

A Thousand Truths

Maoist (Third Worldist) FAQ

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Didn't Communism already fail?

The idea that Communism failed, and that it is “a good idea on paper, but doesn't work in the real world” are popular sentiments even among those who are at least nominally progressive. The fact of the matter is however, these notions are based on a very one-sided version of history.

The ruling class has a clear material interest in suppressing movements and ideologies that threaten its position in society. Manipulating history and discrediting ideological and political leaders with half-truths and outright lies are two of the most common means of accomplishing this.

The reality is that in the 20th century, communism lifted millions out of dire poverty and it gave political and economic power to many of the world's most oppressed people. It greatly increased life expectancy, significantly reduced infant mortality rates, provided healthcare, education, food, and good employment to hundreds of millions who had been denied it for their entire lives previously.

While it is true that the international communist movement of the 20th century failed to wash away the scourge of capitalism-imperialism, the failures of socialism were not due to some inherent flaw in Marxism, nor were they the inevitable result of “human nature.” Socialism only failed when it abandoned its revolutionary principles and allowed for the beginnings of capitalist restoration.

It is also worth noting that every country that sought to break free from imperialist domination and build socialism came under fierce attack by the US and its allies. Genocidal wars, sanctions, state sponsored anti-communist terrorism, and other destabilization efforts by the imperialist powers stunted the development of socialism.

As Marxists, we look at history in all of its complexity and nuance. We can look at the socialist experiments of the 20th century and see what went wrong and just as importantly, we can see what went right. We can look at the victories and losses of the communist movement and in doing so, we can find lessons we can apply to avoid the same pitfalls in the future.

Wouldn't a classless society go against human nature?

As Andrew Collier once said in *Marx: A Beginners Guide*, "To look at people in capitalist society and conclude that human nature is egoism is like looking at people in a factory where pollution is destroying their lungs and saying that it is human nature to cough."

Appealing to "human nature" is one of the favorite tactics of apologists for the status quo. However, those who claim that communism goes against "human nature" would likely be hard-pressed to define what "human nature" even is.

It is certainly the case that in any particular historical period, there appear to be patterns in human behavior that are fairly consistent. But have these patterns always been the same? The very first formations which we can consider to be societies as such were communal. With little division of labor, resources were worked in common and distributed equitably. Remnants of some of these societies remain in some regions of the world. In slave societies such as ancient Greece and Rome, a mass of slaves provided for essentially the whole livelihoods of a privileged elite who governed society. This arrangement was justified by the thinkers of the day as being "natural," but surely few would make that case today. In feudalism, land and resources were worked mostly by small property-owners, predominantly agricultural workers, and a fairly substantial aristocracy forcibly took a portion of their product in the form of "tribute" to sustain the aristocracy's wealth and power. These highly hierarchical, tributary systems were also justified as "natural" by feudal ideologues. Yet we know the feudal mode of production gave way to capitalism. Today, society is characterized by a high degree of division of labor and private ownership of the means of production. Capitalists, who own the means of production, hire workers to generate profit. This arrangement is largely seen as "natural." Yet, is it any more "natural" than any previous mode of production? Even within the global capitalist system today, there are substantial variations in human behavior across the world.

Given the vast differences in how societies have organized themselves across history and geography, any concept of a consistent "human nature" drawn from this would be so abstract as to be totally useless. We often see statements like, "Humans are naturally creative," or, "Humans are naturally selfish," etc. However, what is precisely meant by these statements is so unclear that they can be used to justify *any* political position. Indeed, capitalists, fascists, anarchists, and even some communists have all cited some abstract "human nature" to try to sup-

port their ideas. And if an idea can be used to justify *any* position, it really isn't very useful at all.

Rather than appealing to abstract, useless concepts like "human nature," Marxists are interested in discovering how material conditions—the arrangement of productive forces in society and how they are utilized—shape how societies function, and how people behave. Our understanding of the world leads to the conclusion that capitalism creates the conditions for its own demise, and sets the stage for a new kind of society, one which operates on the principle of "from each according to one's ability, to each according to one's needs." Of course, this new kind of society won't simply spring up out of the old one spontaneously. Revolution is required. Yet, Marxists know a better world is possible, and we know this because we understand that human behavior is, at the end of the day, shaped by the conditions in which we live. If we understand these conditions, we can understand how to change them, and by extension, how to change ourselves.

Don't you realize no one will buy this stuff?

Ironically, there is a hint of truth to this question. A majority residing in the First World enjoy incredibly high standards of living which come at the expense of the super-exploited Third World proletariat. In this particular context, it is true that most will not easily be moved to engage in revolutionary struggle.

However, there are contradictions that exist in the First World that can be seized by revolutionaries to spark resistance. National oppression, mass incarceration, imperialist war, police brutality, and patriarchal violence among other symptoms of this society directly affect millions of people within the US. There are already movements fighting against these phenomena, but most are focused on winning minor reforms within the current system. The role of communists is to encourage these movements to take on a revolutionary Marxist perspective and practice. This is not only possible, but absolutely necessary for our very survival.

Capitalism by its very nature, increasingly poses an existential threat to life as we know it. Through the destruction of critical ecosystems, pollution, and the rapid consumption of non-renewable resources, the Earth's capacity to maintain life has been greatly compromised. These trends can only be reversed by implementing an economic model focused first and foremost on the sustainable fulfillment of human needs—Socialism. The revolutionary overthrow and expropriation of the capitalist class is our only hope for a sustainable future. A healthy, sustainable future is a potential which can appeal all of humanity, and can potentially mobilize large sections of the First World population.

