

# Maoism V.s. “Maoist Third Worldism”: Responding to Criticism From a Reader

MAY 11, 2020

STRUGGLESSESSIONS

---

## Maoism V.S. "Maoist Third-Worldism": Responding to Criticism from Reader



**By S. Mazur**

*The long-gone Maoist Internationalist Movement (MIM), Leading Light Communist Organization (LLCO), and the Revolutionary Anti-Imperialist Movement (RAIM) are part of a small petty bourgeois trend known as “Maoist” Third-Worldism (TWism). They contend that there is no proletariat to organize in the imperialist countries, and as so are largely abstentionists from revolutionary practice. While marginal, many of their faulty presumptions incorrectly claim to flow from Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. Many revisionist petty bourgeois trends in the U.S.A. claiming Maoism similarly have adopted Third-Worldist stances.*

*Struggle Sessions received an email from a reader who asked about this journal’s affiliations to the former Red Guards movement and what our thoughts are on the questions related to TWism. Some edits have been made for clarity and additions to elaborate pertinent explanations. We hope this piece serves to educate around Marxist political economy and around the deceptions promoted by TWists. After our second initial response (which we have taken the liberty of expanding upon below) the reader stopped replying. We encourage him (and all other readers) to engage with criticism, and to also criticize us. We apologize for length, but we wanted to make sure we include their whole email unedited.*

*“...I was wondering if I could get your thoughts on the line of the Maoist Internationalist Movement. What does Struggle Sessions say to the question*

of unequal exchange, the labor aristocracy, and the white nation?”

In regards to MIM, Struggle Sessions reject them as Maoists and as internationalists. They are not a movement, they're a small crew of Harvard kids who distort[ed] Marxism with their shameful trafficking of identity politics and petty bourgeois empiricism—posing—as—analysis onto their website. Now their filth is getting onto weird and subcultural forums like Rhizzone with their promotion of Sakai.

There is much needed analysis around Sakai and his conceptions of “settlerism” and “settler economy” because [Third Worldists] have been pushing his book *Settlers* through such forums. There is objectively a labor aristocracy, it is described by Engels and Lenin, and cited as the source of opportunism in the working class movement, but it is not the majority of the white working class in the U.S. today as Sakai and [Third Worldists] describe. In regards to the white nation, we have not taken a formal position on this, but one contributor has with “Race, Class and Stratification” through our One Hundred Flowers section. We certainly encourage you to contribute and have your own positions scrutinized, even if incorrect, around these matters.

### **TWist responds:**

“Dear comrades,

Don't you think it is dogmatic to simply infer that my positions must be wrong, and yours automatically correct? As though endowed by god? Is that really the degree of strict attitude and discipline that we as communists should adhere to? Of course not, what a horribly low standard! We should be consciously scientific, not chauvinistic and dogmatic. Struggle Sessions is not infallible, and your line can and must be scrutinized and criticized as well. Struggle Sessions incessantly promotes phony—Maoism under the guise of promoting Maoism. You are not gods, you are people — people with wrong ideas. You should admit that as a journal, you indeed suffer from ignorance and

arrogance. Shortcomings are shortcomings, we can make of ourselves better if we recognize them. First off, MIM no longer exists. MIM dissolved in 2008,

So, dear comrades, do not state nonsense. Do not argue in bad faith. Let us be fair here.

First off, MIM no longer exists. MIM dissolved in 2008, and it had a large presence outside of Harvard. If you're asserting that MIM was merely an intellectual echo chamber, you clearly need to follow through Mao's teaching: "No investigation, no right to speak." MIM did have its origins in RADACADS [author's note, the acronym stands for RADical ACADemics], but it's foundations are more clearly realized in RIM, which was their original name before the RCP-CIA stole it and took it as their own. In 1984, MIM was officially established as we know it today: as one of the first organizations to uphold, defend, and apply Maoism and define themselves along those lines. MIM was the one of the first groups to recognize the GPCR as beyond simply enlightened or highly-developed affairs specific to China, but rather as an all-round development of the communist science. Groups like the RCP and ORU came along and upheld Mao, the GPCR, & the GoF too, but they both degenerated.

I'll mention Peru also. MIM continued to build and develop this line in unity with — and taking much direction in line from — our Peruvian comrades in the PCP. MIM has consistently upheld the revolutionary struggle in Peru, and has denounced — and rightfully so — the counter-revolutionary role that RIM played in the people's war. MIM denounced the right-deviationist line and the peace accords as capitulation and counter-revolutionary. MIM has upheld Gonzalo Thought as the integration of MLM to the concrete material conditions of Peru.

