R.C. DUTT LECTURES
ON POLITICAL ECONOMY, 1985

ASHOK RUDRA

SOME PROBLEMS OF
M THEORY OF HISTORY

TRE FOR STUDIES
IN SOCIAL SCIENCES, CALCUTTA

CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN SOCIAL SCIENCES, CALCUTTA

R. C. Dutt Lectures on Political Economy, 1985

SOME PROBLEMS OF MARX'S THEORY OF HISTORY

R. C. DUTT LECTURES ON POLITICAL ECONOMY

ASHOK MITRA
Terms of Exchange and Accumulation
[1975]

KRISHNA BHARADWAJ
Classical Political Economy and Rise to Dominance of Supply and Demand Theories
[1976]

B. N. GANGULI
Some Aspects of Classical Political Economy in the Nineteenth Century Indian Perspective
[1977]

I. S. GULATI
International Monetary Development and the Third World: A Proposal to Redress the Balance
[1978]

V. M. DANDEKAR
Peasant–Worker Alliance: Its Basis in the Indian Economy
[1979]

SUKHAMOY CHAKRAVARTY
Alternative Approaches to a Theory of Economic Growth: Marx, Marshall and Schumpeter
[1980]

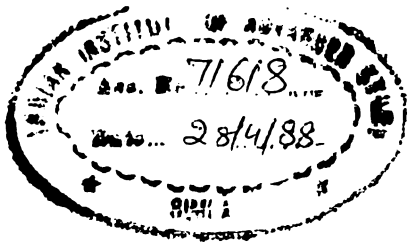
AMIT BHADURI
Domination, Deterrence and Counterforce: An Analysis of Strategic Objectives and Doctrines in the Superpower Arms Race
[1981]

ASHOK RUDRA
Some Problems of Marx's Theory of History
[1985]

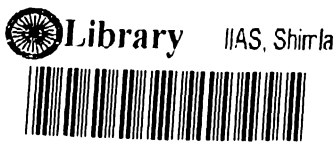
Some Problems of Marx's Theory of History

ASHOK RUDRA

Orient Longman



ISBN 0 86131 754 8



Sole Distributors
ORIENT LONGMAN LIMITED

Regd. Office
5-9-41/1 Bashir Bagh, Hyderabad 500 029

Other Offices
Kamani Marg, Ballard Estate, Bombay 400 038
17 Chittaranjan Avenue, Calcutta 700 072
160 Anna Salai, Mount Road, Madras 600 002
1/24 Asaf Ali Road, New Delhi 110 002
80/1 Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bangalore 560 001
5-9-41/1 Bashir Bagh, Hyderabad 500 029
Jamal Road, Patna 800 001

Printed by P. K. Ghosh at Eastend Printers, 3 Dr Suresh Sarkar Road, Calcutta 700 014 and published by Susanta Ghosh, Registrar, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, 10 Lake Terrace, Calcutta 700 029

Contents

Foreword

THE Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, invited me to deliver the R. C. Dutt Lectures in February 1986. The following pages present my theses substantially as they were presented in the lectures; they have of course undergone important editorial corrections. I have added an appendix on the debate on the transition from feudalism to capitalism, a debate of the fifties lately revived.

The choice of subject represents considerable courage, if not audacity. If one takes a narrow view of the Social Sciences, then the subject may be regarded as belonging to the discipline of Economic History to which I do not belong professionally. To live up to the standards of the scholar in whose honour these lectures were instituted, and before an audience which included several distinguished names in the field, was indeed an intimidating thought. I chose to take the risk because I have been interested in these questions for the last few years, and I wanted to have the benefit of comments by those more qualified than myself.

The importance of the questions raised cannot be overemphasized. In the last twenty years or so there has been a great resurgence in Marxism in all its fields and it has taken the form of Marxists themselves looking again at a large number of propositions that have long been accepted without question. As a matter of fact, among Western scholars the understanding of Marx is changing beyond recognition; the large number of contradictory views on almost all questions is an indication of the great vigour of the subject. It is for this reason that I have in these lectures quoted profusely from a large number of authors. I do not believe in substituting quotations for

argument and I have stuck to that principle in so far as references to the original writings of Marx, Engels and others are concerned. If I have taken a very different approach to Marxian scholars who are writing today, it is only in order to show the large diversity of Marxian research today. This does not at all mean that I have presented a sort of a survey of literature. The careful reader will notice that on every disputed question I have dared to take up a definite position.

Of course the views expressed are all tentative. I am engaged in writing a book on why a transition similar to that in Western Europe did not take place in India. It is a long-term project, and as I improve upon my very incomplete knowledge of the different social sciences that bear on the problem, it is only to be expected that in the spirit of the scientific method that is Marxism I would often revise my opinions and not be sticking to any one of them dogmatically.

Acknowledgements

THE researches represented by the lectures have been engaging the best part of my time and energy over several years. I have benefited a great deal from exchanges with many historians. In 1982, Professor Ashin Dasgupta invited me to a seminar organized by him at Visva-Bharati, and the discussions that followed my paper on 'Against Feudalism' were very profitable for me. Much of the work was done when I was a guest of the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme in Paris for six months in 1984, and for two months again in 1986. I benefited enormously from conversations with Professors Maurice Aymard, Wallerstein and Barun De, and from the interventions by the participants of a seminar which I addressed in May 1984; it was organized by the Study Group on Feudalism, which counts among its members some of the best French historians working on Medieval Europe. Useful too was a month in the Institute of Social Studies in the Hague in October 1985 as an invitee of the Dutch government under the Indo-Dutch Programme on Alternatives in Development. During that period I had the benefit of very fruitful conversations with Frank Perlin among others.

The discussions that took place at the end of the three lectures I delivered at the Centre also enriched my understanding, particularly the comments from Professors Barun De, Asok Sen and Surajit Sinha.

Last but not least, I must record my gratitude to Sujata Ganguly and Mithu Ghosh, research assistants of superlative quality, whose energy and painstaking care bore me up in my researches.

LECTURE ONE

History as a Sequence of Modes of Production

THE UNILINEAR VIEW

'BEFORE 1964, Historical Materialism was generally interpreted to mean that history displayed a single sequence of universally occurring stages of social development, each of them corresponding to a different stage in the development of productive forces. The immanent logic of the development of material production was taken to be such that each stage of the succession would appear, unveil its inner contradictions and give rise to the next, higher phase of economic production and social development. According to this law of social development, the same pattern or sequence of stages would be found in the history of any given society.'[1] This understanding was solidly entrenched in a procrustean bed of dogmas enshrined in such works as N. Bukharin, *Historical Materialism* (1925), O. Kuusinen (ed.), *Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism* (1959), G. Glezerman and G. Kursanov, *Historical Materialism* (1968), and of course Stalin's *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* (1938)—the last was for a generation of Marxists what the Bible is to the believer and wherein the line is laid down in such words as '... the primitive communal system is succeeded *precisely* by the slave system, the slave system by the feudal system, and the feudal system by the bourgeois system, and not by some other.'