What would a society based on Marxist philosophy look like?

From a Marxist perspective, this question is predicated on an idealist error: making the false assumption that society is based on philosophy. Instead, philosophies – including 'Marxist philosophy' – develop out of and are conditioned by the societies in which they exist. Marxists see class struggle, the ongoing contest between different related groups over the conditions of economic activity, as the engine of social change.

As for the societal goals of Marxism, there are two. Marxists use the term 'Communism' as a final end: the type of society they hope to build. In this case, the notion of communism is a society with neither exploitation in the relations of production, the systems of oppression and states that enforce conditions under which exploitation occur, nor wide-ranging alienation derived from the separation of interests engendered by such divisions. In such a communist society, the means of production, i.e., the physical components necessary to sustain human life, would be the common property of all and hence the exclusive property of no one. Economic activity would be planned in a rational manner in order to provide a reasonable standard of living for everyone. The erasure of social divisions as an economic necessity and reality would end the need for the state and systems of oppression. Finally, an increasing ability to provide for people's needs would greatly reduce the labor time necessary to sustain the requirements of life, in turn allowing more time and resources for people to pursue their passions and realize their full potential in a healthy and uninhibited manner.

Because Marxists see class struggle as the means of building communism, the conditions of class struggle are seen by Marxists as an end unto itself. In this respect, a more immediate aim of Marxism is 'Socialism': a stage of social, political, cultural, and economic development which sets the stage for communism. For Marxists, socialism is not a static system consisting of various benchmarks. Instead, socialism is understood to be a process whereby the oppressed masses become the ascendant force in class struggle. They do this by building their own institutions of power and which they then wield over the former and remaining ruling classes. Economic activity increasingly becomes subordinated to the political aims of the newly-empowered revolutionary classes. The conscious production of use-values comes to dominate and strangle out production regulated through exchange-value and profit. Socialism is thus a period of development – one only made possible by the victory of the masses in class struggle – which sets the ma-

terial, social, and cultural foundation for the further development of society - through further class struggle - toward communism.

Finally, the original question relates to the role of philosophy in history. For Marxists, when a set of ideas represents or advances the fundamental interest of a particular group, it is described as an ideology. Principally, we can speak of two types of ideologies. Bourgeois ideologies advance the interests of various sections of the ruling classes. Revolutionary ideologies advance the interest of the oppressed masses, particularly their long-term interest of struggling against capitalist-imperialism and building socialism and communism. While it is true that societies are not 'based on' ideologies, these opposing bourgeois and revolutionary ideologies necessarily contend with each other in the sphere of class struggle while informing the strategies and abilities the respective warring classes. Thus, ideologies - born from class struggle - are also an important element of class struggle.

If 'Marxist philosophy' is to be a notable element of any future society, this will only be due to its adaption to the actual conditions of today's class struggle and its ability to play a positive role in advancing the interest of the oppressed and exploited masses.

Does Marxism oppose democracy?

Let us start with a premise: everyone knows the current political system in North America is flawed and most people are fed up with it. Everyone knows America's "democracy" is limited to voting every few years without actually changing anything. Everyone knows something has to change, but the problem is what and how.

Is it really possible to call "our" countries "democracies" when all the government does is attack its own subjects and foreign populations? All capitalist governments are inevitably bound with the economic structure on which they are built. A capitalist economy requires the constant pursuit of profit, an undertaking of the minority of people who control capital; this minority is composed mainly of white men, at the disadvantage of all other, oppressed social groups. This is why, despite the opposition of the majority of the oppressed populations, austerity measures are taken, large sections of oppressed populations are ghettoized, millions are put in prison for breaking laws most people oppose, while corporate profits remain at their highest.

This situation is quite easy to explain: in a society divided into classes with opposing interests, political life will be structured to serve the interests of the dominant class against those of the often color-coded and gender-coded dominated class. So, while communism rightly repudiates today's "democracy" as a political form akin to that of ancient Greek democracy, "democracy for the slave owners", it proposes a radically different form of democratic decision-making that truly vindicates the word's original meaning: power to the people.

Let's compare the functioning of a capitalist democracy with that of a communist one.

Under capitalism, state bureaucrats act on behalf of capitalists because the logic of the capitalist system requires it, not because of their personal beliefs or affiliations, although the latter may be present.

The economic functioning of the capitalist state is directly dependent on the economy, an economy where capital and land are owned by a handful of private property owners who make decisions regarding investment, wages, etc. As just one example, government policy is in large part dependent on the cyclical "health" of the economy. In times of prosperity, the government can tax more freely, for instance, with little resistance from business owners. The same is not true in times of crisis, where the state must settle with lower revenue and orient itself toward economic recovery. The state may be forced to bail out banks

and corporations (as opposed to devoting resources to social welfare) during economic crisis in order to keep the economy functioning. As can be seen throughout the history of capitalism, state economic policy *by necessity* benefits the wealthy few in a capitalist system.

Not only is the state forced to mediate society at the level of economics, it also has to retain legitimacy, which is dependent on the economy. The population often sees the state as responsible for economic problems, and during economic recessions or slow downs the support for a standing regime declines. In republics like the United States, the party in power will likely be ousted.