Fundamentally, the Maoism of the PCP and MIM are too similar to be considered opposites, or enemies.

MIM, in short, was a Maoist organization. MIM(Prisons) today is also a Maoist organization, and doesn't exist on any of the social media sites you listed. I've

never even heard of Rhizzone, and I'm sure most Maoists haven't either. If you can provide evidence for this accusation that they weren't Maoists, please provide it. Clearly you aren't familiar with MIM and it's line, otherwise you wouldn't spit out such embarrassing garbage.

Let us now turn the focus on objective, material conditions. You argue, erroneously, that the labor aristocracy is not the majority class in the first-world. This goes against the objective, material conditions of the first-world and all the abundance of research available on this exact issue. Whether your ignorance is out of ideological confusion or arrogance, I can't say. What I can do is speak the facts. Let us look at the material world, not idealist dogma and garbage.

Imperialism is today's capitalism, a predatory capitalism in decay. Imperialism is capitalism that progressed beyond free competition into monopolization. It is marked by the all-round globalization of capital, the primacy of finance capital, and the division of the world into exploiter and exploited nations. An imperialist country is a country defined by these characteristics, and a prime imperialist power is a country that plays a big, dominating role in enforcing this in the world arena.

Imperialism is a parasitic system. It is a system that, drenched in blood, grants through force the booty and loot of oppressed countries to oppressor countries.

Imperialism has forged a new class, a class that is of the upper-stratum, a class that falls in line with the bourgeois camp, the imperialist camp. Lenin defined them as the petty-bourgeoisie. They're really a lower segment of the petty-bourgeoisie. In the U.S., this particular class was born in an extension of settler-colonialism and its development into imperialism.

Let us talk about this privileged class, this class that lives lives of comfort.

The proletariat isn't simply defined by those that go to work everyday and do something or another. It's not that simple. The proletariat is defined as a class with nothing to lose, that have nothing to provide but their labor power, that cannot survive without being exploited. If they refuse to work, it's a death wish. Their labor is to the benefit of the bourgeoisie... I think we know this all already.

Exploitation is the process of appropriation and "sucking up" of surplus value generated from workers by the capitalist class, a process that impoverishes the proletariat for the benefit of the bourgeoisie. Basically, if you earn less than your labor's worth, you are exploited.

Just earning a wage doesn't make you exploited. Do you think earning more than your labor's worth is exploitation? Do you really think earning more than 90% of the rest of the world seriously makes you part of the global proletariat? I earnestly don't believe that. The conditions for first-worlders speak for themselves. Basically everyone has running water, a surplus of food food, a refrigerator, a bed, a shelter of some sort, electricity, Internet... I mean, come on. These people have had everything handed to them by the imperialist bourgeoisie, and they didn't earn it. This ideological mythology that these higher living standards are because of higher or better production in interiorly is also incorrect, by the way. The cost of living — and standard of living — is objectively worse in the third-world. So no, life isn't harder in the first-worlders. Sure you have taxes, maybe a broken washing machine... but I guess that's just the pain of privilege.

In the Global South we see 3 billion people living on less than \$3 a day, a billion children forced to live in poverty, children without school, open defecation in the streets, 1.2 billion people without sanitation facilities, consistent, unending hunger and starvation, preventable diseases that kill millions a year, low expectancies of life... I could go on. Being blunt, this has a direct correlation to the privileged lifestyles and leisure time of the imperialist-country classes. The poverty of the poor is a result of the wealth of the rich, right? The biggest imperialist power in the world keeps the rest of the world

down and keeps its position up, bribing it's own internal population for pacification and neutralization. Duh. Wasn't the already established by Engels?

Although the U.S. is still the top dog and pre-eminent imperialist military power in the world, its primary position is being eroded by its rivals, principally China. Still, the Chinese labor aristocracy — while growing — is relatively small in comparison to other imperialist countries. As China expands, this is destined to change. This will have a severe impact on how another socialist revolution will be carried out there, but I'm not hasty in predicting how this will eventuate as I'm neither in a position to wrestle with this nor do I have any information on the current Maoist struggle unfolding right now in China. Still, as the labor aristocracy inevitably balloons under capitalism, so will the base of fascism.

There was a time in history when the labor aristocracy was small in Europe, but that has changed. The labor aristocracy of Lenin's days is different from the labor aristocracy today. The labor aristocracy was once defined as an upper level of the proletariat, but that too has changed. The European labor aristocracy today is the predominant class force, not the proletariat, semi-proletariat, or lumpen. It's universal in the first-world.

