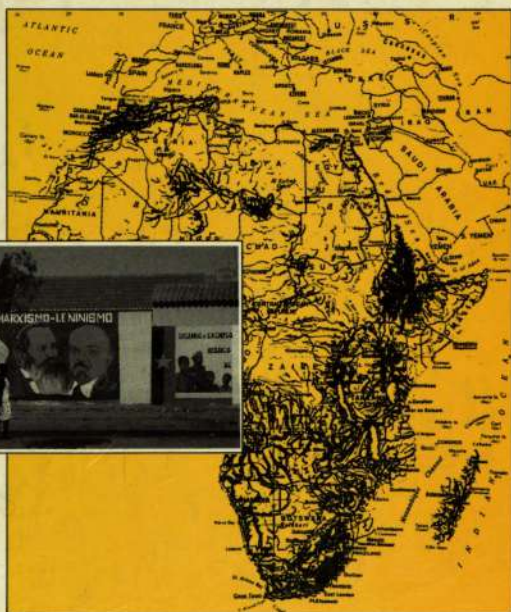


# Samir Amin

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# DELINKING



*Towards a Polycentric World*

# **Delinking**

## **Towards a Polycentric World**

**Samir Amin**



*Translated by Michael Wolfers*



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# Contents

|                                                                                   |     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <b>Preface to the English edition</b>                                             | vii |
| Worldwide expansion and polarization                                              | vii |
| Liberal utopia                                                                    | x   |
| One planet, several systems                                                       | xii |
| <b>Foreword</b>                                                                   | xiv |
| <b>1. The Worldwide Expansion of Capitalism</b>                                   | 1   |
| <b>2. The Problematic of Delinking</b>                                            | 41  |
| The strategic plan                                                                | 41  |
| The concept of delinking                                                          | 62  |
| The tactical plan: delinking or a better world order?                             |     |
| A non-metaphysical opposition                                                     | 68  |
| System and anti-system: the inescapable ambivalence of practice                   | 74  |
| Unity and diversity in the world system. The law of value in worldwide capitalism | 80  |
| <b>3. Expansion or Crisis of Capitalism?</b>                                      | 85  |
| Introduction                                                                      | 85  |
| Is the USSR capitalist?                                                           | 92  |
| Is China similar to the USSR?                                                     | 94  |
| Capitalist expansion in the Third World: return to bourgeois ideology             | 97  |
| Capitalist expansion to the periphery: questions posed by real history            | 103 |
| Conclusion: political economy or historical materialism?                          | 112 |
| Appendix: On the model of autocentric accumulation                                | 116 |
| <b>4. The Asian and African Vocation of Marxism</b>                               | 123 |
| The revolutionary vocation of the working class                                   | 124 |
| The relevance of Maoism                                                           | 129 |
| Socialist transition or capitalist expansion?                                     | 136 |
| Capitalist expansion and the 'white peril'                                        | 143 |
| Communism and national liberation in Asia and Africa                              | 147 |
| The Asian and African vocation of Marxism                                         | 157 |
| <b>5. On the Green Movements</b>                                                  | 165 |

|                                                                           |            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>6. Is There a Political Economy of Islamic Fundamentalism?</b>         | <b>174</b> |
| Fundamentalism or rationalism: two approaches to the history of societies | 174        |
| The fundamentalists' interpretation of history                            | 176        |
| Is there a political economy of fundamentalism?                           | 180        |
| The fundamentalist renaissance in the face of the options of our time     | 183        |
| <b>Index</b>                                                              | <b>189</b> |

## Preface to the English edition

The appearance of *La Déconnexion* in French, Arabic and Spanish has recently revived the perennial debate over the degree of real constraint represented by worldwide expansion of the economy. The prevailing thesis does, as we know, reject any possibility of envisaging any kind of national autonomy for the future, and makes the external constraint an inescapable absolute. The new language of the countries of the East and the performances of the newly industrializing countries (NICs) also strengthens the impression that the neo-liberal discourse will no longer have any competitor.

It is not my view. In a work on social movements to appear soon, the authors Samir Amin, Giovanni Arrighi, André Gunder Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein observe in their joint introduction that ten years ago when they jointly published *Dynamics of Global Crisis*, they attributed the crisis to anything but the price of oil, forgotten nowadays even by those who had no other name than 'energy crisis' for the situation. In ten years time neo-liberalism will have met the same fate.

This book is a plea for reconstruction of the world on the basis of polycentrism. My thesis is certainly founded on the refusal to accept that the worldwide law of value provides the exclusive criterion of 'rationality'. This law is, on the contrary, to blame for 'currently existing capitalism': a world typified necessarily by the increasing polarization of wealth and power, and thereby unacceptable. But my thesis is not synonymous with autarky, as hasty readers (or even non-readers!) seem to think. It is for the reader to judge.

### Worldwide expansion and polarization

We all live, it is said, on the same planet and we share a common destiny. Does this commonplace lead to the conclusion that interdependence imposes subordination of the plans of all the societies on the planet to the same criterion of rationality governing worldwide expansion of the market? This opinion, although prevalent nowadays, is not only entirely mistaken, but also infinitely dangerous.

Currently existing capitalism is a system that produces and reproduces the worldwide polarization of wealth and power. This polarization was speeded up

at two periods: in the 18th century when the European West definitively overtook the civilized Orients in wealth and power, and in the 19th century when the industrial revolution enabled the effective imperialist conquest of Asia and Africa; it is en route to a third stage on the basis of the technological revolution under way.

Modern history has, over five centuries, been shot through by a standing contradiction, always renewed and never surmounted, between the pressures exercised by worldwide capitalist expansion on all the societies of the planet, with a tendency to subject their entire evolution to the exclusive logic of its expansion, and the renewed revolts against this submission, notably from the peripheralized regions, revolts that have reached the pitch of a rupture with, and quasi-autarkic escape from, the system.

Distinct successive phases can be discerned in this history, some marked by the predominance of the trend to worldwide expansion, and others (from 1914 to 1945 for instance) of break-up of the system. After the Second World War the world market was reconstituted in an atmosphere created by the hegemony of the United States. The new worldwide expansion, truncated by the exclusion of the socialist countries, provided the foundation of the political and strategic polarization. This worldwide expansion was momentarily split by the United States' economic hegemony wearing thin, but was nonetheless well able to withstand the mercantile conflict within the OECD. At this level the so-called 'liberal' counter-offensive has borne fruit and the Western bloc has been reconstituted in the light of Eastern countries on the defensive and the Third World in disarray.

Has the worldwide expansion reached a stage that will make it impossible in the future to go back to a break-up of the system? Do new interdependences – in technology, ecology, weaponry, communications – constitute the absolute constraints of a new globalization? Is the direction one of reintegration of the 'ex-socialist' countries in this worldwide capitalist expansion? Did 1917 merely open a parenthesis in history that is by way of being closed? Has the Third World no other option than that offered by 'new industrialization' aimed at the world market and one for which certain East Asian countries provide the model? Must the illusion of autonomous, socially balanced development be abandoned once and for all and the inescapable price of 'accumulation' be met?

The demands of worldwide expansion were expressed in the post-war upsurge, from 1945 to 1970, by a complementary twofold paradigm. In the developed countries Keynesian interventionism was thought to be capable of ensuring continual growth for the benefit of everyone, removing the conjunctural fluctuations and reducing unemployment to a minimum. This performance seemed all the more remarkable as it was in harmony with an external opening-up that put out of mind the memory of the possible conflicts between national politics and the spread of this worldwide expansion. In the Third World countries the ideology of the 'Bandung era' (from 1955 to 1975) suggested that development receptive to the advantages of interdependence could be controlled nationally. The consensus in both categories suggested that the shades of meaning and debate lay within these paradigms. By contrast, the

socialist countries took refuge in the isolation of a third paradigm, hostile on principle to interdependence. But since the autocratic and autarkic state of Stalinism was shaken, a glimmer of hope appeared that liberalism – as a prelude to democratization – would also bring an external opening-up.

The crisis of capitalism has certainly put an end to the Keynesian illusions and to those of the ideology of development, while the ideology of socialism has certainly not yet encountered a solution to its problems. But the vacuum caused by this triple crisis has been filled by a conservative offensive of a 'neo-liberalism' preaching a universal remedy – the market. But the stubborn pursuit of the policies that this dogma inspires can lead only to disaster and the contrary of the objective it seeks: to disaggregation of the world system and a renewal of confused clashes between unbridled nationalisms.

The theoretical and ideological disarray stems largely from the fact that the social sciences and prevailing ideologies – on the left and the right – are constructed on a systematic underestimation of the crucial significance of the polarizing effect of capitalist expansion, and swept along with the optimism of the 19th century, believing that capitalism was capable of homogenizing the world on the basis of rapid and general development of the forces of production. The reality of the polarization suggests an alternative unfolding of history. Social contrasts, intolerable at the periphery of the system, provide the objective conditions for a revolution directed against this currently existing capitalism; one that inaugurates a long post-capitalist period not of 'socialist construction', but of national and popular construction in which a conflict persists between the tendencies of socialism, capitalism and statism, articulated on a dialectic between national autonomy and relations with the world capitalist system. This long transition calls for delinking, not in the sense of an autarkic withdrawal, but from subjection of the external relations of the national and popular society to the imperatives of the complex stages of its internal development. This necessity is binding on all, as the sole alternative to the devastating effects of the pursuit of peripheral capitalist expansion. It is binding on the countries of the newly industrializing semi-periphery and on those of the fourth world, on the big states (USSR, China, India or Brazil) and on the small countries of Central America or of Africa. Its concrete modalities, specific to each situation, are the problems of the 'difficult transition'.

Is there any hope of making international relations evolve in a direction that would minimize the damaging effects of integration in the web of relations of the world capitalist system? Could what I call delinking be the means of reconstructing the world on the basis of a genuine polycentrism? Might it provide favourable conditions for a renaissance of a leftward evolution in the developed Western world, and thus lay the foundation for a renewal of internationalism of peoples and universalism? These are the real challenges of our time.

## **Liberal utopia**

The liberal doctrine is founded on the idea that development is synonymous with market expansion and that at world level it is the product of a constant process of adjustment of the national reality to world constraints. The naive version of the doctrine reduces this adjustment to liberalization of trade and capital flows. In its 'realpolitik' version, it believes that the policies of the state (whose crucial role it does not deny) and the objectives of cultural and social change must be conceived as instruments of this adjustment attained by the combined means of the market and state intervention.

In all these cases the liberal doctrine is pure ideology, without any scientific foundation. The theory on which it is founded assumes that the market as a whole will ensure the maximization of growth and an equitable distribution on the basis of full employment. But for the market as a whole to be effective, that market must include all the output and all the factors of production (goods, capital and labour). The liberal doctrine claims its legitimacy from the fact that this kind of totally integrated market has given the expected results . . . in the developed capitalist countries. The swindle lies in extending this conclusion to the world system while the world market remains a truncated market that embraces only output and capital, as free movement of labour is obviously not on the agenda of what is politically acceptable!

It is therefore understandable why all of history contradicts the liberal thesis and that polarization is the inescapable consequence of the truncated market it proposes. Under these circumstances, subjection of national policies to the supreme criterion of worldwide 'competitiveness' is a bogus response to the challenge. By contrast, the objective of development implies a sustained and constant improvement of productivity in all possible fields, from a given starting point, and action to ensure that the benefits of this improvement should be broadly distributed and permit the gradual integration of all the population in the dynamic of progress. Or, in other words, a policy rejecting the marginalization induced by the implementation of the absolute rule of international competitiveness. Competitiveness is at best a further effect of progress and always relative and segmentary.

Pursuit of the liberal utopia will of necessity not mitigate but aggravate all the social contradictions. It is disastrous for peoples throughout the earth, North, South and East; but certainly more so for the peoples of the South than for the others. According to the liberal policy, its effectiveness depends on three groups of conditions. First, it demands that the worldwide expansion it envisages should mitigate the contradictions in the peripheries of the system. But this is not the case. On the contrary, polarization has become more explosive than ever in the 'semi-industrialized' countries of the Third World; and worldwide expansion, in marginalizing the 'fourth world' it dooms to destruction, encounters an obstacle it cannot overcome. Second, it demands that the worldwide expansion, even in the West, should be able to ensure the necessary reconversions without social disasters. But so long as liberalization is sailing ahead this is not so. Third, it demands that the USSR, China and others

should subject their economic and political national strategies to the imperatives of capitalist expansion like vulgar 'peripheries'. But this is not the case, and the socialist countries will rather seek to retain control of their external relations so that eventually they may intensify these for the benefit of their own strategies.

In these circumstances, the strength of the constraint of worldwide expansion is more apparent than real and the threat of a break-up ever present. I am convinced that if this murderous folly does not lead to catastrophe in the years to come, the fashion will have passed in ten years' time.

It is fashionable to say nowadays that differentiation within the Third World makes it impossible to speak of it in the singular. It is fashionable to say that the newly industrializing countries (NICs) are 'semi-peripheries' on the way to 'catching up', and that their integration in the world market is the key to their miracle, whereas the 'delinked despite themselves' – marginalized in the world system – constitute a shipwrecked fourth world. It is fashionable to draw the conclusion from this comparison that delinking would be an unfortunate and dangerous utopianism. I strongly reject all these theses.

First, the NICs are not semi-peripheries on the way to catching up but in every sense the real peripheries of tomorrow. For the conditions imposed by polarization within the worldwide system are in fact increasingly unfavourable: in the 19th century two or three decades were sufficient for Germany to 'catch up and overtake' Great Britain. How long would it take Brazil to 'catch up' the United States? In the semi-industrialized peripheries the model of development pursued is faced now with a decisive choice. As world polarization brings an internal polarization founded on more and more unequal internal income distribution, the development recommended by the liberal doctrine leads to gigantic social problems. Either these countries will embark upon the path of progressive responses to these problems, and obviously will clash with the simple logic of the worldwide expansion of the market. Or they will not, and will accord priority to the demands of 'adjustment'; and democracy will wither before it has taken root in the society. The example of Brazil in this regard is striking.

Second, differentiation within the peripheries and the 'fourth world' is not a new phenomenon. Capitalism in its polarizing worldwide expansion has always led to the exclusion and destruction of peripheral regions that had lost the role they played, sometimes outstandingly, at an earlier stage. What has become of the Caribbean and Brazilian North-East, the setting for the 'economic miracle' of the mercantilist era? Are not the system that has confined Africa to specialization in agriculture and mining, by extensive exploitation of soils to the point of exhaustion, and the technological revolution that obviates the need for certain raw materials, on the way to excluding the African continent from the world division of labour? The societies of the fourth world undergoing a passive delinking that rejects them cannot find an answer to their problems through the virtues alone of an open door. Does not recolonization, sweetened by charity, aim at concealing the certain failure of the neo-liberal solution?