Since 1964 things have changed greatly among Western scholars, and there is a great deal of interest in '... an historiography which does not apply concepts to

non-Western history which are appropriate only to West European history; an historiography which also awards a greater significance to the role of non-economic factors in the economic infrastructure'. There is an ever widening influence of the view that '. . . history is to be regarded as prima facie open, and not as a closed and unitary process governed by immutable general laws determining its movements towards a single goal'. In this view, 'reducing the history of mankind to an unvarying succession of five stages distinguished by five *fundamental* relations of production' is rejected as 'dogmatic falsification, which, for many years, passed for Marxism'.[2] It has now been convincingly demonstrated by various scholars that Karl Marx may not be held responsible for the unilinear view. It is true, one can read into the Communist Manifesto such a model and one can quote him from the 'Preface to the Contributions to the Critique of Political Economy' as saying that '. . . in broad outline, the Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production may be designated as epochs marking progress in the economic development of society'. Here one does see a single linear scheme, but one may notice the existence in it of an Asiatic Mode of Production (AMP) which is conspicuously absent from the scheme enshrined in the work of Stalin cited above. Such a unilinear scheme (once again with AMP) can be found much more often in the works of Engels, particularly after the publication of *Anti-Dühring*. Extensive researches have, however, shown that despite these all too well-known references, Marx subscribed not to a unilinear view but to one that may be called multilinear or plural. 'Access to the *Grundrisse* has now revealed that Marx, when paying close attention to the forms of pre-capitalist development rather than writing polemical excursuses, believed in the possibility of at least three major alternative forms of development out of the primitive community (the Asiatic, classical and Germanic) and other mixed forms of development such as the Slavonic.'

DIFFERENT PATHS OF DEVELOPMENT

Those who reject the unilinear view of history but retain the idea of history being a succession of modes of production have produced a great variety of alternative paths of development involving different sequences of modes, each one claimed to be in the nature of an interpretation of Marx. Thus Sawer offers the following multilinear scheme which, she claims, is presented by Marx in the *Grundrisse*: (*a*) Communalism–Slavery (Roman); (*b*) Communalism–AMP (Asiatic); (*c*) Communalism–Feudalism plus AMP (Slavonic); and (*d*) Communalism–Feudalism–Capitalism (Germanic). As may be seen, of the four paths only one leads to capitalism, though it is suggested that Marx recognized possibilities in the Asiatic and the Slavonic modes of a direct transition to capitalism without the intervention of a feudal stage. Incidentally, in the Slavonic path the second stage consists of something with some features of AMP mixed together with some features of Feudalism. An extreme interpretation of Marx is to find in his recognition even of a possibility of a direct transition from AMP to socialism. Slavery, in this scheme, is supposed to be a mode which is self-destructive, in sharp contrast to the standard formula of its giving birth to the feudal mode. The earlier generation of Marxists who argued in favour of the AMP without the benefit of the *Grundrisse* or Marx's comments on Kovalevsky, e.g. Plekhanov, Mad'iar, Lomakin, and others, located two paths as follows: (*a*) Communalism–Slavery–Feudalism–Capitalism; (*b*) Communalism–AMP–reversible tendencies to Feudalism. Godelier,[3] with the benefit of access to material denied to his precursors, offered the following variants: (*a*) Communalism–AMP–Slavery–Feudalism–Capitalism; (*b*) Communalism–AMP–Feudalism (of a variety that does not give rise to capitalism). It may be noted that Godelier is placing AMP prior to slavery and feudalism.

An official Soviet position 'promulgated' in 1960 retained Stalin's five-stage scheme, but introduced the modification that 'the Germanic and the Slav peoples did not pass through an epoch of slavery'. A thoroughgoing revision of the same five-stage scheme was advanced in 1966 by two Soviet historians, Vasilev and Stuchevsky, who suggested that the law of progressive development applies only to the following broad stages—primitive communal society, pre-capitalist class society and socialism. 'At a certain point of development each of these stages must be replaced by the next. However, the variety of forms found within the pre-capitalist stage, or secondary formations of human history, are not governed or related by the same law of progression.' This idea that there could be a variety of different pre-capitalist formations not subject to the same laws of movement is advocated in an extreme form by Godelier, who writes: '. . . numerous commentators . . . hesitate to follow Marx when he uses the term mode of production, apropos the Celts, Slavs, etc. . . . there need be no constraint about multiplying the number of modes of production and even applying this notion to transitional forms between two distinct modes of production.'[4] And very recently a French Marxist[5] has advanced a thesis of a mode of production to be called Feudo-Mercantile to span the period between the decline of Feudalism and the rise of capitalism in West Europe. This of course is in sharp contrast to the stand taken by Maurice Dobb, who thought that it was quite inadmissible to think of a distinct mode of West Europe applicable for the few centuries of 'transition' between the decline of feudalism and the rise of capitalism. This is also in sharp contradiction with the position taken by Hindess and Hirst,[6] who try to establish theoretically that there cannot possibly be an AMP or any mode of production other than the ones occurring in the standard scheme, namely Communalism, Slavery, Feudalism, Capitalism and Socialism.

The multilinear view obviously involves an assumption

about geographical factors affecting the course of development. There are two different approaches to the problem. 'The premise which underlies the first approach is that according to the immanent logic of the development of material production a determinate series of social formations will universally occur and that, therefore, geographical factors can only retard or accelerate the development of these formations. The premise which underlies the second approach, however, is that at any stage of the development of material production a number of alternative forms of social organizations (or modes of production) are possible, and that these will depend on a number of geographical, historical and other variables.' Incidentally it may be noted that some critics of Marxism, whose tribe has never shown any diminution of energy in picking up anything to be made into an argument against that philosophy, have found in the giving up of the unilinear view of history another occasion to announce the end of Marxism. Thus Gellner writes, 'The abandonment of unilinearism raises problems which are very deep. If it is disavowed and not replaced by anything, one may well ask whether one is left with any theory at all, or merely with the debris of a theory.'[7] This ignorant criticism has been effectively rebutted by Ellen Wood, who describes unilinearism as 'an attempt to avoid explaining historical change by preempting the question with a mechanical sequence of stages' and argues that 'the object of Marxist theory without unilinearism is precisely to offer a key to the motive forces of historical process.'[8]

THE ASIATIC MODE

Marx's notions about the peculiarities of 'oriental societies', with the State rather than the slave owner or the feudal lord being the principal appropriator of the surplus product, the lingering on of village communalism leading to stagnation of the forces of production and the inhibi-

tion of the emergence of classes, etc., are ideas which are familiar to most Marxists in the more simplistic version in which they occur in Marx's letters and his newspaper articles on India. A very much more sophisticated version has now been dug out by scholars from the *Grundrisse*. As a matter of fact, two different models of the Asiatic Mode of Production (AMP) may be found in the works of Marx, one dating from 1853 and the other from *Capital*; a third model may be located in the writings of Engels in his post-*Anti-Dühring* phase. The resurrection of the idea in 1925, with the publication by Varga[9] of an article entitled 'Economic Problems of the Revolution in China', did not derive inspiration solely or directly from Marx. Extremely influential were the thoughts of Max Weber and Plekhanov. Of course these early writers did not use the precise permutation of words contained in the phrase 'Asiatic Mode of Production'. The term apparently made its first appearance in Lenin's Report on the 'Unity Congress' and it achieved currency with the publication in 1925 by Riazanov of an explanatory preface to Marx's article 'Revolution in China and in Europe'. After that, till 1931, the term came to be increasingly used by a large number of scholars, mostly Soviet, like Mad'iar, Lominadze, Shimonin, Kokin, Papaian, Lalin, Kantorovich, Paul Fox, and of course Varga, who it was that started the debate in 1925 and again reopened it in 1964. The AMP received during this period so much importance that it featured in the Draft Agrarian Programme discussed at a plenum of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. In the later phase of the discussion which began in 1964, important contributions were made by Garaudy, Godelier and Suret-Cenale in France, Tokei in Hungary, Vasilev and Sedov, Kachanovsky and Stuchevsky in the Soviet Union.

