism will change. So, MIWS has been talking about a certain kind of international transfer, unequal exchange.

It's not that Marxism gave communists one idea about the principal contradiction (before there was the concept of the principal contradiction), and then "Marxism-

Leninism" signaled another idea, and so on. Nor did a certain definition of the principal contradiction become a universal part of Marxism after the concept of a principal contradiction became a part of Marxism. To the extent that MIWS has not misunderstood something and "Third Worldism" actually does refer to a certain position on the principal contradiction, "Third Worldism" is better used in reference to a particular movement or a current of line.

In regard to MIWS's statement that parasitic flows can change, MIWS's position is that the united States will remain a bourgeois country until u.\$ imperialism is overthrown, due to entrenched economic, political and social dynamics, which means that any strategy based on the belief that the united States will be re-proletarianized is not justified. Nonetheless, it is not the case that MIWS's position forms part of the essence of any new stage of Marxism. It would take a very specific argument to make that happen. MIWS is talking about one country here and something that has not been completely proved in practice.

Struggle takes place in an uneven way, and so it is possible that as the proletariat advances some First World imperialist countries will cease to be First World imperialist countries sooner than others. Nonetheless, a variety of people place more emphasis on the permanence of existing First World countries' status as First World countries (or core countries, etc.) until the arrival of upheaval or an external revolutionary front. Such an idea could become a part of the framework of a new stage of Marxism, but this would require a specific explanation and theory. MIWS's own position is that there are deeply entrenched structural reasons for international exploitation and the position of First World countries; war and reparations are required for exploited nations to recover resources and end the uneven conditions that give rise to international exploitation. International exploitation will exist in the long term until there is an evening out of conditions. Parasitism will grow and be ruthlessly defended by First World populations, even and especially as it faces a loss of super-profits. The center of gravity of parasitism will not shift to the Third World. MIWS has a global analysis and an explanatory theory. However, a global analysis of class structure and surplus value is by itself still subject to change and not necessarily based on a new theory.

The scope of global analysis may be a source of confusion. Communists in all countries should be expected to do global class analysis. However, the globality of an analysis does not mean that the analysis is universal in the sense that it can constitute

part of the framework of new stage of Marxism. MIWS would say that global analysis of surplus value and class structure is universal, but a particular analysis does not belong in the core definition of a new stage of Marxism.

Strategy

People's war, the united front, and the people's army, are universal, not just Chinese things. U.S. imperialism will be defeated by a people's war -- and an external proletariat and a largely external proletarian-led united front. Again, however, it is not obvious how something pertaining to just one country, the united States, or even to current First World countries as a whole can be an essential component of a new stage of Marxism.

Something that may lead to confusion is that anti-Maoists deny that an external proletariat can defeat imperialism, in spite of evidence to the contrary, namely the defeat of German imperialism at the hands of an external proletariat during World War II. Then, when scientific communists say that an imperialist country bourgeois population can't make revolution, that may seem like something new. It is not. Marx never said that a bourgeoisie could make proletarian revolution, and Lenin never said that a labor aristocracy and imperialists could make revolution. Anti-Maoists, who are also anti-Marxists and anti-Leninists, just have not done scientific concrete analysis of class structure, or they would know that the First World majority is bourgeois and basically incapable of making revolution.

After decades of exposure to facts, analysis, and science, genuine Maoists uphold certain basic views of the global class structure and uphold strategies that are not dependent on a revolutionary Euro-American proletariat. Those who do not, are not applying Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. That basic analysis, and strategic orientation of not relying on a Euro-American working class, has not always been prevalent in Maoism, but their currency now does not reflect a new stage of scientific communism.

Advances in Maoist analysis and science may take place separately from the qualitative emergence of a new stage. In other words, correct analysis may exist relatively independently of revolutionary-scientific stage formation. Mao didn't do an adequate concrete analysis of global class structure, and Mao ended up denying that the First World working class was counterrevolutionary at a time when people throughout the world were raising questions specifically about the class nature of First World workers, and so Mao was wrong on that point, regardless of any excuse. Anti-Maoists

pretending to be Maoist like to pit Mao's words against Maoists with correct analysis, while the anti-Maoists trash the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism all over the place. The individual Mao Zedong got one concrete analysis wrong, but Mao and his comrades still managed to advance Marxism to a new stage.

