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SOME COMMENTS ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF PARADIGMS OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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Discussion Paper #8

November 1983

An indication of a text's ambitions can often be discerned in its title. The authors of <u>Dynamics of Global Crisis</u>, Amin, Arrighi, Frank and Wallerstein, readily affirm the scope of their project. In the initial essay Wallerstein states:

"...the world is in the midst of a crisis structural and therefore fundamental, very long-term and therefore one that lends itself not to a solution but to an 'unfolding'."

"...many call..." "...world economic stagnation..."
"...the crisis..."

[however] "Overcoming the stagnation... which will require a decade, will not end the crisis."

"The crisis of which we [authors] are speaking is the crisis of the demise of the capitalist world economy."

He and the other authors argue: "...a cohesive and coherent explanation is possible". Amin, in particular, argues that the "theory of accumulation at the world level" constitutes the theory of the development of the present world crisis. 3

The authors state in their introduction that they each share a number of important premises. First, the global system can be characterized as a capitalist world-economy which motor force is endless accumulation of capital. This world economy is constituted by core and peripheral zones reflecting a world division of labor in which surplus value is both directly appropriated by the world bourgeoisie and indirectly transferred, via unequal exchange, from peripheral to core zones. Finally the crisis of the global

system cannot be reduced to an internal crisis of the core countries nor to a crisis of East vs. West but must include the crucial role of "antisystemic" movements of the periphery in the transition to socialism. 4

These premises express themes consistent with central concerns within the Marxian tradition: The development of a system of social relations (the source and timing/sequencing of its changes); crises in the reproduction of those relations and consequent transition to new social relations. They also reflect a substantial reconceptualization of certain issues in light of perceptions of the character of the development of the system of social relations in the 1950's and 1960's. In particular, capitalism is conceived to have bifurcated into two types. One of these types, the core, because of the effects of Keynesian inspired demand management (i.e., state economic intervention), increasing overseas trade and investment (i.e., imperialism), and the consequent effect of these upon class relations (i.e., working class cooptation and quiescence), is conceded, relatively, crisisfree development. This was a (partial) concession to neo-classical development theorists that capitalism "works" in the core. At the same time this concession was conditioned by a contention in opposition to the neo-classical development theorists that this success could not be duplicated in most of the rest of the world. The barrier to success in these areas was not a failure to

"modernize", i.e., not a <u>lack</u> of capitalism, but instead was the effect of capitalism's presence.

The reconceptualization of development, e.g., dos Santos' dependent development, Frank's development of underdevelopment and Amin's extraverted dependent development, <u>inverted</u> the terms of the neoclassical's argument. Where the neoclassicals argued capitalist growth, they were opposed with the concept of blockage; exploitation was counterposed to their concept of the benefits of free trade and investment; and integration was rejected in favor of autarkic self-reliance. If the reconceptualization involved an idealized definition of development (requiring improvement in the material lives of the mass of population), it was posited as a critique of (the neoclassical's conception of) capitalism's ability to provide it.

In political struggles it is often useful and sometimes necessary to define positions as oppositions to an adversary.

Negation is a clear definition of difference; such differences facilitate the choosing of sides. Each side knows what it stands for and what to defend, victory consists in the denial of the other. Such politics can be appropriate and even necessary in struggles over theory. However, it is not necessarily sufficient to define theoretical positions by their opposition to an adversary. Under such circumstances the conceptual terrain of the debate may, in effect, be defined by the adversary's positions, their forms of proof and their conception of structure and change.

Though Samir Amin draws concepts, statements and arguments from a wide variety of sources he does, with some inconsistencies, produce a coherent theory of historical development. His theory embodies a conceptualization of the interrelated development of economic, political and ideological practices as a world system. His theory has a distinct purpose: To inform the revolutionary transformation of those practices to constitute socialism in the "Third World". Consistent with that purpose his theory produces an analysis of the current global crisis that outlines the possible conditions for a socialist transition. The coherency of Amin's theory is, in part, based upon the consistency of his political positions. I will argue that, similar to other "dependency" theorists, Amin structures his analysis to invert the conclusions of neoclassical development theorists. He attempts to conclusively demonstrate that capitalism cannot "develop" the periphery (Third World) but instead blocks its development and makes its transition to socialism both necessary (for "development") and likely.

