

Dependence Theory: Concepts, Issues and Questions

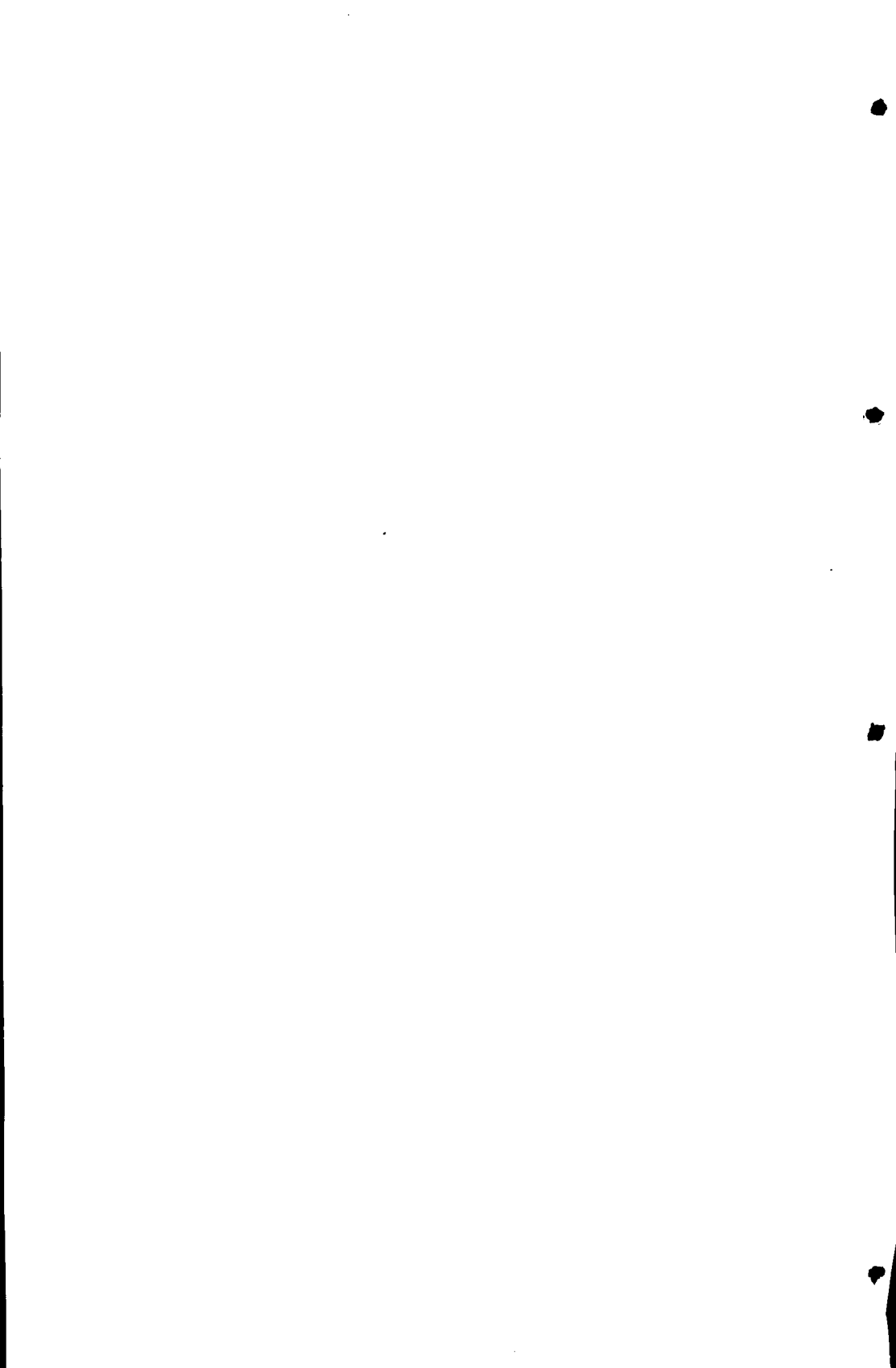