Business confidence is the key: where the state undermines it, private business refuses to invest or moves their assets to another country; where the state fosters it, capitalists invest and bring capital in. In the era of imperialism, the international mobility of capital and its level of international concentration causes capital to flow out of a country when profitable investments can't be found.

For an example, we may look at the UK's Labour Party. Originally born as a socialist party, it was quick to turn sides and become a neoliberal one in order to cope with the constraints imposed by the economy and the political landscape's requirements.

We may interject another mechanism of capitalist "democracy". While parliaments are elected and approve laws, the state bureaucrats who form proposals, carry out research and generally put forth the ideas to be implemented through state policy aren't, nor are they transparent agents. So again, the control of the average citizen is stunted. It is with these agents that capitalists put forth their independent ideas on what is needed through lobbying and associating. This link is a transmission belt that lets the state know what policies capital needs.

Political power is constituted outside the state apparatus in capitalist relations of production, more specifically in the private ownership and control of productive assets.

The legitimacy of capitalist political power also has private control of means of production as its prerequisite. It is well known that most media in capitalist countries is either funded by corporations or controlled by the state, with independent information outlets relying on their own forces which can't be compared to those of the largest oligopolies or state bureaucracies. Even the electoral process runs on dollars: to run for political positions, a lot of money is needed to launch a campaign. To have this money one must either be rich, in which case one will further the interests of their class, or be a member (in the US) of the two corporate parties, Republicans and Democrats. These parties have a

specific capitalist platform and even they, running on donations, see a lot of cash inflows from corporations. In short, wherever we look money is the king piece of the chess table.

We all have freedom of speech, but we don't all have presses with which to exercise it. We all have freedom of assembly, but we can't afford meeting halls even pooling our finances together. We can defend ourselves in court, but capitalists can afford the best defense. We have a right to vote, but capitalists have a right to form policies.

Revolutionary communists stand for the abolition of class society and the end of private property. We stand for the application of the democratic principle not only in the sphere of political life, but also the sphere of economic life. Going back to the experience of the French and Chinese communards, we advocate the practice of communist democracy. While under capitalism political power is formed at the level of relations of production, in communism political power is direct, transparent, and in the hands of the world's workers. To give an example, here is Marx describing the workings of the Paris Commune:

"The Commune was formed of the municipal councilors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at short terms. The majority of its members were naturally working men, or acknowledged representatives of the working class. The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary body, executive and legislative at the same time. Instead of continuing to be the agent of the Central Government, the police was at once stripped of its political attributes, and turned into the responsible, and at all times revocable, agent of the Commune. So were the officials of all other branches of the administration. From the members of the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at workman's wage. The vested interests and the representation allowances of the high dignitaries of state disappeared along with the high dignitaries themselves. Public functions ceased to be the private property of the tools of the Central Government. Not only municipal administration, but the whole initiative hitherto exercised by the state was laid into the hands of the Commune. [...] Like the rest of public servants, magistrates and judges were to be elective, responsible, and revocable. [...] In a rough sketch of national organization, which the Commune had no time to develop, it states clearly that the Commune was to be the political form of even the smallest country hamlet, and that in the rural districts the standing army was to be replaced by a national militia, with an extremely short term of service. The rural communities of every district were to administer their common affairs by an assembly of delegates in the central town, and these district assemblies were again to send deputies to the National Delegation in Paris, each delegate to be at any time revocable and bound by the *mandat impératif* (formal instructions) of his con-

stituents. The few but important functions which would still remain for a central government were not to be suppressed, as has been intentionally misstated, but were to be discharged by Communal and thereafter responsible agents." - Karl Marx, "The Civil War in France"

Does communism oppose individuality?

"In bourgeois society capital is independent and has individuality, while the living person is dependent and has no individuality. And the abolition of this state of things is called by the bourgeois, abolition of individuality and freedom! And rightly so. The abolition of bourgeois individuality, bourgeois independence, and bourgeois freedom is undoubtedly aimed at." - Marx & Engels

This allegation is a collection of two propaganda methods: the ideograph, a word that doesn't have a clear meaning but gives the impression of having one, and the thought-terminating cliché, a phrase passing as folk wisdom built with the purpose of ending a debate without a critical engagement.

If we are to examine communism's allegiance to individuality, we must first define what is meant by individuality.

The capitalist economists have their definition of individuality. They make freedom and individuality their motto, stating that the system they advocate brings in more of these valued things.

Yet the global situation in reality is such that a system exists where vast amounts of the world's peoples live in permanent wage-slavery. It is a world of consequent rule of the propertied classes versus the propertyless classes. This system reaps the lives of millions every year, whose last days are marked by starvation, disease, and even war.

The promises of capitalism, such as "you can become the next Steve Jobs through aspiration and achievement!", is a justification of injustice by means of exception. For every Steve Jobs, there are 1,200,000 Foxconn workers paid \$350 a month (at 10 hours a day, 6 days a week). If we thought about it one second, we would realize that for one person to reach the skies of the global hierarchy of finance capital, millions have to remain in misery, for the latter is precisely what makes the rich richer.

Capitalist society is a society of money. "One dollar, one vote" is a true proposition, the obvious conclusion being: this is a society by, of and for the rich. Because individuality under capitalism is necessarily linked to the workings of the money system, people's desires are subjected to the profit driven market. In their workplace, no creativity or pleasure is permitted, just repetitive, alienating tasks that produce profit for someone else. Outside of the workplace, individuality is reduced to

consumerism, to the false promise of choice and difference. A false promise indeed: what is the difference between Pepsi and Coca Cola if not the advertising campaign?