The methodological doubts that have been expressed in these debates have centred on 'the problem of a mode of production in which the defining elements were of a

secondary or super-structural character and one which does not seem to possess any internal contradictions'. Marx in his earlier writings considered as negligible the existence of classes and class struggles in societies with AMP. This, in his understanding, explained the alleged stagnation of these societies. This particular understanding started to get modified in the writings of Engels, who treated the public servants performing various social functions as constituting a ruling class in such a society. He, however, 'made no attempt to reconcile such a function-based definition of class with the Marxian definition of class in terms of ownership of the means of production'; nor did he relate, any more than Marx himself, 'the rise of the state power in Asiatic society to the repressive functions required by class society'. This function-based definition of classes continued to figure in the writings of the latter-day exponents of AMP. For instance, Mad'iar and Sencer Divitcioglu locate the basic dynamics of the AMP in the contradiction between the two classes, the state functionaries and the people. Godelier, however, takes a different view: for him 'the Asiatic mode of production is a more or less universally occurring transition stage between classless and class societies'.[10] In other words, according to Godelier, the dynamics of AMP is expressed not in any class struggles but in the emergence of classes.

These researches on the Asiatic Mode of Production seem to wander far from the problems of Indian history, though it is that very history which provided the original inspiration of the idea to Marx. As is well known, many of the versions of the AMP ascribe a central importance to large-scale irrigation works and the State's role in relation to them. We do not, however, recognize our society during any period of our history as something that may be described as 'hydraulic'. Small-scale irrigation calling for complicated local level social organization seems to have been important, particularly in south India, but they did

not call for any important intervention by the State. As a matter of fact we feel much sympathy with Barrington Moore's view that 'the Asiatic State was economically superfluous; that it did not even have to perform minimal state functions (like the Western State) such as keeping order as this was done by the caste system, and that it played no positive role in local production'.[11] Despite these reservations we are of the opinion that if the mode of production concept is not to be dropped all together, if one has to apply to pre-colonial Indian society any one of the modes from the small group recognized by and familiar to Marxists, it is the Asiatic Mode of Production and not the Feudal Mode that one has to take up and suitably modify to provide a theoretical framework for that society.

THE CONCEPT OF MODE OF PRODUCTION

Disagreement on the sequences of modes is not the only matter that has been a source of controversy—the concept of mode of production itself has been a matter of dispute and confusion. Most Marxists of course accept the concept as if it is self-explanatory and attach importance to it as if the importance is self-evident. Languages like the following are typical:

> BYRES—'I would insist upon the central importance of the mode of production concept itself . . .'[12]
>
> HILTON—'It would be impossible to understand a specific society in history without understanding the nature of the predominant mode of production within it . . .'[13]
>
> HOBSBAWM—'The mode of production constitutes the structure which determines what form the growth of the productive forces and the distribution of the surplus will take, how society can or cannot change its structures, and how, at suitable moments, the transition to another mode of production can or will take place. It

also establishes the range of superstructural possibilities. In short, the mode of production is the base of our understanding of the variety of human societies and their interactions, as well as of their historical dynamics.'[14]

DOBB—'. . . save for comparatively brief intervals of transitions, each historical period is moulded under the preponderating influence of a single, more or less homogeneous economic form, and is to be characterized according to the predominant type of socio-economic relationships . . .'[15]

Typical also is the tendency to locate authority in the following kind of quotation from Marx: 'In all forms of society there is one specific kind of production which predominates ever the rest, whose relations thus assign rank and influence to the others.'[16]

At first glance the concept seems to be clear enough. Yet, despite all this near unanimity and sacrosanctity, it cannot escape the logical-minded, irreverent student that the terms 'mode of production' and 'social formation' are far from being clearly understood analytical tools, as their facile use would suggest.

Thus, the concept of Social Formation suffers from a façade of rigour hiding a mass of vagueness. It is not always clear in what way social formation means anything other than just a society as it exists concretely at a point of time. As Perlin writes, 'The notion of "social formation" . . . is often used to provide an encompassing unity to bundles of articulating modes of production . . . The result is its lack of clear content and scale, the disagreements about the kinds of spatial and organizational unit it should apply to. Often "social formation" is simply a national or regional unit given to the writer rather than defined by him, thus no unit at all.'[17]

Wallerstein correctly observes: 'In the last twenty-five years, Western Marxists have substituted the term "social formation" for "society". This is just flimflam.

It changes nothing. Everything one can say about the ontological vacuity of "society" applies equally to the concept "social formation".'[18]

'Modes of Production are ideal constructs; social formations are real societies in all their complexity, and thus in practice virtually irreducible to formal categories',[19] writes Wickham, as if raising a serious problem. But there is no real problem here; any theoretical approach to any real world problem involves dealing simultaneously with the real and the abstract. The task of a model in science is to represent in abstract terms some selected aspects of the real world. The problem with 'social formation' is that what aspects of the real world are being selected for abstract representation is kept unspecified. We have seen above that the term 'social formation' is often used interchangeably with the term 'society'. It is not that there has been no attempt to give it a more sophisticated theoretical definition. Thus for instance: 'It is an attempt to categorize real society as a system of different structural levels. One of these, the economic base, consists of one or more modes of production in a hierarchy of dominance; various superstructures (politics, ideology, the state) are organized in an intricate relationship to it',[20] and so on. But Wickham, who advances this formulation himself, writes, 'In fact Marx himself was less bothered by such intricacies; he used "social formation" and mode of production more or less as synonyms, and so do many people writing today.'[21]

The carelessness with which these terms have been used has given rise to much greater vagueness and contradiction in the use of the term 'mode of production', which everybody seems to agree is central to Marxian theory. Cohen[22] has shown in detail the very many different meanings in which Marx himself used the term, and has even argued for its abandonment, a proposal that we support heartily. Byres, who, as we have just seen, attaches central importance to the concept, himself expresses reservations

about the attempted rigorous definition by Hindess and Hirst as an 'articulated combination of relations and forces of production' in the following words: 'Precisely what "articulation" might entail, either in strict theoretical terms or in the treatment of concrete situations, is not immediately self-evident. Those who have operated with the idea . . . have failed, for the most part, to rise above the simple assertion: the assertion that articulation is of central significance.'[23]

While everybody seems to be agreed that a mode consists of a combination of forces of production and relations of production, in actual application one is often totally overlooking the forces of production and depending only on relations of production. Thus, the serfdom definition of the feudal mode of production, which seems to be the most commonly accepted one among Marxists and about which we shall have much to say in the next Lecture, refers only to the relations of the direct producers with the extractors of surplus. This definition may find justification in the following quotation from Marx: 'The specific economic form, in which unpaid surplus-labour is pumped out of direct producers, determines the relationship of rulers and ruled . . . upon this . . . is founded the entire formulation of the economic community.'[24] Though Marx does not use the term mode but uses such phrases as economic form and 'entire social structure' in the same passage, the legitimacy derived from the passage can be extended to Takahashi's 'existence form of labour' approach to the feudal mode of production also. But what happens to the combination, articulated or not, of the forces and relations of production?