## **One planet, several systems**

The simple solution of the market is always incapable of avoiding the appearance of internal and international, social and political contrasts that reach an intolerable pitch. Legitimation of the ideological discourse of neo-liberalism pretends to ignore that the market by itself can only reproduce and heighten these contrasts, and that scientific analysis of the real advantages of the market is meaningless, unless the advantages are related to the determinants of the social system: levels of development, historical place in the world division of labour and the social alliances it has forged and that reproduce it. Critical thought is concerned to discover what might be the alternative alliances susceptible of offering an escape from the vicious cycles imposed by the market. From this point of view the substantial differences between the various regions of the world necessarily entail specific policies that cannot be derived from the rationality solely of the market. These objective reasons are complemented by equally legitimate differences, relating to the culture and ideological and political options of the history of the peoples. The genuine imperatives of our time entail the reconstruction of the world system on the basis of polycentrism. This is my definition of the concept of delinking, one that, as can be seen, has nothing to do with exclusion or autarkic withdrawal. It is a matter of subjecting the mutual relations between the various nations and regions of the whole of the planet to the varying imperatives of their own internal development and not the reverse. That is, a readiness to adjust to the worldwide expansion of capitalism. It is a plea in favour of 'reciprocal adjustment' (instead of unilateral adjustment, of the weakest to the strongest), and I regard it as the only possible realistic humanist discourse of our time. We counter the slogan 'interdependence governs everything', with another: 'one planet, several systems, in the hope of a polycentric world'.

The social alliances defining the content of the strategies of the various countries and regions of our planet are themselves specific. In the West their bourgeois aspect, founded on a long history that has produced the advanced development, is obvious. This does not preclude evolution towards the gradual socialization of the system. In the countries of the East the strategies call for a liberation of society from the exclusive yoke of statism, to the benefit of a dialectic acknowledging the conflicts between the social forces of socialism and capitalism. But in the Third World the strategies almost always entail a more radical than evolutionary reversal of tendencies, and the rejection of the bourgeois subordination that reproduces an intolerable system. In all cases it is right to substitute a national, popular and regional content for the exclusive bourgeois vision of the market, but consciousness of the crisis represented by this option is much more acute in the South than in the West and the East. To some extent, however, perestroika is required everywhere. To refuse it, through the prevailing discourse of neo-liberalism, is to make certain a response by the peoples in the form of the despair of racisms, primitive nationalisms and religious or other fundamentalisms.

A strategy of development of new North–South relations is the central axis of this necessary reconstruction of the world. This essential radical change in the very concept of North–South relations entails, in turn, a revision of all aspects of the political options, as regards intra-European relations, relations with the United States and Japan, and East–West relations. This is the price of realism and modernity; it lies to the left.

**Samir Amin**  
1989

# Foreword

The thesis presented in this work – the necessity of ‘delinking’ from the system of worldwide expansion of capitalism – is, in our opinion, little known and perhaps therefore even less accepted.

The book should certainly explain the concept of ‘delinking’ and avoid a simplistic reading of it as, for example, merely a synonym for economic autarky. It should accordingly reach beyond the discourse of politicians, especially those in the benighted Third World who use the term with an increasing frequency that does not make up for the persistent muddling of propositions, although such confusion is at least in part intentional.

The delinking thesis embraces the following four propositions:

First, the necessity of delinking is the logical political outcome of the unequal character of the development of capitalism. This concept of unequal development goes deeper than the superficial aspect revealed in the pyramidal distribution of average income per capita in the various capitalist countries. It implies a certain concept of the law of value and a theory of the value of labour power and transfers of value in the world system. Unequal development, in this sense, is the origin of essential social, political and ideological evolutions such as, for example, the phenomenon of social democracy and the apparent decline of Marxism in the West, and the emergence of national revolutions in the periphery.

Second, delinking is a necessary condition of any socialist advance, in the North and in the South. This proposition is, in our view, essential for a reading of Marxism that genuinely takes into account the unequal character of capitalist development.

Third, the potential advances that become available through delinking will not ‘guarantee’ certainty of further evolution towards a pre-defined ‘socialism’. Socialism is still a future that must be built.

Fourth, the option for delinking must be discussed in political terms. This proposition derives from a reading according to which economic constraints are absolute only for those who accept the commodity alienation intrinsic to capitalism, and turn it into an ahistorical system of eternal validity. Keeping the debate on a political plane implies in turn a concrete tactical analysis articulated with a strategy that is itself evolving.

These considerations explain the organization of this work in three parts.

In the first part we pose a broad problematic of delinking and deal successively with the questions of conceptualization and strategy, and then tactical considerations.

In the second part, we attempt to answer some of the main objections made to the delinking thesis. Delinking is the only possible answer for the peoples on the periphery of the system, since the unequal development of capitalism necessarily provokes class contradictions there to an explosive degree. The revolutions that have resulted from this unequal development (in Russia and China) can in no way be reduced to moments of capitalist expansion; and capitalist expansion pursued elsewhere in the peripheries of the system that have not delinked retains the specific characteristics that prevent it being assimilated into capitalist expansion in the centres of the system. The delinking thesis demands a reading of Marxism that takes account of its Afro-Asiatic relevance.

In the third part, we examine two proposals for 'delinking' that fall outside the method of historical materialism: that of the movement of the Greens (in the broad sense) in the West and that of Islamic fundamentalism. The current significance of these two trends, both moreover founded on a cultural approach to history, is evidence of the objective character of the social need for 'delinking', even if, in our opinion, they offer no real response to the challenge facing contemporary societies in crisis.

As the problem raised is, we believe, fundamental, it goes without saying that the manner of defining it depends largely on the underlying theoretical concepts. Our adherence to Marxism is not in any sense fundamentalist. The propositions of Marx do not seem to us necessarily and totally indisputable, although the method of historical materialism does not seem to us obsolete. Our concern is not that of a Marxian, nor do we seek to define a 'true Marxism', as we accept from the start the legitimacy of a plurality of Marxisms. In this spirit we find useful the distinction between the essential and the circumstantial in Marx's explanation of historical materialism, as we stress what is, in our opinion, the unseen in the dominant texts of Marxism. In the same spirit the successive contributions of Lenin and Mao are accepted as the understandable products of the evolution of reality and, in this regard, largely positive, even if they are in no sense definitive or complete. On the contrary, the eventual discovery of their historical limits is of greater interest. Capitalist society moreover is still evolving; the problematic of state, nation and social class cannot today, in the era of greater worldwide expansion of the system, be identical to that of 100, or even 50, years ago. Wherever necessary, our views on all these matters are explained in the text (sometimes by cross-reference to other works where we have dealt with the matter more systematically). We wanted to avoid distracting attention with digressions; and, rather the reverse, have chosen to focus the argument on the issue of delinking, the title of the work.\*

\* The author is currently directing a research programme entitled 'Strategies for the future of Africa'. This book deals to some extent with aspects of the themes tackled in the programme.

Although the views expressed here are entirely personal and commit only the author, our thanks go to the institutions associated with the programme, the Third World Forum, the United Nations University (UNU) and the United Nations Institute for Research and Training (UNITAR), as well as Sweden's SAREC (the Swedish agency for co-operation in research) which along with UNU provides essential financial support.

# 1. The Worldwide Expansion of Capitalism

The past 30 years have witnessed profound changes in practically every country in the world system as well as in the system's structure as a whole. The previous 30 years – from 1914 to 1945 – had been characterized by relative stagnation of the forces of production at a global level, violent confrontation between the imperialist centres seeking to overcome their difficulties by ensuring their hegemony through military means (two world wars), the maintenance of Africa and Asia in the status of colonies or semi-colonies, the success of two major revolutions, the Russian and the Chinese, under the leadership of communist parties. The post-war situation was by contrast characterized by an unprecedented upsurge in economic growth of the capitalist system as a whole (indubitably unchallenged until the decade of the seventies), the elimination of colonial empires and the establishment of nearly 100 new or renewed independent states.

Such a contrast between these two periods corresponding to two successive generations must of necessity call into question the theories of social science. In the 1914–45 period, slump, the violence of the two world wars and the crisis of 1930, the success of the Russian and Chinese revolutions, then the upsurge of the national independence struggles, must imply an agenda of an impasse in capitalist development and maturity for 'socialist revolution'. By contrast, the 30 years of 1950–80 were to show capitalism's unexpected capacity to adapt to the new circumstances and even to benefit from them, its capacity, by way of a broad new upsurge, to regain a legitimacy that would ensure a prospect of stability even more remarkable because the socialist revolutions seemed incapable of offering a plausible alternative.

With the normal time-lag in theoretical reflection on observed reality – time for consciousness of the character of the reality, time for the formulation of theoretical constructs, etc. – the social theory inspired by each of these two successive periods crystallized towards the end of – not at the beginning of or during – the period concerned. Thus 'stagnationist' visions of capitalism, built up during the 1930s (see Keynesianism or the theory of 'blockade' of the colonies by imperialism), became widespread only in the post-second world war period. Visions based on the significance of transformation, growth and development, and their character and prospects (see the 'developmentalist' theories or their critiques highlighting 'dependency'), built up during the 1960s,

## 2 *The Worldwide Expansion of Capitalism*

became widespread only in the 1970s, when the model of post-war upsurge was already entering a crisis phase.

In any case, for each of the periods considered here, just as for the preceding phases of capitalist expansion since its origins four or five centuries ago, 'development' has been 'unequal', whether in the advanced centres or in the backward peripheries. For the former, any historian can readily identify the periods of rapid advance for some, and stagnation, or decline of others (the contemporary British decline and Japanese advance, for example). For the peripheries, it is the same today as it has been in earlier phases. At no time in history has the whole of the world around or outside the developed capitalist regions constituted a homogeneous and undifferentiated reality. On the one hand – a trite indication – the historical forms of societies, the level of development of their forces of production, the stage of constitution of state forms have always shown a variety that is no greater today than it was four centuries ago. From the advanced tribute-paying states to the tribal societies, there is no less heterogeneity and distance than between Brazil and Rwanda today. On the other hand, in step with their integration into the world capitalist system, the various regions that we have categorized as peripheral have fulfilled diverse specific roles that emphasize their heterogeneity, or their 'level of development' in the routine sense of their superficial 'modernization'. New England, Spanish colonial America, the plantation slavery colonies, Africa that supplied slave labour, the Ottoman Empire and China (after its 'opening up') which were gradually integrated into exchanges centred on Europe, colonized India and Indonesia are no less differentiated and 'unequal' than the Third World of the present.

The 'rediscovery' of this utter commonplace of the current diversity of the Third World, unequal growth rates in the contemporary era and particularly of industrialization, of the variety of roles played in the world system (suppliers of raw materials, of manpower or of manufactured goods, etc.) does not take the reflection far. The use of this commonplace, true of every age, to counter 'the so-called theory of the centre and the periphery', or 'the existence of the Third World' does not respond to any question worth asking.

If, likewise, one wants to make an abstraction from the succession of distinct phases in capitalist expansion and in inequality of development in all its phases and in the system as a whole, some broad general trends that define the capitalist mode may be highlighted. At least three obvious ones: the development of the forces of production, the intensification of 'interdependence' (exchanges of all kinds) that we categorize as 'transnationalization' or 'worldwide expansion', the generalization of a certain number of forms characteristic of capitalism (wage labour, urbanization, certain kinds of organization of labour and of ownership of the means of production etc.).

Stressing these general and common trends is an easy matter and of dubious benefit to an understanding of concrete reality and the prospects for the system in question.

For instance, who could deny the development of the forces of production as a whole in the apparently advanced or backward regions? So, saying that

capitalism dooms to stagnation such and such a region (the colonies or the periphery, for example), necessarily runs counter to an essential truth: the constructive dynamic of the capitalist mode of production. But in my opinion no one has seriously argued this. On the contrary, what one might say is that in such and such a phase of capitalism, such and such a region playing such and such a specific role may by virtue of the fact effectively be doomed to temporary stagnation or even decline. This proposition, frequently manifested in history, is very different from the formulation given above, which provides an excuse for those who deny the specificity (and inequality) of the roles by readily putting forward the – abstract – trend towards effective change in the long term.

A one-sided observation on the ‘positive’ character of the development of the forces of production without a concern for the class character of this development – (in conventional terms ‘Development for whom?’), either generally (since it concerns capitalism) or concretely, that is to say in a given phase of capitalist expansion and for a particular region playing particular roles in that expansion – is to make an ideological, non-scientific, choice of accepting capitalism as the long-term means (for centuries, a millenium?) of ‘solving the problems of humankind’. One should note another ideological choice that is likewise available: the social contradictions associated with the development of the forces of production permit a response to the problems of societies in the perspective of their future viewed from various angles, according to the outlook of the observer.

The gradual intensification of transnationalization is likewise a commonplace. One might even argue that it tends to wipe out the autonomy of the regions, nations or peoples, constitutive states of the system. But to conclude that political action must submit to its demands since it represents an insurmountable force and it is unrealistic, or utopianly reactionary to reject the consequences, is likewise to make an ideological choice in favour of the ‘civilizing influence’ of capitalism. It is to make an implicit supposition that this intensified transnationalization operates in the same way and with the same effects on the various components of the system. Nothing could be more wrong than this hypothesis if one admits that the specific roles played by this or that component offer the peoples and social classes profoundly different prospects, again in the horizon of a foreseeable future defining the consciousness and political and social attitudes of the historical subjects.

Observation of the general development of the organizational forms of capitalism does not take one much further. Certainly capitalism does tend to ‘homogenize’ the world, and talk about the contemporary effects of transnational communication, of ‘Americanization’ in such or such area of social behaviour, etc., is easy talk for the mass circulation magazines. One must obviously go beyond these mere appearances, since at this level the world can always be seen in the shape of a more or less regular pyramid, where quantitative difference seems the only criterion of grading. If one chooses this or that criterion of classification, an artificial criterion (income per head as modern economic statisticians measure it), or even a partial criterion (level of

#### **4 *The Worldwide Expansion of Capitalism***

industrialization, or the number of telephones per 100 inhabitants, etc.), as there are obvious correlations between most of these criteria, one will discover no more than one already knew: capitalist expansion exists.

For the two real questions, and the genuine difficulties for social science, are outside these trivialities. The two questions are:

First, does quantitative scale of continuing appearance hide qualitative differences? What are the criteria for the latter? Are they of the same character from one phase to another of capitalist history or do they move from one sphere of reality to another? Are the eventual boundaries between the qualitative groups relatively stable or mobile? In particular are there 'intermediate' situations? Do they form the rule or the exception?

Second, does the expansion of the system as a whole entail a tendency to see the more backward regions belatedly reproduce the same type of development as the more advanced regions have previously experienced? Can this trend be 'accelerated', to allow 'overtaking'? Or the reverse, from one phase to another of the history of the system, is it impossible to reduce the types of development of the various segments to the same basic model?

Unfortunately the contemporary debates on 'development theory', useful as they are for a better appreciation of this or that aspect of the problems, are, in our opinion, fairly confused.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the reason is that the questions posed are not always clearly distinguished. In our opinion, the global critiques addressed to a supposed 'dependency theory', the general anti-Third World declarations of the kind that 'the development of the newly industrializing countries – NICs – demolishes the centre/periphery distinction', etc., do not help to a clear vision. These critiques make their work too easy by inventing an adversary ignorant of the characteristic dynamism of capitalism, and this adversary is easily defeated. By the same token, the difficult issues are removed from the debate.