Individuality is dependent on society, this should be a truism. In capitalist society, capitalists run the economy, the media, the government, social spaces, etc. So our capacity to act as individuals and to express our talents and abilities, abundant among the people whom capitalism suppresses on a daily basis, is crushed.

Communism, however, means the working classes and the oppressed peoples of the world overthrow capitalism and run society for their own interest in a democratic and collective fashion. To say this would erase individualism is to lack faith in the majority of the people and their ability to run the world any better than the minority who are currently in control. A socialist society's economy is a democratically planned economy for the common good, not an elitist economy made for the profit of a few. In this society, work would have a new meaning and be free from the profit motive, so that individuals may express their individuality in their daily work and outside of work, without having their workday regimented by the market or competition, without their creativity being impaired by the requirements of an exploitative system.

Socialism? That means more state regulations, wage hikes, and welfare programs?

Liberals sometimes refer to the economies of places like Sweden and Norway as “socialist.” In truth they are anything but.

Socialism is a period of transition between capitalism and communism. In a socialist society, the proletariat—the class of workers that is exploited by the capitalists today—become the ruling class. Moreover, a socialist society is one that is moving toward abolition of commodity production (i.e. production for the purpose of exchange) and more toward production for the needs of humanity and the earth. Since commodity production is the result of class based rule over the means of production, socialism is a move toward a classless society. In short, a socialist society is one in which capitalist relations are dying out, and communist relations based on common ownership of the means of production are emerging.

Seen in this light, it is clear that the Nordic countries and other social welfare states are not in any way “socialist.” They are as capitalist as any other capitalist society, and the profit motive is what fundamentally drives production there.

Workers in welfare states certainly command more wealth than in many other countries. Yet we must ask: how do workers in welfare states have such a high standard of living while capitalists there continue to make competitive profits? The only way this is possible is because the capitalists in welfare states, along with other less generous capitalist states, exploit the labor of the Third World and attain superprofits, a portion of which are distributed to the workers in those welfare states. In other words, the relatively high standard of living of workers in welfare capitalist states is based on the misery of the workers in the Third World. The Nordic “model” is incompatible with the liberation of workers worldwide.

Generally speaking, workers in the First World consume exorbitantly more than workers in the Third World, even in capitalist countries with fewer welfare programs than the Nordic countries. For example, it is plainly impossible for the entire world to consume at the level that the average person in the United States does. The only way workers in the First World are able to consume so much is because workers in the Third World are consuming very little. So for the First World, socialism would not in general mean “wage hikes” either. If socialism were to

take hold tomorrow on a global level, most workers in the First World would see a marked decrease in their material living standards.

For all of these reasons, we cannot simply equate socialism with things like higher wages and increased living standards. For most of the world, socialism would bring about these things, but not for all of the world, and that is certainly not the key factor.

Most fundamentally, socialism is the path to communism—it is defined by what is required to abolish classes and commodity production once and for all. And it must be seen as doing this on a global level, not just for the well off countries.

What is capitalism?

To be uncontroversial in our definition, let's refer to the Collins English Dictionary. The suffix "-ism" is a suffix used to form nouns indicating a doctrine, system, or body of principles and practices. Capital-ism is hence the "system of capital", or the system where the relationship between people and what we know as "capital" is dominant.

When people produce for each other, social relationships seize upon the objects utilized in production. Any instrument of labor, for example a book printer, can enter into various types of social relations. When we use a printer to print a book, the printer is part of the process of production of the book. This process of production happens in a society which has a specific configuration. If we gifted the book we printed to a friend of ours, it would involve no monetary transaction and would only be for their direct consumption; this exchange would not be a capitalist one. Using the same printer, we could be printing books in a capitalist printing factory. Those books would be sold in the market and become part of the capitalist division of labor, producing a profit for the factory owner.

In this peculiar case, the most important characteristic of the book is not its utility for a friend of ours but the customer's exchange of the book for money from their own pocket, and the profit that can be realized by selling the book as a commodity. Here the useful properties of the book and the printer are reduced to their ability to realize profits for a capitalist.

In two exactly identical labor processes we can observe two entirely different social effects resulting from the set of relationships in which they are inserted. For the capitalist, the purpose of the printer, and indeed, of the factory itself, the paper and ink needed as inputs, the money used to buy these inputs, and the labor of his workers, are all means to the end of profit and become incarnations of capital.

So capital is a social relation. It is production inputs which create profit for capitalists when connected with labor. Instruments of production exist in every society, but they become capital only with capitalism. They are capital insofar as capitalists employ them to produce commodities for the purpose of profitable exchange. Profit is generated by the capitalist class paying workers less than the necessary costs of producing a commodity. Capitalists use money to acquire labor power from workers and means of production to produce commodities which they sell on the market for a profit. This profit is then reinvested to make more commodities and more capital in an endless loop.

A precondition for capitalist production is the divorce between workers and the means of production they work with, the latter being a monopoly of the capitalist class which utilizes them to accumulate profits, leaving crumbs for the workers. Under capitalism, workers are free in a twofold manner: they are free from owning means of production, and they are free to choose who to subordinate themselves to in order to gain meager means of subsistence.

This separation of workers from the means of production is what makes capitalism a class-based society. Because capitalists' aim in production is profit, and profit comes from paying workers less, there is a conflict of interests between the majority of workers and the minority of capitalists.