In Amerika, the white oppressor nation has always had a parasitic, bourgeois class nature. It is a privileged, petty-bourgeois class that benefits from all the horrible forms of oppression and exploitation that define and underline this capitalist-imperialist society. The white nation labor aristocracy is not our friends or allies, not at this point in time.

Now with capitalism in decline, but Amerikan profits rising, we are witnessing an emergence of open fascism among the labor aristocratic elements. Some communists originally predicted fascism only presents when communism is a threat, but reality is now showing that fascism also emerges in times of prosperity for the privileged classes. Whether or not Struggle Sessions intends to deal with this development seriously, I'll have to see. By rejecting reality, I have strong doubts that Struggle Sessions is seriously prepared for

understanding fascism today and it's current trajectory, let alone combatting it.

Regardless, quoting Mao, "We can no longer do things entirely according to the way we originally conceived." The western left used to think our focus should be on the so-called "white proletariat," on radicalizing the "poor and exploited" white nation. But as reality now shows, the white nation is a parasite nation, the social base of fascism and imperialism. This majority-exploiter nation is already radicalized by fascist hooligans and imperialist emperors. This process is continuing and intensifying as we speak. Fascism is on the rise, in part because of the failure of the left to combat the same wrong thinking of retrogression and dogma that you and kin promote.

So come on, let's get real about this."

### **Struggle Sessions:**

These attacks on Marxism contained here leads to one inevitable conclusion: that the proletariat in the U.S.A. and other imperialist countries are the main exploiting class of the people of the world. This would make the task of Communists to divide and discourage the just rebellion of the masses. This rejects the task laid down by Lenin of revolutionaries in imperialist countries having to reconstitute the Communist Party against opportunism, as it is generated through the labor aristocracy. It shows a complete distortion of Capital by Marx and deliberately ignores the Labor Theory of Value.

First, MIM's support for Chairman Gonzalo does not mean we cease struggling against their retrograde ideas. Bob Avakian of the RCP-USA deceptively adopted the banner of Maoism for years without practicing it, doing irreparable harm to the Revolutionary International Movement by claiming to support Gonzalo. The leftovers of their influence are still being felt today. There is nothing owed by Maoists to revisionists except class hate for their promotion of confusion and their resentment of revolutionaries and the masses. In this case, TWists are a particular brand of revisionists belonging to

strange anonymous collectives with links to anti-people drug dealers and neo-Nazis. The Maoism of the PCP is the Maoism of the world proletariat, not of MIM.

### *On unequal trade*

When TWists explain the mechanism by which the First World (imperialist countries) exploits the Third World (colonies and semi-colonies) and pays off the whole working population, they lay out a less sophisticated version of Samir Amin's theory around unequal trade. This involves circulation of manufactured finished goods and export commodities (say, bananas from Guatemala) being unbalanced in a way that those who export those bananas are given a raw deal. They treat use values as equal to one another across the world in order to demonstrate that this transfer of wealth happens, just as Amin and others have in the course of their struggle with other academics. The premise that the price of a given use value can be set as equal across different countries (expressed as being under an umbrella of a single global mode of production) could not stand the test of Marxism.

When we look at what unequal exchange is, Amin's version is worth using. Let's compare the United States of America with Guatemala. To arrive at this point we need to equalize the price of means of production and assume equal productivity in the two countries (ironically a starting point in neoclassical econ theory when talking about foreign trade, but a generous one we are making in order to show systematic wealth transfer). Assuming further that wages are higher in the U.S. than in Guatemala, then given equal productivity and equal capital goods pricing, the rate of profit in the U.S. will be lower than it is in Guatemala. As in the neoclassical version of the theory (the Heckscher-Ohlin Theorem), capital will start flowing to Guatemala until the price level in the U.S. rises and the price level in Guatemala falls. This would occur until the rate of profit is the same in both countries, allowing, in this way, for surplus value to have been transferred from Guatemala to the U.S.

The antecedents behind this though are true because there is no same productivity in the U.S. and Guatemala, and the price of capital goods is likewise lower in the U.S.

It is right from the start in Capital that we are made to understand a lower mass of use values does not at all entail lower total exchange value. Nor are we led to understand that a higher exchange value entail a higher mass of use values. This calls for a comparison across countries. Amin would later adapt this to equalize price levels so that a given use value costs the same in the U.S. as it does in Guatemala. Before going into this, this is just not true anyways, if someone in Guatemala buys a banana from a plantation they are paying close to its value, even if there was surplus extracted. If someone in the U.S. eats a banana, they are paying over that and regular distribution and retail costs, the speculative costs of the money market, so on.