Answers to these two series of questions seem to us to lie within two families of vision and perspective of capitalist expansion.

What seems the prevailing view is founded on two hypotheses. 1) The mode of capitalist production obeys the economic laws of a decisive power and an extreme force that tend to homogenize the world, that is, to establish the same kind of society everywhere, which calls on the development of the forces of production to the highest degree possible. 2) The backwardness of some in regard to others must be attributed in essence to causes internal to the various historical formations, that is, to their class dynamic, more or less hostile or sympathetic to the emergence and domination of capitalist relations.

Is this general view of capitalist expansion accurate? More precisely, are the fundamental hypotheses on which it is based sufficient? The critique of the prospect of homogenization of the world by capitalism stems from the observation that not only has this not been achieved, even in crude terms, by the five centuries of history of this expansion, but it is also not on the agenda for the foreseeable future. Is not the assertion that this would be impossible made

innocently by those who believe they have perceived that Western levels of consumption cannot be shared by the whole of humankind as there are inadequate resources on the globe? So, saying that the trend to homogenization is the decisive force and that heterogeneity is only transitory must surely take all meaning from the concept of transition, as it refers to a transition that has been coexisting with capitalism since its origins.

One must therefore discuss the character and causes of the permanence of unequal development, on which there are differing views, and not evade the debate by the simple declaration of an abstract tendency for capitalism to spread.

The common ground of the critics of the prevailing view is founded on the hypothesis that the world capitalist system cannot be reduced to a juxtaposition of autonomous 'national' (or local) formations, since the structure and role of these local formations do themselves depend on the structure of the world system and on the play of forces that determine its global evolution. In these circumstances, the dynamic of local formations is not determined exclusively by their internal conflicts. Social classes are not defined exclusively by their position in the local system but – and no less significantly – by their relationship to the range of forces operating on a world scale. The internal forces/external forces distinction is therefore artificial and reductionist: all social forces are internal once the unit of study is the world system and not merely its local components.

Within the framework of this general hypothesis one should situate the concepts of 'centre' and 'periphery' on the basis of which the theory of unequal development in the world system has been built up. An outline of the imbalance that characterizes centre-periphery relations might run as follows: in the centres, the process of accumulation of capital is controlled principally by the dynamic of internal social relations, reinforced by external relations at their disposal; in the peripheries, the process of accumulation of capital is derived principally from the evolution of the centres, grafted and in some way 'dependent' on that evolution. We shall come back to the meaning of this general definition, its content and historical forms.

The real question is whether this division of local formations into 'central' and 'peripheral', which supposes a qualitative distinction, and not merely quantitative differences, makes sense or not. The various responses to this question, posed explicitly here but often implicit, divide the camps. Nobody denies the global 'interdependence' of local formations, or even their inequality within the former. In a general sense, any process of accumulation depends both on the internal dynamic and the external constraints. This is equally true for France, Brazil, Rwanda, regardless of their level of development. It is even true for the most advanced capitalist country that eventually achieves a position of hegemony: accumulation in Great Britain in the 19th century, in the United States nowadays, is not unconnected to the relations these countries enjoy with the rest of the world. The partisans of the vision and perspective under consideration argue that the 'internal decisions'/'external constraints' mixture will be differently proportioned for some and for others: the external

## **6 *The Worldwide Expansion of Capitalism***

constraint is less burdensome (perhaps) for Japan than for Brazil, for Brazil than for Ghana; but there is no qualitative difference. We revert to the pyramidal image of the world, stratified in successive layers in a continuum that it would be artificial to divide into qualitatively different categories.

There are obvious correlations between the various aspects of 'development'. Thus the pyramidal classification according to levels of income per head for example corresponds, approximately, to the classification of regions and countries according to the degree of external dependence for accumulation and vulnerability to external constraints. As, moreover, the system is characterized by constant dynamism and the growth of its various segments is always unequal, with nations holding varying positions in the pyramid, the conclusion was drawn that the degree of 'external dependence' is itself, and for everyone, relative and variable.

Moreover, the development of the system as a whole entails the ever closer integration of each of its segments, or in other words the degree of transnationalization is accentuated from one phase of history to the other. But this intensification would mean the same for some as for the others, with the result that France, Brazil and Rwanda are to some extent more vulnerable nowadays to global constraints than they were half a century ago.

The theses that reject the view under consideration of a continuum do not only insist upon the 'specificities' of each local formation (nobody denies these). They argue that there really are qualitative differences that entail differing futures in the development of the system as a whole. The character of these qualitative differences will be considered later.

One must recognize this difference of perspective. For the prevailing vision and perspective under consideration implies the recognition of the trend to homogenization, in relative inequality, just as it assigns the position of the various formations in the pyramid structure, itself variable, in the light only of the internal conditions of these formations. By contrast, the theory of unequal development seeks an alternative explanation, in the dynamic of the system as a whole, for the reproduction of inequality from one phase to another. It urges the polarity of the system, that is to say a simultaneous coalescing around one or more central kernels on the one hand, and on the other hand the constitution around this or these kernels of a nebula of satellites that are not 'coalescing'. In other words, 'development' and 'underdevelopment', in the descriptive sense of these vulgarized expressions, are organically linked and constitute the locus and direction of the same worldwide global development. But then one has to show why and how the processes can exist and constantly remain of coalescence on the one hand and disintegration on the other; why the first prevails in some cases and the second in others. One must also take on board the challenge represented by the 'intermediate' situations, that one might provisionally categorize as 'semi-peripheries' and recognize if they form the exception or the rule, if they are 'on the way to becoming central formations' or not, etc.

At this stage and before considering the answers to these questions, one must refrain from crystallizing the positions further. In this area there are not two

'theories', more or less complete and coherent or supposedly such, in opposition. The scientific method, 'the school of thought', does not necessarily lead to such and such a conclusion. Conventional analysis, in terms of neo-classical economics, functional sociology and empirical political science, the structuralist analyses, those of one or more Marxisms (and 'neo-Marxisms') are used by various people and lead to often divergent solutions, whatever the methods of analysis adopted.

It might be added that the logic inherent to neo-classical economics does not encourage one to pose the kind of questions discussed here. Neo-classical economics takes no notice of history and recognizes only the supposedly universal economic laws that take effect with immutable force, bringing an almost inevitable development (that we categorize as capitalist). The backwardness of certain nations in this type of development must therefore be attributed to a refusal – political, ideological or social – to submit to the demands of these universal laws. As one can see, Marxism, accused of being economistic, is infinitely less so than the philosophy of neo-classical economics. This fundamental economism is scarcely extenuated by the explanation of the inequalities and historical backwardness, relegated to disciplines separate from economics: functionalist sociology or empirical political science.

But Marxism itself may give rise to readings that are not entirely different in the conclusions they inspire. The economic laws in question, stripped of their pretensions to universality and revealed as laws of capitalist accumulation, are likewise then regarded as the implacable driving force that leads to homogenization of the world by the development of the forces of production on the basis of generalized capitalist relations of production.

In any case, once this viewpoint is accepted, it would seem idle, or reactionary, to oppose this development, even if capitalist, of the forces of production. Since it would be preparing the objective conditions necessary for the transition to socialism, in the 'economistic' reading of Marxism. Among other factors, resistance to this development in the name of preservation of national autonomy for example would be illusory and in the end negative. A hymn to universality characterizes this view of the expansion of capitalism.

What can one say to counter this view and its theoretical justification, formulated by schools of thought as far apart as the ones enumerated here? Is there a theory – that described as the 'dependency theory' of the 1960s and 1970s, for example – that would take account of the permanence of the reproduction of the centre/periphery imbalance?<sup>2</sup> I do not think one can draw that conclusion. We shall return later to this term 'dependency' which carries all the uncertainties and ambiguities of its common usage. But, apart from the squabbles – of scant interest – over words and labels, the corpus of analyses produced to counter the prevailing view does not constitute a general theory. First because these analyses draw on fundamentally diverse methods: structuralist, Marxist or 'neo-Marxist', sometimes even borrowing from neo-classical economics some of its tools of partial analysis, then because the partial results of these critical analyses lie in various fields, without there always being a concern to integrate them, or may even be contradictory.

## 8 *The Worldwide Expansion of Capitalism*

The supposed 'dependency theory' in question is no more than a first attempt to reject the prospect of implacable and homogenizing capitalist expansion. The Leninist theory of imperialism was assigned the same critical objective and drew significant conclusions about the political strategy of the struggle for socialism. But here one cannot talk of a single, unique 'theory of imperialism'. Rosa Luxemburg for example argued that capitalist accumulation necessarily implied relations of exchange between capitalist society on the one hand and pre-capitalist social formations on the other. In other words, she concluded that the (fully capitalist) centre and the (incompletely capitalist) periphery formed two sub-groups necessarily associated through all the stages of capitalist expansion. Lenin criticized this analysis at a theoretical level, without denying the actual existence of the relations in question. By contrast, he stressed what seemed new to him, in regard to the formation of monopolies, the export of capital, the colonial division of the world and the conflict of imperialisms. But he left standing an ambiguity on the effects of this evolution at the level of the social and revolutionary prospect. On the one hand, he indicated the relationship existing, in his view, between 'reformism' and the establishment of 'the labour aristocracy'. But on the other hand, he praised a work in which Nikolai Bukharin asserts that imperialism unifies the world labour market and thereby tends to equalize salary levels within the system as a whole. We have drawn attention to this observation that often goes unnoticed.<sup>3</sup>

These analyses of imperialism – in the absence of a (single, unique) theory of it – have, in our opinion, represented a great step forward and not, as is too lightly said now, an error. Certainly these analyses are not made in the abstract, but are part of the actual state of the world system of the time. Is it necessary to repeat that until the aftermath of the Second World War, that is during nearly three quarters of a century, the whole system was fundamentally characterized by this dichotomy of industrialized imperialist centres in conflict over colonial and semi-colonial peripheries, with all its implications? Clearly, as always, some have succumbed to the temptation of eternalizing the historical aspects peculiar to this dichotomy, the colonial status of the peripheries for example, or their restriction to agricultural or mining specialization, or the relative blockade on the development of the forces of production, or even the conflict of imperialisms. But these historical forms of the dichotomy, albeit characteristic of the system from 1880 to 1945, are not those that define it today: the Third World is composed of independent states, industrialization is in train (although unequally), American hegemony has excluded some previous forms of conflict of imperialisms, etc. Is it necessary to reject the validity of the analysis of imperialism to return to the view of a continual and homogenizing expansion of capitalism? Or rather to go further and to see why and how unequal development entered a new phase?

It was attempted with the renewal of analyses in the 1960s and 1970s hastily dubbed 'dependency theory'. Here too, the methods, viewpoints, spheres and phenomena analysed and conclusions reached are too varied for one to be able globally – and idly – to accept or reject this supposed theory that does not exist. The choice of the term 'dependency' was certainly unfortunate and has lent

itself to over-easy enthusiasms or rejections. For worldwide diffusion is characteristic of the system at all stages of its expansion and is even intensified from one phase to another. Accordingly, 'interdependence' and by extension 'unequal interdependence' among unequals, hence 'dependency', are neither new factors, nor clearly defined concepts. With the help of economism, the attempt to measure this 'dependency' by purely statistical means – proportion of external trade in the GDP, source of capital, etc. – has too often drawn the discussion on to ground of limited interest. The expression has had successful moments, notably in Latin America whose literature is better known in Europe and the United States than is the production from other regions of the Third World. This, taken with the success of the structuralist school on that continent, is perhaps the source of the confusion that has allowed critics to deal with a supposed 'dependency theory' as a coherent and complete whole. In Africa and Asia, the expression has been used less crudely, thanks perhaps to a certain classicism of Marxist language, which preferred to use the expressions 'neo-colonial' or 'comprador'.

Once again, whatever the terminology employed, the fields of analyses covered have been broad and the benefits significant. There is no question here of making a survey, however sketchy, of these researches, still less a critical examination. The enumeration is purely to indicate the variety: discussions on unequal exchange and the relations between labour productivity and remuneration, analyses of the agrarian crisis and the migration from the countryside to the towns, analyses of the so-called phenomenon of 'marginalization' (urbanization without adequately intensive industrialization), case studies of so-called 'dependent' industrialization (through ownership of capital, technology or the sources of accumulation) of its relationships to the control of accumulation, and its forms (import substitution, free zones and segmented delocalization, etc.), characterization of the historical formation of the local bourgeoisie and the state and their relations with the classes of earlier epochs and to world capital, etc. In all these fields, the viewpoints and conclusions have rarely been divided. The discussions have been lively and there has been no shortage of serious critiques.

By contrast, it seems almost impossible to take seriously the 'global critiques' that have become fashionable of rejecting out of hand 'dependency theory', the concepts of centres and peripheries, and denying the existence of the Third World, etc. This kind of critique is perhaps only a by-product of the university inflation typical of our time. With the obligation to produce something, certain people, instead of playing an active part in seeking positive answers to the questions posed by the real world, over-specialize perhaps in the easier exercise of the critique. Far too much of this literature filling countless journals is content with vague and spurious accusations: 'dependency theory' neglects concrete analysis (!) or social relations (!! ) or the diversity of the Third World (!!!), etc. Sticking to these analytical progressions, our critics are content to fall back purely and simply on to the (highly abstract!) 'theory' of the tendency of capitalist expansion (a reality nobody disputes) to homogenize the world . . .

## 10 *The Worldwide Expansion of Capitalism*

To take the discussion forward, it may be useful to begin with a definition of the character of the concepts of 'centres' and 'peripheries'.

'Centres' are a product of history. In certain regions of the capitalist system, history has allowed the establishment of a national bourgeois hegemony (we shall explain the meaning of the qualification) and a state that we should also categorize as national capitalist. The bourgeoisie and the bourgeois state are here indivisible: only a so-called 'liberal' ideology could fly in the face of reality and speak of a capitalist economy as an abstraction of the state. For example the decision to raise interest rates, the economic foundation of the American counter-offensive, is a decision of the state and not, as Reagonomics presents it, the spontaneous expression of market forces. The bourgeois state is national when it controls the process of accumulation, admittedly within the limits of external constraints, but only when these constraints are rendered highly relative by virtue of its own capacity to react to their action, or to participate in their creation.

'Peripheries' are defined in purely negative terms: they are the regions that, within the world capitalist system, are not established as centres. Accordingly they are the countries and regions that do not have local control of the process of accumulation, which is therefore mainly shaped by external constraints. The peripheries are not therefore 'stagnant', although their development is not similar to that characteristic of the centres in the successive stages of the global expansion of capitalism. The bourgeoisie and local capital are not necessarily absent from the local political and social scene, and the peripheries are not synonymous with 'pre-capitalist societies'. The state may be absent in the formal sense (the colonial case), but is not necessarily so (today nearly all the countries of the Third World are constituted as independent states). But the existence of the state in the formal sense is not synonymous with the national capitalist state, even if the local bourgeoisie is broadly in control of the apparatus, in so far as it does not control the process of accumulation.