It turns out that is a big question that Mao got wrong. Exactly how important it was in China at the time relative to other things, MIWS doesn't know. A definite universal strategic or theoretical conclusion has not been drawn from Mao's particular error, but MIWS would say that the masses, not just top leaders in a party, need to have a scientific grasp of why the Theory of Productive Forces is wrong. It seems obvious looking back with the counterrevolution in China and Deng Xiaoping theory, but it is something that would need to be proved in practice, perhaps past practice. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution showed that in general the masses can and should learn how to become scientific themselves.

The reason why the Chinese communists were able to advance Marxism to a new stage, Maoism, despite major errors of global concrete analysis, may have to do with an unevenness. Global class analysis has been universal since Lenin, but knowledge is gained through practice, and Marxism is an applied science. It makes sense that some bourgeois intellectuals in the First World might have had the most to say about the labor aristocracy and parasitism initially as the absence of revolutionary upsurge in the First World was a more pressing practical matter for First World revolutionaries. Certain concepts and strategies end up having more prominence in certain places, at certain times, because of differences in the development of struggle and differences in the location of revolutionaries in larger struggles and contradictions. Universal ideas then have to spread, and that is itself a struggle with difficulties.

Much of Lin Biao's document "Long Live the Victory of People's War" is concrete analysis. At the same time, Lin Biao states that certain of Mao's ideas are new and universal. The document is heavily concerned with strategy. In thinking about strategy and what may constitute the core of a new stage of Marxism, it is important in using Lin Biao's document to separate specific concrete analysis from what is being elevated to universal truth.

In "Long Live the Victory of People's War," Lin Biao says this explicitly:

"It must be emphasized that Comrade Mao Zedong's theory of the establishment of rural revolutionary base areas and the encirclement of the cities from the countryside is of outstanding and universal practical

importance for the present revolutionary struggles of all the oppressed nations and peoples, and particularly for the revolutionary struggles of the oppressed nations and peoples in Asia, Africa and Latin America against imperialism and its lackeys."

Though Lin says that Mao's theory of people's war is a universal development of Marxism, it is not people's war against u.\$. imperialism in particular that is elevated to universal truth, nor the encirclement of global cities from the global countryside. Lin uses the word "temporary" to describe the state of the proletarian movement in the First World.

What Lin meant by "temporarily held back" is not important here. MIWS itself disagrees with Lin and would use the word "permanently," if anything, in place of "temporary," but what is crucial is that the strategy of global anti-imperialist encirclement was dependent on current concrete conditions at the time. It cannot, in that context or any similar context where there is a question of applicability to conditions, be the basis of a new stage of Marxism. If one were to argue explicitly that there are theoretical reasons why employing the strategy is inevitable, then MIWS may have to change what it is saying.

"Global people's war" with global cities and a global countryside (which alone "can provide the broad areas in which the revolutionaries can maneuver freely" and "provide the revolutionary bases from which the revolutionaries can go forward to final victory") sounds unspecific enough to be uncontroversial among those upholding the First World labor aristocracy thesis. In some usage, it could even be just a metaphor for the idea that people's war will emerge everywhere except in parasite nations. That is not a strategy so much as it is an observation made by applying a theory. Anything more specific than that may not qualify as a core element of a new stage of Marxism. It is conceivable that, with changes in population, class structure, and international flows, imperialism in an imperialism country will be overthrown with neither an internal proletariat nor specifically occupation of the country through people's war carried out by a Third World nation. Also unfavorable to incorporating global people's war in the definition of a new stage of Marxism is a lack of clarity on how the traditional strategy and tactics of people's war are to be translated into practice on a global scale, as opposed to the national scale where enemy forces may outnumber the people's forces. It is the case both that global people's war may be too specific and that it is not well-defined. The simple strategic orientation that the

revolution depends on the struggles of the oppressed and that the oppressed alone can carry out people's war is to be preferred, but then that will not qualify as something that has contributed to elevating Marxism to a new stage.