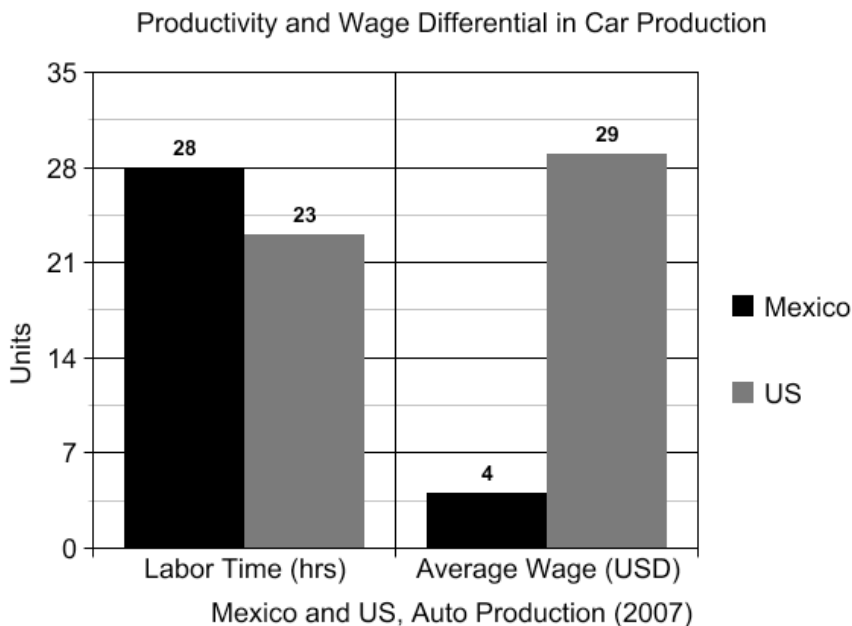
Capitalists can't squeeze profits out of workers' labor just by lengthening the working day, however. When this limit is reached and the workers' won't tolerate any longer workday, the capitalists are forced to introduce machinery in the labor process to increase their profits. To do so, they invest in constant capital, i.e. means of production, raw materials, and other non-labor inputs. However, constant capital can only transfer its value to a product, and not create new value. Only labor can create new value, so the tendency to invest in constant capital leads to a falling rate of profit on investments at a systemic level. The fall in profitability produces a fall in the rate of capital accumulation, and the latter leads to slow growth of GDP, slow growth of output, rising debt burdens, etc., which taken together lead to an economic crisis every few years.

Capitalism is uncoordinated. It is an economic system regulated indirectly by the profit motive and production for exchange, not for use. To the extent that demand has importance under capitalism, capitalist economic calculation is based on units of money, not units of people. A dollar is a vote on the market. Because capitalists control vast amounts of wealth as opposed to workers, the demand of a single capitalist can be worth as much as that of thousands of workers, if not billions (the world's 85 richest people are as wealthy as the poorest 3 billion).

To end the problems caused by capitalist class society, such as unemployment, underemployment, homelessness, hunger, crises, poverty, and even wars, RAIM proposes the restructuring of society based on the democratic and rational control over the production and allocation of wealth. Banks, enterprises, farms, all productive activities shall be subject to the democratic control of the workers who operate them and shall be coordinated through planning according to need, as opposed to guessing according to profit.

Doesn't Capitalism reward hard work?

In 2012, the CEO of Oracle Corporation made \$96,160,696. Meanwhile, the minimum wage worker in Bangladesh makes about \$816 a year. Does the CEO of Oracle work over 100,000 times harder than the Bangladeshi worker?



Cope p. 241

We don't even have to compare workers to CEO's. Let's compare workers in the United States to workers in Mexico. Both Mexican and U.S. workers perform about the same amount of labor in car production, but U.S. workers are paid more than seven times more (see Zak Cope's *Divided World, Divided Class*). The idea that "hard work" is what "earns" people their wealth in capitalist society is simply absurd. How much money someone makes really has very little to do with the amount of work they perform. In truth, value in capitalism is generated by human labor, and the wealthiest people control the wealth they do because they benefit from the exploitation of others' labor.

Can't we just get capitalism to work for everybody?

(Many argue that capitalism could somehow be managed for the direct benefit of wider sections of people. Though made with noble pretensions, such arguments don't withstand the test of logic. Nor will they withstand the test of history.)

Some might argue that while capitalism is inherently unequal, it provides for the creation of a much wider social product than other available modes of production. Hence, the inequalities created under capitalism are justified by its supposed efficiency of producing more.

These arguments holds true up to a certain point. In fact, Marxism postulated that capitalism is historically justified precisely for bringing together the greatest use of the productive forces, the result of which make possible the next leap in human history: communism. However, as capitalism lives on, its wider utility wears away to reveal a whole reactionary set of productive relations which inhibit the positive development of humanity in its pursuit of regression. Instead of real breakthroughs in fighting disease, we get pet obesity medicine. Instead of feeding people and stopping starvation and malnutrition, capitalist-imperialism necessitates that around of a third of edible food goes to waste – often under the logic of keeping food process high. While 'progressive' figureheads like Obama admit the grave environmental consequences facing humanity due to capitalist-imperialism, he is the chief salesman for a system which maintains itself on ever expanding ecological destruction. Instead of satisfying of wants and needs, modern capitalist-imperialism devotes ever-increasing resources to expanding them through marketing, sales efforts, packaging, and 'planned obsolescence.'