There is no shadow of doubt as to the coexistence within the world capitalist system, at every stage of global development, of 'centres and peripheries', according to this definition. It is easily proven. So the question does not lie with this acknowledgment. The real – and less obvious – question is whether the peripheries are 'on the way to becoming new centres'. More precisely the question is whether the forces operating in the global system are working in this direction, or on the contrary working against it. And hence the changes these forces undergo from one stage to another of the development of the system as a whole.

We shall later go further into the meaning of the expression 'control of accumulation'. It means, we repeat, control by the local bourgeoisie and their state over five essential conditions of the process of accumulation:

- the reproduction of the labour force (this supposes at a first stage that the state policy ensures agricultural development capable of producing surplus foodstuffs in sufficient quantities and at prices compatible with the demands of a return on capital, and at a second stage that the mass production of wage

goods can simultaneously accompany the expansion of capital and that of the wages pool);

- the centralization of the surplus (this supposes not only the formal existence of national financial institutions but also their relative autonomy in relation to the flow of transnational capital), ensuring national capacity to direct its investment;
- the market (largely reserved in fact for national production, even in the absence of heavy tariffs or other protection) and the complementary capacity to be competitive on the world market, at least for selected products;
- natural resources (this supposes, in addition to their formal ownership, the national state's capacity to mine them or to keep them as reserves; in this sense the oil-producing countries do not have such control as they are not in fact free to 'turn off the tap' – even if they should prefer to keep the oil in their sub-soil rather than possess financial resources of which they could at any moment be expropriated.
- lastly, local control of technology in the sense that whether locally engendered or imported it can be rapidly reproduced without indefinite reliance on the importation of essential inputs (equipment, know-how, etc.).

The state and bourgeoisie that control these five elements of social reproduction – and only such – deserve to be described as a national bourgeoisie and state. We note here that this reference to the concept of nation is not without ambiguity. There are social realities other than classes, including nation. But the latter is not alone – family, tribe, ethnic group, religious community, etc. are some of the others – any more than it is to be found everywhere. Its historical form – that of a linguistic and cultural community on which the modern capitalist state is based – is closely tied to the circumstances of European history. We shall turn later to these questions about this historical form. Did it pre-exist the states or is it itself a product of the state? Does it operate as a historical agent, and under what circumstances? Has it become a historical 'necessity' that must reproduce itself, notably in the current Third World? But for want of another term and since the ideology of nation has spread throughout the contemporary world, we are obliged to use this description, even where the social reality underlying the state differs.

The historical establishment of the national bourgeois state is not the rule, but so far the exception in the world capitalist system. The establishment is synonymous with the formation of an 'autocentric national economy', to use the expression we thought it useful to put forward. As can be seen, autocentric economic construction is in no way synonymous with autarky, as still too many commentators appear to think. It merely means that relations with the exterior are subject to the logic of internal accumulation and not the reverse. Moreover, in the case in question, autocentric construction is in no way 'anti-capitalist', still less 'socialist', but on the contrary a fundamental element of the formation of the capitalist system.

## 12 *The Worldwide Expansion of Capitalism*

The thesis that the centre/periphery contradiction is immanent in the capitalist system leads to a political conclusion. If the formation of a bourgeois national state and the construction of an autocentric capitalist economy are impossible for the periphery, a different path of development is called for. There will be further discussion of the character of this path – the issues of delinking and socialism.

Autocentric formation and development have led effectively to progressive homogenization of society in the capitalist centres. We understand this to mean that the sectoral distributions of the labour force on the one hand and the surplus value on the other tend to approximate. We have illustrated the difference in this for centres and peripheries by showing that in the former the extreme relations between these distributions are on a scale of 1 to 3 while in the latter they are on a scale of more than 1 to 20. Moreover, we show that all the historical evidence suggests that the scale is gradually narrowing for Europe, the United States and Japan, while it is widening for Latin America, Asia and Africa. Another aspect of this qualitative divergence in the structure and trend of its evolution is concerned with income distribution. Not only is this much more unequal in the Third World as a whole than it is in the centres, but it seems too that the prevailing long-term trend in the periphery is the worsening of this inequality, although this is not the case in the centres.<sup>4</sup>

If these factors are correct and significant – and in our opinion they are – then one has to explain why. Contrary to critiques too lightly formulated, the theory of centre/periphery antagonism in no way neglects social classes and class struggles. On the contrary, it explains the facts precisely through the operation of these struggles. For homogenization in the centres is produced, we believe, by the development of internal class alliances that are not exclusively the result of the internal social dynamic but are also made possible by the position occupied in the world system.

Two historical factors have successively contributed to this evolution. In a first stage, the forms of the crystallization of the new hegemonic bourgeois power, through the bourgeois 'revolution' or without it as the case may be, have entailed broad alliances between this new dominant class and other classes: smallholder peasants or landed gentry as the case may be, a trading or artisanal petty bourgeoisie almost always. These alliances were needed to face the threat to social order represented by the emerging working class, at this revolutionary stage, as 19th century European history shows from English Chartism to the Paris Commune. But on the other hand, these forms of bourgeois hegemony have brought social and economic policies initiating the homogenization of society by protecting the income of the intermediate rural and urban strata. In the ensuing phase, beginning towards the end of the last century, and still characteristic of central capitalism today, bourgeois hegemony extends to the stabilized working class. The means by which social consensus is generalized is the association of Fordism as the prevailing form of organization of the mechanized labour process (ensuring mass production) and the social democratic (or Keynesian) wages policy (ensuring an expanding outlet for this mass production). This consensus does not preclude class

struggle; but the struggle tends to be confined to the area of an economic division of the results and to avoid challenging the overall structure of society. This consensus does not only exist, but provides the very foundation that makes possible the operation of electoral democracy as we know it.

The thesis of centre/periphery antagonism argues precisely that the subordinate positions occupied by the peripheries in the world system render unlikely these forms of gradual enlargement of overall social integration. The bourgeoisies who came late on to the scene, and above all after their countries were integrated into the world system, encounter greater difficulties when they try to enlarge their internal class alliances. In a first step, the centre/periphery dichotomy rests on an alliance between dominant central capital and the dominant rural classes of the old kind in the peripheries ('feudal', or large landowners, etc.) The history of Latin America, where independence was won early (at the beginning of the 19th century) by precisely these landowning classes, is still paying the price of this alliance between dominant British capital (whose place has been taken by that of the United States) and landowning oligarchies, the legacy of the international specialization associated with this alliance, marked by the smothering of political democracy and the rise of the bourgeoisie. In Asia and Africa, colonial forms have operated even more brutally in the same direction, emphasizing the backwardness of these two continents in comparison with Latin America. Later, in the contemporary period, when bourgeois states emerging from the national liberation struggles were established and/or local landowners' powers were overturned, an embryo industrialization entered a world system that was unfavourable to the enlargement of the local social base. Fordism here is not accompanied by working-class social democracy. The opening for new industrial production is rather directed to the demand of the expanding middle classes than to working-class consumption. The constraints of modern technology, essential for competitiveness, demand the massive importation of equipment, know-how, and capital that must be paid for by a willingness to pay industrial labour at much lower rates so as to be able to export. Unequal exchange – an expression of these class relations – finds a logical place here.<sup>5</sup> The agrarian crisis inherited from the previous evolution often increases the burden of these constraints.

Some will say that this centre/periphery dichotomy and its effects (the divergent evolution of income distribution, etc.) are merely passing. And that nothing prevents the bourgeoisie in power from overcoming the consequences. Such a judgment is, in our opinion, totally anti-historic. The fact is that the bourgeoisies of the Third World have up to now been unable to overcome them. But one might say that, instead of the bourgeoisie, other (popular) social alliances could do it? This is our thesis. But then the forms needed to do it imply what we call 'delinking' and are part of a problematic that is no longer merely one of capitalist expansion, but rather that of a possible – albeit contradictory – transition towards another (socialist?) society.

The preceding exposition has shown the peripheries in general terms and suggested that the broad common tendencies are characteristic of them as a whole, beyond their evident diversity. Is this generalization legitimate? A reply

## 14 *The Worldwide Expansion of Capitalism*

to this question entails a close examination of 'intermediate' situations, those of countries that have quickly climbed the steps in the world hierarchy, whether in the past or in our own time. For there certainly are intermediate situations, in society as in nature. One can distinguish the male from the female, the individual in good health from the sick, etc., and these distinctions are meaningful. This does not prevent an examination of intermediate and ambivalent cases often providing a clearer picture of the exact character of the classifications. An examination of the 'semi-peripheries' – to give them a provisional title – will enable one to say in what circumstances and by what means a new bourgeoisie can or could make itself felt, through the construction of a local social hegemony and a bourgeois national state, as a genuine partner in the world system, able to control the process of accumulation and develop the society in a direction that brings it closer to the advanced capitalist societies.

That being so, the history of the constitution of the capitalist centres provides us with a gamut of diverse forms, according to one's standpoint: (revolutionary or reformist) political forms, class alliances and conflicts, appropriateness to the 'national factor' or lack of it, availability of direct colonies or not, types of industry and driving economic activities, (hegemonic or non-hegemonic) strategic position in the world system, etc. One must be careful not to be held to all these specificities, by making for example the West European (notably British and French) model a kind of ideal type in the style of Weber. It remains true that the European model, extended to the United States, has its roots in a history whose cultural dimension cannot be underestimated. These common elements, and Euro-North-American predominance, are such that it is difficult to conceive of 'capitalism' in the abstract, that is independently of this historical 'European' form. In particular the style of the bourgeois class, its fragmentation into 'families' and the competition that rules its behaviour, the relationship of the economy and the bourgeois civil society to the state, and the forms of the latter, are constituents of historical capitalism.

As soon as one leaves the European area to consider the single non-European advanced capitalist country in our modern world – Japan – one perhaps finds forms of operation of the economic and social system that are peculiar to it. In Western capitalism as we know it, the unit of accumulation appears clearly separate from its competitors. In the 19th century it was the family business, and it has become the oligopoly and perhaps the finance group or conglomerate. The state appears as a regulator of competition between these units, and standing above them; but the units retain a broad autonomy in relation to one another and in relation to the state. Is it the same in Japanese capitalism where the constituent families of the ruling class, the industrial-financial oligopolies (the *zaibatsu*) and the renewed states appeared together, less autonomous from each other? In these circumstances, is the unit of accumulation here, as in the West, the business and/or group of businesses, or rather the system as a whole, that is the state? We pose the question without necessarily offering a response.

Can one go further? And say that as a whole the social formations of the

modern world are all equally capitalist, differing only in the historical forms of this mode of production.<sup>6</sup> In this view the centres/peripheries distinction is deprived of any meaningful character. One is back to the quantitative continuum and to the particular specificities of each formation. Some, such as Charles Bettelheim, deny that the societies emerging from the modern communist revolutions (the USSR and China) are anything more than particular forms of capitalism. We feel that abstract generalization goes much too far here and loses sight of the essential differences governing the reality of social and political struggles and their visible prospects in each of the three groups of social formations in our world: advanced central capitalism, peripheral capitalism, the so-called socialist world.

Another cause for thought is the relationship between the autonomy of the central formations and the transnationalization characteristic of the system as a whole. Does not the intensification of the latter call into question the autonomy of the national formations, even the central ones? Is not the current crisis, showing the powerlessness of policies whether (Keynesian) of the left or (monetarist) of the right, a sign that the constraint of worldwide expansion has reached a qualitatively higher level than before? But can one on the basis of this observation wipe out history? Does this new factor make the peripheral formations and those already historically established at the centres 'analogous'? We do not believe so.

The confusion in the debates is doubtless due in part to the fact that the bourgeoisie has become the local hegemonic class throughout the contemporary Third World. This bourgeoisie in power tries effectively to advance its plan of building a national bourgeois state as a partner in the world capitalist system, that is to control the process of accumulation.

But what are the results of this attempt? We have elsewhere put forward an analysis of this bourgeois national plan, formulated by the radical wing of the Third World bourgeoisie on the occasion of the Bandung conference (April 1955).<sup>7</sup> This plan foresaw a possible 'development' through 'inter-dependence' within the world system, and envisaged no way of 'opting out of the system', of 'delinking'. This 'development' was in effect defined by the following elements:

- the desire to develop the forces of production, to diversify production (notably, to industrialize);
- the desire to ensure for the national state direction and control of the process;
- the belief that 'technical' models constitute neutral assumptions that one can reproduce, while controlling them;
- the belief that this process does not demand popular initiative in the first place, but merely popular support for state actions;
- the belief that this process is not fundamentally in contradiction with participation in exchanges within the world system, even if it entails occasional conflict with that system.

Does one need anything more to reveal the bourgeois and national character of this plan?

Without repeating the analysis we put forward of this attempt and its failure, available to the reader elsewhere, we shall briefly recall the main conclusions. First that the circumstances of capitalist expansion in the years 1955–70 have to some extent favoured the establishment of this plan and fed the illusion of its historical possibility. Second that the West has fought this plan with all available economic and political means (including *coups d'état* and military interventions). This hostility cannot be regarded as alien to the fundamental problematic of centre/periphery antagonism. It perfectly illustrates its character and signifies that the system's 'laws' (which cannot be confined to their economic dimension) do not operate in the direction of homogenizing the world on the basis of the generalization of the form of the national bourgeois state, but on the contrary are opposed to the establishment of new centres. Dominant capital is always much more receptive to models of 'subordinate' growth, without local control of accumulation, in other words the neo-colonial state. Third that political support from the Soviet Union to some of these attempts, combined with the revisions to the traditional ideology of the Third International about the socialist transition (among other things, the invention of the pseudo-concept of the 'non-capitalist path') and with the social contradictions and internal limits of the model, explain the ideological confusion that has followed (especially in regard to Third World 'socialisms'). Fourth that the general crisis into which the capitalist world subsequently fell, in the 1970s, has given rise to a counter-offensive by the West, seeking to 'recompradorize' the societies of the Third World, to subject their further development to the logic of the redeployment of transnational capital. This offensive, the principal plank in the strategy of dominant capital in the crisis, successfully exploits the vulnerability of the attempts in question to establish the national state on the periphery of the system. This vulnerability is illustrated in all fields: by debt and the predominance of the worldwide financial system, by the inability of the Third World societies as they are to become partners in the new high technology activities, by the food crisis – reaching famine proportions in some cases – and uncontrolled urbanization, by penetration of the Western model of consumption and conspicuous waste into broad fractions of the middle and even lower classes, by subjection through the spread of communications to the Western pseudo-cultural model, by military vulnerability, etc.

In these circumstances, at the precise moment when critics of 'dependency' are rushing to bury the issue of 'underdevelopment', itself the product of capitalist expansion, is not the comprador form of the state on the periphery on the way to becoming the principal means of unequal integration into the new phase of development of the world capitalist system? This concept of the comprador state, mainly a transmission belt for the dominance of transnational capital, must be contrasted with that of the national bourgeois state, mainly the locus for the regulation of internal class conflicts.