But we see again that Amin runs into problems. If there are the same prices and the wages in the U.S. are higher, and capital goods costs the same, then the cost price of any given commodity would be higher in the U.S. This means (since the price of the finished commodity is the same) that the rate of profit would be lower in the U.S., so no transfer would even take place. If transfer was assumed to take place then rate of profit would have to be identical, and assuming higher prices in the U.S. and an equal price of capital goods, the cost price will still again be higher in the U.S. Then (since we assume transfer has taken place), surplus value would actually be higher in the U.S. than in Guatemala, but that would contradict Amin's assumption of equal prices.

We see then that exploitation does not happen at the level of circulation. It happens at production as will be explained further below. Because the organic composition of capital has allowed much more surplus value to actually be generated, we see then that the rate of exploitation is often higher in spite of wage increases. This is relevant to point out because rather than recognizing as Lenin did that unequal development served as the basis for imperialism stratifying the global working class but nevertheless forged bonds of international solidarity, TWists engage in bourgeois economics to say that the

proletariat in imperialist countries is objectively a class enemy, making such an objective bond impossible.

Marx saw the roots of what Lenin would later lay out, showing the seeds of what Lenin would explain as the realization of superprofits happening on the basis of the discrepancy between advanced capitalism reaching its highest stage on one hand, and semi-colonialism on the other. Marx pointed to the possibility of higher yield of profit from capital invested in colonies and semi-colonies. Put simply, accumulation towards monopoly capitalism happened earlier in the imperialist countries, and the unevenness of constant capital in each country, i.e. dead labor, and the political condition of living labor as it entered into class struggle, determined the measure of the value of labor power in respective countries. As he explained in Capital Vol. 3:

“Capitals invested in foreign trade can yield a higher rate of profit, because, in the first place, there is competition with commodities produced in other countries with inferior production facilities, so that the more advanced country sells its goods above their value even though cheaper than the competing countries. In so far as the labour of the more advanced country is here realised as labour of a higher specific weight, the rate of profit rises, because labour which has not been paid as being of a higher quality is sold as such. The same may obtain in relation to the country, to which commodities are exported and to that from which commodities are imported; namely, the latter may offer more materialised labour in kind than it receives, and yet thereby receive commodities cheaper than it could produce them. Just as a manufacturer who employs a new invention before it becomes generally used, undersells his competitors and yet sells his commodity above its individual value, that is, realises the specifically higher productiveness of the labour he employs as surplus-labour. He thus secures a surplus-profit. As concerns capitals invested in colonies, etc., on the other hand, they may yield higher rates of profit for the simple reason that the rate of profit is higher there due to backward development, and likewise the exploitation of labour, because of the use of slaves, coolies, etc. Why should not these higher rates of profit, realised by capitals invested in certain lines

and sent home by them, enter into the equalisation of the general rate of profit and thus tend, pro tanto, to raise it, unless it is the monopolies that stand in the way.” [1]

These are the objective conditions which with each movement and realization of surplus value under imperialism produces the conditions of semi-colonialism and semi-feudalism. While unequal trade is an important means of extracting surplus value under imperialism, it is not how Guevara or Amin concludes it happens, which concludes that the country is “underdeveloped” through the mechanisms described above. The feature of imperialism is capital export, whose investment integrates the enterprises created in dominated countries into circuits of its international markets, leading to distortions in that dominated country’s economy.

### *On exploitation*

Our TWist notes:

“Just earning a wage doesn’t make you exploited. Do you think earning more than your labor’s worth is exploitation? Do you really think earning more than 90% of the rest of the world seriously makes you part of the global proletariat? I earnestly don’t believe that. The conditions for first-worlders speak for themselves. Basically everyone has running water, a surplus of food food, a refrigerator, a bed, a shelter of some sort, electricity, Internet... I mean, come on. These people have had everything handed to them by the imperialist bourgeoisie, and they didn’t earn it. This ideological mythology that these higher living standards are because of higher or better production in interior [sic] is also incorrect, by the way. The cost of living — and standard of living — is objectively worse in the third-world. So no, life isn’t harder in the first-worlders. Sure you have taxes, maybe a broken washing machine... but I guess that’s just the pain of privilege.”