Some argue for various "alternatives" to modern capitalist-imperialism, usually in the form of a "mixed-economy." Such a "mixed economy," proponents argue, would have strong regulations in favor of workers and would include a greater degree of participatory democracy. This, they argue, would ensure capitalism "worked for everyone."

These arguments ignore the manner in which the internal dynamics of capitalism, based on maintaining and pursuing greater rates of profit via increasing the rate of exploitation, inherently concentrate wealth, thus propelling structural inequalities forward. Even under the anarchist utopia of autonomous worker-ran enterprises, so long as they traded between them in the form of commodities based on law of exchange-value measured through labor time, capitalism would still be in

operation and the competition between individual enterprises for favorable terms of trade would engender structural disparities between them. This is why communists posit socialism as a stage of human development marked by the increasing production and allocation of use-value under a manner which is increasingly democratic and rational, and decreasingly based on exchange-value and commodity trading.

Of course, socialism or a “mixed-economy” are not the only possibilities on the horizon. With the advancements of the productive forces over the past century to the point where decreasing portions of labor-power are necessary to fulfill its reproductive requirements, this enables a system in which increasing portions of surplus-labor can be devoted not toward maintaining existing hierarchies of relations of production. In layman’s terms, there is an increasing tendency (and a fascistic one at that) of US-led imperialism, one which is noted by an increasing proportions of investments in militarism and less coercive means of maintaining hegemony. This, of course, relates in an antagonistic manner to an upstart Russian and Chinese-led imperialist bloc. So, the real “alternatives” readily apparent from modern capitalist-imperialism are either a dystopian future of all-around and and scientific control under a neo-tributary hegemony or a possible apocalyptic world war. Does that work for everyone?

It is well-meaning liberalism and reformism that are utopian, not communism. Those reformers are in fact idealistic dreamers who believe the trajectory of capitalist-imperialism can be altered without struggling against capitalism altogether. More than just idealistic dreaming however, the notion that capitalism can be progressively reformed is a convenient bit of ideology for those who benefit from a productive system which is already decrepit.

If capitalism is so bad, why do we have it?

Capitalism developed out of a network of tributary (i.e., feudal) systems. England, a relative backwater of the European continent up into the Stuart era, had decisively invested proceeds from the slave trade into domestic production, specifically into production on a piece-meal and waged basis, leading to the development of greater productive efficiency via reinvestment into expanding and developing the means of production. Within a span of centuries, England was able to industrially outpace and militarily dominate existing tributary systems the world over while directly colonizing much of the world. However, the world-transforming productive forces unleashed in England would not be their own. Eventually, capitalism itself become a dominant mode of production globally and the US took the reigns as the leading power following World War II.

Compared to the previous tributary mode of production, which had existed for thousands of years and was based on agricultural production, capitalism has been in existence for a relatively short period of time. Nonetheless, its effect has been drastic. Never before has humanity had so much power to either collectively advance or destroy itself.

Albert Einstein, the world renowned physicist, pointed out the fundamental problems with capitalism and the need for socialism in his article "Why Socialism?"[1]:

"...All human beings, whatever their position in society, are suffering from this process of deterioration. Unknowingly prisoners of their own egotism, they feel insecure, lonely, and deprived of the naive, simple, and unsophisticated enjoyment of life. Man can find meaning in life, short and perilous as it is, only through devoting himself to society.

"The economic anarchy of capitalist society as it exists today is, in my opinion, the real source of the evil. We see before us a huge community of producers the members of which are unceasingly striving to deprive each other of the fruits of their collective labor—not by force, but on the whole in faithful compliance with legally established rules. In this respect, it is important to realize that the means of production—that is to say, the entire productive capacity that is needed for producing consumer goods as well as additional capital goods—may legally be, and for the most part are, the private property of individuals.

For the sake of simplicity, in the discussion that follows I shall call "workers" all those who do not share in the ownership of the means of production—although this does not quite correspond to the customary

use of the term. The owner of the means of production is in a position to purchase the labor power of the worker. By using the means of production, the worker produces new goods which become the property of the capitalist. The essential point about this process is the relation between what the worker produces and what he is paid, both measured in terms of real value. Insofar as the labor contract is "free," what the worker receives is determined not by the real value of the goods he produces, but by his minimum needs and by the capitalists' requirements for labor power in relation to the number of workers competing for jobs. It is important to understand that even in theory the payment of the worker is not determined by the value of his product.

Private capital tends to become concentrated in few hands, partly because of competition among the capitalists, and partly because technological development and the increasing division of labor encourage the formation of larger units of production at the expense of smaller ones. The result of these developments is an oligarchy of private capital; the enormous power of which cannot be effectively checked even by a democratically organized political society. This is true since the members of legislative bodies are selected by political parties, largely financed or otherwise influenced by private capitalists who, for all practical purposes, separate the electorate from the legislature. The consequence is that the representatives of the people do not in fact sufficiently protect the interests of the underprivileged sections of the population. Moreover, under existing conditions, private capitalists inevitably control, directly or indirectly, the main sources of information (press, radio, education). It is thus extremely difficult, and indeed in most cases quite impossible, for the individual citizen to come to objective conclusions and to make intelligent use of his political rights.