My critique of Amin's conception of social development demonstrates that its coherency is dependent upon Amin's theorization of the "productive forces-relations of production contradiction" as an essence. It shows that the effects of this contradiction determine the form and the effects of the economic laws-class struggle dialectics and hence, through these dialectics, impart a necessary order to the development and historical succession

of social formations. In the world capitalist system the productive forces-relations of production contradiction is expressed as the primary contradiction between center and periphery. The primary contradiction thus expresses the necessary effects of the more essential contradiction. It is the mechanism through which Amin's teleology of development is realized. It is thus shown to be a formalism of contradiction based upon the effects of an essence. Amin's <u>formally</u> "dialectical" conception of social development is demonstrated to be based upon economic determinism. The critique further shows that his conception of development is formulated and justified in terms of an essentialist epistemology.

This critique rejects the a priori, general analysis of social development associated with essentialism. It regards both the dogmatic, rigid framework employed and its frequent, ad hoc corrective modifications as largely unproductive. On this basis it rejects Amin's attempted synthesis of a new paradigm of social development. Instead it posits the productiveness of specific analyses of each situation to ascertain the particular overdetermination of contradictions within and between class processes, and the class and non-class processes which effect their conditions of existence, in order to understand and influence concrete social development.

The following positions comprise an outline of Amin's theory of social development.⁶ In Amin's texts social development is

theorized in terms of an unequally developing world system composed of a core(s) and periphery(ies). The core and the periphery are distinct structures constituted by differing articulations of modes of production. Each structure (or articulation of modes of production), core and periphery, has a distinct, yet interrelated and unequal pattern of development. The pattern of development of each is produced by the "economic laws-class struggle dialectic" constituted by each structure. That is, the particular growth path of output and income, its particular composition and distribution, the skill and organizational levels of the population, their technical capabilities and transformations, and the various resource availabilities, etc., are determined by the joint effects of economic laws and class struggle. The economic laws are constituted by the "dialectic of the productive forces and the social relations of production". That is, they are constituted by the interaction of technologies (broadly defined including the work processes and their components, the technical division of labor and the sectoral division of output) and the social organization of production (authority hierarchies, market relations, etc.). The class struggle, though in part constituted by the above, "ultimately" determines their joint development - or so Amin claims when not required to spell out its implications for the dynamic of core and periphery.

The center, as structure, approaches the (pure form of) capitalist mode of production. It is characterized by autocentric capital accumulation, i.e., balanced growth of consumption and investment spending which sanctions a balanced sectoral increase in amount and quality of the productive forces. The economic condition for existence of autocentric accumulation is, given constant spending ratios across income groups, real wage increases proportionate to productivity improvements. Under these circumstances, Amin argues, the political and ideological instances of the core societies will "correspond" to the economic instances. The capitalist class will hegemonize state policies and activities. Its ideology, particularly that private ownership of the means and wage labor are commensurate with freedom and promote happiness, is dominant. Given this articulation of instances class struggle will assume the form of a "social-democratic alliance" in which workers accept real wage increases in lieu of contesting capitalist hegemony, particularly in the sphere of international affairs. The economic laws-class struggle dialectic (including the possibility of the hegemonized state intervening to regulate economic activity) facilitates the extended reproduction of autocentric accumulation and hence the reproduction of the social structure.

The core, through the export of capital and the export of force, creates the periphery as its, in terms of structure and function, complementary opposite. The dependent and specialized

ts resources, including those internally generated, were directed by the effects of outside capital to produce an economic structure in which the export sector is dominant, if not in size then in role of "leading" the growth of the economy. The growth of the economy is argued to be dependent upon the income flows generated in the export sector. These incomes are either (re)invested (in some instances repatriated) or passed on, primarily, to the state or to local individuals in the highest income deciles and spent for consumption.

