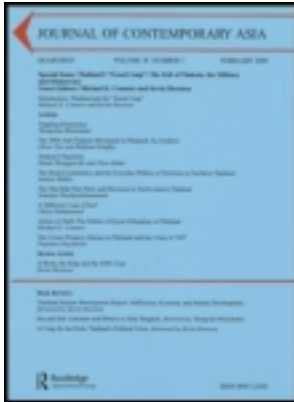


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Publisher: Routledge
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954
Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH,
UK



Journal of Contemporary Asia

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjoc20>

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Published online: 02 Apr 2008.

To cite this article: Sheila Smith (1982) Class analysis versus world systems: Critique of Samir Amin's typology of under-development, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 12:1, 7-18

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00472338285390021>

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Class Analysis versus World Systems: Critique of Samir Amin's Typology of Under-development*

Sheila Smith**

Introduction

Despite the heterogeneity of analytical approaches which are included in the term "dependency theory" (see Palma, 1978), it is possible to distil some commonly held contentions, including the following:

- (i) the world system is such that the development of part of the system occurs at the expense of other parts. The mechanisms by which this occurs include trade and unequal exchange, the transfer of surplus to central/metropolitan countries by multinational corporations, and the transfer of technology under restrictive conditions which prevent its diffusion in underdeveloped countries (LDCs) and benefit its owners in developed capitalist countries (DCCs);
- (ii) underdevelopment is not simply non-development, but is a unique type of socio-economic structure brought about by the integration of LDCs into the world capitalist system;
- (iii) dependent countries lack the capacity for autonomous, self-sustained growth, and can expand only as a result of the growth of DCCs.

These contentions can be summarized by the following quotation from Amin: "The accentuation of the features of underdevelopment in proportion as (*sic*) the economic growth of the periphery — in other words, the development of under-development — necessarily results in the blocking of growth, in other words, the impossibility — whatever the level of production per capita that may be attained — of going over to autonomous and self-sustained growth, to development in the true sense" (Amin, 1974, p.393).

There are some excellent general critiques of dependency theory, including Warren (1980), Leys (1977, 1978) and Palma (1978). I will attempt to summarize these criticisms briefly, before presenting the main part of this paper, which is a more detailed critique of the views of Samir Amin.

Warren argues that dependency theory is static, in the sense that dependency is given, thus "the centre periphery paradigm on which the entire theoretical structure rests . . . remains largely unexamined. The shifting geographical distribution of world economic power (in favour of the LDCs) is simply assumed to unfold under the control of the centre" (1980, p.163). This means

* Paper delivered to 12th Annual Conference of Journal of Contemporary Asia, Adelaide, South Australia, 30 August 1981.

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that proponents of dependency ignore the considerable bargaining power of LDC national States *vis-a-vis* multinationals. Imperialism is assumed to be a "monolithic structure"; imperialism is generally equated with the world market, thus "the possibility of any non-dependent capitalist Third World progress" is excluded by definition (1980, p.164). Finally, "dependency theory assumes: (a) that there is a latent, suppressed historical alternative to the development that actually took place; (b) that the failure of this alternative to materialize was the result primarily of external *imposition* — *even if mediated through internal social forces* — and *not of the choice* of the internal directing groups; (c) that the latent (suppressed) alternative would have been more autonomous and therefore would have achieved more rapid development" (pp.166-7, emphasis in original). Warren goes on to illustrate his contention that all the normal indicators of 'dependency' point to increasingly non-subordinate economic relations between poor and rich countries, as regards trade diversification, control of foreign investment, structural change and balance of payments accounts.

In response to Warren's empirical evidence, proponents of dependency theory might counter with two arguments:

- (a) Warren is equating growth and development, which is not legitimate. As shown in the Amin quotation above, economic growth at the periphery is compatible with the development of under-development.
- (b) Many of the rapidly growing LDCs are exceptions and their experience is not generalizable for the periphery as a whole.

