

Response to A. Emmanuel's "The Socialist Project in a Disintegrated Capitalist World" Maoist Information Web Site

This article addresses Arghiri Emmanuel's ["The Socialist Project in a Disintegrated Capitalist World,"](#) which appeared in the journal *Socialist Thought and Practice: A Yugoslav Monthly* in 1976.⁽¹⁾ MIWS has edited and re-published Emmanuel's article.⁽²⁾

In his article, Emmanuel presents ideas that he had presented elsewhere ("Réponse à Eugenio Somaini," in *Un débat sur l'échange inégal: salaires, sous-développement, impérialisme*, "Myths of Development versus Myths of Underdevelopment," and "Unequal Exchange Revisited") and partly elaborated later (in *Appropriate or Underdeveloped Technology?* and *Profit and Crises*).⁽³⁾ Emmanuel proposes that a majority of Western workers are labor aristocrats, and not only labor aristocrats, but also net-recipients of surplus value, making them full-fledged exploiters of non-Western workers. Emmanuel re-uses familiar natural-resource and ecological illustrations to show that upward equalization to the level of average First World consumption is not possible and states that the contradiction between First World country workers and Third World workers is antagonistic. Emmanuel describes the contradiction between the labor aristocrats and the imperialists in the West as a contradiction between exploiters. Emmanuel points to trade and unequal exchange, rather than the export of capital to the "underdeveloped" countries and profit repatriation, as the main site and form of imperialist parasitism. Emmanuel's overarching theme is that low wages contribute to underdevelopment, and socialist central planning is needed to overcome a problem of a lack of investment due to absent non-productive consumption and break free from dynamics (those of the international market and capitalism) that result in underdevelopment. Third World nations that continue to participate in the capitalist world economy will experience perpetual underdevelopment, which Emmanuel relates to historical wage differences, international exploitation, and a certain division in the world. Socialism is inevitable as the development of productive forces must proceed.

In his article, Emmanuel also discusses the re-proletarianization idea that has cropped

up relatively recently in Maoist circles apparently independently of Emmanuel's work, that is, the idea that the Western working class is presently a labor aristocracy but may become proletarian in the future, with future strategic implications. What is most interesting about Emmanuel's article for MIWS at present, though, are the issues the article raises about productive forces and the revisionist theory of the productive forces, and the kind of presentation Emmanuel makes in his article and the apparent emphasis on strategy in comparison with some of Emmanuel's other writings. MIWS will discuss these things in two parts. While Emmanuel's article is not an example of the revisionist theory of the productive forces, it is MIWS's contention that simply holding the position that the Western working class is a labor aristocracy is not enough to prevent counterrevolution on the basis of the Theory of Productive Forces. Secondly, while Yugoslavia was neither imperialist nor socialist and communists have found it necessary to dumb down theory further than what Arghiri Emmanuel did with his article in *Socialist Thought and Practice*, most attempts to popularize theory in the First World are misplaced. First, MIWS will discuss the issues Emmanuel's article raises about forces of production.

Productive forces

Emmanuel begins his article by defining his approach: "The analysis that follows rests on the almost traditional premise of historical materialism that the *ultimate* determinant of history is the development of the productive forces" (italics in original). Emmanuel anticipates the criticism that his analysis is "economist," and explains that dialectical-materialist analysis of history requires that one view class struggle as based on the development of the productive forces or another determinant; later in the article, Emmanuel argues that socialist relations of production are needed for the development of the productive forces to advance. For Emmanuel, the development of the productive forces is determinantal. If there is no law that is determinantal, then one cannot predict the development of society, and one might as well just "recount the exploits of leaders and parties in chronological order."

"A class struggle divorced from the economic infrastructure of society is just as indeterminate as the actions of kings and captains, and to refer to the free will of the classes to explain history is no less *idealistic* than to refer to the free will of great men." (italics in original)

MIWS will not be reviewing debates on economism, productive forces, relations of

production, and class struggle, here, but the idea that some criticisms of "economism," which here refers to a certain alleged underappreciation of the role of class struggle in history, were historical-idealist, was not unique to Arghiri Emmanuel. For example, Claude Varlet wrote two years later: "According to Bettelheim, economism is the essential characteristic of 'congealed Marxism'. It is therefore necessary to examine the criticism that Bettelheim makes of economism in order to show that, under the pretext of criticizing the theory of productive forces, [Charles Bettelheim] has substituted historical idealism for historical materialism." (4) Arguing that Stalin opposed the revisionist theory of the productive forces and criticizing Bettelheim for upholding historical idealism and a notion of spontaneity, Varlet states that the class struggle is based on a dialectical relationship between the productive forces and the relations of production. Clearly, there have been different approaches to criticizing the theory of the productive forces, and no simple conclusion may be drawn from Emmanuel's opening provocative remarks about economism and productive forces.