One may give further examples of other very different ideas one has got about what mode of production stands for. For instance, Asok Sen recently spoke of 'Marx's category of the mode of production with its techno-economic, juridico-political, and ideological dimensions'.[25] Thus, according to Sen, a mode of production includes such

features of society as are usually treated as part of its superstructure. This leads to another source of confusion: does the superstructure belong to the mode of production or not? Most Marxists seem to exclude it; but increasingly it is being recognized that one cannot understand history without taking into account all kinds of superstructural features. The question then arises: if the dynamics of a society cannot be understood without taking into account elements not belonging to the mode of production, why should one attach that central importance to the mode of production? When Hilton writes, 'the precise development process of the society considered will be determined by specific features in it—including superstructural features—as well as by the dynamics of the mode',[26] one may well ask him: what exactly is the dynamics of the mode, as distinct from that of the developmental process of the society?

This is precisely what Irfan Habib asks when he writes: 'One may say that where the social form of labour differs, the "mode of production" cannot be the same (and the dominant mode of production defines the economic formation). But what seems often to be overlooked is that the converse is not necessarily true. Wage-labour remains the basic form of labour in socialism, but this does not entitle us to identify the capitalist and socialist modes. A second element, no less crucial, must therefore also be considered: this is the form in which the surplus extracted from a producer is distributed . . . Moreover, if each economic formation is distinguished by its own specific laws of motion—and even a specific prime mover—it cannot simply stem from the conditions of labour alone, but must arise out of an interaction which cannot also remain unaffected by factors external to both.'[27] Long before all these, Parain and other participants in a French colloquy on feudalism emphasized the importance of such superstructural matters as the Church and its ideology for the comprehension of French feudalism.[28]

Given all this vagueness, it is not surprising that the concept would be used in highly divergent fashions. These different uses have been brought together by Perlin into two groups, of what he calls macro-logical uses and micro-logical uses.[29] The macro-logical uses are those of the standard modes like slavery, feudalism, capitalism, etc. Examples of micro-logical uses given by him are domestic or family mode of production, lineage mode of production, African mode of production, peasant mode of production, hacienda mode of production, share-crop mode of production, etc. Authors cited by him include Sahlins, Coquery-Vidrovitch, Rey, and others. These modes have not, however, always been used only as micro components of holistic macro-modes. Thus, recently, Romila Thapar has used the concept of the 'lineage mode' to characterize early Vedic society in India.[30]

Yet another source of confusion lies in not making clear in a particular case what we have called in an earlier article the 'domain' of the concept of mode of production in any particular context and which is the same thing as what we believe Perlin means by 'field of adequacy',[31] and Wallerstein means by 'the unit of analysis'.[32] Talking about the controversy of describing the whole world as capitalist as done by Wallerstein, Gunder Frank and others, we wrote: 'It seems to us that the difference between the two positions arises out of two different ways of demarcating what may be called "the domain" of the concept of mode of production. Gunder Frank thinks that the appropriate domain is the world as a whole . . . Those who talk of different modes coexisting in the world implicitly assume that the correct domain of the concept of mode is defined by the political boundary of a nation-state.'[33] Not only the nation-state but even sectors of an economy have often been treated as the domain—witness the debate on the so-called Mode of Production in Indian agriculture. As we said in the same place, 'We have not found in Marxian classics any categorical statement about

what is the appropriate "domain" for the concept of mode. As such, there does not seem to be any means of concluding the argument . . .'[34]

Another problem concerns the ranking of modes. The idea of development through a sequence of modes obviously involves the assumption that each successive mode corresponds to a higher level of development of society than the previous one. As Hobsbawm writes, 'There seems to be little doubt that Marx himself saw them as forming a series in which man's growing emancipation from, and control over, nature affected both the forces and relations of production. According to this set of criteria, the various MOPs could be thought to be ranged in ascending order.'[35] Many historians, however, regard the level of development corresponding to European feudalism as lower than that reached during the Roman antiquity. For a much earlier period in human history Leach has the following to say: 'The change-over from a hunter-gatherer economy to a horticultural economy was not, in any obvious way, a marker of human progress from a dietary and health point of view. This much vaunted Neolithic Revolution must have led to a decline of living standards, not an improvement.'[36]

A closely related problem is that of 'mode-dominance'; that is, the problem of how to judge which among two or more coexisting modes is to be regarded as the dominant one. It is a problem that does not seem to have occurred to most of those who glibly talk of it as if it were self-explanatory. Wickham has attempted to answer the question in the following terms: 'Normally the dominant mode of production is that which has the closest links with the state',[37] but this raises the question of how to judge which links are the closest.

A much deeper problem arises concerning the linkage between two successive modes of production. With all their differences, Dobb and Sweezy seem to be in agreement that 'the disintegration of the feudal mode of pro-

duction had already reached an advanced stage before the capitalist mode of production developed, and that this disintegration did not proceed in any close association with the growth of the new mode of production within the womb of the old';[38] and 'the transition from feudalism to capitalism is thus not a single uninterrupted process—similar to the transition from capitalism to socialism—but is made up of two quite distinct phases which present radically different problems and require to be analysed separately.'[39] That '. . . it was out of the ruins of the Feudal Mode, as its forces of production outstripped its social relations of production in the later Middle Ages and early modern periods, that capitalism was born'[40] is of course a matter of factual history. Therefore feudalism can indeed be regarded as 'antecedent'[41] to capitalism, though this does not establish any 'necessary causal relationship'[42] whatsoever between the two modes. It may indeed be true that there is no such causal link between feudalism and capitalism in particular and two successive modes in general. That, however, needs to be openly admitted with all its consequences for the view of history as a sequence of modes of production. It will not do for Marxists to mouth commitment to the idea of a causally connected sequence of modes without ever being able to unravel that causality. Etienne Balibar, in fact, has taken the position that there really is no Marxist theory of Transition whereas Godelier has taken up the challenge of building up one such theory. With no disrespect to the latter we may express the view that he has not yet really constructed anything that may be called a theory. What he has presented till now are important elements that may be used in the construction of a theory.

NOTES FOR LECTURE ONE

1. This extract is from Marian Sawer (1977). So are all the other quotations in the first three sections of this chapter which are not marked with any superscript. We did not want to clutter up the paper by making repeated references to the same source. We have, in most cases, not given references to Soviet authors writing in the Russian language and not therefore accessible either to ourselves or to most readers. The original references are mostly to be found in Sawer's book. Another book that we have found to be most informative about the debates among Soviet, French and other continental scholars is that of Melotti (1977).
2. Maurice Godelier (1970, Preface to Italian edition).
3. Maurice Godelier (1970).
4. Ibid.
5. Pierre Bezbach (1983).
6. Barry Hindess and Paul Q. Hirst (1975).
7. Ernest Gellner (1984).
8. Ellen Wood (1984).
9. References to this and other authors mentioned in the paragraph are to be found in Sawer's book.
10. Quoted in Sawer.
11. Barrington Moore (1967).
12. T. J. Byres (1985).
13. Rodney Hilton (1984).
14. Eric Hobsbawm (1984).
15. Maurice Dobb (1946).
16. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse.*
17. Frank Perlin (1985).
18. Immanuel Wallerstein (1977).
19. Chris Wickham (1984).
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. G. A. Cohen (1978).
23. T. J. Byres (1985).
24. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. III.
25. Asok Sen (1984).
26. Rodney Hilton (1984).
27. Irfan Habib (1985).
28. CERM (1974).
29. Frank Perlin (1985).
30. Romila Thapar (1984).
31. Frank Perlin (1985).