Neither of these arguments is sustainable. The first is sometimes based on a moralistic expectation that capitalism ought to be nice. The existence or otherwise of capitalist development needs to be grounded on something stronger than its niceness and nastiness. Alternatively the first argument is based on the view that capitalist growth at the periphery is 'distorted', which implies some 'correct', standard type of capitalist growth. (For more details, see Smith, 1980, pp.14-15). The second argument is an illustration of the circularity of dependency theory — all LDCs are dependent, except when they're not. Furthermore, as Leys argues, Britain was an exceptional case, and, summarising his views, he states that "The debate about dependency and under-development has not shown either that capitalist development cannot occur at the periphery . . . to. What it demonstrates is, rather, the need to study and theorise the conditions under which some peripheral countries have, and other have not, experienced significant measures of growth" (Leys, 1978, p.244).

This brief result of some criticisms made of dependency theory in general is clearly inadequate to dispose of it. I shall therefore proceed by attempting a more detailed discussion of one theorist — Samir Amin. This discussion is an extension of a previous article (Smith, 1980), which was based on three works: *Accumulation on a World Scale* (1974), *Unequal Development* (1976) and *Imperialism and Unequal Development* (1977); the present discussion includes two later works: *The Law of Value and Historical Materialism* (1978), and

Class and Nation, Historically and in the Current Crisis, (1980).

The rest of the paper is organised as follows. After a brief summary of Amin's analysis of world capitalism, the critique of Amin is in three parts: first, a discussion of the ways in which Amin attempts to immunize himself from criticisms; secondly, some general criticisms; thirdly, a discussion of the spurious nature of Amin's claims to 'scientific objectivity', and finally, a discussion of the political implications of Amin's ideas.

Summary of Amin's Analysis of World Capitalism

According to Amin, it is necessary to analyse capitalism at a world level in terms of two categories, centre and periphery. The basic difference between centre and periphery is that capitalist relations in the centre developed as a result of internal processes, whereas capitalist relations in the periphery were introduced from the outside. Thus central economies are autocentric: Autocentric capitalist growth is characterized by the balanced internal relationship between the sector producing mass consumer goods and the sector producing capital goods. In contrast, peripheral economies are "subject to the logic of accumulation in the centres that dominated them" (1980, p.133). The form of domination has changed with the political independence of peripheral nations, from direct colonial rule to technological dependence, domination by multinational companies, etc., but this has been associated with a deepening, not a lessening, of underdevelopment.

In peripheral economies, low wages, modern technology and hence high labour productivity provide the basis for unequal exchange and hence for super-exploitation: "all plans for a dependent development policy worked out in constant prices lead to a blocking by a double deficit, in the external balance and in the public finances; all plans for such a policy worked out ex post, at current prices (relative prices of imports and exports) lead to this same blocking occurring even sooner. There is only one explanation for this, namely, that the price structures are distorted (through the effect of combined class struggles on the world scale) so as to aggravate exploitation in the periphery" (1978, p.63). Unequal exploitation and unequal exchange dictate inequality in the international division of labour, and lead to a 'distorted' structure of demand at the periphery, since the domestic market for mass consumer goods is restricted by the low level of wages, and since demand is dominated by 'parasitic classes' demand for luxury goods. This 'distorted' structure of demand has effects, both on the structure of domestic production and on the composition of imports. Peripheral economies are subject to a 'vicious circle' of development: "in order to reproduce its own conditions of existence, the peripheral formation must still contain precapitalist modes of production or else produce non-capitalist modes which, being dominated, provide the capitalist mode with its cheap labour" (1977, p.218).

Amin rules out completely the possibility of 'proper' capitalist development at the periphery: "in the imperialist period . . . the door to the establishment

of new capitalist centres is henceforce closed, while the era of the stages of the socialist revolution is opened" (1980, p.114), and "complete, autonomous capitalism is impossible in the periphery. The socialist break is objectively necessary there" (1980, p.131). In order for the productive forces in the periphery to develop the imperialist system must be broken up, since "the contemporary imperialist system is a system of centralization of the surplus on the world scale . . . characterized by the acceleration of accumulation and by the development of the productive forces in the centre of the system, while in the periphery these latter are held back and deformed" (1980, p.252).