Doubtless the succession of attempts to establish the bourgeois national state, followed by their destruction and compradorization as peripheral societies, is nothing new. On the contrary this succession of events is

characteristic of the history of the periphery from the start. The example of Egypt – with successive attempts and failures by Mohamed Ali, Khedive Ismail, the Wafdist bourgeoisie, Nasserism – is obviously particularly illuminating. But it is certainly not unique, to the degree that some people have thought it possible to associate moments of upsurge and moments of recompradorization into long A and B cycles of global capitalist expansion.

It is clearly understood that the forms of these successive attempts, and of the compradorization that follows their destruction, have evolved from one phase to another of capitalist expansion, in relation to the overall development of the forces of production. For example the prevailing form associated with the 1880–1945 phase is that of colonization, that is the pure and simple negation of the state accompanied by agricultural and mining specialization imposed by the colonial administration. We suggest that the prevailing form being sketched today is that of the semi-industrialized comprador state.

It is necessary here to repeat that compradorization is not imposed by ‘external aggression’ unrelated to the structures and internal social struggles on the periphery. On the contrary, we have already said that the failure of the Third World bourgeoisie was closely tied to the absence of the broad internal social alliances that have, in the centres, permitted the distribution of the results of the development of the forces of production and by the same token reduced vulnerability to the exterior.

The question is therefore whether the bourgeoisies in the Third World are capable of controlling internal alliances of the kind. We say that the historical circumstances shaped by the global system are totally unfavourable to this. Under these circumstances the plan for the national bourgeois state remains extremely vulnerable. And there is a great temptation to the local bourgeoisie, for want of anything better, to accept that their development be planned for continuing subordination. We put forward the hypothesis that generally speaking the bourgeoisies of the Third World are at that point nowadays, have abandoned their national plan in ‘the spirit of Bandung’, to accept compradorization. This hypothesis obviously demands various concrete analyses.

The theory of centre/periphery antagonism, when seen in this light, goes well beyond discourse on ‘dependency’. Once again the ambiguity of the latter term is unhelpful to the discussion. We have already commented that, for example, in our view Canada is not peripheral, albeit clearly ‘dependent’ on the United States, and would not become so by being dominated by US capital. If Canada is not peripheral it is precisely because the same social alliances that govern development in the United States also operate in the Canadian society (Fordism plus Keynesianism, etc.) The contrast here with Mexico is striking. Canada is perhaps a ‘province’ of the United States–Canada connection, but does not have the character of peripheral capitalism.

It remains to consider two series of complex questions raised by the preceding analysis. The first is about the character of the option available if one rejects compradorization. Could the popular classes, in the absence of the

bourgeoisie, seize the initiative and control an 'alternative' strategy to that of subordinate integration into the world capitalist system? What is the character of this strategy that we call 'delinking'? To what extent does it come within the problematic of the so-called 'socialist transition'? The second question is precisely about the 'semi-peripheries' of the modern world. Are there any exceptions to the rule that the local bourgeoisies are incapable of controlling the crystallization of a bourgeois national state on the basis of a peripheral position in the system? What are the problems these exceptions will face?

If autocentric development, capable of responding to the material needs of all the social strata of the nation, as in the capitalist framework, is seen to be impossible on the periphery of the system, it is necessary to study another option of 'alternative development' considered outside the global constraints. This is the meaning of the expression 'delinking'. But this concept again needs to be defined and explained, as crude usage has obscured its meaning.

'Autocentric development' has a precise meaning, namely national control of accumulation as we have defined it above. A reminder is necessary since the literature – and notably that of the numerous critiques of the centre/periphery theory – often with disturbing readiness confuses this concept with pseudo-concepts describing economic policies of so-called development in use here and there. For example, there is a confusion of autocentric development with industrialization strategy by import substitution, on the pretext that the latter, in opposition to export-led strategy (taking exports as the driving force for growth), finds its expansion in enlargement of the internal market. One does not ask if the strategy of import substitution in question comes within an attempt to control accumulation or if it accepts a degree of financial (or direct ownership by foreign capital), technological 'dependency', etc., such that the dynamic of accumulation escapes the local state (as in the majority of cases: Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, etc.). One also does not raise the question of the internal class alliances on which the industrialization in question is based, nor consequently whether the expanding internal market is that of the mass of the people or the middle strata (as in the range of experiences of industrialization in Latin America and the Arab world).

Undoubtedly, as we have already said, the 'autocentric strategy' is not 'anti-capitalist', since it corresponds to the content of central development. *A fortiori* a strategy of development of the forces of production in the people's interests, in a socialist perspective or an experience of delinking, can only be autocentric.

Delinking is not synonymous with autocentric development. It indicates another phenomenon: a demand imposed by the system. It is the condition for autocentric development, on the basis of a legacy of peripheral capitalism. Here again it is useful to recall that the expression has been misused as a synonym for many things, such as autarky, or the cultural retreat to obsolete utopias, which have nothing to do with the concept put forward.

We shall deal later with the exact content of this concept. In a word, it deals with a principle: that of 'delinking' the criteria of rationality of internal

economic choices from those governing the world system. These criteria are only the expression of the law of value governing a socio-economic system. We have argued that the world capitalist system as a whole – centres and peripheries included – was governed by the same law of value that we categorize as ‘world capitalist’. This reality is expressed in common parlance (by the World Bank for example) in relation to ‘comparative advantage’ (between local production or export and import) or to ‘profitability’ (calculated on the basis of ‘world prices’, etc.). We have argued that adoption of these criteria of economic rationality led by force of circumstance to reproduction of inequalities (here centre/periphery) in development, with all their political and social consequences. We have therefore proposed that one should define the criteria of economic rationality on the basis of constraints and social relations internal to the nation. We believe moreover that this proposal is in no sense utopian, and could not be since it rationalizes the effective practice of socialist societies (or supposedly such) which have effectively ‘delinked’ and are, to say the least, parties to a plan for a new, ‘socialist’, society, integrating the mass of the people, even if they are diverted from it in their actual evolution.

The latter observation obliges us to consider that the problematic of socialist transition is truly at the heart of the matter. For if the bourgeoisie is incapable of ‘delinking’, and if only a popular alliance can and should be persuaded that delinking is an ineluctable necessity, the social dynamic must lead to aligning the people’s plan into a perspective for which we find no other description than socialist. It being understood that the socialism in question remains a plan for society, largely ahead of us, and not a reality already achieved – here and there – that needed only to be copied.

Is there any other choice for the contemporary Third World? The alternatives, in fact, seem highly dramatic today: delinking or adjustment? ‘Adjustment’ to the demands of the world system is not even always possible. Perhaps it is for some ‘semi-peripheries’ to which one will return, at the cost clearly of great wretchedness and great suffering for whole swathes of society, perhaps the majority. But for the rest – those who constitute what one nowadays calls the fourth world – adjustment is perhaps merely to agree to perish, sometimes in the literal sense of the word, as the famine shows. It is still the case that the historical conjuncture can lead some societies to show themselves incapable on their own of escaping from their impasse. ‘Collective suicide’ has been seen in history, and no false optimism justifies one in forgetting it. The retreat to obsolete utopias, fuelled by a cultural nationalism that has the wind in its sails, represents for us a choice of this kind. Delinking, brought within a socialist perspective, remains the only acceptable answer to the challenges of our time.

In returning to the characteristics of autocentric development (national control of accumulation permitting in turn a homogenization of the society), we cannot fail to notice that the socialist experiences (or the so-called such) of the Soviet Union and China likewise meet these criteria. The development of the forces of production in these two experiences, as in that of other socialist countries of

Marxist-Communist leadership (Eastern Europe, including Yugoslavia and Albania, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba), always operated within the framework of an overall national strategy, planned and autocentric in the full meaning of the word. One can – and must – discuss the social character of this development (socialist or not, reproducing class relations or tending to make them disappear, etc.), the relative importance of the results achieved in terms of development of the forces of production, relative success or failure of the planning aspirations for control of development, the character of the difficulties encountered and the contradictions characterizing the system (impasse or temporary difficulties, etc.); one cannot deny its autocentric character, in the sense in which we have defined the term.

There is a striking contrast between this success – from this point of view – and the failure of the experiences of development of the capitalist Third World. The latter countries with or without strong growth according to the case, with a greater or lesser degree of state intervention and socialist aims, do not seem to have been able so far to achieve an autocentric development of the forces of production accompanied by social homogenization and strengthened local autonomy in regard to the global system (one will return later to the supposedly doubtful cases of the contemporary ‘semi-peripheries’).

Must the experiences of the communist world be regarded as successes from the nationalist standpoint, but failures as attempts to create a classless ‘new society’? Whether one likes it or not, an explicit mention must be made of the sense given to the socialist plan. It is clearly understood that the official discourse of the regimes in question does not raise doubts about this supposedly socialist character: the suppression of private ownership of the essential means of production, for the benefit of state and co-operative ownership, is regarded as synonymous with socialism and the abolition of class exploitation. Obviously the social and political reality requires a critique of this reduction of the concept of socialism. If one refers to Marx – and one has the right to do so here as it concerns social systems that do officially refer to Marxism – socialism means much more. It cannot be defined exclusively in negative terms: abolition of private ownership of the means of production. Its positive content implies the genuine social control of their use and control over social destiny (development of the forces of production) by the workers themselves. This control is unthinkable without a political democracy more advanced than the constantly limited democracy of advanced capitalist societies. If it were not so – and it is the case – the question of the social character of the system remains. Moreover Lenin and Mao Zedong were not content with the bald rhetoric of the prevailing discourse of ‘socialist’ power. The former and the latter raised precisely this issue of socialist reality and, each in his own way, analysed his society in terms of struggles between socialist forces and capitalist forces. Considering the case of the USSR, Mao and the Maoists concluded at a certain moment that it was the capitalists who had won, after Stalin’s death (according to them). We place the defeat of the socialist forces (without thereby drawing a conclusion as to the capitalist character of the winning antagonists) much earlier: at the origins of the Stalinist system

itself, the forced collectivization of the 1930s, bringing a rupture of the popular alliance and the constitution of a new despotic state. In regard to China, Mao was not far from concluding on the eve of the launching of the cultural revolution, that 'capitalist' forces were on the way to winning. The total rejection of the cultural revolution by Mao's successors could lead to the understanding that the logical conclusion was that capitalist forces had won here too. This is not our judgement at all. On the one hand we regard it as erroneous to describe as 'capitalist' the anti-socialist forces in the two cases (Soviet and Chinese). On the other hand, we believe that nothing like 'forced collectivization' bringing the constitution of a despotic state was carried out in China, and that, by virtue of this, the relations between the state and the mass of the people (with peasants obviously included) are of a different nature from those characteristic of Stalinism.

The complex questions of the character of the so-called socialist societies, of the character of their crises (or their impasses), of their relations with the capitalist world, of their possible evolutions, cannot be determined by a negative description ('non-socialist societies'), or positive, but one-sided and one-dimensional, ('capitalist' societies, albeit under specific forms), or indefinite and vague ('statist' societies, or 'new society of classes'), to embrace all these societies (Soviet, Yugoslavian, Albanian, Hungarian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Cuban, etc.).

Undoubtedly these societies do present a certain number of significant common traits largely as a result of twin factors. The first, objective, is that these regimes emerged from popular revolutions in backward countries (largely rural, semi-peripheral or frankly 'peripheralized' in the world capitalist system), and therefore faced the double task of rapid development of the forces of production and of carrying out a number of tasks historically accomplished elsewhere by capitalist development itself. The second common factor is that these people's revolutions have been led by communist parties emerging from the Leninist-Bolshevik tradition. This has carried with it a range of concepts as to state-class and avant-garde/avant-garde party/people relations, in other words a range of concepts as to political organization (democracy, etc.) that are highly specific. What is important here is not so much to classify them (as 'true' or 'deviationist' Marxists), or to judge them from an ideological, or moral, standpoint, but to grasp the genesis on the basis of the ideas prevailing in the labour movement at its origins (namely in the Second International), the extent, the historical limits and new contradictions they have entailed in the societies whose reconstruction they have inspired.

This common heritage has bequeathed problems that are far from being settled. In our view it is these political problems that are now the main obstacle to development of the forces of production. In other words, this crisis can be considered in its economic aspect. It is a question in fact of systems that have achieved a powerful development of the forces of production on a broad basis (massive shift of the labour force from agriculture to industry, models of industrial technology largely borrowed from the capitalist West) by means of administrative planning, having relegated market mechanisms to a minor role.

## **22 *The Worldwide Expansion of Capitalism***

and which, today, are up against the difficulties of moving to intensive accumulation, which implies more sensitive and effective incentives for higher productivity. Will this objectively necessary change be made or not? Will it be made by means of 'restoration of capitalism' (or its establishment, if one regards it as only embryonic here before the revolution), or by the development of new relations of production creating the conditions for genuine social control by the workers (the very definition of socialism)?

This question of the evolution of the purported socialist systems remains an open one in our view. Doubtless some people think it has been answered already, whether as societies that have become 'capitalist', or because a new 'statist' mode of production has already been established there. The first theory – systematized by Charles Bettelheim for example – is, in our view, abstract and simplistic, since it reduces the content of capitalism to mere wage-earning. But we think it requires more: parcelling out of ownership of capital, bringing with it 'competition', in turn the foundation of economic alienation that is essential to the working of capitalism. Furthermore, the market (or pseudo-market) form that the competition of capitals demands, has not (not yet?) spread to a single one of these social formations. The second theory (the 'statist' mode of production) retains the advantage of not reducing the new reality to historical capitalism. But it may be the object of a hasty and unjustified generalization to which we shall return.

In any case it is impossible to take the discussion deeper if one clings to the common overall characteristics of these systems. On the contrary, one must take the measure of their concrete, sometimes divergent, history. Each of these revolutions, in the historical circumstances of its development, has brought what seem to us three distinct tendencies together in a complex, contradictory manner (of changing weight from one phase to another of the development):

- a socialist tendency, expression of the popular content of the social forces organized in the struggle against capitalism, whose reality and persistence cannot be denied by the mere denunciation of the hollow character of the 'socialist rhetoric' of power (though this should be done);
- a statist tendency corresponding to the constitution of new social forces, dominant or aspiring to dominate, to which one will return;
- a capitalist tendency, expression of the objective forces associated with the development of the forces of production.

The true history of each of these cases under examination thus shows how these tendencies have come together differently.

