The exclusive and conflictive development of the periphery evolved within a world context of capitalism under the hegemony of the centres and, more especially, of its major centre. Historically, the dynamic role has fallen to the centres while the periphery has taken a subsidiary role in the spontaneous development of capitalism.

The term 'subsidiary role' is used in the sense that although the dynamic of the centres has been, and continues to be, important to the periphery, it is far from sufficient. In fact, in this case, technological progress and its fruits have tended to be concentrated in the centres themselves. Furthermore, industrialisation and the trade of industrial goods prompted by the incessant diversification of the former are also concentrated in the centres. Thus, capitalism proves to be essentially centripetal.

The advanced countries in which capitalism evolves – the centres –
tend to spread the dynamic of their development to others—the periphery—except to the extent needed to ensure the centres their supplies of primary products. Therefore the periphery tended to remain on the fringes of the industrialising process during the historical development of capitalism and later, when the periphery in turn industrialised, it was divorced from the centres’ major flows of trade, where this process manifested itself. Thus this peculiar dynamic of the centres tended to limit the scope of development on the periphery, in conjunction with other internal factors.

On the other hand, the centres propagated their technical expertise, patterns of consumption and life-styles, institutions, ideas and ideology to the periphery. Thus capitalism on the periphery proved to be essentially imitative.

During this century, two major crises have occurred in the centres which have had far-reaching repercussions on the periphery. Institutions failed to adapt fully to the changing demands made by this dynamic process, to the enormous development of technology and its ambivalence and to the play of power politics, which have had such a marked effect on the distribution of the fruits of technology.

THE TWO MAJOR CRISES OF CAPITALISM

The first crisis to occur in the major dynamic centre of capitalism was embodied in the depression of the 1930s. As a result, the already limited development of the periphery was sharply cut back and inward industrialisation imposed. In spite of its defects, this substitutive industrialisation allowed the periphery to grow at a rate which exceeded that of its inadequate exports to the centres.

The second great crisis is that in the throes of which capitalism today finds itself. During the centres’ long years of euphoria preceding the crisis, the periphery began to boost industrialisation towards the exterior. This became increasingly necessary as the policy of substitution came closer to exhaustion. The export of industrial goods was boosted, especially in those countries in which industrialisation had made the greatest strides in the preceding phase, during which it had been directed inwards. However, it is evident that even this second crisis has failed to dispel the centripetal tendency of capitalism.

Thus the external brake on development of the periphery has once more been applied. The centres have not particularly favoured industrial trade with the periphery and neither has the latter taken full advantage