There are four important political conclusions to be drawn from Amin's analysis:

1. Peripheral economies have no freedom of manoeuvre in relation to world capitalism.
2. Only a radical and complete break with the world capitalist system will provide the conditions necessary for 'genuine' development.
3. The working class in countries of the centre benefits from the exploitation of the periphery: this provides the objective explanation for the pro-imperialist political and ideological characteristic of the workers' movement in the centre.
4. The principal contradiction in the world is between the peoples of the periphery and imperialist capital. Hence, "In the periphery, the socialist transition is not distinct from national liberation. It has become clear that the latter is impossible under local bourgeois leadership and thus becomes a democratic stage in the process of the uninterrupted revolution by stages led by the peasant and worker masses" (1980, p.252).

Critique of Samir Amin

(A) Amin's Self-Immunitisation from Criticism

Criticizing Amin is difficult, and potentially hazardous, for several reasons. First, Amin's analysis is concerned with 'essences', thus any critique based upon actual events can be countered by accusations of superficiality and of concern only with 'appearances'. Secondly, Amin proceeds by a mode of argument which I have described as "assertion plus threat" (Smith, 1980, p.13), i.e., an assertion is followed by a 'threat' or an insult applied to anyone who might disagree. This mode of argument is often combined in Amin's work by an attempt to proclaim himself the 'true' intellectual descendant of Marx, the 'Marxest of them all'. One example is the following: "It is worth noting that the concepts of centre and periphery, basic to my analysis, but rejected by all pro-imperialist currents within Marxism, were introduced by Lenin in direct relation to his analysis of the imperialist system" (Amin, 1980, p.132). A further example is: "West-centredness systematically distorts Marxism. Through dogmatic rigidity, it has virtually turned an instrument of revolutionary action into an academic discipline. The debate over unequal exchange has convinced me that insistence on the 'pre-eminence of production over circulation' is nothing but an ideological excuse" *Ibid*, p.204). Finally, "in the periphery the absolute pauperization of the producers exploited by capital has revealed itself

in all its brutal reality. But it is there, precisely, that the pro-imperialist tendency among Marxists pulls up short, for it is from that point onward that Marxism becomes subversive . . . The consequences that follow from this contradiction constitute the real problems — which are of no interest to dogmatic professional Marxism or, for that matter, to revisionist and crypto-revisionist labour movements” (Amin, 1978, pp.34-35). At the risk of being labelled a revisionist or a pro-imperialist Marxist, or even not a proper Marxist at all, I should like to argue that assertions plus threats or insults are not an adequate substitute for a serious critique of other persons’ arguments.

The final, and most unacceptable, reason for the difficulty of criticizing Amin, is that the pro-imperialist degeneration of Marxism in the centre is objectively given. This is most clearly argued in Amin 1978, for example: “The objective basis of the pro-imperialist tendency among Marxists is constituted by the fact of imperialism itself and its implication: the hegemony of the social democratic and revisionist ideologies among the working classes at the centre of the system. On the theoretical plane, this tendency finds expression in the tirelessly renewed striving to eliminate the question of the collective, worldwide genesis of surplus value and its distribution” (Amin, 1978, p.116). Of course the revolutionary credential of the intelligentsia, which at the centre is in the service of capital, is here, in the periphery, in the camp of revolution” (*Ibid*, p.124). This means that a correct analysis of the world, or any part of it, can only be generated at the periphery, and thus intellectual work in countries of the centre must be automatically dismissed: “As for the trends of that famous ‘Western Marxism’ . . . they are all linked with trends in bourgeois, and therefore pre-Marxist philosophy. Consequently, *even when they ask the right questions, they are incapable of answering these questions because their society is not ready for the answers*. Refusing to break with imperialism, they can be re-absorbed, especially through psychologism in one form or another (Freudo-Marxism, feminism, and so on)” (*Ibid*, p.125, my emphasis).

This form of argument is an extreme example of economic reductionism: by locating a person’s class position, Amin is ‘reading off’ their political and ideological stance, without even considering the content. Amin’s argument is also extremely dangerous, since it is teetering on the brink of racism, by claiming an intellectual privilege for his own ideas because they are generated within the periphery, and not because of their content, whilst discussing any critique from the centre by labelling it ‘pro-imperialist’. The status of arguments is therefore pre-determined, resulting from the location of their owners in centre or periphery.