The economic structure of the periphery does <u>not</u> approach that of the capitalist mode of production. One of the initial, and crucial, effects of foreign capital is the subordination of (potential) local competitors and the creation/reinforcement of complementary tribute-paying modes. These modes provide a (relatively) unlimited supply of labor to the export (and later to the import-substituting) sector and provide a refuge of support for the reserve of labor. As a result, even though the productive forces utilized in the export sector may be quite advanced, real wages remain low because of the intense downward pressure exerted by the unemployed. This allows a combination of stagnant, low wages and high productivity in the export sector.

The internal markets of the periphery are restricted and distorted. Incomes of the upper deciles and the state sector grow

relatively rapidly (via the effects of foreign capital). This money is spent on imports, import-substituting consumption goods (most of which Amin considers, relative to the consumption levels of the mass of population, luxuries) and local services. Incomes of the bulk of the population stagnate. Consequently there is little development of mass consumption goods directed towards their needs and agricultural development in non-export sectors tends to stagnate - a self-reinforcing process. The development of the productive forces, except in the export sector, is blocked.

The marginalized masses, hardly employed and cared for, who work for low wages at high productivity in the export sector are, compared to workers in similar, highly productive industries in the core, super-exploited. This unequal exploitation produces the conditions for unequal exchange between periphery and core. The "cheap" means of production and consumption exported to the core constitute a transfer of surplus from (poor) periphery to (wealthy) core. The transfer facilitates reproduction of auto-centric accumulation in the core (it positively conditions the social-democratic alliance), while simultaneously it blocks the (all-around) development of the periphery and reproduces an extraverted, dependent form of accumulation.

The social relations associated with the extraverted, dependent form of accumulation, that is the alliance of foreign capital, state functionaries and local tribute-receiving classes counterposed

to super-exploited workers and peasants, block the all-around development of the productive forces in the periphery. The needs of the masses are not met and society is reproduced, it develops, in such a fashion that they will not be met. Amin argues that the form class struggle assumes under these circumstances is antagonistic to the continuation of the system. Class struggle will produce "national liberation" in the periphery. The consequences for the development of the global system are straightforward. The primary contradiction of this system, i.e., that which primarily conditions and ultimately determines the system's development, is between the allied classes of the core (including the exploiting classes of the periphery) and the allied (oppressed) masses of the periphery. This contradiction will "unfold" as a rupture within the capitalist world economy and will proceed with a socialist transition beginning with revolution in the periphery.

How are these arguments specifically relevant to understanding the "crisis of the global system"? In a general sense they define it. They describe the interactions (contradictions) that will unfold as the demise of the capitalist world economy. Amin utilizes a long term historical model composed, successively, of systems (core and peripheral social formations); stages; phases; and cycles. The capitalist world (economic) system has progressed through two stages and is in the midst of a third. Its first stage was

mercantilism; its second stage was competitive capitalism; and its third stage, since 1880, is imperialism. All stages express relations between core and periphery. Since the beginning of the imperialist stage the two are qualitatively distinct and their differences are insurmountable. Areas that are peripheral cannot become part of the core, their roles are historically fixed.

There are two types of phases within each stage. "A" phases are constituted by periods of sustained systemic growth. "B" phases are characterized by periods of sustained crisis and transition.

Amin's A and B phases are similar, when taken together, to long waves as described in other analyses of capitalist development. He resists this characterization because he objects to the "mechanical" nature of the conceptualization of long waves.

Cycles occur within these phases. Amin argues that these cycles are subject to state intervention and management in the core countries and that their negative impacts are primarily displaced to the periphery.

In 1945 an A phase, constituted by the establishment of U.S. hegemony, began. This hegemony was based upon a two-fold international alliance. On the one hand U.S. capitalists aligned themselves with (and dominated) Japanese and European capitalists. This permitted some international economic management of cyclical conjunctures and facilitated autocentric accumulation of all the core nations (albeit at different rates). On the other hand,

U.S. capitalists allied with the surplus extracting classes of the periphery and were able to supress socialist revolutions and maintain the conditions for exploitative international trade and investment.

