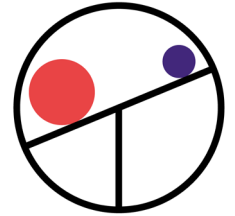


# ARGHIRI EMMANUEL ASSOCIATION

## NEWSLETTER 2



January 2024, Number 2

### An update on our work:

Arghiri Emmanuel Association

The effort to find a new home to Arghiri Emmanuel's legacy continues and brings first results. Our team has met representatives of the Amsterdam-based International Institute of Social History (IISG) in Paris, and together they spent two days identifying and classifying the available material. Owing to our previous visit in 2022, the most important pieces were already identified and categorised which made the work a lot more efficient, but many unknowns still remain.

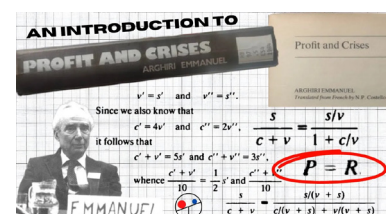
The IISG criteria for selection was clear: the archive seeks original (and previously unpublished) material. This leaves out printed documents such as books and material available elsewhere. In this first effort, the material was divided into three parts: 1. our team and IISG have made an initial selection of documents that would be accepted in the archive; 2. the material that would be definitely left out, and 3. documents that couldn't be evaluated at the moment and were left for processing in the future.

As of this point, this effort has a clear roadmap to follow: ship the first batch of documents to IISG, host the rest separately by our team, and process the remaining material. The IISG would require the assistance of our team to properly organise and categorise the material in the archive, which in itself would be a long running task. On the other hand, the material that was still not identified would require digitalisation, translation, and evaluation in terms of its importance to the archive. Thus, the newly identified material would either be included in the IISG archive, or if deemed minor it would remain available in digitalised form.

With that perspective, our Association requires contribution from the experts in terms of skills to properly translate and interpret the material, in order to come up with a proper evaluation. We are counting on our community to help us out in this research. Our team has already initiated the biographical research about Emmanuel's life, and previously unknown details came to light: he was a friend and economic advisor to Lumumba, which caused him to get deported from Congo. In addition, the archive contains Emmanuel's correspondence with authors such as Immanuel Wallerstein, Anouar Abdel-Malek, Samir Amin, and others.

On a more personal side, our team has managed to locate the burial place of Emmanuel and Torkil and Nemanja visited his grave to pay respects.

### New videos:



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**Letters:**Emmanuel-Wallerstein  
ExchangePreface by Torkil  
Lauesen

Arghiri Emmanuel's letter to Immanuel Wallerstein is dated 13th of June 1972. It comments on Wallerstein's paper: "The rise and future demise of the world capitalist system: Concepts for comparative Analysis", a paper that was to be presented at the Annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, New Orleans, in August 1972.

Dear Mr. Wallerstein,

I'm really mixed up to respond so late to your letter from March 20. On the one hand, I found your envelope at home at the end of April, that is to say upon my return from Congo-Kinshasa and the Central African Republic, where I had stayed for about a month. On the other hand, I have had to, during the month of May, unexpectedly replace a professor friend at Nanterres, which with the I.E.D.E.S. and PARIS VII, makes it three universities that I serve. If you add to this the end of year exams you will perhaps find from me some excuses.

I really liked your papers and I completely agree with you on the main points. I particularly noted the description that you give and which seems very accurate to me of the circumstances which surrounded and even conditioned the abolition of slavery, which only replaced the more or less forced labor in local plantations and mines for the same work overseas. I can also verify by my own personal experience the analyses you make, and which seem strikingly true, of the elite African "clerics" and of their motivations, where the tribalism is in the end nothing more than a pretext for regionalism and secessionism. In fact, it is the purest "bureaucratic" case. The state – an end in itself. As you say so well, the options cannot be in this case those of a "government that wishes to stay in power".

Your 16th century brings me many new elements, but perhaps a little too numerous and too entangled in this summary of popularization to support a theory of the "industrial revolution". I do not clearly see the main factor which ultimately determined England's advance, the regression of Poland, the blockade of Northern Italy, the backwardness of France, Could it be the strong, centralized, "technocratic" state of absolute monarchy? But then it's rather France which should have started first.

I believe that in the final analysis the problem of industrial revolution is a problem of raising agricultural productivity beyond a certain threshold, therefore – apart from one socialist who skips the steps – a problem of introducing capitalist relations in agriculture.

If this is so, there are only two ways to achieve this: directly transform the eminent property of the lord into capitalist property, or transforming peasant holdings into bourgeois property and wait for market relations to dissolve it of their own accord – through the proletarianization of some, the enrichment of others – and transform it into capitalist property. In both cases, we must go, whether we like it or not, through the expropriation of the peasants, immediate and violent in the first, slow and evolving in the second.