32. Immanuel Wallerstein (1979).
33. Ashok Rudra (1982).
34. Ibid.
35. Eric Hobsbawm (1984).
36. Edmund Leach (1985).
37. Chris Wickham (1984).
38. Maurice Dobb (1946).
39. Paul Sweezy (1978a).
40. John H. Pryor (1985).
41. Edmund Leach (1985).
42. Ibid.

LECTURE TWO

The So-called Feudal Mode of Production

CONTROVERSY—or rather confusion—about the feudal mode of production continues unabated. Way back in 1940, Marc Bloch lamented the loose uses to which the term feudalism was put by many: 'Charged with more or less vague historical associations, the word with certain writers seems to suggest no more than the brutal exercise of authority . . .'[1] As late as in 1985, the situation remains unchanged. According to one social scientist: '. . . it is tempting to agree that "feudalism" is a term with little analytical value, one that merely spreads confusion and prevents clear thought on the questions at issue—a mask used to cover ignorance and intellectual uncertainty.'[2] According to another, 'disagreement might be reduced if words like "feudalism", now less a term of convenience than a cover of ignorance, were expunged from the historical vocabulary.'[3] Already in 1974 Elizabeth Brown[4] argued forcefully for the abandonment, lock, stock, and barrel, of the very concept of feudalism. Again, as late as in 1985, Perlin[5] decries authors mixing up two distinct concepts of feudalism, the first one involving 'a comparison, implicit or explicit, with classical feudalism, as it is seen to have occurred in medieval Europe most notably in England' and a second very general one with universal applicability. Bloch, it may be recalled, traced this distinction and the confusion arising from not recognizing it to as far back as Montesquieu and Voltaire: 'In the eyes of Montesquieu the establishment of "feudal laws" was a phenomenon *sui generis*, "an event which happened once in the world and which will perhaps never happen again".

Voltaire, less experienced, no doubt, in the precise formulation of legal definitions, but a man of wider outlook, demurred. "Feudalism", he wrote, "is not an event; it is a very old form which, with differences in its working, subsists in three-quarters of our hemisphere." '

Voltaire did not go beyond the Western hemisphere. At present, however, a large body of Marxists, led by Soviet historians and including among them a majority of those belonging to third world countries, go so far as to extend the scope of the so-called 'feudal mode of production' to the histories of all countries. This general definition being all too simple, there is a near unanimity among those who accept it. In the words of the Soviet scholar Sedov it goes as follows: 'Given that cultivators work on their own land with the aid of their own implements, and they alienate their surplus labour in the interest of a third person or third persons, they are therefore subject to feudal exploitation.'[6] This is very similar to the one used by Dobb: '. . . an obligation laid on the producer by force and independently of his own volition to fulfil certain economic demands of an overlord, whether these demands take the form of services to be performed or of dues to be paid in kind . . .'[7] As a matter of fact, even dues in kind is too specific for Dobb, who, as is well known, equates feudalism to serfdom, by which he means nothing more than labour subject to coercion of any kind.

This all too wide-open definition has a large body of adherents among Marxists for its being the officially accepted one by the Communist parties the world over since 1931, though there are variations in the phrasing used by individual authors. For instance, Hindess and Hirst talk in terms of 'tenants paying rent to (or doing labour service for) a monopolistic landowner class' and Hilton[8] writes as follows: 'The essence of the feudal mode of production in the Marxist sense is the exploitative relationship between landowners and subordinated peasants, in which the surplus beyond subsistence of the latter,

whether in direct labour or in rent in kind or in money, is transferred under coercive sanction to the former.'

Those who work with this definition exclude from it slavery as it occurred in European antiquity. There is of course no logical justification for this exclusion, for the slave is also just a coerced labourer subjected to surplus extraction by juridico-political means. This anomaly has been removed by Samir Amin,[9] who has advanced the concept of a Tributary Mode of Production which covers all pre-capitalist surplus extraction mechanisms, whether through revenue taken by the State or rent taken by the landlord or slave production appropriated by the slave-owner—a definition that has found acceptance among some scholars, e.g. Eric Wolf.[10] Sweezy[11] also welcomes this concept, but while doing so he refers to it, correctly in our judgement, as a 'family of modes'. Samir Amin, however, used the singular term 'tributary mode'. As a single mode this is worse even than a universal feudalism covering 'any society that has not yet undergone a bourgeois revolution, from the France of 1788 to the Nigerian emirates, from Tsarist Russia to nineteenth-century China or India',[12] as this would include the slave-based societies of Greece and Rome as well. If the serfdom definition of feudalism covered almost all pre-industrial and pre-capitalist societies, Samir Amin's 'tributary mode' enjoys the advantage of merely doing away with the qualification 'almost'.

The impressive consensus about the serfdom definition of feudalism, however, disappears as soon as scholars sit down to write the actual history of any feudalism or any aspects of it; for then they find it necessary to take due account of various other concrete features—political, cultural, ideological, etc.—of the actual society under study. There is no agreement about the additional features that are essential even for West European feudalism. Gorreau[13] in a recent book presents an excellent summary account of the perspectives of different historians, mainly

French. Likewise, Ward[14] in a recent article has done a good job of distinguishing between as many as ten foci in the scholarly understanding of feudalism. Thus, Focus I emphasizes 'ties of dependence' between man and man, or vassalage. Focus II is on the institution of the 'fief', defined as land held in conditional rather than absolute tenure, that is, upon the condition of provision of service—Ganshoff is cited as a principal proponent of this view. Focus III takes as the defining characteristic of feudalism the union of benefice and vassalage. Focus IV makes specialized military service the touchstone of feudalism, authors cited being Cronne[15] and Stephenson.[16] Focus V is on the tendencies of parcellization and centralization of political power; and so on.

All these different aspects are taken care of in the remarkably compressed definition of Marc Bloch which goes as follows: 'subject peasantry, widespread use of the service tenement [i.e. the fief] instead of a salary, which was out of the question, the supremacy of a class of specialized warriors, ties of obedience and protection which bind man to man and, within the warrior class, assume the distinctive form called vassalage, fragmentation of authority—leading inevitably to disorder'.[17]

But even this definition is not altogether comprehensive, for it leaves out certain aspects which were focused upon by Sweezy. Sweezy has been subjected to merciless and unremitting criticism for three decades by the self-appointed protectors of the purity of Marxism for allegedly departing from the Marxian concept of feudalism; but it is ironical, for the words he used for highlighting certain features of the feudal society were borrowed by him from none other than Dobb himself. Thus (1) 'a low level of technique'; (2) 'production for the immediate need of the household or village-community and not for a wider market'; (3) 'demesne farming'; (4) 'political decentralization'; (5) 'conditional holding of land by lords on some kind of service-tenure'; (6) 'possession by a lord of

judicial or quasi-judicial functions in relation to the dependent population'—these are not Sweezy's own words but are taken from Dobb's own *Studies*.[18] So the 'production for use' idea for which Sweezy has been chastised so much and 'parcellization of sovereignty', which Perry Anderson has emphasized but which has been characterized as 'non-Marxist' by Hilton,[19] are ideas occurring in Dobb himself.