Though the actual ideas present in Emmanuel's writing are more advanced than those of the majority of his critics who have raised or might raise questions about the specific importance he attaches to development and international economic relations, Emmanuel's writing in different places does raise questions about the relationship between class analysis and views about productive forces. Previously, MIWS wrote: "MIWS predicts that the theory of the productive forces will arise, if the humyn species survives long enough to establish another dictatorship of the proletariat, even among those who acknowledge that First Worlders are exploiters and that upward equalization to First World levels of development and living standards isn't possible. Some of Arghiri Emmanuel's writing occasionally points in this direction, and MIWS sees potential problems." (5) The goal of developing productive forces is compatible with the goal of ending oppression in the long run, but if one's stated priority is developing productive forces, that can lead to emphases that divert the revolutionary struggle. The development of productive forces is a necessity throughout history, and it is a strategic necessity at some points, but these are different than making the development of the productive forces of society a permanent, overriding goal.

Revisionists in some countries today alternate being saying that capitalism is needed to develop productive forces before a society can be ready for socialism, while opposing politics in command and opposing proletarian leadership and proletarian

dictatorship, and saying that the goal of socialism itself is to develop productive forces and increase living standards. (If one's credibility as a communist party rests solely on claiming to be working toward communism, then anything is possible, and anything can be called "socialism.") If that is true, there are also contemporary revisionists, including frauds claiming to be Maoist, who say that anti-imperialism and socialism have nothing to do with equalizing living standards, which is also wrong. Supporters of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping are not in power in the First World or numerous there. The bigger danger in the First World are those who claim to see no connection between living standards and exploitation and chauvinistically provide false cost-of-living justifications and cultural justifications for First Worlders' ownership of everything from personal cars to iPods. Nonetheless, for the sake of encouraging understanding and development of the theory underlying the scientific position that a majority of First World workers are labor aristocrats or exploiters, MIWS will mention, in the context of Arghiri Emmanuel's article, some ways in which views of the relationship between class structure, international exploitation, and productive forces, may differ. Not all approaches that recognize that tens of millions of First Worlders are labor aristocrats lead to correct ideas about international economic relations, productive forces, and development.

Separating correct from incorrect critical responses to Arghiri Emmanuel's work is called for. MIWS will touch on these briefly. MIWS has some disagreement with some of the ideas in Emmanuel's article that MIWS has already articulated elsewhere, specifically in regard to how exploitation is concluded from the impossibility of upward equalization (upward to the average First World level or average First World worker level) of monetary income or resource consumption or utilization. MIWS still does not mind distributing Emmanuel's article without extensive criticism. The practice of many of Emmanuel's critics so far has been to raise this or that criticism or piece of empirical counterevidence (e.g., declining "real wages" in the united States), or rejecting Emmanuel's propositions simply because they do not like his conclusion about international solidarity, without presenting any calculation of international surplus value (using any theory) and its impact on the internal class structure of the First World. This is the practice of Emmanuel's earliest prolific critics, such as Charles Bettelheim, and recent critics. At the same time, a revolutionary white Western majority is treated as the default, as are the correctness of Westerners' demands for higher living standards in opposition to corporations or just the wealthiest owners and rulers. This is chauvinism almost as a matter of definition: amerikans are assumed to

be revolutionary, while Muslim people in the Third World are supposed to be backward. With the prevalence of such chauvinism, MIWS would welcome any attempt to encourage sustained thinking about the kinds of questions Emmanuel raises.

Emmanuel's article falls in the proletarian and Marxist camp. Emmanuel's article is entirely consistent, for example, with the September 19, 1969, *Peking Review* article on the Theory of Productive Forces that is available on MIWS. [\(6\)](#) The *Peking Review* article contains:

"While affirming that the productive forces and the economic base in general play the principal and decisive role in relation to production relations and the superstructure, our great leader Chairman Mao stresses: **"When it is impossible for the productive forces to develop without a change in the relations of production, then the change in the relations of production plays the principal and decisive role," . . . "**

Arghiri Emmanuel argues that the development of the productive forces is determinantal, but that central planning is needed for development to take place, separately from the dynamics of underdevelopment. Also, Emmanuel explicitly says that taking the development of the productive forces as a determinant is meant for prediction and "strategic research," not to say that the development of a nation's productive forces is in some sense an overarching, operative priority in communist work. However, undiscerning readers may get the impression that development of the productive forces is strategically a first priority.

As alleged supporters of "Deng Xiaoping Theory" have arisen among those claiming to also support the labor aristocracy thesis on the Western working class, MIWS's concern is not entirely speculative. The combined support for "Deng Xiaoping Theory" and the labor aristocracy thesis could be a result of dishonest efforts to make Maoists look stupid, or of eclecticism engendered by an authoritarian or cult attraction to a government governing more than a billion people. Either case, there is a line, with potential adherents, that needs to be dealt with. MIWS suspects serious intellectual support for the same or similar lines, in the Third World, because there has been interest in questions of international exploitation and international value, and unequal exchange and Arghiri Emmanuel specifically, in continental China.