The situation prevailing in an economy based on the private ownership of capital is thus characterized by two main principles: first, means of production (capital) are privately owned and the owners dispose of them as they see fit; second, the labor contract is free. Of course, there is no such thing as a pure capitalist society in this sense. In particular, it should be noted that the workers, through long and bitter political struggles, have succeeded in securing a somewhat improved form of the "free labor contract" for certain categories of workers. But taken as a whole, the present day economy does not differ much from "pure" capitalism.

Production is carried on for profit, not for use. There is no provision that all those able and willing to work will always be in a position to find employment; an "army of unemployed" almost always exists. The worker is constantly in fear of losing his job. Since unemployed and poorly paid workers do not provide a profitable market, the production of consumers' goods is restricted, and great hardship is the conse-

quence. Technological progress frequently results in more unemployment rather than in an easing of the burden of work for all. The profit motive, in conjunction with competition among capitalists, is responsible for an instability in the accumulation and utilization of capital which leads to increasingly severe depressions. Unlimited competition leads to a huge waste of labor, and to that crippling of the social consciousness of individuals which I mentioned before."

Einstein went on to describe the only "one way to eliminate" the "grave evils" of capitalism as through:

"the establishment of a socialist economy, accompanied by an educational system which would be oriented toward social goals. In such an economy, the means of production are owned by society itself and are utilized in a planned fashion. A planned economy, which adjusts production to the needs of the community, would distribute the work to be done among all those able to work and would guarantee a livelihood to every man, woman, and child."

We disagree with some of details of the terms and understandings Einstein presents on socialism. Yet he essentially gets the point: capitalism is not the best of possible worlds. Instead, it directly benefits a minority while maintaining contradictions which set itself against increasing number of people.

Notes

1. Albert Einstein, "Why Socialism?", <http://monthlyreview.org/2009/05/01/why-socialism/>

How can you say Americans are not exploited!? Millions of Americans live in abject poverty!

Often times, self-described Marxists are surprised or even angered by our line that most workers in the US are not exploited.

We admit many people in the US live in relative poverty and that a minority are exploited. A smaller portion are marginalized, highly oppressed, and live under acute poverty. Likewise, oppression is a reality with the First World, and many peoples are subject to national-colonial and gender oppression inside the militarized borders of imperialist powers.

However, those who are exploited in the First World are a minority in their respective countries and do not form a stable proletarian class capable of carrying through revolution on its own accord, i.e., separate from the proletariat at large. Instead, whatever exploited minority which exists in the First World is often under the cultural and ideological hegemony of a majority of exploiting and parasitic classes.

When we say that Americans are not exploited, we are making a qualitative claim about the consumption of the social product relative to its production. In short, First World workers consume more (socially necessary labor time) than they expend. That is, First World workers are able to consume more labor (in the form of commodities) than they themselves contribute. Moreover, much of the work First Worlders engage in is superfluous or tertiary: it serves no purpose but the realization of surplus labor value and the maintenance of exploitation. Does this apply to all workers in the First World? Of course not. But it does accurately characterize a majority of workers in First World countries.

For a number of reasons, it is important to understand the realities of global class structure:

- First, the theory of the labor aristocracy explains why First World and US workers are so conservative, apathetic, or otherwise content with imperialist social-democracies.
- Secondly, it helps us understand the labor aristocracy as a root of opportunism and a bastion of reaction, allowing us to locate the true proletariat “lower” among Third World-centered workers.
- Third, the labor aristocracy is a universal phenomenon under capitalist-imperialism and is not restricted in time and space to

the US or modern imperialist countries. Thus, it has implications for the understanding of imperialism generally.

- Fourthly, in this regard, the labor aristocracy has an economic function in the transference, saturation, and concentration of stolen wealth into handful of major economic capitals.
- Finally, broadly grasping the theory of the labor aristocracy is important for avoiding economist and reformist errors.

So while it is perfectly reasonable to assume some in the First World are exploited, it is liberal to use this fact to obscure the general picture of imperialist parasitism by the First World population at large. Likewise, it is either utopian or fascistic to demand an equitable re-distribution of wealth in the First World without accounting for its origin in the super-exploitation of the Third World.

The United States is a country of well over three hundred million people and riddled with contradictions. Ultimately, revolutionaries are better suited to studying and organizing around these contradictions rather than relying on a lazy reading of Marxism.

Strategically, we are better suited to rely on the world's majority rather than an abstracted "millions" of people in "abject poverty" in the US.

It is important to remember a number of things. First, a Third Worldist analysis of classes in modern society explains, not causes, the passivity and conservatism of First World workers. Secondly, a Third Worldist analysis does not absolve the need for revolutionary organizing in the First World. Instead, it demands the critical and creative application of revolutionary theory in accordance with the need to develop a broad united front for global new democratic and socialist revolution.

Isn't Marxism eurocentric?

In the academic realm, the argument that Marx and Marxists are eurocentric is often made; postcolonial theorists have arrived at the conclusion that Marx was a European chauvinist, and that the Marxists who followed him are as guilty of European chauvinism as he was. The main critic in this field is Edward Said, who criticized Marx's keenness to praise the bourgeoisie's internationalization of capital ("Capital batters down all Chinese walls") and his critique of Marx's emphasis on the positive aspects of colonialism in his article on British rule in India (dated 1853).

This critique of Marxism is rather important, as a Marxism underpinned by colonialist ideology could never claim to be a theory of emancipation for Third World peoples; the colonized can't free themselves speaking the colonizer's tongue. However, Marxism can integrate national identity into a class-centered universal world outlook.