The serfdom definition of the feudal mode is a product of the Marxian orthodoxy that a mode of production has to be defined by its infrastructure of forces and relations of production, in particular by the relations of production which determine 'the specific form in which surplus labour is pumped out of the direct producers'. However, more and more historians are finding that in their actual study of history they can hardly work without taking into account many superstructural features. Thus Perry Anderson asserts: 'No structural analysis of feudalism considered simply as an "economic system"—that is as a mode of surplus extraction—can explain the dynamics of feudalism . . . If the feudal mode of production can be defined independently of the variant juridical and political superstructures which accompany it such that its presence can be registered throughout the globe wherever primitive and tribal social formations were superseded, the problem then arises: how is the unique dynamism of the European theatre of international feudalism to be explained?'[20] Likewise, Brenner writes, '. . . it is indeed central to my viewpoint that "fusion" (to put it imprecisely) between "the economic" and "the political" was a distinguishing and constitutive feature of the feudal class structure and system of production'.[21] As a matter of fact, Brenner goes a long distance away from the orthodox Marxist practice of defining a mode of production in terms of infrastructural features alone and squarely states: 'It seems to me, therefore, that those historians who have insisted upon a narrowly "political" definition of feudalism as a "form of

government'' . . . have grasped an essential driving force of the system.'[22] Hilton lends support to the position in the following words: 'The specific features distinguishing medieval European feudalism are often supposed to be a superstructural character, that is, part neither of the forces nor of the relations of production . . . In fact the "feudal" tenures of post-Carolingian Northern Europe were not universal over Europe, but the hierarchy of kings, dukes, counts and knights was fairly general as was the ethos of feudal loyality. . . . An aspect of European feudalism which is normally regarded as superstructural was the fragmentation of political authority, particularly in its jurisdictional aspect.'[23] Brenner also attaches a great deal of importance to the political role played by the village communities in France and in this he echoes French historians like Parain.[24] This of course is a long way off from the days when Coulborn's definition of feudalism 'as a method of government'[25] and other non-Marxist scholars emphasizing vassalage, fiefdom, etc. were dismissed without ceremony. There are, however, still many who insist upon a purely economic definition of the feudal mode. Thus Wickham argues: 'Anyone who looks at analyses of the experiences of tenants in different places and times in world history must recognize the similarities, not just existential ones, but in the logic of the economic system of rent-taking compared.'[26] And Mclennan writes: 'The enforcement of the transfer of the surplus may well be a political matter (or indeed military or ideological), and it is obviously crucial for the feudal ruling class that these non-economic constraints operate. But nothing follows about the production relations themselves being non-economic.'[27]

As historical researches progress and findings accumulate, there is a continuous shifting in one's state of knowledge about what might have been the facts of history. Thus, there has been increasing recognition that demesne, villeinage, etc. characterized only limited parts of me-

dieval European society, and they diminished in significance over time. Bois[28] has shown that in thirteenth-century Normandy demesne covered ten per cent or less of the cultivated surface. Ward[29] quotes various authorities to show that 'even in the heartland area, by the middle of the eleventh century, the allod (non-feudal, heredital, absolute property) still constituted the principal form of property ownership'. 'Association of fief with the vassalage was not frequent' and that often 'tenure of a fief implied not conditional but hereditary tenure, seldom disturbed by "conditions" beyond the payment of various dues'. It would thus seem that Marxian historiography requires to account for a feudalism where the manor, the labourer tied to the soil, and service tenure play a much less important role than it used to be thought of earlier (e.g. in Marc Bloch's masterly treatise). In view of all this some have taken the extreme stand that '. . . in empirical terms the traditional model of Western feudalism is a figment of the imagination created by medieval lawyers and post-seventeenth century historians'.[30]

This lessening of the importance of some of the institutions considered typical of medieval European society might appear to strengthen the case for the wide open definition favoured by orthodox Marxists. This, however, is not the case. No fresh results of historical research can change the judgement that the serfdom definition is 'too limited by itself to provide the historian with the tools needed for synthesis and generalization'.[31] The fact remains that 'there have been hundreds, perhaps thousands of quite different social and political structures which deserve the title "pre-industrial society"; if this diversity is squeezed into a single category "feudalism", the category becomes redundant.'[32] This general definition is of course not equal to 'the task of a theory of feudalism to explain why feudal expansion was followed by a crisis, and why feudalism gave rise to capitalism'.[33]

We now come to the question of the so-called laws of

motion of feudal society. Irfan Habib argues eloquently: 'We are interested in feudalism (as in Western Europe) chiefly for elucidating the consequences of its breakdown which opened the way to the genesis and development of capitalism. For such purpose its "laws of motion" are most important for us.' These laws of motion, he argues convincingly, are likely to be different in societies which did not share the different superstructural features of medieval Europe or were not affected by the same external factors which affected it. He rightly concludes: '. . . in that case to tar all such societies with the same brush will give no illumination because we cannot read into them tendencies that we have established for an essentially different social order.'[34]

Of course, we agree with Habib; but he seems to be under the illusion that one has been able to uncover the 'laws of motion' of European feudalism. That of course is far from true. There have been, during recent times, two serious attempts to extract these laws from meticulous studies of the working of the feudal economy, namely those of Witold Kula[35] for Poland and Guy Bois[36] for Normandy. Both claim that even though their studies are limited to specific regions and periods, their findings have universal applicability. This claim, however, cannot be entertained. Guy Bois indeed formulates something like a 'law', namely that of 'the diminishing rate of feudal levy'. Kula in his two interesting chapters on 'short-term dynamics' and 'long-term dynamics' presents a whole lot of interesting though fragmentary historical material relating to ups and downs in production, prices, etc. in his region of study. But there are no regularities that he extracts out of them which can be called 'laws' and which can be applied to other times and places. As Postan observed, after showering well-deserved praises on the work, Kula's own study reveals that on employment of resources, outputs, control of social relations and responses to internal conditions Kula's 'Polish feudalism appears to display

characteristics uniquely its own'.[37] As a result, Kula's feudalism differs sharply from the feudalism as it functioned in the West. This is not surprising at all, given the heavy dependence of the Polish economy of the period on trade with the emerging capitalist countries of the West. What is much more serious is that 'there is little in his analysis to demonstrate how and why Polish feudalism prepared its own decline and its replacement by a different economic order'.[38]

Very similar criticisms apply to the altogether different model of Guy Bois. As to its universal applicability, Brenner[39] concedes that 'the model of Bois seems to "fit" the French evidence' but finds it to be 'contradicted by the radically different English data for the same period'. Maurice Aymard[40] on his part shows how Bois' model does not fit at all the history of Italian feudalism. Even for Normandy, the utmost Bois can claim is to have discovered and explained a pattern of cyclical changes during the period under his study. His claim that these changes led to the dissolution of the feudal mode has been contested by Brenner who says: 'What is required but missing is an explanation of the lords' ostensibly inherent, long-term structural weakness as surplus extractors by extra-economic compulsion from peasant possessors',[41] and elaborates the criticism at length. Whether explained or not, dissolution of the mode is at least discussed by Bois; but the emergence, in a simultaneous process, of the capitalist mode is certainly not a part of his model.