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And it is here that we encounter the political factor in the relationship of forces of the moment. The revolutionary bourgeois class cannot fight on two fronts, Well, it compromises with the feudal lords and expropriates the peasants together (English case), or it relies on the peasants and abolishes the rights of the feudal lords (French case). In the first case, the "revolution" is peaceful on the political level – as paradoxical as it may appear, it thereby becomes integral on the economic level and allows the productive forces to take a leap forward. In the second, the political revolution is radical and it is through this that it sets up a hybrid system where precapitalist agriculture, fragmentary, becomes a brake, a defect and a mortgage for the future.

I do not underestimate the importance of the overall amount of trade, In my work, I say that it is only during periods of full employment or almost full employment (like it, quite exceptional- the one, that we are currently experiencing), that the capitalist countries begin to pay attention to the terms of trade. During periods of underemployment and depression they are interested in selling more and to "undersell" their competitors, rather than to sell at a higher price. And their need for outlets is such that they sometimes even go so far as to agree to sell, not only for a little, but for nothing at all, for bad or completely irrecoverable debts, for inconvertible dollars today, for clearing marks (the Balkan countries) before the last war.

That said, I think there were a number of other reasons which could counterbalance the American's desire to keep Europe in its weak economic position and therefore consequently encourage them to launch the Marshall Plan, not the least of which was the fear of the peaceful or violent impact of the U.S.S.R.

We must also not forget that it was the Marshall Plan which constituted the first mechanism for installing the dollar in the reserves of the European Central Banks and thus allowed the United States to monetize its debt to this day. Because,

ultimately, it was only a part of this aid and the others which followed which were incorporated into real American values, gold or merchandise, shipped to the rest of the world, and that at the very beginning. The remainder consisted of simple tokens which have not codified anything in the United States, while allowing, it is true, European countries to play with these tokens in the game of international trade, for lack of being able – in this period of economic weakness and lack of mutual trust – to make their own.

Once started, this system, becoming irreversible, allowed, on the contrary, the United States to acquire real values in the rest of the world and finance their wars with their own currency, that is to say, with date recognitions, which, through their monetization on the international level, never have to be repaid.

Very cordially yours,  
Arghiri Emmanuel

To view this letter in the digital archive, click here:  
<https://unequalexchange.org/2023/12/05/letters-emmanuel-wallerstein-exchange/>



**Letters:**  
Emmanuel-Abdel  
Malek Exchange

Preface by Torkil  
Lauesen

*Emmanuel's exchange with Anouar Abdel-Malek is based on a paper Adel-Malek presented at the Cavtat conference in Yugoslavia on the 27th of September 1976. Cavtat was a popular conference in the 70s, gathering academics such as Emmanuel, Wallerstein, Amin, Gunder Frank, Hobsbawm, and the like.*

*Anouar Abdel-Malek (23 October 1924 – 15 June 2012) was an Egyptian-French political scientist. He was a Pan-Arabist and a Marxist. The notion of the 'pan-Arab state' permeated Abdel-Malek's work. He supported Nasser's projects such as unity with Syria in the '50s. He criticised the pro-Moscow Communist Party for their failure to Egyptianize leftism. Later, Abdel-Malek fled Nasser's crackdown on communists and socialists, travelling to France in a boat and nearly losing his life in the attempt. Despite this, he continued to support Nasser's project based on shared principles.*

*Keenly attuned to the work of the Zionist Lobby, Abdel Malek described Israel as a racist and imperialist state.*

*In his work, he also explored questions of orientalism, well before the seminal Orientalism by Edward Said published in the late '70s. But it was not until Said's book that attention was paid to these arguments in broader circles.*

*He considered Marxism not simply a weapon for national and economic liberation for the Third World, but as a means of freeing thought from Western domination, as he described it in his book, 'Nationalism and Socialism.'*

*Adel-Malek's paper is called: "The Thrust of Socialist Thought", and begins with the statement:*

*The transformations of the world, since Yalta, is just beginning to be dimly perceived by political intellectuals, though it does lie at the very core of the concrete power struggle at world, regional and national levels alike.*

*Wherefore this introductory attempts to cut across the ideological cosmopolitan smokescreen to reach for the linkage between culture and power, thought and action, in the historic field now unfolding.*

*It was later published in "Nation and Revolution," Volume 2 of Malek's huge work, Social Dialectics, in 1982.*

*Emmanuel's copy of the paper is full of exclamations: Yes! No! Juste! and notes – it seems that the paper aroused strong feelings. Emmanuel's letter is dated 22 November 1976. Malik's response is from 6 January 1977. Below we reproduce the originals with translation in English. The letters were translated by Daniel Williams for Anti-Imperialist Network collective.*

To view this letter in the digital archive, click here:  
<https://unequalexchange.org/2023/12/05/letters-emmanuel-abdel-malek-exchange/>

My dear Abdel-Malek,

Since Cavtat, I have had the opportunity to carefully reread your paper and I cannot resist the temptation to share with you some thoughts.