A certain amount of liberalism or necessity would allow Arghiri Emmanuel's ideas to

be openly discussed in capitalist China, even if only to be refuted. Some discussion of Emmanuel's ideas would not be surprising; Emmanuel's work is also discussed in imperialist countries, which are not on any progressive road. A "Marxist" government "opening up" a Third World nation, to integration with neo-colonialism, would in the intellectual arena presumably need to deal with various theories of imperialism, international exploitation, international transfer, and trade, to maintain credibility if it does not openly reject communist goals and concepts. Emmanuel's ideas are opposed to "opening-up." However, one can imagine individuals in China conceding the conclusion about the Western labor aristocracy, but trying to make that conclusion compatible with the theory of the productive forces. Specifically, one may think: "The West has no national proletariat, but developing the productive forces is of first importance." Or: "The West has no proletariat, but not because its workers are exploiters, only because Western workers form a reactionary majority-labor-aristocracy class with high, but not exploitive, wages." Or even: "Western workers are exploiters and exploit Third World workers, but developing the productive forces and achieving a comfortable living standard and a comfortable life are still of utmost importance." There are different, substantially dissimilar variations of the idea that the Western working class is a labor aristocracy. There are differentiation variations that all belong to the proletarian camp. But one can have a correct view of the class composition of the First World while holding a counterrevolutionary line on production. What may appear to be a strategic difference within the proletarian camp may in some situations be the difference between Marxism and revisionism, revolution and counterrevolution. Not every one who claims to want to exploitation and believes that the First World does not have a proletariat will be a Marxist.

Arghiri Emmanuel's own position is that only central planning can provide the stimulus needed for domestic investment so that the development of the productive forces to continue in the Third World. Otherwise, the Third world cannot catch up with the First World, even if it were possible, with development, for all people in the world to have the First World consumption level in the future. Emmanuel's article thus provides a ready-made answer to "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics" and the opposition of this "socialism" to central planning, to the revolutionization of the relations of the production, and to class struggle. From the point of view of the necessary development of the productive forces, the only path open to the Third World is the "socialist path," "where investment is, as it should be, inversely proportional to nonproductive consumption, where accumulation is the faster . . . "

Not only is it not possible to take the capitalist road in particular Third World countries; not only does capitalism as the dominant mode of production not play a progressive role in particular countries; the capitalist road as a viable path of development is closed in the Third World in general.

The Theory of Productive Forces is the economic line of the bourgeoisie in the communist party. As whole Third World nations become proletarianized and the Third World bourgeoisie looks to Marxism for some answers, scientific ideas such as Arghiri Emmanuel's about class structure and the development of the productive forces become even more important. Anti-amerikkkanism is contributing to the growth of anti-imperialism and the unity of people in Third World nations. Anti-amerikkkanism is popular in the world and deserves its popularity. Anti-amerikanism in fact encompasses a large and ideologically heterogeneous united front, necessarily consisting of different classes. Anti-amerikan forces may arise that claim to agree with Marxist positions on the Western labor aristocracy, but fundamentally do not implement Marxist economic science and instead use bourgeois approaches. Beneath the shared goal of ending exploitation and oppression are divergent approaches, some leading back to capitalism. The Theory of Productive Forces remains a threat even where there are anti-amerikanism and some correct conclusions about the First World class structure. Where Marxism is mainly treated as a tool for national economic development, the tendency exists for the Theory of Productive Forces to crop up. In uniting with anti-imperialist forces, it is important to maintain proletarians scientific independence.

Third World bourgeois pro-capitalist anti-amerikans who believe that the First World labor aristocracy is an obstacle to national economic development and view that development as an overarching priority belong in a united front, but they are not Marxist. Within the proletarian camp and communist party, the Theory of Productive Forces must be struggled against. Besides providing an argument against the Theory of Productive Forces as it is being applied in one revisionist country, Emmanuel's article also exposes the faulty thinking of those who selectively denounce Islamic nationalists, who are not claiming to be Marxist, for not struggling to delink from imperialism. Lately, fake Maoists justifying huge wage and living standard differences between the First World and the Third World, and glorifying First World productive forces, have been attacking Islamic rulers in particular ostensibly for supplying imperialism with resources and subordinating their nations' economies to the

imperialists. Others, claiming to recognize the First World non-proletarian majority, have also singled out Islamic and Muslim nations and forces and in the process ascribed a progressive role to imperialism in developing productive forces in other nations. Despite differences among Islamic forces and though some leaders are comprador, Islamic forces as a whole are a target of so-called Maoists because the Islamic forces do not have a Marxist ideology, and because the Western labor aristocracy and its social-imperialist and social-fascist parties view Islamic movements and resistance to imperialism by Muslims as difficult to influence and a threat to labor-aristocratic interests and rule. Presently, the labor aristocracy oppresses and rules the Third World and exploits Third World workers jointly with the imperialists, in a joint labor aristocracy-imperialist dictatorship that, by acting through the same state, appears as the dictatorship of a single, giant imperialist class.