Despite the predetermination status of my ideas, generated as they are in a Western ivory tower, I wish to argue that all ideas and arguments should be examined on their merits, and not according to the status of their originator; and furthermore, that the political orientation of struggles and ideas cannot be ‘read off’ from the geographical location of those struggles.

(B) Some General Criticisms

(i) Amin, along with many other proponents of the dependency under under-

developed school, regards the periphery on the one hand, and the centre on the other, as undifferentiated blocs. There are many purposes, however, for which this view is both unhelpful and misleading. Significant differences among less developed countries can take political or economic forms: examples of the latter are differences between oil exporting economies, newly-industrialising countries, countries with a significant industrial sector based upon the domestic market, exporters of non-oil primary commodities, etc. It cannot be seriously sustained that all these groups of economies face a single, monolithic structure of imperialism, and that none of them have any freedom of manoeuvre in relation to imperialism. Examples of political differences include differences between countries which are attempting to construct a socialist transition whilst remaining to some degree involved with the 'international capitalist system', either through trade or foreign investment, such as Angola, Zimbabwe, Nicaragua; and on the other hand, countries such as South Korea, Singapore, Nigeria, Hong Kong, Ivory Coast, which remain firmly within the capitalist political camp. To deny the significance of these latter differences involves denigrating the heroic struggles which took place, denying the important victories of political participation of the mass of the population as well as the economic changes resulting from liberation, and, further, involves an arrogant dismissal of the economic strategies formulated in those countries for a transition to socialism. The latter is indeed an arrogance stemming from a presumed intellectual omniscience, generated, not in the centre, but in the periphery.

Amin regards empirical evidence which runs counter to his view as superficial. Yet his methodology is suspect: how are his assertions to be disproved? Amin's methodology proceeds as follows: there are two categories of country, A and B; countries in A have characteristics X, Y and Z; countries in B have characteristics O, P and Q. Countries' membership of A and B determines all important features of those countries. If research uncovers the existence of X, Y and/or Z in countries in B or O, P and/or Q in countries in A, this research is either wrong, or superficial, or has failed to understand Marxism. This methodology is a recipe for tautology, rather than a procedure for analysing the world. Some examples of evidence which would be dismissed by Amin by means of this procedure are as follows: the development of multinational companies based in less developed countries such as Brazil, India and South Korea. By June 1979, the cumulative total of foreign investment by South Korean companies has reached US\$134 million, involving 367 projects. Around one-third of this had occurred during the first 6 months of 1979 (Lueddel-Neurath, 1980, p.51); evidence of mass consumption of Brazilian produced manufactured goods in Brazil, rather than their consumption excessively by 'parasitic classes' (Wells, 1977); and evidence of the increased production of capital goods in LDCs (Schiffer, 1981). The latter three examples are instances of attempts to inquire into the actual nature of capitalist development in LDCs, and to that extent are, however, dismissed by Amin as irrelevant before the answers have been discovered. This research into the specificity of particular economies is deemed unimportant by Amin.

(ii) In presenting a criterion of capitalism in the centre as a 'standard' and capitalism in the periphery as a 'distortion', Amin implies a strange assessment of the process of capitalist development in the centre. He argues that, because of domination by the centre, "the development of under-development is neither regular nor cumulative, in contrast to the development of capitalism at the centre. On the contrary, it is jerky and made up of phases of extremely rapid growth, followed by sudden blockages" (1976, p.289). If Amin's view of 'standard capitalism' is one of regular, steady, even progress, then all capitalisms of the centre are 'distorted', and the yardstick by which peripheral capitalism is judged is an abstract, utopian one.

(iii) Given Amin's confidence of the correctness of his view of the world, it is surprising to find major inconsistencies in it. In *Accumulation on a World Scale*, Amin argues that "so long as an under-developed country continues to be integrated in the world market, it remains helpless . . . the possibilities of local accumulation are nil" (1974, p.13). However, in *The Law of Value and Historical Materialism*, in a remarkably sensible chapter on Mining Rent, Amin argues that the formation of mining rent is conditioned by the emergence of a bourgeoisie in the periphery states to impose a real royalty for access to their resources, and that "the transfer from centre to periphery which this rent constitutes should enable accelerated accumulation to take place in the periphery . . . The necessary condition for this accelerated accumulation is access to the centre for the periphery's industrial exports" (1978, p.74). Thus, it seems, the periphery has room for manoeuvre, the possibility of local accumulation in the periphery is not null. Yet Amin still wants it both ways: "The bourgeoisie of the periphery is (thus) a productive class, even though it is dependent and parasitic" (1978, p.78).