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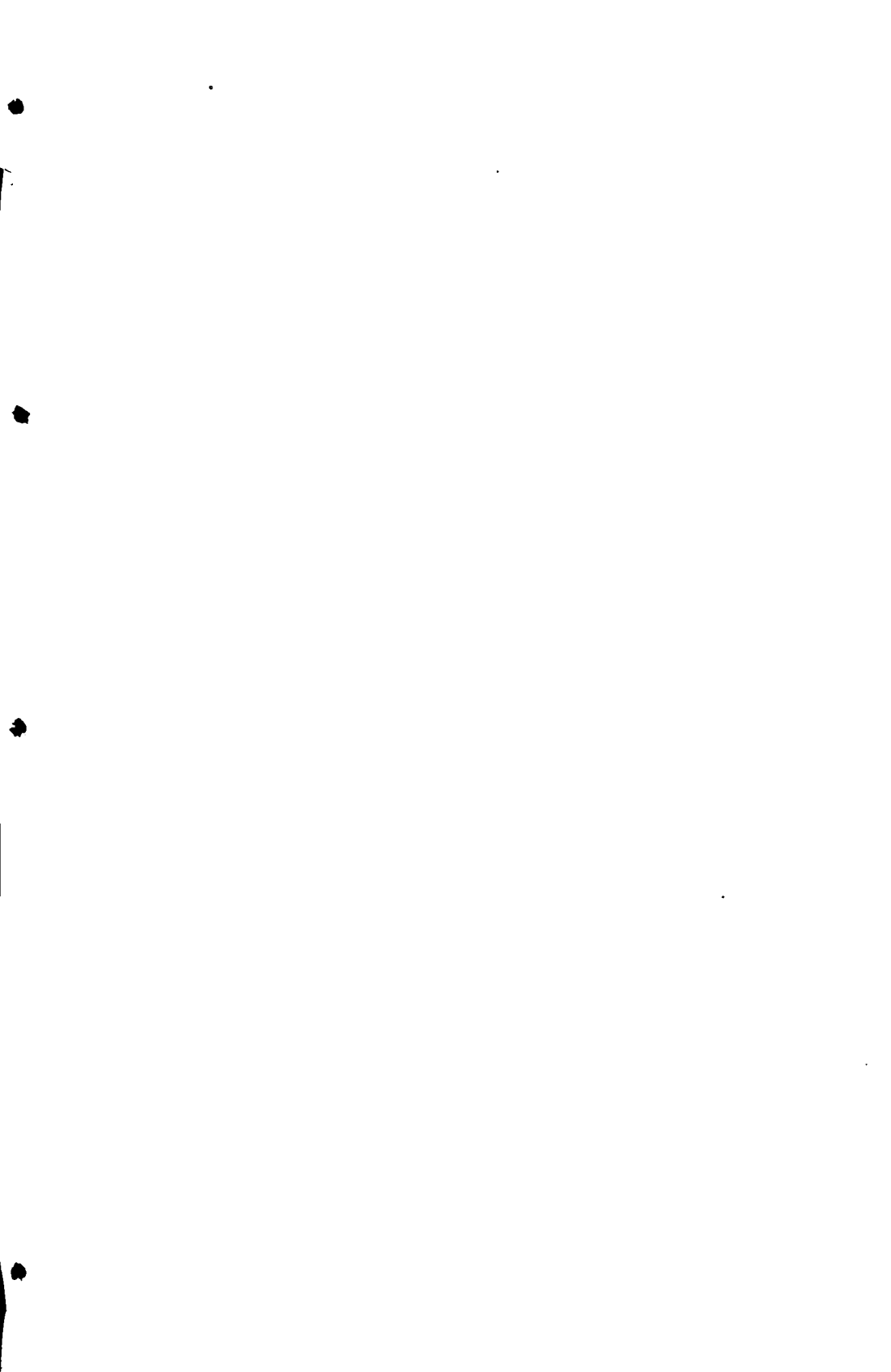
Development Theory: Imperialist Legacy