The Russian revolution, which inaugurates this history, lays the basis for a worker and peasant popular alliance that constituted the effective foundation of Soviet power right up to the collectivization of the 1930s. The latter, imposed with violence on a refractory peasantry, put an end to the popular content of power and founded the despotic state, whose primary aim is to ensure the super-exploitation of the peasantry in order to pay for industrialization reproducing the Fordist forms of exploitation of the labour of the new working class, largely constituted by the migration of impoverished peasants. This state

becomes the mould in which is cast a new dominant class which takes on a statist form not merely dominant but almost exclusive. For the rest, extensive accumulation is now achieved and for that reason the peasant issue has lost its original importance (the peasantry itself representing no more than a minority to which, moreover, substantial concessions have been made from the mid-1950s). But the question of moving to intensive accumulation has not been answered. The new class in power seems itself to be divided over the ways to make this move. Some – symbolized no doubt by Khrushchevism – propose a decentralized statism for the benefit of technocracy whose most genuine representatives they probably are (and technocratic solutions linked with this proposal: strengthening of the market role, ‘consumerism’ and depoliticization of the masses, etc.). Others retreat into bureaucratic conservatism (Brezhnevism) flavoured perhaps with a reformism more liberal than democratic, or an attempt to revive political and ideological life (notably of the Party), that reflects the persistence of the tendency to socialism (beyond the doubtful rhetoric of the system), but is tricky in the light of the historical legacy and the challenges of Western aggressiveness.

The combination of the three tendencies outlined is much less unbalanced in favour of the statist impasse in China. First because nothing has been done here comparable with Stalinist collectivization and industrialization; the state – doubtless bureaucratic and scarcely democratic – has neither turned into a despotic machine virtually impervious to popular pressure, nor the sole locus of establishment of driving ‘avant-gardes’: the aspirations to power of the popular base, encouraged by Maoism, on the one hand, and those of the new capitalist entrepreneurs, strengthened by the current line, on the other, provide alternative poles of attraction. The combination here, we believe, brings together a still live socialist tendency, a national capitalist tendency and a statist tendency, able to maintain its dominance under the circumstances of a capitalism–socialism internal conflict. In these circumstances too, it is, we believe, out of the question that the capitalist tendency can win acceptance for a ‘comprador’ perspective, similar to that imperialism can envisage imposing on the capitalist Third World. It is a question then of a national capitalist tendency. Moreover, given that here the phase of extensive accumulation is far from being achieved, the peasant and worker popular base, less fragmented than in the USSR, reinforces, within the internal struggles in the dominant statism, the tendency for progress in the popular and democratic political and ideological life and weakens the option for a realignment around the statist technocracy–national capitalism couplet.

This kind of combination occurs again, but more amenable to a potentially favourable evolution, in Yugoslavia or in Hungary, at a higher level of development (as the phase of extensive accumulation is already past), but operating under more severe external constraints (small country, Western infiltration into Yugoslavia, Soviet presence in Hungary). An evolution that, in China, followed on this basis and permitted the continuing strong development of the forces of production, would, in our view, offer the best long-term hope for the forces of socialism. But one also finds in the world of so-called ‘genuine’

socialism, examples of negative involution. The most tragic cases are perhaps those of Czechoslovakia (blocked by Soviet fears), Romania (blocked by its primitive statism), Poland (seduced by the attractions of the West), or Vietnam (unable even to begin extensive accumulation, and where military statism tends to be perpetuated on the sole basis of nationalism and regional expansionism).

It is not, we think, a case of merging all these differences into a grey concept of generalized statism.

Doubtless, from the point of view of national construction, that is reinforcement of its capacity to assert itself as an autonomous reality in our world, the experiences of the USSR and Yugoslavia (despite the unresolved nationality issues), and of China and Hungary are positive. Contrarily, in the 'socialist' societies, locked into impasses from which they can seem to find no escape, the national achievements are themselves vulnerable.

Without doubt the point of view that attributes a positive character to the achievement of national aims is far from being shared. The Marxist vulgate, precisely because it denies the pertinence of centres-peripheries polarization, judges 'nationalism' as totally negative. This position pairs up with that of world capitalism as in its transnational expansion it comes up against 'national' barriers. The community of views expressed for example by Bill Warren and his school – under a Marxist cloak – and by the World Bank is evidence of this.

We come back once more to the inevitable question of statism.

Marxism has based its conception of human liberation on the double abolition of value – expressed in the economic alienation immanent in the capitalist mode, with economic laws operating as laws of nature – and of the state – an expression in this system of dominance of the bourgeoisie and its ideology. Marx, however, aware of the dangers of utopian temptation, refrained from specifying the modalities of operation of an advanced society freed of this double constraint. The societies of existing socialism, as it is called, are, however, to say the least, far from providing satisfactory responses to these questions. The expropriation of capitalists for the benefit of state property and planning – such as it is – to replace the market have not ensured genuine control for the workers and social control of development. At the same time, the state has not only survived but has done so in strengthened autocratic or bureaucratic forms. One knows the – formalist – justifications that the powers in question have made. Our analyses have, we hope, led us to be less complaisant. Statism is here a necessary dimension of the long transition initiated by the supersession of capitalism in the circumstances imposed by the most basic objective reality: unequal development of capitalism and its essential supersession beginning from the peripheries of the global system. In addition, the complex and contradictory character of the post-capitalist societies is ineluctable, and statism is one of their dimensions. Its preponderance in the Soviet system has, we believe, particular historical reasons. Is it then a question of a new social system of classes rather than a form of capitalism? Is this system stabilized? In transition? Or at an impasse? Is it capable of socialist evolution? We have raised these questions elsewhere and

believe they are still open.

It is still the case that the necessary and probable rejection of capitalist expansion such as it can only be at the periphery of the system creates the necessary conditions for history to follow in the way it has begun since 1917. It is in this sense that, for us, delinking by 'scraps' detaching themselves from the system of the global rationality of capitalist expansion will always remain the first chapter of a long evolution governed by the internal conflict of the socialist, national capitalist and statist tendencies. To reject it in the name of 'absolute values' whose immediate achievement one demanded, is to condemn oneself to desperate impotence. One must place the battle within the context of reality, if one wants to change that reality and not merely observe it and analyse its evolutions post mortem. To accept it is also to understand that control of social destiny cannot be achieved at a stroke, with the wave of a magic wand. This control will therefore remain limited and relative, and we do not yet know what lies ahead of us – the human society freed of economism and the state. Furthermore, this liberation cannot be conceived as an absolute metaphysical entity. The distinction we put forward between the levels of social alienation and anthropological alienation has precisely the aim of relativizing the concepts of 'transparency of social relations', of 'de-alienation' and of 'social control of destiny'.<sup>8</sup>

One of the inevitable dimensions of history present and to come, at least in the foreseeable future, is that of the nation-state. For if the supersession of capital cannot be done at a stroke, then the 'countries' where it comes under challenge remain inserted in the constellation of the world system of states. This argument has been advanced by the so-called socialist powers to justify the state and reasons of state. The manipulation, evident here, should nevertheless not make one forget the real constraint of the global system. It is clearly understood that the 'national' content of supposedly such of the states in question, must itself be examined in a critical manner. We deal elsewhere with the historical analysis of this particular social reality, not placed 'above classes' but smack alongside them, as with the other social realities (for example gender division).<sup>9</sup> Denying these realities always ends up in justifying in fact the real oppressions that are always and definitively articulated on the exploitation of labour. To put them aside by refusing to integrate them in the real social ensemble always ends up in weakening the potential transforming force. It is also clearly understood that the true content of this so-called national reality must be specified and analysed, relativized by a distancing in regard to the ideology of the nation-state and its transfer, like so many other elements of the dominant ideology at the world scale, from European history to that of all human societies.

The objective reality – even necessity – of the state and the national dimension is ineluctable. Doubtless it is legitimate, desirable, and even crucial, to avoid losing sight of the distant objective of liberation and of abolition of the state and the nation, without thereby necessarily falling into utopian fantasy and believing it possible to describe the humankind of the future 'without nations'. Experience has shown that, in this kind of exercise, one usually

remains prisoner to a mechanical projection of the conventional view of the contemporary West which, like all societies, has great difficulty in self-relativization and self-criticism; or one falls into the glib assertion of the (positive) persistence 'of the difference', without really being able to situate its significance. Let us admit that we do not know what a liberated and diverse humankind will be like, without this – necessarily contradictory – diversity engendering antagonistic conflict.

These real objective demands of the state and of the autonomy of the nation in the global system are precisely the subject of an ideological rejection widespread in the contemporary West. The almost psychological explanation of this factor seems fairly obvious: disappointment aroused by the distance between the rhetoric of the so-called socialist power and the reality, the feeling of powerlessness to act in the developed West to influence its evolution significantly, the luxury that makes possible in the rich central societies the juxtaposition of generous statements and selfish compromises, etc. In addition in the current phase, the ideological offensive of the right has managed to place objectively in its camp the phraseology of this kind of apparently 'left' critique.

In effect this phraseology may be summarized in the following four propositions

- The East – and even the Easts (Russia, China, Yugoslavia and others likewise) – which is not 'socialist', is at an impasse.
- Nationalism is in itself and always the expression of anti-socialist forces.
- The state is always and everywhere the enemy of the people.
- The field of battle must be transferred, for reasons obeying the preceding propositions, to the domain of struggles for democracy.

If it is not possible here to go into the detail of these confused arguments, we must at least situate our contrasting propositions.

First, the proposition according to which the East is 'blocked' deserves more reflection. Is it more so than the West, enmeshed in economic consensus to the point that left and right, such as they are, have here lost any historical relevance? And if Soviet society seems today to encounter fairly strong barriers to change (but after it has managed to solve some problems, has become the second superpower, has – relatively speaking – maintained a pluri-national unity that no Western colonialism has ever been able to envisage, etc.), China, Yugoslavia or Hungary with apparently less difficulty overcome these supposedly absolute 'blocks'.

The anti-statism seems to us often superficial in its method and if truth be told hardly scientific. There is often confusion between state and (administrative) apparatus, noisy complaints of excessive taxes and income redistribution by the state to the extent of 60 per cent of income, topped up with a dash of ready satire on bureaucracy in Georges Courteline style, etc. One deduces from this that the state is necessarily oppressive. One forgets that, in the real economic class struggle, even in the West, state protection has appeared to be, and even become, the effective means of defending the weak. The Reaganite ideology is not mistaken, in its generalized attack on the welfare state. The

proposals put forward to 'limit' the state and roll back its powers often, in our opinion, overlook that Western democracy itself has entailed its strengthening. And have not a number of experiences of 'decentralization' shown the retreat of genuine democracy, a victim of the bias of the combined influence of reactionary local forces and depoliticization following the loss of the overall dimension essential to political consciousness? Going further into the vision of the problems of the future: can one imagine social control at a high level of development of the forces of production without a complex organization (hence 'bureaucratic' apparatuses)? Can one at the same time desire social solidarity on the scale of millions of individuals, efficient modern technology, and conceive of overall social control only by means of 'autonomous small collectives' at the grass roots? The articulation of the free activity of individuals, great and small collectives will doubtless demand systems infinitely more complex than those imagined by the neo-libertarian utopias of our time.

Once one empties the genuine dialectic of the state and civil society to substitute a metaphysical opposition of one to the other, one easily falls into neo-liberal discourse on democracy. One forgets the Marxist critique, justified in our view, according to which genuine democracy is not restricted to freedom, or freedoms. The latter are a necessary element, but in no way sufficient.

This critique of anti-statism on all counts does not exclude a reflection on the statist consequences of the tendencies to accumulation of capital. The latter operates in the direction of a growing centralization of capital that leads to a gigantic organization. When the latter, in the logic of capitalism, retains a private form, it presents all the 'disadvantages' of statism (bureaucracy, etc.) without the advantage of political transparency. Moreover the contradiction inherent in the capitalist mode of production – namely the tendency for productive capacities to expand beyond what society's capacity to consume permits – can be overcome only if, alongside Department I (production of the means of production) and II (production of consumer goods), there is developed a Department III of absorption of the surplus, of which the state is a natural protagonist in the form of social and/or military expenditures.<sup>10</sup> Overall these tendencies of accumulation of capital mean that socialism is objectively necessary here, although for other reasons than those that also make it necessary at the periphery of the system.

By this token, the base unit of accumulation tends to burst out, to impose itself beyond the boundaries of the firm or financial group, to identify, through the state, with the entire social formation. Japanese capitalism in this evolution enjoys perhaps a particular advantage, from the fact that from the outset, for reasons relating to its historical, ideological and political structure, the state has further unified the elementary units of accumulation. But the same tendencies should operate elsewhere in the same direction of evolution, despite the handicaps represented, in historical Western capitalism, by the ideology of the 'private-public' contrast. If, despite the objective maturity of socialist supersession, this does not pave a way, for political reasons relating to the attenuation of social conflicts and socialist consciousness in the developed

centres, then capitalism itself will evolve towards statism. This deserves the description as capitalist and thereby to be distinguished from the statism of the contradictory transition.

The preceding exposition is based on the fundamental thesis of the division of the world capitalist system into centres and peripheries, opposed and complementary in an asymmetrical relationship inherent to capitalist expansion. It follows from this thesis that the supersession of capitalism begins necessarily from the crises of the periphery, by means of their 'delinking'.

The thesis says no more than that. For it in no way denies the diversity of the peripheries, nor the quest for capitalist expansion. The concept of periphery is defined, as we have said, in negative terms: the regions that are not established as autocentric national bourgeois centres. By this token, diversity is the rule here, as much in the past as in the present. Such diversity is naturally laden with consequences. The concrete objective conditions for the delinking essential to overcome peripheral status are neither identical nor of equal extent in this or that situation, in the various phases of the global expansion of capitalism. Delinking, like any radical qualitative change, is always difficult, and therefore comes as the exception, a response to those situations of exceptional crisis. By contrast, adjustment is the rule, that is, an attempt to remain within the system.

The 'adjustment or delinking' debate suffers, we feel, from a confusion of levels of analysis. The opposing choice in principle, of 'adjustment or delinking', is closely associated in our analysis with the opposition of 'capitalism or socialism', likewise in principle. This unavoidable association is the result of actual historical conditions where the latter opposition operates: the impossibility (in the sense that the question is not on the agenda of actual social forces) of the socialist option in the developed centres on the one hand, and the objective necessity of this option if one wishes to escape the tragic consequences of capitalist development, as it is and can only be, at the periphery of the system. But, concretely, delinking (and behind it socialism) is not equally probable or even possible, randomly and at any given moment throughout the periphery. We will note therefore that the peripheral societies all try at first to 'adjust', that they do not do so as passive subjects 'shaped' from outside but as active historical actors whose action is one ingredient in the dynamic of the global system.

Critique – in the fashion of the day – of the analysis in 'centres-peripheries' terms overlooks that it in no way neglects the active behaviour of states and social classes (especially the dominant) at the periphery. But the analysis raises doubts as to their intention – and will – of achieving the objectives they propose, if these objectives really are 'development' in the image it has in the centres, in all its dimensions and with all its social consequences (homogenization of the society, a broad consensus flowing from it, etc.).