The 'Scientific Objectivity' of Amin's Analysis

One of the central features of Amin's analysis is the argument that the periphery is underdeveloped because of super-exploitation, and that the resulting super-surplus is transferred to the centre: "contrary to the bourgeois theory of under-development, the periphery is not poor but impoverished, because it is super-exploited" (1980, p.163). Several means are employed by Amin to establish that this super-exploitation is an objectively provable phenomenon: first: Amin's claim to be the true heir of Marx means that his application of historical materialism to the world capitalist system is the only correct use of Marx's method, and that anyone who disagrees has failed to understand Marx; secondly, to provide an acceptable scientific proof, Amin attempts to quantify this super-surplus. In order to illustrate the basis on which his claim rests, I shall discuss the quantification of the super-surplus in detail.

Table 1 is reproduced from *Class and Nation* (Amin, 1980, p.151). The first thing to note is that no source is given for the numbers. The second remarkable feature is that the 75 million unemployed persons, constituting 6 per cent of the world's population, receive no income. The arbitrariness of the division of

persons and income into classes hardly needs to be stated. However, after defining the class categories, Amin poses the following question: "Is it possible to use a table of the equivalents, expressed in incomes, of production within the capitalist system, to analyse the contradictions within this system . . . and pinpoint the tendencies in the accumulation which they control?" (*Ibid*, p.156). The answer he provides is in three parts:

1. a 'vulgar economist' would regard the income of each class as a measure of its contribution to production, since 'vulgar economists' are concerned only with 'appearances', i.e. prices.
2. a 'vulgar Marxist' would proceed thus: for group A, total value produced is \$2,220 billion, the value of labour power \$1,040 billion, surplus value \$1,080 billion, and hence the rate of surplus value approximately 100 per cent. For group B, total value produced is \$460 billion, surplus labour (income accruing to land proprietors) is \$185 billion, thus the rate of surplus value is 185/275, or 67 per cent. So although workers in B are poorer than in A, they are less exploited.

It should be noted that all extreme degrees of vulgarity would be needed in order for a Marxist to equate prices and values in this way. Indeed, Amin rejects the reasoning of his imaginary vulgar Marxist, on the grounds that the reasoning "derives from a systematic obfuscation of the fact of imperialism, expressing a bourgeois point of view within distorted Marxism, whether social democratic or revisionist" (*Ibid*, p.157).

3. The only correct way of interpreting the table is by starting with "a comparative analysis of working conditions which define the comparative productivities and the rates of extraction of surplus labour" (*Ibid*). Furthermore, the prices in the table are "distorted", due to "different conditions of the class struggle and the extraction of surplus labour" (*Ibid*, p.159). So to interpret the table correctly, one should reason as follows:

"Suppose that the direct producers in the centre . . . are exploited under technical conditions which maximise the productivity of their labour in each of the branches of production concerned; and take 100 as an index of this productivity for each of these branches. The return to labour here is about \$4,300 per worker and the value created about \$8,700, the rate of surplus value being about 100 per cent" (*Ibid*). Note that Amin follows his imaginary vulgar Marxist here by directly equating prices and values in the centre. Not so in the periphery, however. In industry in the periphery Amin assumes that the index of comparative productivity is 50. Taking this productivity difference into account, "the value produced by . . . 50 million workers (in industry in the periphery) at the average rate of exploitation of the centre (100 per cent) would be $0.5 \times 50 \times \$8,700$ or \$220 billion. If the value of the industrial production of the periphery given empirically, i.e., in going prices, is less than this, it is because the rate of exploitation of the workers is much higher than in the centre (their salaries are not even half of those in the centre, but are seven times less), and because the resulting extra surplus labour is not necessarily made up