Ironically, Brenner invites on himself a very similar criticism. His elaborate study[42] (begun in an article in 1976 and completed in another in 1982 where he takes into account the contributions made by others in the intervening years) gives a highly persuasive account of the way the struggle in the feudal society between lords and peasants, between lords and lords, and lords and the monarch increasingly obstructed the development of the forces of production. However, if one is to go by his model,

one has to treat feudalism as a mode that has only a declining phase, with no earlier ascending phase. But theoretically each mode is supposed to come into existence for playing the role of initially releasing the forces of production. And empirically there is now ample evidence about a phase of European feudalism in which there was considerable expansion of the forces of production including technological innovations. If Brenner's class struggle model fails to take into account what nowadays is called the First Industrial Revolution of the twelfth century, his success is no more in explaining the Second Industrial Revolution, the familiar one of the eighteenth century. Another curious feature of Brenner's account is that he chooses to restrict his class-struggle model solely to the struggle between landlords and serfs, with the total omission of the role of the emerging bourgeoisie. Brenner has a strange bedfellow in this matter. Wallerstein, his *bête noire*, also shares the view that the bourgeoisie did not exist or play any part independently. This is very strange, for it is quite clear from Marx's own writings that according to him the class struggle that marked the emergence of capitalism was principally between the bourgeoisie on one side and the nobility on the other. This is elaborately shown in the classic study of Dobb, but paradoxically it is Dobb himself who set the trend, in a wrong direction in our judgement, when in reply to Sweezy's question he blandly asserted that the 'motive force of the feudal mode of production' was the class struggle between lords and serfs. Hilton, in the Transition Debate, echoed him, and since then it has become an established line with an entire school of English language historians.

The sum and substance of this line of argument may be presented in Dobb's own words as follows: 'To the extent that the petty producers were successful in securing partial emancipation from feudal exploitation—perhaps at first merely an alleviation of it (e.g. a transition from labour rent to money rent)—they were able to retain some

element of the surplus product for themselves. This provided both the means and the motive for improving cultivation and extending it to new lands, which incidentally served to sharpen antagonism against feudal restrictions still further. It also laid the basis for some accumulation of capital within the petty mode of production itself, and hence for the start of a process of class differentiation within that economy of small producers—the familiar process, seen at various dates and in widely scattered parts of the world, towards the formation on the one hand of an upper layer of relatively well-to-do improving farmers (the Kulaks of the Russian tradition) and on the other hand of a depressed layer of impoverished peasants. This social polarization in the village (and similarly in the urban handicrafts) prepared the way for production by wage-labour and hence for bourgeois relations of production.'[43] This is at best a sketch and entirely speculative, more vague than 'the widening of the market' or 'rise of money economy', ideas which Dobb dismisses for their alleged vagueness. As a formula, it is incomplete. For, as Gorreau[44] points out, it starts off with the petty producers securing partial emancipation without explaining how such emancipation came about.

Dobb does not even sketch, nor Hilton nor Brenner later on, how the exploited serfs, or even the upper layer of the peasantry, could usher in anything beyond agrarian capitalism. The industrial entrepreneurs, the merchants, the bankers, the manufacturers who played such important roles in the industrial revolution, are simply left without any mention in this narration. If indeed all these sprouted out of 'agrarian roots', as Brenner would suggest through the title of his latest article ('The Agrarian Roots of European Capitalism'), the work of showing the connection between the branches and leaves of the tree of capitalism with these roots remains yet to be started.

NOTES FOR LECTURE TWO

1. Marc Bloch (1961).
2. Frank Perlin (1985).
3. S. N. Mukherjee (1985).
4. E. A. R. Brown (1974).
5. Frank Perlin (1985).
6. L. A. Sedov (1968).
7. Maurice Dobb (1946).
8. Rodney Hilton (1978a).
9. Samir Amin (1980).
10. Eric Wolf (1982).
11. Paul Sweezy (1986).
12. Umberto Melotti (1977).
13. Alain Gorreau (1980).
14. John O. Ward (1985).
15. H. A. Cronne (1939–40).
16. C. Stephenson (1941).
17. Marc Bloch (1961).
18. Maurice Dobb (1978a).
19. Rodney Hilton (1978a).
20. Perry Anderson (1979).
21. Robert Brenner (1982).
22. Ibid.
23. Rodney Hilton (1984).
24. Charles Parain (1974).
25. Rushton Coulborn (1956).
26. Chris Wickham (1985).
27. Gregor Mclennan (1986).
28. Guy Bois (1984).
29. John O. Ward (1985).
30. Edmund Leach (1985).
31. Frank Perlin (1985).
32. Edmund Leach (1985).
33. Roger S. Gottlieb (1984).
34. Irfan Habib (1985).
35. Witold Kula (1976).
36. Michael Postan (1977).
37. Ibid.
38. Robert Brenner (1982).
39. Maurice Aymard (1981).
40. Robert Brenner (1982).

41. Robert Brenner (1976 and 1982).
42. Maurice Dobb (1978c).
43. Ibid.
44. Alain Gorreau (1980).

LECTURE THREE

Marxian Theory and Indian History

We shall now turn to some of the problems that we face in trying to apply the Marxian method of analysis to Indian history. As students of Marx, we are not interested in knowledge for the sake of knowledge. We are interested in knowledge about society so as to be able to change society. We are interested in our history so as to understand our present and to be able to build our future. The present-day reality of India is that of an underdeveloped society. If we want to develop our society we have to understand why it is underdeveloped. The question can be best put as: Why did India not pass through the stages of industrialization and capitalist development at the time or even before European countries had those experiences? Nationalist sentiment seems to have prevented any serious enquiry into the question. One has accepted the apparently satisfactory answer that imperialist conquest prevented 'Indian feudalism' (assumed to exist before the coming of the British) from giving rise to capitalism. It is not really an answer at all, because the question to ask is: Why was it possible for European imperialism to stop the process of development in India? Why was it not possible for the Indian society to resist the imperialist onslaught? One may go further and ask: Why did it not happen the other way round? That is, why was it not possible for Indian imperialism (or, say, Chinese imperialism) to stop the process of capitalist development in Europe?

The same questions can be asked of the Dependency School. The analytical framework of the school with the conceptual elements of the Centre, Periphery and Un-

equal Exchange is indeed a very powerful one for the understanding of the conditions of the present-day world. But the framework takes as given a certain number of countries to constitute the Centre or the Core, and the remaining countries to constitute the periphery. Once this division is accepted, the process of 'development of underdevelopment' becomes demonstrable rigorously. But the school cannot answer the question: Why did Brazil or India not belong to the Core from the beginning? Search for the reasons for pre-colonial India's failure to develop industrially and capitalistically has to be made in the pre-colonial history of India itself. If the search has not even been taken up seriously, that is because of Indian Marxists remaining stuck to the idea that Indian history has to be comprehended in terms of a sequence of modes just like European history. We shall, however, argue that it would be advisable to free ourselves of this particular strait-jacket.

We take this approach because of the theoretical difficulties of the concept of the feudal mode of production and that of the theory of development through a succession of modes that we have already discussed, as well as the dismal record of the attempts that have been made to comprehend Indian history in that framework. This record is that of treating present-day India as semi-feudal and our past as feudal. But with the exception of Dange, even the most doctrinaire Indian Marxist has had to admit that India never knew the slave mode of production. There were domestic slaves and palace slaves but not slave-labourers engaged in production on any considerable scale. So from the beginning of the emergence of class-divisions, Indian society has to be treated as 'feudal' and this has to be taken as having lasted to an unspecified period, from which time the mode changed into 'semi-feudal'. This feudalism of the past has of necessity to be one of the broadly open general definition which we discussed in the previous lecture to show its uselessness for

any analytical purposes. As to semi-feudalism, it is a term that was hardly ever used by Marx, Engels or Lenin. It is a term that is hardly ever used by Marxist scholars of the West and does not even find a place in the recently published *Dictionary of Marxist Thought*.[1] As a matter of fact, semi-feudalism for the present and feudalism for the past is a legacy that Indian Marxists, along with other third world Marxists, have taken over uncritically from the Chinese Communist Party. It is that party that fought for the official acceptance by the International Communist movement of these concepts for characterizing the histories of all third world countries. It was to placate that party that in 1931 Stalin decreed a termination of the debate that was taking place among Soviet scholars about the Asiatic Mode of Production for characterizing the societies of many non-Western countries. Unfortunately, the Chinese party did not produce any theoretical literature about the feudal mode of production as it prevailed, according to it, in countries like China and India.