Similarly, saying that the joint dictatorship of the proletariat of the oppressed nations is a defining element of a new stage of Marxism presents a problem. The JDPON has a specificity that makes it an unsuitable candidate for evidence of a new stage of Marxism. The JDPON is related to global people's war in that both are related to an absence of a First World proletariat, but the JDPON and global people's war are different in that the emphasis with the JDPON strategy is on oppressed nations and a multinational dictatorship. For the JDPON, MIWS sees some confirmation in practice in the multinational Soviet occupation of Germany. In defining a new stage of Marxism, a pertinent question is whether the JDPON will be necessary in most First World nations. MIWS upholds the JDPON as an alternative to strategies that are obsolete or based on pseudo-Marxism, and MIWS believes that the JDPON is the likely form that proletarian dictatorship will take in the First World. However, there is some freedom for different strategies to be developed that are still consistent with scientific concrete analysis of class structure. It comes down to that the JDPON as a universal strategy has not been entirely proved in practice. By contrast, the need for cultural revolution has been proved in practice; a new bourgeoisie will arise in any proletarian party, as evidenced by multiple counterrevolutions. (White-utopian and other revisionist alternatives to the JDPON have not been proved in practice either or have been disproved in practice, as with the May 1968 events in Paris. The JDPON is an "experiment" that needs to be carried out to find out how to defeat imperialism in a majority-exploiter country. That the JDPON has not been specifically verified in practice, and the consistency of the JDPON strategy with scientific class analysis, is a reason to uphold and test it, but the JDPON is not yet universal, fundamental truth.)

There is a leap between concrete analysis of class structure, and theory, to strategy that requires further, intervening analysis of particular structures and contradictions. An overarching strategy of seizure of power by an external proletariat, by people's war and with a people's army, flows from a certain concrete global analysis. However, the specific JDPON strategy and also the exploiter-division strategy, proposed for the First World, paving the way for the JDPON in a First World country are contingent on certain contradictions.

JDPON, exploiter-division, anonymous reasoning and other ideas exist on the same

broad level, because they are all still being tested in practice. (Although, discernible advances in struggle may have at least been made with anonymous reasoning and other practices derived from analysis and theory, practices that would have been integrated into the truth of a particular party or movement without necessarily being universal.) JDPON is a destination point for communist practices in all nations, imperialist nations and oppressed nations. The proletariat of the oppressed nations is moving toward the JDPON, and revolutionaries in the imperialist nations are helping to create the conditions for the JDPON. But we are living in a moment of history where the experiment testing the JDPON is still running.

Strategy that has become an integral part of Marxism has been tested and is closely tied to theory. For example, the party in Leninism is based on a theory of materialism, practice and theory, leadership, spontaneity, opportunism, and state.

There are issues relating to how to implement the Leninist party in First World nations today, but the Leninist party strategy is universal both in its global relevance and in its inseparability from Marxism. The party is a strategy, but it has also been raised to the level of universal theory, as has the dictatorship of the proletariat, for example.

MIWS agrees with many of the positions associated with the proposed framework of a new stage of Marxism, and so MIWS's differences may seem minor. However, this subject concentrates some important questions about knowledge production that clearly need to be addressed. Specifically, MIWS is interested in the relationship between concrete analysis and universal truth, a topic that encompasses strategy as MIWS has suggested.

Not doing concrete analysis is not even Marxist. But in addition to that, there is an issue about the extent to which a concrete analysis should be considered universal. It is safe to say that anyone who says a majority of First World workers are proletarian is not Marxist. The First World labor aristocracy thesis is something that a scientific communist regardless of her or his nationality should be upholding; corresponding strategies such as the JDPON are similarly subjects for international scientific deliberation, international scientific struggle and unity. In a sense, the labor aristocracy thesis is universal, but does it represent a new stage of Marxism is the question.

Concretely speaking, Maoists who uphold the labor aristocracy thesis on the First World working class form a movement that is distinguishable from that of "Maoists"

who do not uphold the labor aristocracy thesis. But that crypto-revisionist "Maoist" movement is not scientific to begin with. Something that is important, but difficult, for newcomers to understand is that most people calling themselves "Maoist" in the First World are frauds in one of various ways. Rather than abandoning "Maoism" to these frauds and replacing it with another label, "Maoism" should be reclaimed. There is no genuine Maoism that does not do concrete analysis. It has been multiple decades of Marxists in different countries raising questions about the size of the labor aristocracy, which is of such importance in Leninism, in the First World and presenting arguments and analyses. "Maoists" who do not do concrete global class analysis and go so far as denying that such a thing as global class structure exists are frauds. Systematic global class analysis has been around since Lenin, if not Engels and Marx.

Many Maoists in China made a mistake about the Euro-American working class. That does not make Maoism unscientific. Thus, there is no need to define a new stage of Maoism on the basis of doing scientific global analysis alone.

A new stage of Marxism should be defined only after there has been an accumulation of scientific practice, particularly advancements in universal concepts, strategy and theory, that needs to be defended globally in order that further advances may be made. There hasn't been a revolution in the contemporary First World, but denying the labor aristocracy thesis has led to attacking oppressed nations and opposing people's war, and to new mutations of the Theory of the Productive Forces. MIWS believes that gains made in political economy are one thing that must be promoted widely and consolidated, but MIWS believes that this can be done within the framework of Maoism.