Exploitation is a relationship that is mediated by capital in the production of surplus value. It is not a relationship between labor itself, through which the

latter becomes a “net exploiter” to TWists. For TWists who distort Marxism, the greater amount of use values a wage can command = the lesser degree of exploitation of a waged worker. This is of course no different than what a lot of reactionaries say: you may be exploited, yes, but *you own a television set*, so how are you even really poor? Pure and simple, a temp worker at a plastic shop earning 25,000 in the USA doesn't exploit anyone, while a food production small business owner in Managua who earns less than 25,000 who has employees who earn less than what he does exploits – exploitation requires a position of ownership and control over the means of production.

Where pre-capitalist modes of production exist along with imperialist investment penetrating there, the full value of labor power can actually be less than that required to reproduce an individual workers labor powers. One of the reasons superexploitation (=extraction of surplus value at a higher rate in contrast to workers in imperialist countries) happens is because, in conditions of those semi-feudal, semi-colonial societies, the average social cost of reproduction of a bulk of the population who are peasants relies on traditional agriculture, while the new waged workers (often being those from peasant families who moved to work in a textile factory or bauxite mine to send wages back to the villages) often find themselves able to command a greater diversity of use values as they move to the cities. What we see in the third world is peasant communities becoming obliged to convert their labor into labor power, growing, on their own fields, export products that they can sell to first the colonial houses from centuries ago, to today capitalist agricultural enterprises. This leads to the reduction of their own food production and the destruction of traditional handicrafts, which reinforces the need for the working population to acquire more money to ensure the survival of families and communities, and contributes to the continued expansion of the urban unemployed there with their attending slums along with shortages in food. This has only increased with time. But the reason still prevails that super-exploitation happens as capital export takes advantage of the persistence of pre-capitalist modes of production, in spite of that ongoing trend towards urbanization and further proletarianization of the peasantry.

## *On the labor aristocracy*

The reality of the labor aristocracy is indeed apparent in our advanced imperialist country unlike many others, no one denies this. But the reality is such a condition for labor aristocracy is rooted fundamentally in the opportunist political leadership of sections of organized labor, courting favor with U.S. imperialism in competition on the world scale. It was never defined, by Lenin, Mao, or any other past revolutionary movement from among the oppressed nations and proletariat, as a strata that encapsulated the entirety of the working class (white or otherwise) of the “First World.”

Lenin, flowing from Marx and Engel’s analysis of the English working class in the 19th century, in a polemic against Kautsky and the Centrists who complained that the Comintern split the working class movement, replied that it was already divided politically, ideologically, and *economically*. He laid out how the labor aristocracy represented the economic link of imperialism to opportunism, and that this would be a permanent feature of imperialism (though those workers inside of it, just like members of other classes, are transitory depending on the condition of capitalism): “And from this, we concluded that a split with the social chauvinists was inevitable and that certain workers have already drifted away to the side of the bourgeoisie.” Going from there he said that “economically, the desertion of a certain stratum of the labor aristocracy has become an accomplished fact; and this economic fact, this shift in class relations, will find a political form, without any particular difficulty.” [2]

How does the “bribe” Lenin describe happen?

“The whole thing boils down to nothing but bribery. It is done in a thousand different ways: by increasing cultural facilities in the largest centers, by creating educational institutions, and by providing cooperative, trade union and parliamentary leaders with thousands of cushy jobs.”[3]

Obviously, Lenin imagined this as more than simply higher wages or slipping someone an envelope, he implied privileges and reforms that a section of the working class gets. It is precisely the task of revolutionaries in imperialist countries to battle this element:

“We are waging a struggle against the “labor aristocracy” in the name of the masses of the workers in order to win them over to our side; we are waging the struggle against the opportunist and social chauvinist leaders in order to win the working class over to our side. It would be absurd to forget this absurd and most self-evident truth.” [4]

Because of capital export it does indeed follow that the United States is a net importer of commodities and that there is a stratum of monopoly capitalists who derive their profits solely from interest from their direct foreign investment that melts down to this strata, but the U.S. is still the second largest manufacturer in the world, behind only China. This is something the TWist does not want to recognize, that the class which has nothing to lose but its chains is concentrated in large number in the USA. Most Asian brands produce completely in North America, and when they need cheaper labor they source from the maquiladoras in Mexico. Many factories in the southeastern parts of the USA are wholly vertically integrated, producing nearly everything except semi-conductors, tires, etc. There remains a formidable processed steel sector, albeit with a lot more automation and labor saving methods. The U.S. proletariat is faced by exploitation in many forms, with work speed-ups, greater temporary contracts and de-skilling through greater constant capital being introduced, and wage depression. As so, it is a class question to recognize the importance of organizing the proletariat there as a vital trench, to defeat imperialism’s political influence through the labor aristocracy among the proletariat.