Table 1
World Income Distribution by Class (1975)

	(1) Millions of Persons	(2) Percentage of (1)	(3) Average Income Per Person (\$)	(4) Total Income (Billion of \$)	(5) Percentage of (4)
A. Centres					
Peasantry:	35	3	4,300	150	6
Working class					
"inferior" category	50	4	3,000	150	6
"superior category	60	4	4,500	270	10
Proletarianized petty bourgeoisie	110	8	5,200	570	21
Middle and bourgeois layers	90	7	12,000	1,080	40
Unemployed	25	2	—	—	—
TOTAL of A	370	27	6,000	2,220	83
B. Peripheries					
Peasantry:					
poor and exploited	600	44	200	120	4
middle	150	11	400	60	2
owners and capitalists	50	4	1,000	50	2
Working class	50	4	600	30	1
Proletarianized					
petty bourgeoisie	80	6	800	65	2
Middle and bourgeois layers	20	1	6,800	135	5
Urban unemployes	50	4	—	—	—
TOTAL of B	1,000	73	460	460	17
GRAND TOTAL	1,370	100	1,950	2,680	100

Discrepancies in percentages result from rounding.

Source: Amin, 1980, p.151

Amin's calculations for all sectors can be summarized in Table 2:

Table 2

Sector	A Productivity Index (Centre = 100)	B Number of Workers in Periphery	C Value Produced per Worker in Centre	D ¹ Total Value in Periphery at "Effective Prices"	E ² Total "Apparent" Value in Periphery
Industry Proletarianized	50	50mn	\$8,700	\$220bn	\$165bn
Petty Bourgeois	30	80mn	\$8,700	\$210bn	\$ 65bn
Agriculture	10	750mn	\$4,300 ³	\$320bn	\$230bn
TOTAL				\$750bn	\$460bn

$$1. \text{ Col. D} = \frac{A}{100} \times B \times C$$

2. Col. E = total value of surplus per sector from Table 1.

3. This figure is less than average income per worker in the centre because Amin assumes that "the contribution of dead labour (capital)" is zero in the periphery. The figure of \$4,300 is the actual earnings of the workers in agriculture in the centre.

Source: Deduced from *Ibid*, pp.159-161

for by a volume of profits that would presuppose a considerably higher rate than in the centre. *As a result, effective prices differ from prices of production*" (*Ibid*, p.160, my emphasis).

The purpose of this exercise can now be revealed: the difference between the "apparent" output of the periphery of \$460 billion and the value of output at something called "effective" prices of \$750 billion is almost \$300 billion; this sum is transferred to the centre by means of a 'distorted' price structure, where it swells the income of both workers and capitalists. In case our credulity is being stretched at this point, Amin states that "This statistical illustration of the nature of the imperialist problem is not arbitrary. On the contrary, the basic statistics and hypotheses are conservative and tend to under-estimate the magnitude of the surplus labour extracted on the periphery of the system" (*Ibid*, p.161).

To establish the destination of this mysterious \$300 billion, Amin states that: "The volume of surplus labour extracted from the workers, employees and peasants of the periphery is *obviously much too great for me to believe that it is retained completely by the local exploiting classes* in the form of rent and profit. The total income of these exploiting classes (\$185 billion) is, in fact, less than the extra surplus labour extracted (\$300 billion)" (p.162, my emphasis). There are two points to note here. First, Amin clearly regards himself and his 'beliefs' as adequate judges of his own assertions. Secondly, he establishes his assertion by comparing apples and pears: the \$185 billion is in 'apparent' prices, the \$300 billion in 'effective' prices, so it is difficult to tell which figure is the largest without using a long piece of elastic. However, Amin supports his assertion further by the following argument "if . . . this surplus labour were retained by the local exploiting classes, we would see a prodigious development of capitalism, which could then resolve the problem of under-development" (p.162-3). This possibility has, however, already been ruled out completely, by the assertion quoted above.