So, was Marx eurocentric? Hindsight is 20/20, and a condemnation of Marx without investigation is uncalled for. Marx's first arguments in regards to non-European societies were in the New York Daily Tribune, with a focus on Indian society. In these articles, while emphasizing the role of colonialism in dismantling previous modes of production and introducing capital as the supreme relation of production, he recognizes firstly that the colonized Indians don't benefit from this change of mode of production. He also states that in this replacement of the dominant economic mode are the seeds of working class self-government: "The Indians will not reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie, till in Great Britain itself the now ruling classes shall have been supplanted by the industrial proletariat, or till the Hindus themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the English yoke altogether." [1]

Marx says: "The profound hypocrisy and inherent barbarism of bourgeois civilization lies unveiled before our eyes, turning from its home, where it assumes respectable forms, to the colonies, where it goes naked". In the same vein, Marx asked the readers whether or not "a people are not justified in attempting to expel the foreign conquerors who have so abused their subjects. And if the English could do these things in cold blood, is it surprising that the insurgent Hindus should be guilty, in the fury of revolt and conflict, of the crimes and cruelties alleged against them?" [2]

Marx's curriculum vitae demonstrates his support to Chinese resistance to the British during the Second Opium War and anti-colonial uprisings

in India. He supported a proposal to make the Union's war effort's motto in the civil war "the emancipation of the slaves", and in the "London Conference of the First International" he argued for the "right of every people to dispose of itself ", laying the basis for the Maoist proposal of right of self-determination of nations.

In Marx's ethnological notebooks, we can see a non-reductionist and multilinear theory of histories which refuses to bow to a single model of global development, but proposes a concrete analysis of concrete conditions of every society, Western and non-Western.

Subsequent Marxists have gone deeper in the discussion of eurocentrism, showing that the Marxist tradition can provide a more powerful critique of eurocentrism both within and outside its tradition than other trends of thought can claim.

For instance, Samir Amin has extensively criticized eurocentrism from a Marxist perspective. In his book "Eurocentrism", Samir Amin argues that the concept of "Europe" is a retrospective construction; the idea of a "European civilization" is a colonialist ideology developed after 1492, crafted by colonialists who, conceiving of themselves as a superior and unified civilization, began to tailor the past and construct precedents for their superior civilization. Moreover, in the analysis of modernity, Amin argues that whilst modernity is in actuality a world project, the understanding that humans are the motor force of history, the eurocentric position for him holds that European culture is the breeding ground for modernity. Many more critiques of eurocentric trends within Marxism have come from the Marxist tradition, such as the critiques put forth by Ward Churchill from a pro-Native position, the critiques of eurocentric Marxists by Omali Yeshitela in favor of Black Liberation, and much more.

In short, Marx constituted a break from previous European thought and provided a non-reductionist theory of history, and the Marxist tradition, even when some of its strands embraced eurocentric prejudice, was able to rid itself from these and criticize eurocentrism better than anti-Marxists.

Notes

1. Karl Marx, The Future Results of British Rule in India, 1853

2. Marx & Engels on Colonialism in India.

<http://espressostalinist.com/2012/02/23/marx-engels-on-colonialism-in-india/>

What exactly is one to do in the US?

(Often times we receive this question from young comrades who feel dedicated to the cause yet at a loss for concrete ways to contribute)

This is a great question which deserves a great answer. Unfortunately, if there was a great, clear answer I would probably be able to cite some other source on the matter.

The strategy of the Revolutionary Anti-Imperialist Movement (RAIM) is dialectical. We see a unity between the subjective forces in the First and Third Worlds. While we see global new democratic revolution itself as a process in which part the Third World overthrows the weight of the First, thus establishing the basis for socialism, we understand that the subjective forces established in the First World can condition those in the Third and vice versa. In this regard, we aim to develop both a Maoist (Third Worldist) and wider oppositional political culture in the First World as a way of aiding and developing real solidarity with budding revolutionary movements in the Third World. Likewise, as the masses of the Third World continue to organize against imperialism, we aim to develop dual power and oppositional institutions which can act behind enemy lines to help seal the fate of imperialism.

This boils down to two related things, each supporting the other: raising consciousness and organizing. These can manifest in a number of concrete ways: working in a student group or in local coalitions to draw attention to any number of issues (while also working independently); organizing a radical study group; conducting agitation and public awareness campaigns through postering and media distribution; taking part in and organizing local protests and other campaigns. Other work is technical or intellectual: writing and formatting for various publications and media outlets, maintaining technical aspects of websites, graphic design, etc. Work to raise consciousness and organize is largely behind the scenes, informal, and could be described in both business and revolutionary terms as networking. Not all of the work is particularly glamorous or easy, but it is all absolutely essential to building a wider movement to oppose imperialism.

But before we get ahead of ourselves, it is important for people who want to engage in revolutionary work to have a firm grounding in theory. For this reason, we provide a reading list of essential and recommended works. In general, it is part of the RAIM tradition to promote continual intellectual and theoretical inquiry side by side with practice.

One thing people can do is join RAIM.

RAIM is a political institution which operates on a number of levels, including local and national initiatives, to raise consciousness and organize revolutionary and oppositional political cultures. As the adage goes: strength in numbers.

RAIM members are required to have displayed the requisite political understanding. One way this can be attained is by reading the sections of the RAIM 101 Study Guide with the guidance of a sanctioned member. After this, we expect new members to be engaged in the collective work of raising consciousness and organizing.