The end of U.S. hegemony - indicated by the "dollar crisis",
the "oil crisis" and the U.S. defeat in Vietnam - initiated a
B phase of crisis and transition. It is, Amin maintains, a crisis
in core-periphery relations. Due to its defeat in Southeast Asia
(the periphery) the U.S. was unable to impose a reign of free
trade and investment for its capital. Its capacity to do so
elsewhere was also commensurately reduced. The high cost of this
failure to adequately defend empire - both in "out of pocket"
expenditures and in benefits foregone - reduced the level of
U.S. domestic investment, with consequent reduction in productivity
growth. Coupled with these high external costs were the high internal
costs of maintaining the social-democratic alliance during a period
of war. Capitalists placated U.S. workers with increases in real
wages in excessive of slowed increases in productivity. Consequently, rates of profit, and growth, fell.

While the (relative) productivity/wage position of the U.S. was eroding capitalist competitors in Europe and Japan were rapidly increasing productivity through investment. They gained cost advantages which were manifested in both external balances and

growth rates. U.S. political and economic hegemony was, from the early 1970's according to Amin, at an end.

For Amin the global crisis, in the short-term manifested by an end to U.S. hegemony, is the result of class struggle. Class struggle causes the crisis when it first assumes a form that is potentially antagonistic to the reproduction of the conditions of capital accumulation and then causes it when the effects of that struggle actually disrupt those conditions. The cause and consequences of crisis is then identified when the conditions for the class struggle are specified and the impact on the reproduction of the core-periphery structure detailed.

On a general level Amin's analysis has the appeal of a good description. Apart from his theoretical framework and the analysis of his premises, his arguments are simple and persuasive. However, the degree of scrutiny his explanations can bear is problematic. In particular the links between his general framework, the conclusions he deduces from it and his analysis of crisis is tenuous. In the following critique Amin's general framework, his paradigm of social development, and his justifications for it will first be discussed followed by a discussion of the relation of that framework to his analysis of global crisis.

Amin sets analysis of the development of the world capitalist system as his primary task. He argues that <u>universal</u> history, i.e., the history of all parts of the world, provides the basis

for understanding this system. History, by itself, is not sufficient basis, he continues. The theorist must have, as well, a "correct perspective" on history. The correct perspective is that based upon recognition of "change". With the correct perspective, Amin argues, a theorist can appropriate the essential characteristics of history, deduce the concepts relevant to its understanding and then, by applying these concepts, uncover the basic patterns of social development, i.e., its contradictions and their resolutions. 7

Amin identifies two main Marxian approaches to the study of history and the development of society. The first approach is west-centered (i.e., based primarily on analysis of "western history") and based upon a "linear economic determinism". In this approach, Amin argues, the development of the productive forces is conceived to "automatically" lead to corresponding changes in the relations of production. Class struggles act to reveal this historical necessity and society's political/ideological superstructure is necessarily transformed to correspond to the changes in the economic "base".

The second approach, Amin's own, is counterposed to this

"west-centered, linear economic determinism". It is based, he

argues, on the conceptualization of universal tendencies which

result from a basic dialectic of the productive forces and relations

of production. His approach differs from the first, because these

tendencies are conceived in terms of "economic laws-class struggle dialectics". His conception of development, he then argues, is not reduced solely to the effects of objective economic laws, but also theorizes the effects of class struggle.

For Amin, history and theory are "inseparable" in two senses.

First, history is the source of a theory's concepts, and history
can only be understood through these concepts. Second, history,
through the effects of the economic laws-class struggle dialectics,
determines conditions that either prevent or facilitate the formation
of a correct perspective of history. Only certain theorists in
certain regions are able, because of the effects of a particular
type of class struggle-economic laws dialectic, to form the correct
perspective of history, deduce the relevant concepts and, hence,
understand development.

Amin conceives correct theory as the product of a relation between theorist and history that is conditioned by the factors that allow formation of a correct perspective. If a theorist has the correct perspective then that theorist's perceptions of history permit correct conceptions of the universal, basic laws which govern human societies.

Amin argues that his revolutionary perspective (gained from experience of the class struggles of the periphery) allows him to deduce the appropriate concepts and therefore enables him to under-

Stand society's contradictions and, hence, its development.

Through this knowledge he is able to verify that his approach is correct. Amin conflates his conception of history with the "real" and that on this basis seeks to justify his conception of history. This indicates an empiricist epistemological position and is thus an essentialism of theory.