Imperialism leaves in its wake a desolate collection of nations perpetually reeling from the stunning impact of super-exploitation and pillage. In addition, it also leaves behind modes of thinking that systematically blind peoples of the imperialized world to the reality of imperialist plunder. Modern theories of development exemplify this ideological legacy of imperialist domination. Their effect is to make the oppressed look inward, into themselves, in a confused search for explanation of their poverty. Imperialism almost never figures as an explanatory variable in conventional theories of development.

The imperialized is told: You are poor because you are backward. You are backward because you are not yet industrialized. You cannot industrialize because you do not have the capital to fund such an effort. You have no sufficient capital because your capacity to generate surplus is limited. It is limited because your technology is backward, your values and institutions outmoded, your entrepreneurial class too small, your people's N-ach (need-achievement) too low, and your population multiplies too fast. In short, you are backward because you are poor—poor in resources and resourcefulness, poor in technology and creativity, poor in the requisite modernizing values, and, if development theorists are to be seriously believed, poor even in history!

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lectual and political superstructures. These internal structures of underdevelopment operate to preserve the existing processes through which the surplus generated in the local economy is transferred to the economy of the dominant country.

3. In the language of dependency, the local economy, the economic sectors, the geographic regions from which surplus is *expropriated* (extracted) are called "satellites" or "peripheries". The economies and sectors to which surplus is transferred are referred to as the "metropolises" or "centers". The global capitalist economy is accordingly organized into systems of *metropolis-satellite* or *center-periphery* relationships. Under this set-up, the developed capitalist countries function as metropolitan centers, having their respective satellite systems of dependent economies.
4. The *internal structure of nations* is also characterized by a system of center-periphery linkages. A satellite dependent nation, for instance, will have its own developed sector, acting as the periphery's center. It is this sector that is responsible for extracting the locally-generated surplus, though, because of its own dependent peripheral status vis-a-vis the metropolitan center, whatever share of the locally-generated surplus it keeps is either re-invested in more of the same externally-oriented enterprises, or is consumed in the form of imported luxury items.

In the view of dependence theorists, such a process assures the perpetual subordination of the local capitalist sector and prevents the growth of an independent self-sustaining national economy. In this manner, too, the process of underdevelopment initiated by colonial conquest, and developed and brought to its maturity under the aegis of modern imperialism, becomes firmly entrenched in the social, economic and institutional structures of dependent societies.

Peripheral Capitalism

Foremost among such social, economic and institutional structures is the peculiar organization of *peripheral capitalism*. Not having developed historically from the conditions of indigenous feudalism, as was the case with European capitalism, the capitalism of the periphery combines within a single mode of production various modes of exploitation including, particularly, those that characterized the feudal mode of production. Does this make peripheral economies feudal or capitalist then? This is a critical question over which