Third World capitalists differ in their reception of imperialist economic ideologies and acceptance of particular imperialist economic policies. Some assert themselves as compradors economically. But if socialism is the only road forward economically, as Arghiri Emmanuel argues, then the substantial differences between the bourgeoisies of different Third World nations may be mostly political in nature. The substantial differences may be, for example, in the extent to which they repress their own peoples and attack other oppressed nations militarily. There is no bourgeois non-socialist economic route out of imperialism, contrary to the suggestions of fake communists, with twisted politics, siding with imperialism against Third World capitalists who are supposedly selling out their nations economically more than others. Criticizing the Third World bourgeoisie for not delinking from imperialism is essentially to criticize the Third World bourgeoisie for not being socialist, which would be fine in a communist-party-building context, but not where it means opposition to a possible and needed united front against imperialism. The Third World bourgeoisie is vacillating even with respect to anti-imperialism, but Emmanuel's important implicit proposition in his analysis in *Socialist Thought and Practice* is that anti-imperialism does not have its own inherent political economy separate from New Democracy, which in its leading element is socialist in character, and socialism. While not itself the socialist stage of revolution, new democracy puts the Third World on the road to that stage while carrying out the united front against imperialism. There is no sustainable economic anti-imperialism, an enduring economy of anti-imperialism, separate from new democracy and socialism. Without new democracy and socialism and without expecting the Third World bourgeoisie to be proletarian, when it can

only be vacillating, the Third World bourgeoisie still has a role in anti-imperialism, and that is in military and political struggle. The Third World bourgeoisie vacillates even in military and political struggles, but there are immediate structural reasons why the Third World as a whole cannot successfully develop its productive forces without proletarian direction. These constraints restricting what non-socialist Third World bourgeoisies can do in the economic sphere have nothing to do with cultural or political differences between them, such as Islam. All non-proletarian roads today lead to imperialism or back to imperialism.

It is therefore odious to see self-styled Marxists attack those in the Third World who are opposing imperialism militarily and politically under the pretext that these Third World leaders and fighters support neo-colonial economic policies. These same so-called Marxists praise First World worker "productivity," which is actually exploitation and the realization of surplus value created by the Third World workers, want even higher living standards and more power for the First World "working class" and "middle class," and all but openly (and sometimes openly) deny the relationship between the conditions and class structure of one country and the conditions and class structure of another country under world capitalism. In addition, they call the First World working class revolutionary though that "working class" has again and again for decades sided with the imperialists and opposed the exploited and oppressed, and objectively and structurally has no tendency to stop being reactionary and stop exploiting and oppressing. When these so-called Marxists attack people in the Third World who are fighting imperialism, but not claiming to be Marxist, because these people support policies and relationships that perpetuate the role of the Third World in the world economy (against the Third World's "national" interests with respect to its productive forces), and attack united fronts in general, they make economics more important than class struggle in general and in fact themselves uphold the theory of the productive forces. They uphold the theory of the productive forces by saying that whether Third World leaders allow the development of productive forces in their nations is more important than anything they do to fight imperialism. Since First World "productivity" is treated as the standard to be achieved, obviously this dooms the Third World bourgeoisie to perceived failure and obsolescence. So-called Marxists obligate Third World leaders to pursue an impossible standard, itself a neo-colonial falsehood, and when the Third World leaders end up adopting non-"Marxist" neo-colonial ideologies and practices (or rather those that seem to benefit only monopoly capitalists, not the labor aristocracy), the so-called

Marxists only then accuse them of selling out their peoples.

The Third World cannot catch up with the First World and then travel the same path. The imperative of economic independence from imperialism and capitalism is premised on certain concrete realities. What it means for the First World to separate from the logic of imperialism is entirely different than what it means for the Third World, because the First World is parasitic. Without a correct understanding of the relationship between productivity and international economic relations, independence or self-reliance for the former First World would mean continued imperialism. If China ever does become imperialist, or the proletariat permits the First World labor aristocracy to carry out imperialist dictatorship disguised as "communism," it would be because of similar failures to understand the true relationship between participation in the international economy and imperialism. While some "Marxists" have emphasized structural dependency and disarticulation more than international flows of value, Third World governments do not just preside over economies that are oriented to meet the requirements of imperialism. Differences in productivity and consumption between the First World and the Third World are primarily due to international accumulation, international exploitation, and parasitism, and the relationship between the First World and the Third World is mainly one of parasitism. Imperialism is not against the interests of the people of the First World and the Third World equally. Ignorance of the First World labor aristocracy's role in imperialism underlies a disproportionate hostility toward the Third World bourgeoisie for buying into "globalization" and "neo-liberalism" and the plans of monopoly capitalists. "Globalization" allegedly characterized by the free flow and export of labor and capital is perceived as a threat to First World workers and nations.