What is new and universal in Marxism

These are things that are not new:

- international class analysis
- the concept of a labor aristocracy
- the concept of parasitism
- parasitism as a central feature of imperialism
- the quantitative investigation of surplus value
- the idea that the development of the productive forces is connected to exploitation somewhere

- the idea that the prices of internationally traded goods may not be proportionate to their value (MIWS is putting this one here even though the full implications did not sink in until relatively recently in the history of the communist movement)

These are things that are new:

- the concept of a majority-exploiter nation where a majority of the population receives more value than it creates
- the idea that the development of productive forces in the First World is based mostly on international exploitation
- the concept of non-exploited productive sector workers

To the above, one may add settlerism as a social formation and other things, many of which are related to the above. Some things may have originated outside Maoism partly (J. Sakai, who wrote an influential work on the Euro-American working class, was not a Maoist), but become a part of Maoism. Maoists have advanced and are advancing knowledge on a variety of questions, but the items in the above list, which is not meant to be exhaustive, are at the heart of many contemporary controversies.

Theoretical tools that could have been used to reach correct conclusions about exploitation and parasitism existed before the 1960s, but MIWS would argue that the concept of a majority-exploiter nation, with its implications, was not present initially in Maoism, but only latently. The concept is relatively new and of universal importance, as is the idea that international exploitation can play the predominant role in the development of First World productive forces and in First World living standards. These are relevant in any nation where there is a struggle against neo-colonialism. However, when the majority of so-called Maoists are frauds, MIWS sees no need to differentiate from "Maoism" as if the majority of "Maoist" practice has been legitimate. Since Maoism is a science, new concepts and theories are formed regularly. Each new concept or theory does not signal a new stage of Marxism.

Backing the CIA against a Third World nation, abandoning a people's war and promoting imperialist accommodation and capitulation internationally, abandoning the dictatorship of the proletariat for Liberal reasons disseminated internationally, treating the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution as some kind of great Liberal revival, chauvinist ideas about advanced white people culture as justifying attacks on oppressed nations, and other outrages, were never conceivable parts of Maoism.

Frauds calling themselves "Maoist" are also disseminating Trotskyist and Liberal ideas about development, and rejecting anti-imperialism and obscuring parasitism. Also, the universal truths of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism are abandoned, while basic questions about class structure are ignored or distorted, under the pretext of understanding the particularities of struggle.

The scientific communist movement in contrast to the above does look like something different and distinct. However, a new stage of Marxism should not be defined in relation to the counterrevolutionary ideas of fakes, zombies and clowns calling themselves "Maoist." A new stage of Marxism is built on earlier frameworks of correct ideas. And Maoism formed amid a struggle against revisionism, but Maoism was not simply a reiteration of old Marxist ideology. Instead of proclaiming a new stage of Marxism, MIWS reaffirms the struggle between Marxism, which is Maoism, and revisionism, and the tortuous struggle to expel bourgeois ideas and tendencies, in all of their manifestations, from the scientific proletarian revolutionary movement.

If MIWS is wrong and there is a new stage of Marxism, then what to name the stage is a secondary question. There are two questions: whether there is a new stage, and what to call it. There may be good reasons not to use a particular name, but the naming would be secondary. To the extent that a name is treated as a divisive issue more important than whether there is a new stage, MIWS would say that a non-scientific dynamic is at work.

There is no such thing as non-Maoist Marxism. Non-Maoists are either revisionist or not claiming to be Marxist. Likewise, if MIWS is wrong and there is a fourth stage of Marxism, those who call themselves Maoist, but do not basically uphold the new stage in their practice, must be either revisionist or in the process of deviating. MIWS's position is that alleged communist parties that do not uphold the labor aristocracy thesis are revisionist, but not because they are not upholding a fourth stage of Marxism. This is key.

There are indications that some do not understand the full implications of the stage of Marxism declared. For example, it cannot be the case that there is both Maoism and Maoism-Third Worldism as current scientific ideologies and practices belonging to different stages. That is comparable to saying that there is both Marxism-Leninism and Marxism-Leninism-Maoism except in a chronological movement/intellectual history sense. There is no such thing as Marxism-Leninism without Maoism in scientific practice today.