Amin attempts to avoid the simple empiricist position that "history provides the truth" by appealing to the concept of "correct perspective". "Reality", itself, does not justify his theory. "Reality" correctly interpreted does. But Amin only justifies this position by means of the logic of his own conception of history. This is a rationalist epistemological position.

Amin claims to capture the <u>essence</u> of history and thereby deduce from that essence correct concepts, theory and perspective. That is, he claims that history has a universal order to, and pattern of development that he is able to appropriate in his concepts which then justifies his claims to understanding. This is, again, an essentialism of theory.

Amin's approach is characterized by a vacillation between empiricist and rationalist epistemological positions. He tends, as his notion of the "inseparability" of history and theory indicates, to gravitate towards the position that essential forces guide both history and the interpretation of history so that his

essentialism of theory (primarily rationalist) is juxtaposed with an essentialism in his theory.

According to Amin the dialectic of the productive forces and relations of production governs the development of society and "impels" history to pass through a succession of necessary stages, each stage constituted by a dominant mode of production articulated to subordinate modes as a social formation. He further argues that the development of the productive forces determines, "in the final analysis", the relations of production. If these two positions were the full extent of Amin's formulation, then it would be not only an economic determinism, but a technological determinism as well.

In order to explicitly distinguish his conception of development from those based on such determinisms, Amin argues that the class struggle determines, in the final analysis, the development of the productive forces and is thus the "motor of history". To avoid a voluntaristic conception of history, Amin further specifies that the class struggle (or "subjective" forces) is not independent of the effects of the productive forces and relations of production (or "objective" forces) but interacts with them to determine the laws of social development. The development of society, in other words, is governed by a "dialectic of economic laws and the class struggle".

Amin, in the specification of his conception of development, theorizes two distinct forms of this dialectic, each with a corresponding form of class struggle. One form is characteristic The core social formations are dominated of core social formations. by the capitalist mode of production as a specific articulation of the productive forces-relations of production contradiction. economic laws of the core, so conceived, are those of autocentric accumulation of capital. The political and ideological instances of this type of social formation are conceived to correspond to the economic instance, i.e., capitalists control the state and bourgeois ideology is dominant. Class struggle is conceived to take the form of a social-democratic alliance between capitalists and workers. In this context, Amin conceives the economic lawsclass struggle dialectic to facilitate the extended reproduction of autocentric accumulation, meet the (alienated) needs to the mass of population and to foster the development of a stable system within the capitalist stage.

The core, through its effects (e.g., the export of capital in the imperialist phase), is conceived by Amin to create peripheral social formations (the periphery) as its complementary opposite (negation) within a world capitalist system. In the periphery, so created, the development of the productive forces is blocked by the relations of production, the dynamic of development is external (accumulation is extraverted and dependent, not autocentric),

the political and ideological instances do not correspond to the economic instance (i.e., in sum, the <u>opposite</u> of the core) and, in consequence, surplus is transferred from the periphery to the core via unequal exchange.

The periphery, so constituted in relation to the core, facilitates increases in the rate of profit, provides the basis to maintain the social-democratic alliance and supports extended autocentric accumulation in the core. In other words, the periphery, as created by the core, <u>complements</u> the <u>development</u> of the core within the capitalist stage through the very conditions of its own underdevelopment.

The creation and integration of the periphery into the world capitalist system as the core's complementary opposite allows development in the core within the capitalist stage. However, in Amin's conception expanded reproduction of the world capitalist system is ultimately problematic. Accumulation is conceived to be blocked in the periphery. Its workers and peasants are superexploited and their needs are not met by the expansion of the system. Class struggle, between the "imperialist bloc" and the super-exploited masses of the periphery is thus necessarily antagonistic. The economic laws-class struggle dialectic of the periphery tends to transform not only the periphery, i.e., through socialist revolution as transition to communism arising in the

periphery, but through its effects on the core transforms the world capitalist system as well. According to Amin there is an "inherent" contradiction between core and periphery and the development of the world capitalist system is governed by this primary contradiction.