In equating the Third World capitalists (not just compradors) with the First World bourgeoisie (from which the labor aristocracy is falsely excluded), much has been made of the Third World bourgeoisie's proneness to complying with the wishes of imperialism. The fact that the Third World bourgeoisie is flabby and vacillating (albeit less reactionary on the whole than the First World labor aristocracy) is not somehow a revelation only in the last decade that disproves the theory of the united front. The Third World bourgeoisie is both economically and politically flabby, but the First World labor aristocracy is bloated with super-profits and can only be counterrevolutionary as it feels the gravy train is threatened. The Third World will defeat the counterrevolutionary First World. That is despite the difficulties that Third

World nations and their governments collectively and individually have disentangling themselves from imperialism and pursuing a non-imperialist path before new democracy has been consolidated and the new-democratic stage of revolution has been completed.

Without a coherent alternative to participating in the world market under capitalist dynamics, to participate in the world economy is ultimately to participate in the imperialist economy. One is either on the sending or on the receiving end of the flow of super-profits. Proletarian leadership and eventual dictatorship is the only way forward. The disagreement MIWS has with many who say the same words has to do with what is meant by moving forward and what is meant by proletarian leadership. The economies of the First World and the Third World are presently integrated in such a way that, to extricate itself from imperialism, the Third World would have to expropriate a majority of First World people, not just for living standards to be equal globally under present levels of production, which Arghiri Emmanuel discusses, but also to prevent the emergence of international exploitation under conditions of uneven distribution of resources. Underlying the expectation of Third World leaders to build the productive forces of their nations without expropriating the First World is the idea, based on the theory of the productive forces, that unevenness in the development of productive forces is not connected to class struggle and the appropriation of labor. Selectively expecting Third World leaders to develop productive forces without expropriating the First World and selectively attacking those who do not is plainly and simply neo-colonialism. So-called Marxists and even so-called Maoists participate in neo-colonialism enthusiastically because they are an expression of the social-fascist tendency of the labor aristocracy opposing both their countries' imperialists and the proletariat, principally the proletariat. The objective of the organized labor aristocracy is, as Arghiri Emmanuel suggests, to ensure the continuation of imperialism in the face of revolution. Emmanuel writes:

"It is even conceivable that in one or another country of the Center the salaried aristocracy could one day defeat the existing capitalist class decisively and install a particular system that could possibly be christened 'national socialism', or something similar, but which would actually be an *ad hoc* system that assures its hegemony."

Popularization of theory

With so much trash calling itself Marxism in the First World, one may remark on the merits of Arghiri Emmanuel's kind of writing in *Socialist Thought and Practice* from the point of view of presentation and disseminating theory.

Emmanuel's article is relatively short, contains no math other than simple numbers and concepts used (in what is almost conversational writing) to illustrate some principles and convey a sense of some realistic proportions, and concentrates on conclusions and their strategic implications, rather than presenting all the reasoning going into conclusions. Emmanuel's article is thus different than much of Emmanuel's other writing available in English.

Socialist Thought and Practice contains a range of revisionist and social-democratic views. There is great diversity even within the issue in which Emmanuel's article appears. The present writer does not know why "Socialist Project" appears in the journal, but it is given that one would be pressured to dumb down science in such a Liberal setting and with limited space. But not only does the bourgeoisie infiltrate the proletarian camp; the proletariat can infiltrate the bourgeoisie, too, and the bourgeoisie was in power in Yugoslavia. Perhaps the most important thing in 1976 was just to generate interest in the kinds of questions Emmanuel was drawing attention to. Thankfully, the word "Mao" does not appear in the article, because the context of the article in the journal is revisionist. Emmanuel's article was published at a time when clarity on what scientific communism was, and what the movement that Mao Zedong symbolized was about, was going to be extremely important.

Emmanuel's article is not agitational. It presents theory, but MIWS does not see it as a model for scientific writing in general, because it would mean a slapdash approach to research, theorizing, and argumentation. Underlying the statements in the article are historical experience, not always directly discussed in the article, and an enormous amount of reasoning and evidence that Emmanuel presents elsewhere. To confuse the statements in the article with the entire scientific process would be to erode science.

The slapdash approach to research and theorizing is why MIWS had to dig up an old article in what has become an obscure journal or relic, but one available in many libraries in the West. MIWS could have just said, "Check here," but few would have bothered. By putting one of Emmanuel's most radical writings in people's face, MIWS takes care of a few different problems, including attempts to water down or distort Emmanuel's politics and obscure the full extent of Emmanuel's thinking,

which was coherent and perhaps fully comprehensible only in its entirety. [\(7\)](#)

"Socialist Project" does not serve as a comprehensive model for science. However, it should be read. For some time, some in the "international communist movement" and (to an extent) academic political economy have thought they were making contributions to science -- and, to be fair, actually were advanced in comparison with others in the same movement and field -- but actually often repackaged old information and rehashed old debates. A range of topics that communists have discussed in the past several years were dealt with by Arghiri Emmanuel, China's communists, and others, thirty and even forty years ago. Documents published within a decade ago, such as the writer MC5's *Imperialism and Its Class Structure in 1997*, have also been ignored by many academic and non-academic Marxists writing on the same topics.

