

between internal and external conditions. In other words, the dynamic of dependent countries is one particular aspect of the more general dynamic of the capitalist world. That general dynamic is not, however, an abstract factor producing concrete effects: it exists both at the level of the particular modes of its expression in "the periphery of the system" and at the level of international capitalism's mode of articulation.¹⁶

If matters had remained there, no real harm would have been done. Yet the belief in the 'realism of concepts' (the idea that there is some 'general dynamic' that exists *independently* of our intellectual reconstruction of the partial coherence which articulates countless particular dynamics) is already becoming a belief in systems (the whole is 'expressed' in the 'Particular modes' of its expression and in the articulation of their elements). This leads to both an implicit functionalism (which is not far removed from the belief that general dynamics create dominated modes in the same way that functions create organs) and a belief in the primacy of external causes.

Anyway, finalism and pessimistic functionalism are obvious from the outset of Baran's argument that 'the decisive point is that the economic development of the underdeveloped countries is profoundly antagonistic to the dominant interests of the advanced capitalist countries.'¹⁷ This is certainly an admirable position, coming from an intellectual speaking from within the heart of the American Empire at the height of its power. And there are certainly enough arguments to back it up. But in theoretical terms, it is a very weak position. It provides the basis for a simplistic Third Worldism and, thirty years later, the revanchist New Philosophers had only to evoke the good conscience of the White Man choking back his tears to refute it.

I have no intention of exonerating Great Satans like America and Britain, Little Satans like France, or more abstract Great Satans such as Capitalism or the World Economy. I am simply saying that *results* should not be confused with *causes of existence*: that a body of partial regularities which 'forms a system' is not the same thing as a system which 'unfolds'. The formation of the international division of labour cannot be regarded as the deliberate or functional

organization of a system. Quite apart from the freedom of history, the class struggle and competition between capitals, we also have to take into account the way in which the existences of nations and of State sovereignty compartmentalize the reproduction of social relations.

The State is in fact the archetypal form of all regulation. It is at the level of the State that the class struggle is resolved; the State is the institutional form which condenses the compromises which prevent the different groups making up the national (or at least territorial) community from destroying one another in an endless struggle (the point is not that struggles come to an end, but that they rarely destroy classes).

To argue that world capitalism has from the outset been a single regime of accumulation with forms of global regulation is tantamount to saying that some sovereign power established regular trade flows, codified and guaranteed universally applicable social norms and procedures, and then, when the need arose, delegated its powers to local states that were simultaneously established throughout the world. It is tantamount to saying that every compromise and every shift in the balance of power at any given point on the surface of the earth corresponds to the need to adjust a totally adaptable and perfectly homeostatic cybernetic system.

That image is as gloomy as it is unrealistic. The development of capitalism in any given country is first and foremost the outcome of internal class struggles which result in embryonic regimes of accumulation being consolidated by forms of regulation that are backed up by the local state. Within these national social formations, it may be the case that relations with the outside world established long ago by certain agents (trading companies, military expeditions, etc.) proved not only acceptable but even useful to certain dominant groups, and that they became decisively important to the regime of accumulation insofar as the national social formation can no longer function without them because they resolve one or more of the contradictions inherent in its mode of reproduction. When that happens, those relations mould the local society's 'habits', become part of its regular workings, and appear to have been 'designed on purpose'. What has in fact happened is that certain

compatible relations have combined with one another. Other relations could have done so, but that would have been a different story.

We must, then, study *each national social formation in its own right*, using the weapons of history, statistics and even econometrics to identify its successive regimes of accumulation and modes of regulation. We must make a concrete analysis of their rise and fall, and see to what extent external factors did or did not have a role to play.

The stabilization of a regime of accumulation or a mode of regulation obviously cannot be analysed in terms of its economic logic alone. Such 'discoveries' are the outcome of social and political struggles which stabilize to form a *hegemonic system* in Gramsci's sense of the term: in other words class alliances based upon a consensus (and a varying degree of coercion) which shape the interests of the ruling classes, and sometimes some of the interests of the dominated classes, into the framework of a regime of accumulation.