MIWS's focus is not on reviewing specific organizations and Web sites to begin with, but MIWS is not saying that if someone has declared a fourth stage of Marxism, they must be revisionist or pre-fourth-stagers are revisionist. That would be a totally ridiculous way of approaching this question, omitting struggle and ignoring what it truly means to say that there cannot basically be two simultaneously existing scientific practices that belong to different stages of Marxism. Similarly, it is possible that MIWS is wrong without MIWS's being a revisionist simply because of this article. Indeed, though MIWS has articulated why there is not a fourth stage of Marxism, MIWS could belong to a fourth stage of Marxism whether it knows it or not. Acceptance of new stages of Marxism has itself been an uneven struggle historically. Science is a struggle, not verbal agreement/disagreement and unity or division without struggle.

Regarding MIM Thought

MIM Thought is the ideology of the Maoist Internationalist Movement as developed by the application of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism to the concrete conditions of imperialist countries. MIM said that it was the vanguard in English-speaking imperialist countries and certain other imperialist countries, but MIM Thought in MIWS's opinion could be a starting point for any First World country today by generalizing.

MIM Thought encompasses much more than the labor aristocracy thesis and more than political economy, but also gender, and strategy and tactics.

Some aspects of MIM Thought are universal. There is no reason why scientific communists in any nation should not understand basic concepts about international flows of value, productivity, and prices. At the same time, some of the concepts involved did not originate in Maoism or MIM Thought. MIWS would say they have some particularity to MIM Thought anyway because of the prominence MIM gave to them. It is not enough for someone to learn some concepts, not apply them, and forget about them, and that is why MIM Thought has some of its originality. MIM was further ahead than others calling themselves Maoist outside the united States who may have actually been Maoist point at one point despite the difference in emphasis on political economy and its application.

This article is not a review of MIM Thought or MIM. MIWS will say a couple of things about MIM. MIM was founded a little more than 25 years ago. The consistency or lack thereof in a particular organization's line is not decisive as to

whether there is a new stage of Marxism; only the most advanced elements of line in the international communist movement are crucial. Secondly, MIWS has some significant, but very specific, criticisms of things that appeared in MIM's line relatively recently in MIM's existence. Instead of focusing on MIM, MIWS addressed some things in writing its own articles. The etext.org MIM site contains advances that would be important in assessing the state of development of Marxism.

There is potentially a question of the relationship between cardinal principles in MIM Thought, and Marxist stage formation. MIM said that it did not intend its third cardinal principle on the First World working class to be cardinal for the Third World. Later, the etext.org MIM site placed more emphasis on the need for Third World communists to do international class analysis. The question arises of whether the labor aristocracy thesis defines a new stage of Marxism, and the relationship between cardinal principles and the development of Marxism to a new stage. The practice of having a cardinal principle on the labor aristocracy, associated with MIM, is influential among genuine Maoists in the First World and may shape understanding of the stage Marxism is in today.

An overreaction to, or distorted understanding of, Wang Ming line may be slowing down the spread of scientific advances throughout the world. MIWS's own position is that the labor aristocracy thesis is of universal importance. Also, it is not exclusive to MIM, but even if it were, it would be of universal importance. The fact that the labor aristocracy thesis appeared in different countries even before there was MIM only shows how behind communists are, who do not uphold the labor aristocracy thesis, in their willingness to study imperialism concretely.

In "[Concerning cardinal principles](#)," MIWS says that "the proper role for cardinal principles is to identify key areas where the scientific struggle needs to be consolidated in order to make further advances." MIWS doesn't address whether there is a fourth stage of Marxism in that document, but that understanding of cardinal principles is relevant. Cardinal principles aren't isolated. Rather, they reflect an accumulation of struggle and advances. The thesis on the First World working class as a labor aristocracy is cardinal in the First World and should be a dividing-line question in Third World nations, if not cardinal in these nations. The labor aristocracy thesis is one place where communists need to be now to be making advances and moving toward the communist goal, as opposed to moving toward eventual counterrevolution or neo-colonialism. Those who do not uphold principles that are cardinal and correct

dividing lines should not claim to be Marxist.