The final conclusion Amin derives from this exercise is that, although the transfer of \$300 billion from periphery to centre benefits mainly the monopoly capitalists, it also benefits workers in the centre by allowing them to carry on their economic struggles under more favourable conditions, "but at the same time these conditions create a fertile soil for the political illusions of reformism, which has thereby achieved hegemony among the workers of the centre" (p.164). Finally, a self-congratulatory peroration: "my analysis corresponds to the interests of 90 per cent of the men and women of the capitalist world. It lays the basis for a worker-peasant alliance, an alliance of all exploited workers, on the basis of internationalism, that is the conditions necessary to change the world" (P.166).

One conclusion which might be derived from this exercise is a 'circulationist' one: that the problems of the periphery could be resolved by 'recycling' the super-surplus to the periphery as a basis for accumulation. Amin would, of course, deny the charge of circulationism in assertive terms. Then what, one may ask, was the purpose of the exercise?

Even if we were able to accept the procedure by which Amin has quantified

the extent of the 'white man's burden', what exactly does that exercise tell us? Capitalist development has always been characterized by exploitation, yet the demonstration of the exploitation of the working class was not an adequate basis to show that capitalism is not historically progressive. To believe that economic conditions in LDCs would be better if imperialist super-exploitation did not occur is a very curious creed for a Marxist, particularly one who is cognizant of the dramatic changes which have occurred in LDCs in the last 35 years.

Amin's 'analysis' rests on a set of unverified assertions, added to a set of fabricated numbers which are manipulated by means of some arbitrary calculations to produce the conclusion that he first thought of. No credibility can be attached to any stage of the procedure. No attempt is made to consider how actual prices come to be what they are, since actual prices are asserted to be meaningless. No dynamic analysis of changing conditions of production and distribution of particular commodities is deemed necessary. In fact the issue of changing conditions of production and distribution of commodities is an issue which only a 'reformist' would raise, but by ruling out a discussion of such specific questions, Amin is denying the validity of specific research, and all freedom of manoeuvre of all governments in all LDCs, in order to establish the dangerous political conclusion that only a complete break with the whole capitalist system can provide the basis for 'true' development. Isn't that what Pol Pot's regime did in Kampuchea?

Some Political Implications of Amin's Ideas

Since little credibility can be attached to Amin's economic analysis, it is important to examine the political conclusions he derives with such confidence. In my earlier article (Smith, 1980), I discussed the dangerous implications of Amin's denial of national economies as units of analysis or as levels of political struggle and action. There are other, equally dangerous, implications however. His clear message is that imperialism is the main enemy, that all ills in LDCs are attributable to imperialism, and all LDC struggles are objectively anti-imperialist and hence pro-socialist. Without denying the evils of imperialism and exploitation in poor countries, Amin's argument is the crudest kind of Third Worldism, and rests on the notion that people who are poor, non-Western and super-exploited by imperialism will not exploit each other. Thus this view abstracts from class analysis within LDCs, from the dynamics of exploitation within LDCs and diverts attention from difficult and complex issues of countries' internal political and economic dynamics. For example, the Tamil tea estate workers in Sri Lanka are worse off since nationalisation, this issue cannot be analysed only by reference to imperialism, but requires an analysis of internal class structures. Furthermore, Amin's position provides a basis for the suppression of working class and socialist organizations in LDCs, under the guise of nationalistic anti-imperialism. As Bill Warren argued "The inter-relationship between anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist ideology . . . became quite complex. On the one hand, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist

rhetoric and ideology . . . became closely interwoven . . . On the other hand, the fact that the two never fused completely always left the foreign devil to be called out, to fortify the position of those who wished to strengthen themselves against imperialism without opting for a socialist path" (Warren, 1980, p.117). Warren's argument seems particularly apt in considering, for example, recent events in Iran, though Amin would presumably applaud those events as objectively progressive. Definite prescriptions for political and economic transformation cannot be derived from generalized, abstract assertions without considering the specificity of countries.

Amin's prescription of withdrawal from the world capitalist system as the only basis for 'true' development makes little sense for large economies, let alone small ones, aside from ignoring the reality of increased economic strength and bargaining power of LDCs in relation to world capitalism, and aside from ignoring the lives of millions of persons in countries where a socialist revolution is not on the medium term agenda, let alone the short-term one. In fact, Amin's capacity to ignore the lives of millions has been amply demonstrated by his support for Pol Pot.

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