The pretense of making theoretical innovations without engaging in a sustained way with complex questions and the range of previous contributions, but through an accretion of propositions, pronouncements, and verbal agreements and disagreements, is contrary to promoting and advancing science in a broad way. Arghiri Emmanuel's article is an example of what has fallen by the wayside, pushed to the margins, and demands more specific attention than other writing communists might refer to. MIWS is motivated to bring material such as Arghiri Emmanuel's to the Internet, because it is actually interested in science. MIWS is not here jockeying for power or a career in an organization or academia and has no economic or social need to pretend to be original where others have already written things that are useful and should be built on, not ignored. Having a correct theory on which communist practice may be based is important for its own sake.

Some communists do not understand the difference between agitation and theory. There is also a difference between developing theory and disseminating existing theory, creating theory and representing it. Within the dissemination of theory, there is also a pull toward popularizing theory.

MIWS would conjecture that an emphasis on popularizing theory, in an environment where few will go beyond the theory in its popularized form and pursue further study, can lead to lack of awareness of the origins of theory and ignoring its most developed expressions. There is much writing on and about theory aimed at a broad audience, in journals, "newspapers" and letters, and articles published in various outlets on the Internet. Perhaps the intended goal of much current discussion of theory is to

popularize theory, but casual or unsystematic discussion can take on a life of its own and either discourage the exploration and development of theory or become blurred with that development in counterproductive ways. MIWS mentioned the conversational style of some of Emmanuel's language. Actually, the style of writing, conversational or something else, is not crucial. The problem with much conversational writing today is not its style, but that it is not connected to an understanding of the different kinds of information (agitation, theory, etc.), their roles, and the places where they are appropriate. One can be conversational in writing and be engaging and memorable, but without a framework for communication and standards of progress, ingrained habits and aimless drifting take over. Consequently, there is a built-in tendency toward Liberalism, watering down ideas and expectations, and taking in all kinds of garbage calling itself communist because one is surrounded by the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie. This results in various problems, including stagnating scientific advancement.

How to disseminate theory has to be properly contextualized. In the First World, it is not just a sub-topic of the mass line; there are barely any "masses" in the First World countries, except in particular minority groups. In cases where popularizing theory has worked, communists were either in power or on the road to power, or had a potentially revolutionary majority that it could work with. Without follow-up support and guidance, popularizing theory in the First World usually has led to diluting the communist movement and giving rise to militants who think they are communist, but are without experience in a range of struggles, including struggles against revisionism, and without the motivation to gain that experience.

MIWS has noticed recent attempts to popularize Arghiri Emmanuel's ideas, apparently independently of Maoism.[\(8\)](#) These are in international kinds of non-revolutionary publications that attract bourgeoisie-internationalist intellectuals and professionals with intellectual and material resources. In such settings, one may expect some people to read an article, read the bibliography or endnotes, and go along with reading Emmanuel's unequal exchange book and *Profit and Crises*. The rest will think, "That was interesting," and go on being bourgeois as usual, not claiming to be scientific-communist, no harm done. This is different than trying to popularize "Maoism" in a "radical" or "leftist" setting where ideas and language will be appropriated by white-nationalist or imperialist-integrationist leftists and already-mobilized exploiters seeking more super-profits, instead of sparking something new.

One theme that MIWS has stressed since its creation is that communist organization is scientific. That means that genuine scientific struggle and unity will exist within communist organization. Unevenness is a fact of any organization, but in the First World cult dynamics lead people off course, and so the people in a communist organization should have roughly the same levels of intellectual and political development. There is a tendency for cults to form where there isn't a revolutionary situation, but instead leaders and people who are led.

Popularization of theory implies that there is an existing unevenness among people who are vanguard material, and perhaps that people with similar development are lacking in a particular location. In the First World, in such circumstances and with no oppressed majority, one should see separate unconnected communist organizations (internally similar even if they are externally dissimilar) emerging, not one communist organization growing by recruiting followers. MIWS sees a need to disseminate knowledge of Arghiri Emmanuel's work and others' to move science forward, but this is different than building a following around an organization, Arghiri Emmanuel, or a particular source of theory. Theory should be spread among those who have the capability and appropriate situation (not a situation of developmental unevenness) needed to carry out scientific struggle and advancement.

Opposite of those who want to popularize scientific-communist theory among the First World "masses" are those who dismiss scientific-communist theory on international economic relations, such as Arghiri Emmanuel's, as "academic." The same people have no problem citing academics when it suits their positions or need for credibility. But the bourgeoisie's, including the First World labor aristocracy's, indignant reaction to theory such as Emmanuel's is proof enough that such theory lies in the arena of class struggle.

Some specific issues in Emmanuel's article

MIWS will conclude by briefly discussing a few of the specific issues in Emmanuel's article, "Socialist Project," that it has not already addressed.