Undoubtedly, this is a powerful blow to certain common mystifications. I admired both your verve and your depth. I agree on several points. But I can't follow you to the end.

When you denounce the Western-centrism of traditional Marxism, I am with you. I applaud you with both hands when you notice that the current crisis in the Center is felt more like a crisis of civilization than like one of an economic system. But when you deduce that economic development is not a problem of socialist thought or you draw an argument from it (or, in any case, you continue) to approve those who, in Asia or elsewhere, condemn productivity, you are, in my opinion, yourself only projecting "universally" a point of view: in the best case, the point of view of the one who solved the problem of physical survival, at worst, the point of view of the bored rich person ("riding the metro-working-sleeping").

I find this neo-Eurocentrism (or Chinese-centrism) more unacceptable even than the old one (which itself did not lack times of generosity). Have you ever thought about what it represents, your "cultural revolution", whether that of the Sorbonne or that of Shanghai it matters little, for a man who, in India or in Africa, sees his child die of hunger or disease? Are you sure to be able to produce enough food and...doctors, to feed and care for all the children in the world, without a little "Stakhanovism"? If so, where do you get this certainty from, since the only discipline that could procure it you have rejected in advance as "economism"?

I understand very well that we must stop writing glosses and that we must place the sacred texts in the socio-cultural and ethno-historical environment which has conditioned their appearance. I am, likewise, very happy to see you refuse to consider peripheral revolutionary thought as the exotic pose of scientific socialism. But when you insinuate that there is no universal socialism at all of which this thought could be one of the components (component in short or in full), I'm losing my footing. In what way, then, would it concern me, a Greek from Paris?

Because, you see, the thought of Mao-Tse-Tung, in itself and for itself, I don't care! Whether or not it brings happiness to 800 million Chinese, whether or not it brings them the most human and the most perfect system that can exist, in what way, do you want me to be interested, me who belongs to the 3 billion non-Chinese, to which the Chinese themselves on the one hand, you on the other, by virtue of "national pluralism", you deny all right to look? On the other hand, it is quite obvious that when a Chinese, in person or through a Maoist intermediary, shoots me in Angola, as part of its "realpolitik", this to me looks at all points of view. And it turns out that this hardly suits me.

That the national framework constitutes a historical constraint that we unfortunately underestimated, it's not me who would speak against you. But

that we must not only take it into account as a necessity, but make it a virtue; that we ourselves come to establish as a finality the manufacture of as many ad-hoc socialisms as the existing nation-states, that is beyond me.

What then is the legitimacy of the nation, apart from the existence of a state apparatus which tends to perpetuate itself in perpetuity (which is the real definition of bureaucracy)? You talk about historical national specificities which separate China from Russia. If they are only historical why not seek to abolish them? Have we given up on making history specifically on this point? Or, in what way are these specifications intrinsically larger than those which separate Uzbekistan from Ukraine? Or Slovenia from Serbia, whose amalgam nevertheless seemed solid enough to lead a "heroic" war of national liberation?

On the other hand, what thing, other than the state apparatuses, separates the island of Cyprus from Greece? Suppose that tomorrow a communist party obedient to the Soviet Union, in all respects identical to that of East Germany, took power in the West. Do you really think that the reunification of Germany would follow automatically, one of the two state apparatuses agreeing to sabotage itself in the national interest? For my part, I do not believe that. Where is objective transcendence of the nation found?

What if it were otherwise? What if you were, despite everything, right? If there was nothing to do and nation-states turning their backs were there for eternity?

Well, in that case, you want me to tell you, between a world composed of free States of this type, organized internally according to the most sublime socialist model and pursuing cheerfully on the exterior their "realpolitik", on the one hand, and the Pax Americana on the other hand, I, Arghiri Emmanuel, would choose without hesitation the Pax Americana.

Because there is something that you are neglecting, it seems to me, in your analysis: the atomic cataclysm. Mathematically, the risks of its triggering are an increasing function of the number of nation-states and the degree of their independence. In a world composed of States as independent as those you advocated this cataclysm becomes a virtual certainty.

So, you understand, there are no stakes commensurate with the thing. You can sacrifice yourself for your family, sacrifice your family for the good of the country, perhaps even sacrifice the country for the good of humanity; but sacrifice the whole of humanity, for...who...for what.. – it doesn't make sense. There survival of humanity takes precedence over its liberation.

Take care! World unification has ceased to be an option. It has become a condition of his existence. From now on, the only option left is to know who will do this unification. Us or them? If we resign, it will be them, that is to say any state superpower or the multinational corporations. We can trust them. As soon as they have completed the enslavement of the world and they will have made it their thing, they will be careful not to destroy it.

All the best,  
A. Emmanuel  
Paris 22.11.1976.



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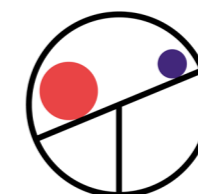
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