Evidently the dynamic of social classes is the motor of change here – at the periphery – just as it is there – at the centre. The question then is not one of artificially contrasting a method based on recognition of this general evidence with a view that would ignore it to retain only 'external' and 'global'

determinants. This means of being rid of the problem is too easy to be acceptable. One has still to explain why social classes in this or that situation are what they are, and on this basis, to understand the objective reasons that take account of the respective plans, the successes and failures of struggles, and the actions taken to put them into effect. We believe that it is impossible to understand what the social classes in this or that situation are, the character of their plans and strategies, without situating them in the global system. The relation between the local structure of social classes and the global system is not one-sided in the sense that the autonomous dynamic of the local classes shapes the system; for, in turn, the system structures the local classes. Is it possible in these circumstances for imbalance in the system to be overcome by the autonomous dynamic of the local classes? Yes, in principle, say the critics of our thesis. No, in principle, history replies to them. For if so the 'end of peripheries' would have been declared as possible and even imminent four centuries ago at the dawn of capitalism. Marx foresaw it for India more than a century ago, and it has been denied. We might also declare it today as possible and imminent – as critics of our thesis do – with exactly the same arguments.

The real, concrete examination of the dynamic of change at both local and global level, and the modifications in the world hierarchy that result, is the only way to overcome the contradiction and answer the question: why has what is possible 'in principle' not 'in fact' occurred?

Which societies, through the history of capitalism, have managed to constitute themselves as 'fully developed' centres (in the visible and immediate meaning of the term)? Have they done so from the starting point of a peripheral situation (that is, not external to the capitalist system, but occupying a subordinate position within it), but showing themselves capable through intelligence and will (of the state, of the dominant classes) to 'take selective advantage' of the opportunities offered by the market and, by a systematic and active strategy, to hoist themselves from 'subordinate development' to 'autonomous development'? Are possibilities of this kind in sight today for some societies in the Third World?

The expression 'semi-peripheries', used to describe 'intermediate' situations leading to the constitution of capitalist development in the style it has in the most advanced regions of the system, runs the risk of reducing to a single model two series of phenomena that we believe to be distinct: the gradual constitution of centres on the basis of non-peripheral situations on the one hand, and the attempts to overcome the condition of peripheral capitalism on the other.

It is clearly understood that the capitalist system was not constituted overnight, by the wave of a magic wand. Capitalist formations are of necessity constituted on the basis of internal transformation of the previous historical formations. Faced with this problem, one can therefore adopt a purely pragmatic approach and refuse to go beyond that to a case by case examination, with each case being studied in all its singularity. But is it forbidden to hope to understand more? Is it forbidden to seek to identify, as well as the singularities, the principal forces that have allowed some to swing over to the group of advanced poles, while they kept others in what it is

convenient to describe under the label of 'under-development'?

It seems to us that as soon as one tries this operation one is bound to see the essential differences that separate the cases of central and eastern Europe, Japan and North America on one side, from those of Latin America, the Ottoman Orient, India, China, Africa and South-East Asia on the other. Central and eastern Europe has never been peripheralized; it is organized in states and empires that constitute autonomous and even substantial political partners of the European system; it will recover from its economic and social backwardness by internal transformations broadly determined by the dynamic of its own classes. The external world, that is the advanced capitalist system, appears to offer these states and empires a challenge, but it is not a matter of a direct constraint strong enough to be decisive. America, on the other hand, is a fabrication of mercantilist Europe, peripheral from the outset for the roles it played, in the precise meaning we have given the concept (not 'weak development of the forces of production' but 'subjection of internal accumulation to the aims of accumulation in the centres dominating the system as a whole'). It is not without substance to note here that the most developed regions in this peripheral system (the slave colonies and the Indian populated regions subjected to mining exploitation then to the hacienda system) have not up to now managed to hoist themselves into the ranks of modern developed countries, while those left hanging, by-product of European emigration (New England), constituted a centre that was destined to become the most powerful in today's world.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, our thesis also posits that the conditions for a capitalist maturity were met in the 16th to 17th centuries in the Ottoman Empire (Rumelia and Egypt), in India, and in China, its backwardness being purely relative and due, moreover, to more advanced forms of the tribute-paying mode of production, in comparison with European and Japanese feudalism. But the domination that the European West was to exercise over these societies, far from reinforcing the elements favourable to a speedy capitalist evolution, would weaken them (destruction of Indian industry, imposition of unequal exchange, colonization and destruction of statist autonomy, etc.). Japan, which escaped this domination, rapidly constituted a new centre, precisely because it had never been peripheralized.

Did the independence of Asia and Africa, regained after the Second World War, put an end to the action of these external constraints and re-establish the predominance – virtual exclusivity – of the internal class dynamic? The acceleration of unequal development within the Third World in the post-war period, the appearance of new 'semi-industrialized' countries, gave force to the thesis of 'semi-peripheries' capable of constituting themselves into new centres, and also justified the thesis of exclusivity of internal social relations and state strategies. A closer examination is in our view necessary before this conclusion can be drawn.

Latin America must in fact give one pause. It was constituted from the start as periphery, the main one of the time, not in the least 'blocked', as the critics of our thesis understand it, but on the contrary undergoing a development of the forces of production superior to that of regions peripheralized later or less

intensively. It won its political independence very early, at the start of the 19th century, when the mercantilist system in crisis gave way to the industrial system. It entered the era of industrialization earlier than Asia and Africa – colonial until the 1950s and 1960s – and rapidly reached a more substantial ‘semi-industrialized’ stage in its principal states (Brazil, Mexico, etc.). Is it now on the way to constituting new centres, once more in the precise meaning we give the term (social homogenization, that is Fordism plus welfare state and a pronounced relative autonomy in the world system)?

Analysis of the character and structure of the classes and their dynamic throws doubt on the future of the Latin American continent. First let us not forget the past too quickly. Early independence, snatched by the dominant class of the mercantilist era, far from attenuating the burden of external constraints, was on the contrary to increase them by renewing them: the dominant landowning–industrial capital alliance (British then North American) has to our day continued peripheralization in the new industrial phase. Industrialization, being very recent, has not, as in the early centres, created a historically constituted working class as a numerically significant and organizationally autonomous social force. These two factors together determine a kind of industrialization that, far from homogenizing society, is based on increasing internal polarization, as the ‘Brazilian miracle’ illustrates to perfection. The specificity of the class structure that results – numerical predominance of ‘marginals’, poor peasants, middle strata enriching themselves with rapid growth, etc. – is inseparable from the historical forms of integration in the world system. It reproduces, with changes, some essential aspects: the comprador approach of the local bourgeoisie and its state firmly preferring a subordinate position in the world system to the risks of confrontation. Is external debt, whose cancerous growth was in no way foreseen by the rhapsodists of industrialization, not a brutal reminder of the domination of the new transnational financial capital and the pusillanimity of the local bourgeoisies?

In these circumstances it seems fairly evident that a development of the forces of production spreading its impact throughout society (and this characteristic defines what capitalism has in effect achieved in its centres) cannot be achieved in the framework of a local bourgeois hegemony. People’s power, delinking, opening to socialist transition (with all its contradictions) are therefore closely linked and objectively necessary. But this option is not thereby automatically added to the agenda. On the contrary, perhaps since this continent is more ‘developed’, the scope for possible adjustment, still within an overall peripheralized but renewed structure, is greater here. This prospect, perhaps the most likely, is not one of ‘semi-peripheries’ on the way to constituting new centres; it is a renewal of the peripheral structure in the new stage of the expanding and changing global system. Doubtless, too, the cultural argument finds its place here: ‘European’ aspiration, which has always characterized Latin America, diminishes the effects of the cultural contrast one finds in Asia and Africa, where capitalist expansion has been and is associated with a foreign culture (and formerly with direct domination).

There are few unifying elements that allow one to speak generally of Asia and Africa, except in contrast with Latin America. Asia and Africa have never been shaped as peripheries to the same extent as Latin America. The substratum of previous societies is always present and accordingly the differences are considerable, at the level of development of its forces of production (especially in 'traditional' agriculture) and social organization and culture, etc. Asia and Africa were integrated only marginally in the mercantilist system (certain regions of Africa that supplied slaves for America, the Levant where trade began to decline in the unequal competition of European and Ottoman mercantilisms, conquered India, Indonesia and the Philippines). Real integration into the world capitalist system occurred in the recent epoch of imperialism. This integration was made through the almost general means of political colonization by the great monopolies, themselves competing for hegemony. Because of the inequality of these metropolises and the diverse roles in the imperial systems played by the various colonies, colonization, far from homogenizing, led on the contrary to more differentiation. It unified only in the sense that it created a common objective: the national liberation struggle for independence. From the variety of social forces unleashed by this movement resulted, in the period after the Second World War, a variety of independent regimes, despite a common concern to strengthen political independence by economic and social development within the world system (and not by breaking away from it) that culminates in 'non-alignment'. We have elsewhere offered an analysis of this movement we describe as a 'bourgeois national plan', symbolized by the Bandung conference that for a score of years opened the era of 'the development ideology'.<sup>12</sup>

These objective differences clarify those that define the overall development strategies pursued. In Latin America *desarrollismo* is dominant, a simple ideology whose Euro-American cultural root shines forth: industrialization (import substitution in fact, which least disturbs the initial structures and the share of income they enjoy) and accompanying urbanization strengthen the position of the middle classes, bearers of democracy. That these middle classes, in the structures of a system that is incapable at the same time of satisfying the mass of the people, become the objective base of authoritarian regimes goes unnoticed. Certainly, the failure in these circumstances of the bourgeois national effort, which the current crisis was to reveal – especially in the dimension of foreign indebtedness and the threat of subordination inherent in 'readjustment' – leads to the weakening of dictatorial regimes. But the new democracy finds itself at an impasse from the start: if it should take on a popular character it will come up against the demands of the readjustment imposed by the dominance of transnational capital.

In Asia and Africa, Bandung inaugurated a series of more radical attempts, based on profound reforms (agrarian reforms and nationalizations) and often on unchallenged popular backing. These experiences, in the forefront of the effort for national bourgeois construction, ended up being questioned, under the combined effects of constant hostility from the West (going to the extreme of military intervention) and historical insufficiencies and limitations of the

local bourgeois leadership itself. The systematic hostility of the West demonstrates the stupidity of economic analysis according to which it is always possible to exploit selectively and intelligently the opportunities provided by the market to strengthen the degree of one's autonomy within the world capitalist system. It reminds us that world capitalism, far from being a favourable factor in the constitution of new and independently autonomous centres, is fundamentally opposed to it. Beyond the achievements measured in terms of growth and variables, these avant-garde examples seemed to have come close to the aim – national control of accumulation – when the crisis brought a brutal reminder of the impossibility.

Other strategies, pursued in Asia and Africa, have never targeted autonomy and control of accumulation. With simple acceptance of adjustment to the trends of world development, they have managed only very unequally to achieve the objectives of strong growth. The success of some (Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Malaysia, Philippines, etc.), must naturally be matched with the failure of others, doomed to stagnation (most African countries, among others). Neither the former nor the latter can truly be classified as a 'bourgeois national plan'. It is development of a markedly comprador character. The industrialization occasionally achieved, and taken by some at face value without analysis of the structures or specific social and political impact, does not lead spontaneously and gradually to social homogenization or national autonomy. On the contrary, free zones and cheap manpower, excessive technological and financial dependence, without the prospect of their supersession, give this industrialization a comprador character that prevents consideration of its political and social effects like those in the historically constituted centres.

In this grim picture of 'compradorization' or 'recompradorization' widespread in the Third World (this factor, in our view, justifies acknowledgment of the reality of the Third World, notwithstanding its diversity), is there a single exception? Only the cases of South Korea and Taiwan, to which we shall return, permit the question to be raised.

The contemporary evolution of the Arab world, in any case, illustrates the thesis of the historical impossibility of a bourgeois national plan and, consequently, the necessarily comprador character of the 'adjustment' perspective. In the 1950s and 1960s, an end was made to the old social alliances on which the colonial and semi-colonial development of old imperialism had been based; direct colonization or indirect domination based on the local power of the large landowners and the old mercantile comprador bourgeoisie were overturned by the national movement in the main Arab countries. Aspirations to autonomous national development, industrialization and modernization, 'social justice' (redistribution, agrarian reforms, etc.), unity of the Arab nation all met in a plan that was one of the most radical in the Third World. The constant and violent hostility of the West using, among others, its Zionist military base combined with the class interests of the reactionary forces in power in the oil Gulf, and the weaknesses and historical limitations of the bourgeois national plan, have led to the current disaster. This is characterized by recompradorization of the society (here called *infītah*): dismantling of

industrial autonomy, abandonment of projects for agricultural and food self-sufficiency, submission to the new transnational financial capital, cultural aggression, etc. The new system is based on the predominance on the regional scale of oil interests (and of reactionary regimes in the region) and the transfer of local powers to neo-comprador classes and strata, who see their enrichment in the subordination of their countries to American-oil predominance.

The predominance of the Gulf itself implies that the Arab peoples renounce their unitary national aspiration, without which the centre of gravity of dominant social forces would be unable to maintain itself in the oil-producer deserts. The replacement of popular nationalism with an obsolete aspiration founded on fundamentalist ideology plays an essential role in this framework. The 'confessional' fragmentation to which it leads does not spoil, but rather enhances, economic 'integration' of the various Arab countries into the neo-imperialist 'oil-producer' system. For the Western plan in course integrates, in its way, the various Arab regions by developing new 'complementarities' there (such as export of manpower from some towards the oil-producer regions, on which is founded the semi-rentier economy of consumption). In this sense, we have said that fundamentalist ideology is no answer to the crisis but one of its symptoms.<sup>13</sup>

Is it a matter of a new phase of 'adjustment' to the imperatives of a global expansion of capitalism, capable of ensuring at the local level a new development of the forces of production? We very much doubt it. For the main countries of the region – Egypt in the first place – the plan must necessarily result in the foreseeable future in a retreat of development of the forces of production and a worsening of social chaos, inequality, etc. The hopes some place in a new growth, sustained by an 'open door' to Arab and transnational capitals, have been systematically dashed during the ten years of *infitah* in operation. The objective of imperialism here, is to destroy the potentialities rather than exploit them by controlling their development. That, it would seem, is the condition for the permanence of Western control of the oil, the only resource of real interest to them in the region. The 'adjustment' proposed here leads almost certainly to self-destruction and, in this sense, the ideologies that allow it actively or passively (fundamentalist obsolescence) manifest the desperation; the collective suicide. For it is not possible – in the name of some simplistic and mechanical 'optimism' – to rule out the possibility that a society, incapable of reacting positively to the challenges of its time, should allow itself in one way or another to be 'destroyed', in the sense that it loses the possibility to shape for itself its own destiny which, then, results exclusively from the interplay of external forces. Such a society – and the classes that compose it – ceases to be an active subject of history to become its object. That has already occurred many times in history.