There is an awkward reference to Rosa Luxemburg in Emmanuel's article. Emmanuel borrows an empirical example from Luxemburg. Firstly, it is unfortunate that there appears to be a typo in the reference, resulting in an error (which otherwise does not take away Emmanuel's point that capital has historically flowed from low-wage countries to less developed countries). But more importantly, Emmanuel's theory contradicts Luxemburg's. It should be remembered that, as with Emmanuel's other

writings, Emmanuel raises ideas and purposefully contradicts in presenting and developing his own theory. Emmanuel raises the idea that lack of productive and non-productive domestic consumption leads to the export of capital (which in Luxemburg's theory ends up leading to crisis in the exporting country and hurting workers there), but Emmanuel contradicts Luxemburg by arguing that low wages in the Third World result in a transfer of value to the First World, which enjoys a high degree of prosperity at the expense of Third World workers. The overall direction of the flow of capital and commodities is from the Third World to the First World. The main dynamic for revolution consists of the actions of the oppressed of the Third World, not the internal contradictions of the imperialist countries.

In regard to the re-proletarianization of the First World working class, by no means has the First World working class gained or regained a proletarian status. A proletarian First World working class remains within the realm of prediction and imagination. And nobody has as yet articulated how communist tasks should differ presently if the First World working class were to become proletarian. Arghiri Emmanuel writes: ". . . socialist revolution is possible in the Center only if events come about (originating from the periphery) making the Center cease to be the Center. In other words, *hic et nunc* the conclusion is unconditionally negative, and we must turn towards the periphery." The "Center" is still the "Center"; it has not ceased to be the "Center." One thing that Emmanuel does not address in his article is the need for reparations, only saying that the external source of capital needed for accelerated development to catch up with the First World level under capitalist dynamics is lacking. Even if unequal exchange were to end, and even if there were total autarky (which is not Emmanuel's proposal), any remaining unequal distribution of resources and assets would constitute a structural basis for the continuation of imperialist and the persistence of privilege. Revolution in the First World is not a matter of only cutting off resources to the First World. The First World would need to be expropriated of its accumulation of resources. Even if reparations took place and the First World started to lose the deep-rooted structural foundation of its existence, it is doubtful that the First World working class would become revolutionary. Historically, as Emmanuel's own examples illustrate, the oppressor nation working class has responded with counterrevolution when its interests were threatened.

As far as the nature of the relationship between the First World working class and the Third World working class, this particular article by Emmanuel differs with H. W.

Edward's position.⁽⁹⁾ H. W. Edwards did not address whether First World workers were net-recipients of surplus value and net-exploiters, but according to Edwards, the relationship between the First World workers and the Third World workers could become antagonistic, which implies that First World workers could be antagonistic toward Third World workers without a net transfer of value to the First World workers. Lenin, without speaking of net exploitation, also described the labor aristocracy, in his own country, as enemy.⁽¹⁰⁾ Thus, even Arghiri Emmanuel appears to underestimate the reactionary character of the First World working class, as in "Socialist Project" he suggests that antagonism is contingent on net exploitation. Although, Emmanuel in earlier writings had said that there was an absence of international solidarity connected to unequal exchange, without speaking of net exploitation by the First World workers.

In regard to the discussion of economism versus historical idealism, and discussions of spontaneity, consciousness, etc., it was Lenin's, Stalin's, Mao's and H. W. Edwards' position that revisionism and counterrevolution were related to the labor aristocracy. Certainly, the most salient problem today is not one of finding a theoretical balance between class struggle and the development of the productive forces as a determinant, but of analyzing -- and whether to analyze -- the class structure of the world. The most prominent difference is not between "economists" and "non-economists," but between those who recognize the interrelatedness of the class structures of the First World and the Third World and those who don't. Currently, most "communist" "Marxists" in the First World are unwilling to investigate international transfers of value and their impacts on class structure. They distract themselves and others with all kinds of concerns in what amounts to denying the relevance of surplus value to class structure under capitalism. The two causes of this, what appears to be a mental blockage preventing people from calculating surplus value, are Liberalism and parasitism: a preference for majority-oriented strategies and discussions, and an addiction to super-profits.

As regards Emmanuel's argument that low wages are a cause of underdevelopment, Emmanuel was responding to others at the time who were claiming that other things, such as competition from First World corporations making domestic Third world investment unprofitable, were responsible for the blockage of development in the Third World. MIWS is not going to get into the details of the debates here, but Emmanuel' argument should be viewed in the context of his larger theory about

capitalist reproduction, profit-rate equalization, prices, and purchasing power. Emmanuel was concerned with explaining why wages were not dependent on productivity, and also with explaining why decreasing or increasing wages did not simply (in a linear zero-sum way) increase or decrease profit available for investment within Third World nations. As to whether foreign investment has become more important, than the outflow of surplus value due to unequal exchange, in the blockage of development in the Third World since Arghiri Emmanuel wrote, MIWS and others have suggested that it has not.⁽¹¹⁾ Although the export of capital in the era of imperialism plays a role in unequal exchange through the equalization of the profit rate, trade with unequal exchange is likely a bigger source of super-profit for the First World than foreign investment with profit repatriation. Generally, the focus on "globalization" and "neo-liberalism" dominated by multinational corporations and foreign capital (divorced from any consideration of surplus value transferred to the labor aristocracy and so-called middle class of the First World) continues to be a distraction from a comprehensive understanding of contemporary imperialism, imperialist exploitation and parasitism, and their workings.