Amin's theory of development of the world capitalist system in the imperialist phase involves an orchestration of the concepts:

1) development and level of the productive forces; 2) the relations of production; and 3) forms of class struggle, to constitute a mandated pattern of social development through necessary stages to a definite end-point, i.e., transition to communism arising from the periphery.

Therefore, in Amin's conceptualization of development, class struggle is determined by the productive forces-relations of production contradiction, as expressed in forms of the economic laws-class struggle dialectic, so to produce the necessary development of this contradiction, as a succession of core and peripheral social formations, to produce a necessary end-point, or final resolution of this contradiction.

Amin's conceptualization of a primary contradiction which governs the development of the world capitalist system is not as an overdetermined contradiction. It is theorized as an expression of the "basic" productive forces-relations of production contradiction.

Amin's conception of development is thus an economic determinism embodied in a teleology of process. This teleology of process, or <u>formalism of contradiction</u>, wherein the development of the productive forces successively proceeds through necessary transformations of the relations of production to a resolution of their contradiction, is an essentialism in theory.

Amin builds his theory of the current crisis <u>into</u> his framework of development rather than from it. The framework is not material for construction of the theory of the crisis but is instead a predesigned plan in which the pattern of development and crisis is pre-specified. Phrased differently, Amin poses his history as a scheduled route. In that context his analysis of crisis amounts to identifying landmarks to judge progress on the inevitable path to communism. The theory of development cannot "develop", it is, instead, already a dogma.

It is useful to recall that it was argued earlier that Amin's framework of development (and his theory of history) was structured as an <u>inversion</u> of the neoclassical theory of development. We now see the scars it bears as an effect of that inversion. Its "essence": The contradiction between productive forces and the relations of production; can be contrasted to the neoclassical's essence: An imputed human nature.

This discourse rejects essentialist conceptions of social development. It rejects the method: Essentialism of and in theory. It rejects the concepts so produced: e.g., core and periphery as starting point of analysis. Finally it rejects the conclusions: e.g., that a "source" to socialism exists and that it is necessarily in the "periphery". These essentialisms circumscribe the discourse, they preclude (except as their premises permit) questions which define the specificity of analysis and, in effect, substitute a metaphysical/religious mode of analysis, a dogmatism, for overdetermined class analysis.

The purpose of this discourse is to begin a process of breaking away from the constraints (epistemological, ontological and political) imposed by the inversion of neoclassical development theory upon the Marxian tradition. It recognizes the contributions of dependency theory, of Marxian variants of that theory and of Marxian critics of that theory can be deconstructed and serve, in part, as valuable means to produce non-essentialist discourse on development, to construct specific histories, and to understand the effects of particular crises and thus the means to change social relations. Inversion can finger a political opponent but it leaves blank the solution, offering only negation. Socialism requires more of a definition than simply the negation of capitalism. Constructive change requires more than identifying who may have the best reasons to revolt.

FOOTNOTES

- 1. Amin, Arrighi, Frank and Wallerstein, <u>Dynamics of Global</u>
 <u>Crisis</u>, Monthly Review Press, N.Y. 1982. p. 11.
- 2. IBID. p. 9.
- 3. IBID. p. 167.
- 4. IBID. pp. 9-10.
- 5. Discussion of this paradigm difference can be found in:
 - Brenner, Robert. "The Origins of Capitalist Development:
 A Critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism", New Left Review 104, July-August 1977.
 - Foster-Carter, A. "From Rostow to Gunder-Frank: Conflicting Paradigms in the Analysis of Underdevelopment", World Development, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1976.
 - Palina, Gabriel. "Dependency: A Formal Theory of Underdevelopment or a Methodology for the Analysis of Concrete Situations of Underdevelopment", World Development, Vol. 6.
- 6. These and the following arguments and positions are drawn from Amin's essay in Global Crisis and his other works. The arguments and the documentation of specific citations are set out in more detail in my Ph.D. dissertation: Economic Growth and Development:

 A Critique of Samir Amin's Conception of Capital Accumulation and Development, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 1981.
- 7. As above (fn. 6) detailed discussion and citations can be found in Economic Growth and Development: A Critique of Samir Amin's Conception of Capital Accumulation and Development, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 1981. It is available from University Murrelium, Ann Arbor Mi.

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