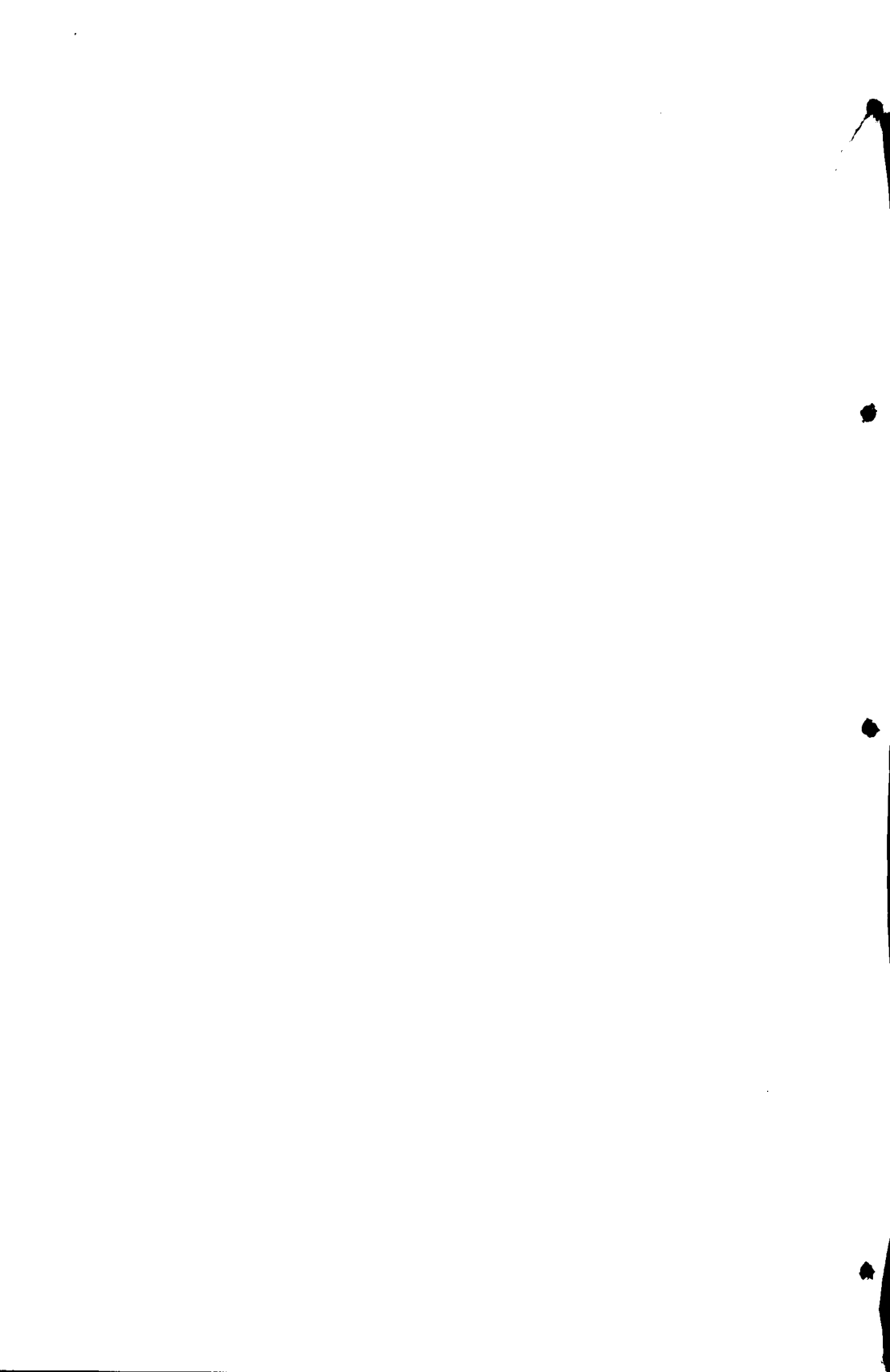
dependency writers have quarreled and split into factions; it is a crucial question because its resolution indicates the main directions of revolutionary activity.