The countries of the centre have often been analysed in this way, but the workings of the periphery (which is usually seen as a homogeneous reality, whereas it is in fact an infinite quantity of differentiated situations) are usually seen in terms of the needs of the centre.¹⁸

Does this mean that Satan (Imperialism as intentional practice) never intervenes in the underdevelopment of peripheral countries, or that national regimes of accumulation are simply juxtaposed and do not form a system? This brings us back to William de Baskerville's problems with the crimes of the mysterious Antichrist. He solved the mystery by looking for a chain of causes and for relations between signs, but he also realized that each situation was specific. It is true to say that in one sense all the murders were caught up in the contradictions of the same Benedictine institution and that, in a very specific sense, those contradictions did tend to generate an Antichrist. As to whether or not the hand of Satan was *directly* involved ... that depends which murders we are talking about.

I will say no more, as I do not want to give the plot away. It does, however, seem to me that this twofold answer applies equally well to imperialism. Capitalism does have

general contradictions (though they are not always manifested in the same way, and their importance varies from one regime to another and from one dominant mode of regulation to another), and capitalism does 'work'. If imperialism did indeed find even a provisional solution for those contradictions, and if a particular chain of concrete causes did indeed generate and develop embryonic imperialist relations, then it is legitimate to say that imperialism developed because it resolved those general contradictions to the advantage of certain national capitalisms. But it was not created 'in order to resolve them'; it survived and developed *because* it resolved them. If other ways to resolve the contradictions are found, or if other contradictions appear, it may disappear, change, or persist out of habit. It is only in that sense that we can say that, the habits of History being what they are, the 'function' of imperialism is to resolve those contradictions (which is not to say that its 'function' is responsible for all the ills of the Third World).

Just as a manufacturer of machine-tools tries to do business rather than playing a role in 'Department One', but does at the same time fulfil that function, so class alliances in certain countries find it profitable to adopt international relations which give their country a peripheral function, or are forced to do so. And we can agree that, once centre-periphery relations have stabilized, there is indeed a world regime of accumulation (or an 'international division of labour') with specific forms of regulation (expeditions, wars, international treaties, subcontracting agreements, the international financial system ...).

How are we to reconcile 'national regimes of accumulation' and the 'world regime of accumulation'? As with the wave-particle duality, they are in fact two aspects of the same thing, depending on how we look at it. Thus, 'triangular trade' characterized both certain aspects of the Spanish regime of accumulation and certain aspects of the world economy's regime of accumulation during the Mercantile period, and what I will term 'peripheral Fordism' characterizes both certain NICs and certain aspects of the world economy in the seventies.¹⁹ But in reality, struggles and institutionalized compromises tend to arise within the framework of individual nations; hence the methodological priority

given to the study of each social formation in its own right (and in terms of its relations with the outside world) or, to take up the terms of an old debate, to *the primacy of internal causes*.

Just a moment. Someone is sure to object that 'external' and 'internal' are not mutually exclusive terms, that we cannot seriously overestimate the power of a young state's laws, and that uncertain frontiers are no real defence against the power of capital. I quite agree. We can see from the examples of Chile, Poland and Afghanistan that foreign intervention, and sometimes even the threat of foreign intervention, can interfere decisively with local struggles. It happens every day in Africa, and it has been known to happen in France, both under the Vichy regime and in the days of the Burgundians and the Armagnacs.

That is the whole point. If we regard the dominant strata within dominated countries simply as puppets of foreign powers or if we make a broad distinction between the 'world bourgeoisie' and the 'peoples of the world', we will be unable to analyse the infinite number of divergent interests which, intellectually, we group into force fields, but which are in fact simply pursuing local or locally materialized interests.²⁰ In reality they are no more than partially integrated, and it is through the State that they find their overall expression. Even if economic interests and transnational ideological pressures do abolish frontiers, it has to be remembered that the form in which those pressures and interests are integrated is still the State form (even though not all territories have 'reached' that form, and even though certain territories claim that it has already been 'transcended').