*On the “white nation”*

The “white nation” positions suggests that white workers, white petty bourgeoisie, and the white imperialist bourgeoisie, are all put together in one

nation. This is not scientific, and promoters of this line tend to avoid explaining what is meant by “white” beyond using phenotypic traits. In this case they are lumping a bunch of languages, cultures, regions and psychologies into one nation. For instance the psychological makeup of Jews, Slavs, Irish, and Anglo Americans are not the same, and their languages are often different, too. While they lack specific national oppression in the US, they do not automatically come to form one singular nation on the basis of lacking something. There are also, for example, Japanese Americans who have been in the US for many generations: they are not an oppressed nation or from an oppressed nation, but they still cannot be lumped together with the “white” population. This does not mean there isn’t oppression, just that it is done by the imperialist ruling class, who mobilize white chauvinism for its reactionary purposes.

There is no good argument that relies on Marxism to demonstrate that “whites” constitute a nation. There is no common economy, there is no common language, there is no common geographic territory, so on. At best we see several nations that, through participation in the settler project in the past, were able to achieve uneven status and integration into “whiteness.”

Uneven development into this social category is important in considering this topic overall. “Privilege” itself, as well as the absence of national oppression, does not in any way actually prevent those with a relative “privilege” from facing oppression and exploitation as well. Maoism in the US lays out these positions well, explaining that while there is undoubtedly some “privilege” in not experiencing national oppression and the short term perceived interests that comes with that, TWists and the postmodernists who are inspired by them overextend those perceived interests to the point of potential friends becoming enemies.

A celebrity among not just “M”TWists but around other trends in militant identity and nationalist politics, J. Sakai’s “Settlers” presents itself as a short study in counterfactual history, but it only offers counter myths to the ones the bourgeoisie teaches us in school. Sakai discards Marxism and dialectical materialism, discounts that people are the basis of everything, and offers up a crude geographical essentialism that would make Jared Diamond get a sweet tooth in the opening sections of his book. Sakai explains that land is what has determined the current state of class struggle, rendering social relations as secondary. Sakai does this in order to extrapolate events that happened before imperialism was solidly developed and consolidated, as a means of coming to a far reaching conclusion about the profoundly nonrevolutionary nature on the white proletariat. He deliberately deletes the names and history of Black Communists and socialists and their struggles, in order to further harp this point about the inherently volkish nature of the U.S. “settler” left. When you look deeper Sakai and his inheritors are eclectic and metaphysical idealists. Demarcation is necessary from such crude determinist ideas based on fabricated history.

In the opening, Sakai claims that settlers did not go to where there wasn’t land, which is false. The British West Indies have a much higher population density, for example, and if land was the attractant, the density would instead be similar to that of the USA. New England became one of the bases of early capitalism in part because of the development of ship construction for the Triangle Trade, as the sea currents off the coast of the Massachusetts colony gave a much better jump off point back to Europe than the Caribbean did. There is no doubt that slave labor played a role in surplus value becoming the capital that would drive the creation of a bourgeois mode of production.

But Sakai has to go further to make his conclusion. Sakai says that the white settlers were dependent on “the slave economy, slave products, [and] slave labor.” Ever since division of labor first started as class societies emerged humans have always depended on others for the things they need to live. Even today under imperialism all proletarians “depend” on the exploitation of others. Rewarding some profound significance to this is drinking the poison

tonic of the bourgeoisie, seeing anti-consumerism as a form of struggle rather than the territory of the “left” petty bourgeoisie struggling for its social morality in a exploitative world.

Sakai depends on American exceptionalism in many ways. There were more slaves in the West Indies (in Spanish, British, and French colonies) than in the USA. There were more slaves in Cuba and Haiti than in the North American British colonies. Yet no far reaching conclusions are drawn up about about the countries there and their political development through time.

Sakai then goes on and correctly identifies how the United States was born from an independence struggle that had remarkably little social revolution (as part of its process or program). And, as a result, half of the new country was a network of slave labor camps. Half of the ruling class was slave owners. And the class interests of the landed aristocracy marked the new society in countless ways (in its mode of expansion, its foreign policy, its culture, its approach to the Native people west of the Appalachians, its tariffs and more). All well and true, but then he spends time lauding the emerging contradiction between the growing Northern capitalists and the slaveowners as one between settlerism and slavery. We are left without understanding that the U.S. Civil War was a great and righteous revolutionary war that swept away slavery, and that pushed the class interests of the slaveowners away from controlling developments in the U.S. Its inspirations were slave rebels and John Brown.