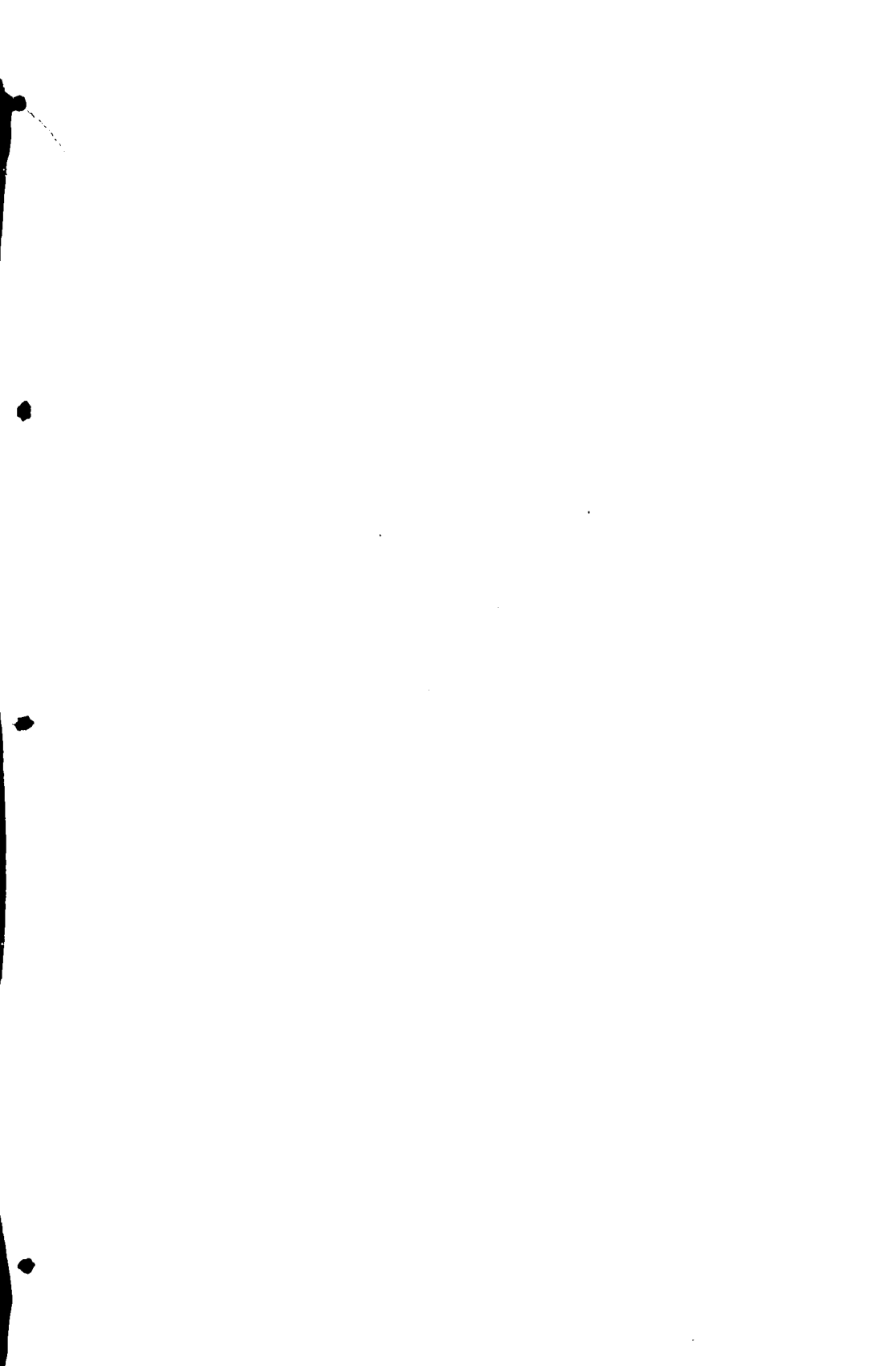
If the economies of the underdeveloped countries are essentially feudal, then the direction of revolutionary strategy must consider the maturation and development of capitalist forms regarded as preconditions to the establishment of a socialist society. The direction of the attack is against the landlords as the internal enemy, in addition to imperialism as the external enemy. The thrust of the struggle is, thus, "democratic" rather than socialist. And the struggle must then count among its allies an emergent national bourgeoisie presumed to be suffering from imperialist competition.

Many other dependence writers, on the other hand, assert that the economies of the underdeveloped world have become components of global capitalism. They are components of a worldwide capitalist machine in that they produce for the global capitalist market and transfer the surplus from their predominantly agrarian economies to the metropolitan centers of the capitalist world. Indeed, the system of exploitation within these agrarian economies may exhibit some feudal characteristics like paternalism, and a system of diffuse obligations among employers and workers. But all these do not erase the basic fact that production is for the capitalist market, and that it is a capitalist class in the dominant center which appropriates the major surplus. Hence, it is capitalism, not feudalism, that is primarily responsible for the continuous underdevelopment of the economy.

Samir Amin has noted that in peripheral economies, which tend to be predominantly agrarian in character, two types of local bourgeoisie arise: the big plantation owners who produce for the export market, and the comprador bourgeoisie in the urban centers who profit from the alliance with foreign traders. The fates and fortunes of both are intimately linked with the interests of international capitalism. It is, therefore, argued that the development of backward countries cannot possibly lie in the expansion of capitalist forms in the remote areas, for there are almost no remote areas in the underdeveloped world that have remained untouched by imperialist capitalist penetration. Gunder Frank has argued that the hope of the underdeveloped nations lies alone in revolution—in socialist revolution.