Unfortunately, while there have been recent calls to calculate global surplus value and transfers, only a few others besides MIWS seem to be willing to answer conclusively questions about the importance of unequal exchange in imperialism.⁽¹²⁾ As this pertains to what the structures and groups oppressing the proletariat are, much "Marxism" claiming to be internationalist has yet to be put on a scientific foundation.

Notes

- ^{1.} Cited in: John Brolin, "The Bias of the World : Theories of Unequal Exchange in History," doctoral thesis published as a monograph (no. 9) in *Lund Studies in Human Ecology* (series) (Lund, Sweden: Lund University Press, 2007).
- ^{2.} <http://maoist.ws/archive/economics/index.html#aesocialistproject>
- ^{3.} Some of these documents are available on MIWS either in part or in whole. Check <http://maoist.ws/archive/economics/index.html>.
- ^{4.} Claude Varlet, "Economism and Historical Idealism in the Writing of Charles Bettelheim," <http://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/rdv7n2/varlet.htm>
- ^{5.} MIWS note on September 3, 1969, *Peking Review* article "U.S. Imperialism Steps

Up Ruthless Plunder and Exploitation of Latin American People,"
<http://maoist.ws/archive/economics/latinamericaunequaltrade.html>

6. "The Essence of "Theory of Productive Forces" Is to Oppose Proletarian Revolution," <http://maoist.ws/archive/economics/essencetpf.html>

7. One instance of watering is to deny the political nature and consequences of Emmanuel's ideas. But one distortion by those who recognize that Emmanuel's ideas are political is the misrepresentation, of the importance Emmanuel saw in the absence of First World-Third World working class solidarity, to the effect that Emmanuel was a pessimist who thought revolution was impossible.

8. That is except, perhaps, via Samir Amin. Samir Amin has spoken about Maoism on different occasions. MIWS has major disagreements with Amin that MIWS does not discuss explicitly in this article.

Amin, who is concerned with international economic relations and transfers, has cited Arghiri Emmanuel in his own writing and credits Emmanuel for theoretical contributions. People who seriously draw from Amin are not unaware of Arghiri Emmanuel. Yet, the amount of interest in Emmanuel's work in the last two decades has been small and disproportionate to the importance of Emmanuel's work.

9. H. W. Edwards is the author of *Labor Aristocracy, Mass Base of Social Democracy*, available at

<http://www.etext.org/Politics/MIM/contemp/whitemyths/edwards/index.html>, and *Anatomy of Revisionism*, introduced at <http://maoist.ws/whatsnew/20070722aradded.html>.

10. Critics of Maoists and Arghiri Emmanuel sometimes emphasize what they claim are problems with the idea that a majority of First World workers are net-exploiters. The existence of First World workers who are net-exploiters is crucial for different questions, but one question of basic orientation since Lenin is whether to recognize that there is a labor aristocracy and its characteristics. Net exploitation or no exploitation, most "communists" in the First World deny that a majority of First World workers are labor aristocrats, which is itself damning evidence of a lack of science. There are also those who purport to raise problems with the idea that are majority of First World workers are unproductive from the point of view of capital accumulation, but do not address the labor aristocracy issue.

The difference between an utterly bourgeois net-exploiting labor aristocracy and the

labor aristocracy as it was traditionally understood before the middle of the twentieth century is, however, relevant to assessing the revisionist theory of the productive forces today. It affects how one views possibilities for developing productive forces even if one believes that a majority of First World workers are labor aristocrats. In this article, MIWS addresses different versions of the theory of the productive forces apparently compatible with the labor aristocracy thesis (to say nothing of chauvinists who don't even recognize the labor aristocracy in the First World or claim that it is more exploited than Third World workers).

11. "Draft: Examining the export of capital and parasitism today,"
<http://maoist.ws/theory/economics/ecdraft.html>

12. Paul Cooney, "Towards an Empirical Measurement of International Transfers of Value," in *The New Value Controversy and the Foundations of Economics* (pp. 241-260), edited by Alan Freeman, Andrew Kliman, and Julian Wells (Cheltenham, UK, and Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar, 2004).

Readers will notice points where MIWS would obviously disagree with Paul Cooney, but Cooney has called for calculating international transfers of value. MIWS awaits a calculation based on Cooney's work that would shed light on parasitism and the global class structure, but isn't holding its breathe.