Can we go so far as to say that determinate agents such as foreign states or companies deliberately create or maintain imperialist relations because they know that they will resolve certain problems? Yes, of course, but this is not necessarily the case. Wars and coups d'état have been fomented to keep markets open, to get hold of raw materials or to keep control over a badly-paid labour-force. That has always happened, it still happens, and it will go on happening. But if we always explain the destiny of dominated nations in terms of obvious Machiavellian interventions by

dominant groups, we confuse specific cases with generalities. Worse still, we confuse a state of affairs characterized by certain economic relations with the result of specific actions on the part of a limited sector, with actions designed to produce that result. In many cases, that sector may in fact have been pursuing non-economic aims, and it may have achieved results that were not intended.

First and foremost, the outcome is the result of internal conflicts or of a consensus (influenced by varying degrees of coercion) to 'choose' a particular regime of accumulation. In each case, the 'choice' induces the national social formation to a specific position within the hierarchy of nations, but that position itself is not predetermined. No matter how stable the hierarchy may seem, and no matter how coherently it may function, it is no more than the product of an uncertain process.

The 'needs of central capitalism' approach tells us nothing about the successes of North America, Japan or Prussia, and nothing about the relative destinies of Australia, Canada or Argentina. In fact it probably leads us wildly astray when it comes to both Canada and Argentina.

Matters are obviously rather different when it comes to colonies. These are territories without a State and they are subordinated to the policies of the metropolis, though not without considerable resistance, and therefore not without compromises. In terms of the needs of dominant metropolitan groups they are obviously functional (even though Spain certainly did not know the price it would have to pay for having certain colonies as opposed to others). Similar arguments apply at the regional level.²¹ The 'needs of central capitalism' approach should be questioned primarily when applied to formally independent states with a relatively autonomous field of class struggle.

This is the case, then, with former colonies in Latin America from the early nineteenth century onwards and with some former British Dominions – particularly Canada and Australia – at the end of that century. It is significant that when Frank raises this issue, he uses the language of the Apocalypse, arguing that from the 1820s onwards, 'both Canning and Bolivar were giving expression to the historical process that, if not Providence, world capitalist development

held in destiny for Latin America.²² He then quite rightly reverts to the language of concrete analysis, providing a detailed description of the key role played by the defeat of an 'internal' bourgeoisie which wanted to develop manufacturing industry at the hands of a liberal bourgeoisie based in the import-export sector. If the struggle had been won by the internal bourgeoisie, there might have been a Latin American Prussia or a Latin American Japan. But in that case, what does 'world capitalist development' have to do with it? It is simply a concept which helps us to grasp and intellectually synthesize the outcome of concrete processes. It certainly does not predetermine the destiny of any particular country.

To Conclude: Beware of the 'International Division of Labour' and Other Labels

Whilst no immanent destiny condemns a particular nation to a particular place within the international division of labour, a provisional solution for the immanent contradictions of capitalism can at times be found (and I insist that is a matter of chance discoveries) in deviations and differences between regimes of accumulation in different national social formations. In such periods, a *field* of possible positions, in other words a range of mutually compatible national regimes of accumulation, does exist, but positions within it are not allocated in advance. The ruling classes of various countries can refer to a number of 'models'. The ruling classes of the dominant countries dream of reducing other countries (which may be already dominated or still autonomous) to a peripheral status devised in other circumstances. Social alliances within the dominated countries develop strategies which may, depending on the state of the internal class struggle, lead to either dependency or autonomy. But not all national social formations can be 'dominant' at the same time.

Having chased the ghost of World Capitalism out of the door, I am not about to let it come back through the window. Something which 'forms a system' and which we intellectually identify as a system precisely because it is pro-

visionally stable must not, I repeat, be seen as an intentional structure or inevitable destiny because of its 'coherence'. Of course it is relatively coherent; if it were not, we would have international conflict and there would be no more talk of systems. But its coherence is simply the effect of the interaction between several relatively autonomous processes, of the provisionally stabilized complementarity and antagonism that exists between various national regimes of accumulation.

Centre-periphery relations, to use a widespread conceptualization, are not direct relations between states or territories which are caught up in a single process. They are *relations between processes*, between processes of social struggle and between regimes of accumulation that are to a greater or lesser extent introverted or extraverted. Relations between processes obey constraints of compatibility similar to those which regulate the process of capital valorization within a schema of reproduction: world output of equipment goods must equal world demand for equipment goods, and so on. And as we well know, schemas in which everyone produces and exchanges the same things do not 'help' to resolve the contradictions of capitalism.