Who, then, is the enemy of the revolution? In the perception of these dependency theorists who see capitalism as well-entrenched in the underdeveloped world and well-sustained by global imperialism,





through the use of foreign foundations to dole out scholarships for graduate studies in the center of metropolitan imperialism itself—the U.S. With their Ph.D.s and their assorted graduate degrees, the local *pensionados* come home properly equipped with new as well as worn-out apologies for, and mystifications of, imperialist exploitation. Most of them are properly unconscious of the role that they now play—they see themselves proudly as technocrats who have bright ideas about how we can get this country going. Amidst models, theories, indicators and futuristic scenarios, they carefully formulate plans for urban development, countryside development, regional development, etc. while the ones who really shape the destiny of the nation have just worked out another loan from the World Bank, or applied for a new credit tranche with the IMF, or have just approved a Japanese conglomerate's application to set up a pollution factory in the countryside.

Language and Dependence

Imperialist domination of the direction of cultural and intellectual life, perhaps, takes its most repulsive form in the systematic retardation of the growth of a national language. Many dependent countries were, at least, able to preserve the use of a national language even after they became incorporated into the network of global capitalism. But many others, including the Philippines, did not have a clear chance to even develop a national language.

Language follows the requisites of the economy. In an imperialized economy like that found in our country, it is logical for the people, at least in the urban centers, to emphasize the use of the language of the dominant economic sector. It is largely because our economy has remained heavily in American hands, and is now gradually being shared with the resurgent Japanese, that English has remained the dominant language, and Nippongo has become a profitable and valuable language to learn.

I am afraid that the prospects for the development and widespread use of a national language in our society remain dim, notwithstanding presidential directives requiring its use in the educational system. The sad truth is that Filipino is, and will remain, a subordinate language in our own country, for as long as we allow the ruthless domination of our economy by imperialism. The liberation of our language goes hand in hand with our national liberation.

Dependence and the Mass Media

English, of course, is the language of the mass media—in our country and elsewhere in the underdeveloped world—the greatest single purveyor of the western cosumerist lifestyle. Our TV stations run the same TV programs broadcast in America just a few weeks before—in English to be sure. The whole range of canned American police shows—from *Streets of San Francisco* to *Hawaii Five-O*, from *Cannon* to *Kojak*, from *Policewoman* to *Barnaby Jones*—are regular daily features on Philippine television.

Sesame Street, a program especially produced for American children—black, white or Porto Rican—is shown to, and avidly watched by, our children three times a day. At least, this program may contain some redeeming qualities. But one is hardpressed to understand what cultural gems or educational lessons are to be found in such escapist programs like *Bionic Woman* or *Wonder Woman* or *Charlie's Angels*, to name a few. Is this, perhaps, part of the peculiar tragedy of all dependent culture?

Questions For Study

Here, we have started to consider the Philippine situation as, possibly, one of dependency. I shall not attempt to present an analysis of Philippine underdevelopment from the perspective of dependency theory. That, I think, is a job that ought to be done by all of us who can still feel passionately about the future of this country, working in the social sciences. I shall only try, at this point, to propose some questions that an empirical investigation of Philippine dependency might raise. The beauty of some theoretical perspectives is that they allow you to ask questions about reality that other schemes either omit or do not consider problematic.

1. There is no doubt that Philippine economy is predominantly agrarian. Would that be the same as saying that it is feudal?
2. What is the predominant term of work in the agricultural sector: wage work or tenancy?
3. What is the social organization of the modern capitalist sector in the Philippine society? What forms of productive activity does it embrace? Who control the productive enterprises, and how extensive is foreign participation in the modern capitalist sector?
4. Who constitute the Philippine bourgeoisie, and what were the original sources of their wealth? What shifts and changes in