The scope for adjustment possible 'with growth' (without even considering 'redistribution') has here become virtually nil. This given is perhaps the new factor. To take the example of Egypt, since the start of the 19th century with Mohamed Ali, then during the classic century of imperialism, with the efforts of Khedive Ismail and of the liberal bourgeoisie of the Wafd, the plans for

bourgeois national construction were successful. Each time, and before they were brutally dismantled by imperialism imposing its recompradorization in the forms corresponding to the epoch, they had managed to develop the forces of production in an irreversible way. It was the same with the attempt of Kemal's Turkey, an early example of a bourgeois national construction initiated after the First World War. Can one today overlook that the 'opening' of the country from the 1950s was fatal to this attempt? The Turkish economy, far from showing itself capable of integrating profitably into the world system and benefiting from it, found itself caught in a tragic impasse on all sides: de-industrialization, massive emigration, total loss of autonomy, social chaos and political violence, etc.

The hypothesis we have advanced is precisely in this area. We say that up till now the history of the Third World has been that of attempts at bourgeois national construction that, albeit abortive, have followed the rate of world expansion of capitalism. We suggest that for at least some regions of the periphery, including the Arab world, this chapter of history is definitively closed. The bourgeoisie, in its various forms, at the current stage of capitalist transnationalization and taking account of the internal contradictions of every kind (social, political, cultural) engendered by the historical development of the region, totally accepts its comprador status and will no longer attempt a national construction. No matter how far the *Nahda* was the ideological expression of the bourgeois national attempt, we have suggested that the era of the *Nahda* is finished.<sup>14</sup> This hypothesis does not mean that the task of national construction is henceforth obsolete. The tasks of the 'democratic national revolution' (development of the forces of production in autonomy from the global system, that is autocentric construction) remain on the agenda of ineluctable necessities. What is new is that national construction can no longer be bourgeois but must be popular. The delinking that this content implies will necessarily open the chapter of new contradictions considered above (the clash of socialist, statist and national capitalist tendencies).

Is it a hypothesis peculiar to the Arab region? Is not the scope for adjustment with growth and redistribution just as narrow for the whole of the African continent? Plunged into chronic famine, the preserve of mining enclaves and global mastery of chaos by the renewed intervention of the 'rapid intervention forces' of the West, can there be anything else on its agenda than the 'readjustment' counselled by the World Bank, IMF, etc.?

Doubtless particular internal factors of all kinds explain these impasses of capitalist expansion. But do not these factors of economic, strategic, political and cultural weakness operate in an unfavourable climate? The conflict of theses is right here: some assert that global capitalist expansion is favourable to national bourgeois constructions, and we argue the reverse, namely that it constitutes a barrier to them. Can the barrier be surmounted here and there? Perhaps, but we do not see how and why, not even in Latin America, and *a fortiori* in Africa and the Middle East. Could it be done in India perhaps? The question is worth asking, since India, for its continental scale and the (relative) success of its unity, enjoys considerable advantages. Here, more than anywhere

else perhaps, the 'internal factors' (from the bourgeoisie or from the mass of the people) are relatively weightier. The successful bourgeois national hegemony, in an economy less vulnerable by force of circumstance (going as far as capacity to control technology that enables some Indian transnationals to penetrate the world market) and in the political system (capability of neutralizing the divided opposition of the people), is not currently as threatened with recompradorization as elsewhere. Should we therefore overlook the weaknesses: a very slow rate of overall development, massive poverty that is difficult to see an escape from, etc.? What effects will these weaknesses have in the more distant future?

Finally, we come to the last example of bourgeois national constitution in our time, that of South Korea (and perhaps Taiwan). Is this really an exception, in the sense of an irreversible success of bourgeois national construction taking its place in the world system?<sup>15</sup>

The presentation of the 'Korean case' by the ideologues of capitalism – one should say the World Bank propaganda – stresses the conjunction achieved between exceptional growth sustained over more than twenty years, and a broad opening to the outside (even more remarkable growth in exports, priority concern with competitiveness, technological borrowings, intended openness to the transnationals, etc.). It even seeks to explain the success of the experience by this conjunction, with openness being the necessary and sufficient condition for strong growth. In this perspective, it contrasts the so-called 'inward-looking' strategy, as it sees industrialization through import substitution, with an export-oriented strategy.

These are tall stories with little bearing on reality, since, first, the concept of autocentric development has very little to do with the conventional practice of import substitution, as has been shown, and, second, growth and an opening to the exterior cannot be directly and simply correlated. For example, North Korea has also recorded exceptional growth – at a similar rate – without the openness. On the contrary, openness in itself, if it has permitted strong growth in some countries, has doomed many others to stagnation. On the other hand, the models of strong growth with openness are found in structural evolutions totally different from one another. For example, one could not reduce to a common denominator the cases of Korea and Taiwan on the one hand, and those of Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia or the Philippines on the other. The latter experiences are no different from those of other regions of the compradorized Third World, from Côte d'Ivoire to Pakistan . . . Products of industrial delocalizations dominated by transnational capital, industrial sub-contracting and the flowering of 'free zones' based on the super-exploitation of local labour for the benefit of the world market, of (frequently mining) exploitation, of tropical agriculture, these 'miracles' of growth here, have no more than elsewhere, contributed to homogenizing society and broadening its scope for autonomy in the system. On the contrary, they are bound by social dislocation and greater dependence, reducing to nil the hope of local control of accumulation. In this sense it is really a case of 'development of under-development', to repeat the pertinent expression of

André Gunder Frank, if one is to understand that under-development is not stagnation of the forces of production but absence of national control over their development.

The case of Korea is interesting and significant precisely because it is not what its eulogists suppose. The central role of the state that characterizes this experience cannot be reduced to that of a 'planner-conciliator' of various economic interests, local and foreign. The state here must be the veritable motor of development, extremely suspicious of transnational capital, which has generally not been allowed free entry (the Korean state has so far preferred to direct investment through subsidiaries, a policy based on the creation of national, largely public, enterprises, buying technology not globally but in packets, and taking care to master its use rapidly). The significance of statist intervention has been so great that the private form taken by the consortiums – in Korean *chaebol* (analogous to the Japanese *zaibatsu*) – is perhaps only a form of the national bourgeois state. In these circumstances, but thanks to them, Korea has managed to 'selectively exploit the opportunities afforded by the world market', as it is said.

Exceptional circumstances have favoured this statist national construction. In the first place, the competition from North Korea which, during the 1950s, was progressing at a faster rate than South Korea, but doomed at the time to wretched stagnation precisely through the American protectorate and the policy of its local executant, Syngman Rhee. Without any doubt, the real attraction of the success of the North is the origin of the agrarian reform undertaken in the South after the 1950–53 war. There are perhaps other elements that have operated favourably: the strong statist national tradition peculiar to all the old nations of eastern Asia, the embryo of a true bourgeoisie closely linked to the ruling class, the so-called 'Confucian' state of mind. This latter ideological dimension, characteristic of the whole area of Chinese culture (China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam), could not alone explain the success of the region, whether of capitalism or socialism. One has often had good reason to resort to the analogies between the component of this ideology and those designated in the 'Protestant ethic': individualized competition and the hierarchy of duties accepted on this base, regard for work and education, etc. More significant, in our view, is the fact that this ideology is presented in a lay, civil and non-religious form. Although Confucianism has not been able to eliminate the religious spirit, it has very much limited its influence. A conservative ideology to be sure – with respect for order and the (highly patriarchal) family – it is nonetheless more flexible, not being formulated in religious writings (which are – and always have been – susceptible of diverse interpretations but constrained nevertheless to survive a formal reading of the texts). By this token, too, Confucianism has perhaps been one of the ingredients of greater national cohesion: the individual knows of no other affiliation than that of the family and nation, and does not have to identify with a religious community to which he owes fidelity.

In this framework of analysis, we believe it is possible to distinguish the real problems from those that appear to be superficial, or even false.

The formulation of various possible evolutions in general, and here of Korea in particular, in strictly economic terms does not answer the questions asked, but merely illustrates implicitly differing answers to them. It is like the exercise of examining under what technical economic conditions (technology, finance, manpower availability, markets, etc.), the 'input-output matrix can be filled in', that is, the internal complementarities between various outputs, income and demand can be systematically developed.

The real question is whether South Korea has achieved – or can achieve – the constitution of a bourgeois national state, in the sense in which we have defined it. Has it gained control of accumulation? Can it develop and retain it?

Appearances suggest a positive – and exceptional – response to the question, although, in the absence of sufficient data and because the experience is still too brief for the data to be indisputable, question marks remain in our mind.

At the level of social homogenization, which is both the result of the constitution of the bourgeois national state and the condition for its reproduction and expansion, it seems fairly clear that the achievements of Korea go far beyond those of any other Third World capitalist country. Not only because by virtue of its historical origins, the Korean nation is a strong reality, but also because the economic development has been based here on an income distribution considerably less unequal than elsewhere. But at this level what are the real tendencies of the system? As regards the rural areas and the towns–countryside relations, there is broad agreement on the impact of agrarian reform and state policies on agricultural crop prices in their time, but the disintegrating effects of the rural modernization under way and the market ideology that is gaining ground are, it seems, the object of controversies that are difficult for the outside observer to judge. It is the same for the evolution of wages for the various categories of workers, with differing skills, and the relationship to the strong and continual improvement in productivity. As one knows, our thesis is that the characteristic of the behaviour of the system at its centres is precisely to ensure, over a long period, the parallel evolution of wages (of all wages) and the global productivity of the economic system. Can one say this is the case in Korea?

The response to the questions of external vulnerability can likewise not be made on the sole ground of its manifestation, namely the economic system. At this level in fact one can sustain any old thesis or its converse. There is no *a priori* reason urging the conclusion that Korea will lose control of the technologies necessary for the pursuit of its development, nor the inverse conclusion that it will necessarily pass from control of the current conventional industrial technologies to that of the so-called 'high technology' of the future. In the same way, will the external debt – at present not negligible but modest in comparison with that of other Third World countries – remain under control, or will it serve as a Trojan horse for transnational capital? Vulnerability to external markets and to the demands of raw materials supply is not, *a priori*, necessarily more severe than that limiting the autonomy of other – developed – countries in the capitalist system, although this vulnerability seems particularly severe at the current stage, especially for some industries on which Korea has

placed some reliance in its competitiveness (shipyards, for example).

In fact, three preliminary questions can more usefully be discussed here to carry the analysis forward. First: who is really the master who controls capital in Korea: the state or the 'private' sector? We have already put the question in the form: are the *chaecols* forms of action by the state or the reverse, is the state the tool of the *chaecols*? Second: will the aspiration of the middle classes for the models and levels of consumption of the developed West, reinforced by the ideology of the market, impose an increasing inequality, calling into question the prospect of homogenization? Third: to what extent will Korea accept an eventual strategic blackmail by its protective allies, the United States and Japan? Will it eventually agree to surrender its further economic development, if it appears too successful, in order to remain in the strategic and military sphere of the United States?

In this framework, the questions of homogenization and autonomy (control of accumulation) appear closely linked, and the – common – response to be social and political rather than economic. Our hypothesis here is that the monopoly of power is actually concentrated in the technocratic-military-capitalist class and that the continuance of this situation carries a strong risk of calling into question the possibility of a pursuit of autonomous national development, by virtue of the social egoism of the class in power and its vulnerability to an imperialist offensive aimed at 'compradorizing' it. That is the essence of historical experience, taught especially by Latin America. The question of decentralization is therefore central. We mean by that not only formal freedoms, important in themselves of course, but also the possibility of an autonomous expression of the popular social forces, alone capable, by imposing compromises, of ensuring social cohesion and thereby reinforcing the firmness of resistance to external aggression. We believe that this evolution also initiates the possibility for the socialist tendency to develop within the society, similarly we do not think the 'transition' and 'supersession of capitalism' should take one predetermined form. This possibility is only the expression of the historical necessity of a national and popular content, for which the hegemony of the new bourgeoisie can no longer meet the requirements in our epoch and in the light of the evolution of the world system as a whole. It is also clearly understood that this evolution may open the way to a real approximation to North Korea. The equally important development of this second half of the Korean nation is not the object of our analysis. Its positive aspects (notably national and social) and negative (at the level of the impasse of the current power structures) are known. Without a doubt, in any case, the situation is no more 'blocked' in the North than in the South, or at least it is so in its peculiar way in each of the two states. The general atmosphere in the region would allow for one Korea, thus become democratic and popular, half-capitalist and half-socialist, to play an important part, to seize the opportunity for more fruitful and less vulnerable relations through diversifying its partners – notably towards China – as the only way to strengthen its autonomy.

Our analysis of contemporary evolutions in the Third World thus leads us to

conclude that nothing in them encourages us to abandon our central thesis, namely that the world system of capitalist states is not a factor favourable to the construction of new national bourgeois states capable of meeting the challenges of the age, but rather the reverse: that it constitutes a handicap to this. The necessity of launching the complex and contradictory transition to socialism, through 'delinking', remains ineluctable.

## Notes

1. The bibliography on these debates is substantial. For a selection of the main viewpoints and our theses, cf. Amin, Samir, *Unequal Development*, New York, Monthly Review Press, and Hassocks, Harvester Press, 1976; Amin, Samir, 'The End of a Debate' in *Imperialism and Unequal Development*, New York, Monthly Review Press, and Hassocks, Harvester Press, 1977; Amin, Samir, *Class and Nation, Historically and in the Current Crisis*, New York, Monthly Review Press, and London, Heinemann, 1980. See further our studies of the crisis in: Amin S., Arrighi G., Frank A.G. and Wallerstein I., *Dynamics of Global Crisis*, New York, Monthly Review Press, and London, Macmillan, 1982. See, too, chapter 3 below (for critiques of Bettelheim and Warren).

2. An excellent critical synthesis of 'development theory' is provided by Fayçal Yachir, 'Où en est la théorie du développement?', Third World Forum, Dakar, May 1985, mimeo.

3. Amin, *Unequal Development*, p. 147.

4. Chapter 3 in the original French text, omitted in this translation, has already been published by the Research Foundation of the State University of New York in English translation as Samir Amin, 'Income Distribution in the Capitalist System', *Review*, 8, 1, Summer 1984, 3-28.

5. See *Imperialism and Unequal Development*; and *The Law of Value and Historical Materialism*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1978.

6. Chapter 3 below.

7. 'Il y a trente ans', Bandung: paper presented to the United Nations University Conference on the 30th anniversary of Bandung, Cairo, April 1988, mimeo (to be published by UNU).

8. See *The Law of Value and Historical Materialism*; and *Class and Nation*, Introduction.

9. *Class and Nation*.

10. *The Law of Value and Historical Materialism*.

11. *Class and Nation*.

12. 'Il y a trente ans', Bandung.

13. See Chapter 6. Also Amin, Samir, (in Arabic) *The Crisis of Arab Society*, Cairo, 1985.

14. *The Crisis of Arab Society*. The Arabic word *Nahda* means renaissance and the term is used to denote the renewal of the Arab Orient in the 19th century.

15. Selective bibliography in: Michell, Tony, *The Republic of Korea, Employment, Industrialisation and Trade*, ILO, Geneva WEP, 1983; Foster-Carter, Aidan, 'Standing-up: the Two Korean States and Dependency Debate', Seoul National University, 1985, mimeo; Evans, Peter, 'Class, State and Dependence in East Asia', Seoul National University, 1985, mimeo.