Denying the labor aristocracy thesis has become like denying that the United States is an imperialist country. Some "Marxists" do deny that the United States is an imperialist country, but the labor aristocracy thesis arouses more controversy. If there were more support in the "Marxist" movement for the labor aristocracy thesis, it would not have to be defended with a cardinal principle. Cardinal principles thus play a role that is different than that of declaring a new stage of Marxism, though apparently similar. Declaring a new stage of Marxism signals an accumulation of universal, immortal truth, truth that has become embodied in an elevated, world-historic practice; global scientific communist practice is being taken to the next level. The basic line on the bourgeoisification of the First World so-called working class with super-profits is universal, but still within the realm of concrete analysis using concepts that have been available since Lenin. Not applying those concepts and making an order-of-magnitude error, after years and decades of opportunity for supposedly scientific Marxist parties to correct errors, is revisionist.

Cardinal principles and the question of a fourth stage of Marxism are perhaps entangled in other ways. Cardinal principles and the emergence of a new stage of Marxism may intersect, as they might have between the late 1960s and the early 1980s. For example, upholding the theory of the new bourgeoisie in the party has been a cardinal principle, but it also belongs to Maoism.

However, not all cardinal principles represent a new stage of Marxism. And at the same time, adherence to some cardinal principles, especially by verbal agreement, is not sufficient to stay on the communist path. The new bourgeoisie in the party in China used superficial agreement with cardinal principles, and nihilism and other anti-Marxist approaches to questions not explicitly specified in cardinal principles, as a way of spreading revisionism. In parties both in and out of power, but perhaps particularly in parties facing pressures in a majority-exploiter country, cardinal principles may need to be changed or expanded in the course of struggle. But also, it is important that cardinal principles reflect larger ongoing unity and struggle; the purpose of cardinal principles in the first place is to orient communists for continued scientific struggle and advancement. Lack of adherence to scientific practice and previously established universal truth is a reason why those who continuously oppose international class analysis are revisionist. It is also why not upholding the thesis on super-profits and the bourgeoisification of the First World working class does not

represent divorcement from a new stage of Marxism, but divorcement from the present stage of Marxism and therefore Marxism in general.

Some may argue that the labor aristocracy thesis is not cardinal for Third World nation communist parties because it is not yet important to tasks in the Third World, or because Third World parties are only temporarily lagging behind in science. MIWS would argue that the thesis is either cardinal or otherwise dividing-line for Third World parties and that any party that does not understand basic differences between First World and Third World class structures, but sees an international dimension to politics, cannot consistently remain on the road to communism. There is no reason why new scientific communist parties today would form without a correct stand on the First World working class and the extent of parasitism.

As communists such as H. W. Edwards were suggesting decades ago, whether to oppose the whole of imperialism, including the labor aristocracy, or support a part of it, is a matter of Marxism or revisionism. Phony "Maoists" themselves treat the labor aristocracy thesis as dividing-line, by saying that it is counterrevolutionary. A line cannot both be counterrevolutionary and insignificant. An incorrect analysis and theory can lead to strategic errors and has led to numerous strategic errors among those opposing the labor aristocracy thesis and disrupting the communist movement globally.

The distinction MIWS suggested above with "cardinal" and "otherwise dividing-line" refers to the fact that, in the course of the revolutionary struggle, one divides into two over a variety of questions and tendencies that may appear, not all of which will be covered in cardinal principles. MIWS does not claim to know how far struggle has advanced in particular Third World nations. The labor aristocracy thesis may be uncontroversial in some places. So, a Third World party may emphasize other things in its cardinal principles while still holding the labor aristocracy question to be dividing-line.

A party sometimes revisits previous analyses, and line struggle may advance without anyone's being purged with every advance. Not all questions result in organizational division. However, the issue of the global class structure goes beyond upholding democratic centralism and majority decisions. Regardless of whether a party includes a principle on the First World labor aristocracy in its cardinal principles and regardless of how it chooses to deal with lack of internal scientific unity on crucial global class structure questions, there cannot in 2008 be a whole scientifically active communist

party anywhere that thinks that a majority of the First World population is proletarian. Parties that otherwise constantly oppose the labor theory of value and concrete analysis in pursuing exploiter goals should be broken with. Upholding the labor theory of value does not have to be specified as a cardinal principle; it is already built into the foundation of Marxist revolutionary scientific practice.

MIWS is not interested in struggling over what name a specific movement or constellation of Web pages should call its ideology. Questions about a fourth stage of Marxism will likely crop up in various contexts. The particular term "Third Worldism" has its own history that will make it relevant for the foreseeable future, as long as the principal contradiction is between imperialism and the oppressed nations. MIWS believes that "Third Worldism" would be a better name for a current, movement, or a set of cardinal principles, than a stage of Marxism if the label is to be used for anything. Hopefully, MIWS has addressed some questions readers may have about designating advances in Marxist scientific practice.