Because so much time is spent treating slavery in the U.S. as exceptional, what we don't see, in ways that Marx explained in his time as the U.S. Civil War developed, was how the extension of slave relations eventually harmed the capitalist development of the U.S. economy. It made the U.S. South geographically undeveloped and made them retain semi-colonial relations to Europe, as one can see in Calhoun's early threats of succession over the tariffs being placed on Britain. The emerging Northern industrial capitalists, in alliance with swaths of the petty bourgeois, began to see that the “slavery question” could only be resolved through the process of war as the Democrats, who represented petty bourgeois settlers and the landed aristocratic classes,

intensified their efforts to stultify the consolidation of capitalism through westward expansion.

In ways that are insulting to Sakai and certain kind of non-materialist identity politicians, it is hard for them to deal with the fact that (1) the end of slavery did not mainly come from slave revolts (even though slave revolts and armed ex-slaves did play an important and in many cases a determining role through labor desertion and enlistment), (2) that the main material force that crushed slavery was a force of an army of almost a million white men, backed by the whole economic and military apparatus of the Northern farm-and-growing-capitalist society, (3) that the main leaders of this revolution were representatives who had vacillated on the question of abolition, and/or who were always ambivalent if not outright opposed to equality between black and white men, and (4) that Lincoln and Grant did not “betray” Black people in the U.S., but their successors within the Northern bourgeoisie did, as they inevitably would. The final consolidating act of the American republic was centered around the abolition of African slavery, and we wouldn't have developed the antecedents of Communist revolution if it hadn't happened. The lack of being able to approach this question dialectically, of seeing how the bourgeoisie can play a dynamic and revolutionary war at first and end up (after that historical period) change into its opposite, is completely lost on them. The actual war was led by leaders who were representatives of the Northern capitalists, like Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant, and William Tecumseh Sherman, with other revolutionaries advising and pushing from the wings, like Frederick Douglas, the great political representative of freedman and Black slaves, Seward, and other Radical Republicans.

There indeed was a period where land served as the basis of capital accumulation, because in the developing world markets of the time based in simple commodity production, access to land meant creating crops which were quite profitable. This is why slavery was initially important, but as the manufacturers became more important, the backward conditions of labor (and low productivity) in slave states created little to no basis for investment in the

implements of production. It held capitalism, and eventually what would become imperialism, back.

Many white settlers in this period indeed preferred to go west on the “virgin continent.” It was better to establish themselves doing subsistence production most of the year as independent farmers on land that formerly was the realm of the indigenous, instead of submitting to wage slavery in the service of Sam Slater and other early industrialists. But the political issue of right and relationship to state power started to come to a close at the end of the Indian wars, as it started to cement that land was ceasing to be the basis for capital accumulation. The bourgeoisie needed a large reserve army of labor and reliable proletariat, and this could not be had if most of the population could just till all day—this led to some of the first capitalist crises which led to mass proletarianization through mass foreclosure on farmers and petty proprietors. Cities grew as the dispossessed, the Irish and German along with Eastern and Southern European immigrants, and Blacks from the South coalesced to create the modern U.S. proletariat.

Sakai then draws up a selective depiction of the IWW and Socialist Party. The former’s Black agitators, such as Lucy Parsons, are disregarded as tokens rather than revolutionaries. Leaders like Eugene Debs, who Lenin considered a leader of the U.S. proletariat in spite of his vacillating positions, are treated as hardened anti-Black chauvinists. Debs indeed had an incorrect position (in his article “Danger Ahead” he argued that the Socialist Party “having nothing special to offer the Negro, and we cannot make separate appeals to all the races”). Sakai does not note that Debs’ position here was that of W.E.B. Dubois and other Black socialists of that time, and that it ultimately was derived from Frederick Douglas himself. Never mind in debates around the “Negro Question” that Black socialists were calling for at the time that Debs deferred to them. This is not to say that Debs position was correct rather, that claims of his anti-Black chauvinism or indifference are obviously overblown.

For the Communist Party of United States of America, it indeed had chauvinism in its ranks and when they were formed there was almost no Black

members. This was in large part because the Socialist Party that it largely split from had almost no Black people. The CPUSA was also mainly rooted among immigrant workers (not having much of a base around “native” white Americans either). We do not hear about Cyrill Briggs and the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB) which had an immensely powerful influence that was enabled by their merging into the CPUSA. Merging into the CPUSA gave them a national infrastructure, international allies of the Communist movement who instantly became sympathetic to the bitter oppression of Black people, and allowed them to actually become a national force. [5]

The repudiation of the Lovestone line and the Communist International demanding that they recruit outside urban immigrant ghettos (and outside New York, and a few other enclaves) gave our proletariat the experience of CP organizing in Alabama among sharecroppers, often coming to armed conflict with the Klan and other white reactionary organization. The mythology of Sakai around this period is wrong, the intervention of the Comintern and the dialectical process that involved both the agency of Black and white organizers, solidified the basis of Black membership in the CP throughout the 1920s to the 40s. Betrayal by Browderite revisionism weakened the influence of Marxism among the Black masses in the years to come.