World labour and its products are, then, unequally allocated between various countries. We refer to this phenomenon as the 'International Division of Labour', but we can now see that the term is as deceptive and probably as deliberately confusing as the concept of 'Actual Existing Socialism'.

When we speak of the International Division of Labour, we all too often imply that labour is internationally allocated in accordance with the 'iron law of proportionality', with the same principles and the same optimal level of organization that prevail within capitalist units of production. The international division of labour is in fact more akin to the division which exists *between* capitalist units. It does lead to a certain order (the famous 'schemas of reproduction'), but that order is mediated by the effects of arbitrary and unregulated competition, by generalized warfare and dirty tricks, and by relations of domination. Similarly, the actual existing division of labour is simply the outcome of various nations' attempts to control one another or to escape one another's

control, of one or another class alliance's unremitting efforts to achieve or surrender national autonomy. It is not an expression of the needs of 'World Capitalism', except insofar as the existence of world capitalism does logically presuppose some regularity in the allocation of labour. It is, I repeat, a chance discovery, or rather the result of attempts to resist or adopt chance discoveries.

As we shall see, certain economic and financial groups do in fact try to manoeuvre their way across the chessboard of 'unequally developed' nations and regions by fragmenting the labour-process in their branch across pools of labour characterized by different types of wage relations (i.e., conditions of the sale and use of labour-power). They quite consciously organize an internal geographical division of labour, and it is true that the generalization of such practices does consolidate a new international division of labour.

It would, however, be quite wrong to conclude that this new international division of labour is simply the outcome of organizational activity on the part of multinational companies. The field can only be structured because the multinationals' project coincides with a decision on the part of the ruling classes of certain countries to gamble upon what we will term an 'export-substitution strategy', and that can, as we shall see, involve a number of different internal regimes of accumulation ('bloody Taylorism', 'peripheral Fordism'). The studies produced by Michalet's team show that multinational companies do not normally relocate certain segments of the production process in order to establish a new international division of labour.²³ The capitalists of the centre are usually more concerned with getting around trade barriers erected by peripheral countries and with off-loading their manufactured goods in accordance with the 'old' division of labour.

A final word has to be said about the objective nature of positions within the 'field' of unevenly developed national social formations. It is fairly easy to give a stylized description of these positions by using conceptualizations such as 'centre of the world economy/semi-periphery/periphery', 'developed countries/underdeveloped countries', 'raw-material exporters/industrialized countries', 'introverted

countries/extraverted countries', 'sub-imperialism', 'NICS', etc. It is much more difficult, and indeed dangerous, to apply any one of these labels to a given country, and it is still more dangerous to describe a country on the basis of the label we give it or which it adopts.

The 'field' itself varies as regimes of accumulation in different countries (and therefore the dominant international regime) change. This does not simply mean that one country takes another's place or that the 'centre of the world', as Wallerstein or Braudel would put it, moves from one country to another.²⁴ It is the very texture of the field which changes. The centre was once a city (Amsterdam), and then it became a country (England, the USA), but there is no reason why there should not be several centres or why the system should take the form of a network organized around a centre. Why should we try at all cost to find a predecessor for England or a successor to the USA?²⁵

More seriously, the field is in fact a *quasi-continuum* of situations, local regimes and modes of insertion into the world economy. Certain countries appear to *typify* certain internal regimes of accumulation or certain modes of insertion, and we spontaneously tend to classify countries by referring to these models. Once they have been classified, we tend to think that it is the abstract category which determines the specific features of each country (even though we can never quite agree as to which country belongs to which category). But if we put Argentina into the same category as some Caribbean banana republic²⁶ on the grounds that 'its exports are mainly raw materials', we are going to have problems with Canada.

National situations are no more separable by classificatory barriers which define the essence of their position in international relations than are Boltanski's social classes.²⁷ There are of course typical cases, classic 'centres' and classic 'peripheries'. Both theoretical work and empirical criteria reveal certain similarities (the NICS). In other cases – 'OPEC', 'The Group of 77', etc. – self-designation comes into play. When a classification becomes widely accepted, it becomes an objective reality, if only because the countries that have been 'grouped together' try to form alliances with their 'fellows' in order to defend their 'common interests', though they