Sakai, while not including the CP’s policy of revolutionary integrationism within trade unions (both in its “own” that it initiated through TUUL before it was scrapped and in the CIO) along with integrated struggles and marches, it is not incorrect in exposing the chauvinism that crept up as the Party moved rightward. The CP adopted the American flag and Party members were encouraged to adopt Anglo names. Steve Nelson, the leader of the Lincoln Brigades was a Croatia born with the name Stjepan Mesaros, Gus Hall as Arvo Kustaa Halberg and so on. There developed a “speak English” policy where people were forbidden to have cell meetings in their native languages. These were some rightist policies among many other major turns which led to World War 2, where (with great excitement) the CP called on the masses to prove their Americanism in a “war for democracy” that ended up retaking the

Philippines, threatening China and creating the first truly global U.S. imperialism.

The character of these contradictions and their interactions (complex and intertwined) still needs to be specified. The history of white-settlerism and slavery continued to shape US society after the US became an imperialist state, but the white proletariat are not “settlers” today.

### *Conclusion*

“M”TWism asserts that revolution is only possible in the Third World and can only surround the first world and impose a war from outside. This is nothing short of a militarist and political fantasy, one which poses no conception of the movement of capital itself with the falling rate of profit as a world trend. While they are right in pointing out that proletarian revolution in imperialist countries have faced setbacks worldwide (by revisionism and fascism), we should know that the increased attacks politically on their own working classes and dismantling of most of the so-called “social wage” will only bring more resistance.

As a petty bourgeois ideology, TWism hides behind the political disillusionment that revisionism has created by inventing a new, stranger revisionism of its own from behind their computers. One which inevitably has taken the form of the most bizarre political configurations such as Maoist Internationalist Movement which begins organizing other peripheral marginal trends from Satanists to white supremacists. This is still continued with the extension of Leading Light Communist Organization (LLCO). In Poland LLCO maintains relationships with neo-Nazis in an “alliance of extremists.” It is a fact that the imperialist countries are surrounded by colonies and semi-colonies and, in the dynamics of the crisis of overaccumulation we are all paying horrifying witness to (working through the opportunity for our class to defend what it has won and advance even further to socialist revolution) those weakest links of imperialism are joined by the crisis ridden classes of the advanced capitalist countries, linked together as an international class.

This subculture of petty bourgeois who simply do “anti-imperialist” actions in a mass of those they consider to be parasites has its influence on other trends, like the militant identity politics of the “MCP-OC” and its egotistical head. What they all have in common is sharing petty bourgeois illusions of the most dangerous type. All which weaponize white guilt as a motivator for its activists, postmodernism, and extremely moralistic, and thus essentially apolitical and again, metaphysical (i.e. near religious) conceptions of history, politics, and classes.

#### Works cited

[1] Karl Marx, Capital Vol. 3

[2] V.I. Lenin, Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism

[3] The Communist Party of Peru, Elections, No! People’s War, Yes!

[4] V.I. Lenin, Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder

[5] Cathal, Race, Class, And Stratification. Retrieved at <https://struggle-sessions.com/2020/01/02/one-hundred-flowers-race-class-and-stratification/>

---

#### PREVIOUS POST

*Against “Postmodernism”*

---

#### NEXT POST

*Interview with Irish Socialist Republicans*

---

# Leave a Reply

Enter your comment here...

Search ...

## ARCHIVES

---

December 2021

---

November 2021

---

October 2021

---

September 2021

---

August 2021

---

July 2021

---

June 2021

---

May 2021

---

April 2021

---

March 2021

---

February 2021

---

January 2021

---

November 2020

---

October 2020

---

July 2020

---

June 2020

---

May 2020

---

April 2020

---

March 2020

---

February 2020

---

January 2020

---

December 2019

---

November 2019

---

October 2019

---

August 2019

---

July 2019

---

June 2019

---

May 2019

---

April 2019

---

February 2019

---

---

January 2019

---

December 2018

---

November 2018

---

October 2018

---

September 2018

---

August 2018

---

July 2018

---

June 2018

**BLOG AT WORDPRESS.COM.**