This would of course have required the formidable task of refuting Marx's own arguments for rejecting feudalism for India, a task much more difficult than that of rejecting Marx's Asiatic Mode of Production. Marx was categorical in his rejection of feudalism in India. The most explicit rejection is found in Marx's Conspectus of Kovalevsky (Sovetskoe-Vostokoredenie, 1958, Nos. 4 and 5). Kovalevsky stated that under Mohammadan rule in India, allodial land tenures had tended to change into feudal ones, and free landowners had become dependent. Marx rejected the inferences which had led Kovalevsky to this conclusion.[2] He argued that 'the mere fact that under the Mogul benefice system the land tax was paid to an appointee of the treasury rather than directly to the treasury by no means implied the feudalization of India. In general, the Indian land tax no more converted landed property into feudal property than did the land tax in contemporary France. The fact that the tax was used by

the government as a payment to its appointees did not make the latter into feudal lords.'[3] One of the specific differences between Western feudalism and oriental society which were enumerated by Marx was the absence in the latter of anything approaching the Western system of 'feudal law'. Marx followed Palgrave in describing feudal law as being based on the assumption of the right of the individual, whether free or enserfed, to legal protection from his feudal lord.

The same is true of semi-feudalism. There is no analytical literature whatsoever about the dynamics of this so-called mode. In contemporary India those who talk about semi-feudalism mean no more than the existence of such things as usury, tenancy, speculative trade, etc. in Indian agriculture. Significantly, it is never applied to Indian industries. It is significant that Western scholars do not describe the period of transition between the decline of feudalism and the rise of capitalism as 'semi-feudal', even though tenancy, usury and trading capital played in the European society of that time roles not dissimilar to that in present-day India.

While it is true that most Indians who talk about Indian feudalism think implicitly in terms of the all too general definition (based on coerced labour alone), the staunchest proponents of the thesis of Indian feudalism, namely R. S. Sharma, and his companion B. N. S. Yadava, in their serious works,[4] did not use that definition but tried to argue that the model of West European feudalism, with characteristics not only of the infrastructure but also of the superstructure, with all the paraphernalia of fief and vassalage, lordship and serfdom (understood as labour attached to the soil), was applicable to Indian historical reality between the fourth century A.D. and the thirteenth century A.D. It is not surprising that the thesis should have received, in the hands of critics, severe batterings. It is indeed an extraordinary intellectual feat to treat gifts of land to Brahmins as the counterpart of benefice: in the

first case, the gift is unconditional; in the second, there is the obligation to render service and that often military. Again, as Hilton[5] points out, an essential feature of European feudalism was 'the fragmentation of political authority particularly in its jurisdictional aspect. Jurisdiction—the right to bring one's own tenant and subject to one's law court—was the essence of feudal political domination . . .' Such a question can hardly arise in the case of Brahmin recipients of land gifts. These and many other objections were raised by a number of critics, e.g. D. C. Sircar and others,[6] Harbans Mukhia[7] and Rudra,[8] to reject the thesis of Sharma and Yadava point by point. We need not repeat them here. In any case Sharma's thesis is not particularly relevant for our question as to why India did not know industrial and capitalist development. That is because Sharma's feudalism disappears in the thirteenth century A.D. and he has nothing to say about the mode prevailing immediately before the British conquest.

Incidentally, the proposition that India has passed through a feudal stage comparable in any way to feudal Europe loses credibility when one notices the highly divergent periods in which supporters of the view have located that discovery. Thus Sharma and Yadava place Indian feudalism between third and thirteenth centuries A.D. The distinguished Russian historian of the nineteenth century, M. M. Kovalevsky, on the other hand, believed that the process of 'feudalization' in India started precisely with the 'Muslim conquests'. For D. D. Kosambi, whose writings in Indian history justly enjoy a previleged status, the feudal system broke down around the middle of the seventeenth century, under Aurangzeb. Col. James Todd, on the other hand, was witness to the functioning of what he believed was the classic form of feudalism in Rajasthan in the early nineteenth century.[9]

As to the last-mentioned feudalism supposedly occurring in Rajasthan, it was subjected to scrutiny by Daniel Thorner,[10] who reached the following negative conclusion:

'Using feudalism then in the sense of a method of government as indicated in the introductory essay, we have to conclude that neither the Rajput states nor the Muslim regime of Northern India were feudal.' As to the Mughal period the rejection by Irfan Habib[11] is quite categorical. His rejection is based not on any static comparison between the social structures of Mughal India and medieval Europe but on his arguments presented in a previous important article,[12] that the Mughal society did not possess the potentialities of the kind of industrial and capitalist development that European feudalism gave rise to.

If attempts at periodization of Indian history in terms of a sequence of modes has given rise to such poor results to this day, we doubt very much if further attempts in the same direction would give us any better success. On the other hand, the record of those Marxists who did not use the framework of a sequence of modes and applied Marx's other tools of analysis have indeed produced impressive results. We have only to think of the masterly works of Kosambi and the excellent results arrived at by Irfan Habib. We are not forgetting that Kosambi did speak of 'feudalism from above' and 'feudalism from below'; but true to his style, he did not stop anywhere to elaborate what he meant by those categories. In any case, his profound analysis does not reveal any strait-jacket of rigid categories. Instead he made superb use of the two instruments of analysis which for us constitute the essence of the Marxist method, namely class-struggle and contradiction between forces of production and relations of production. In our judgement it is on such use of these two instruments that we have to depend for solving the problems of Indian history that remain as yet unresolved.

In using these instruments, we would be well advised to keep clear of some problems—false problems in our judgement—that seem to have caused no little headache to theoretical Marxists in the West. One of these goes by

the name of the Primacy debate. It is held by some theoreticians (e.g. Cohen,[13] Laibman[14]) that in Marx's thought the forces of production enjoy a primacy over the relations of production. As Cohen puts it, 'The primacy thesis is that the nature of a set of production relations is explained by the level of development of the productive forces embraced by it (to a far greater extent than vice versa) . . . The primacy thesis, as we find it in Marx, is associated with a second thesis, which will be called the development thesis . . . The productive forces tend to develop throughout history.' About the latter, Laibman speaks of '*a fundamental, immanent pressure for progressive change which does not require determination from outside itself*'.[15]

There is no doubt that there are many passages in Marx which seem to suggest that the forces of production grow in some kind of an autonomous fashion, the relations of production reacting to this growth sometimes by obstructing it and sometimes by changing themselves so as to facilitate it. There are some others like Brenner who read the opposite meaning in Marx, namely that the relations of production change autonomously and bring about changes in the forces of production. He states his position as follows: '. . . the relatively autonomous processes by which class structures were established, developed and transformed have to be placed at the centre of any interpretation of the long-term evolution of the pre-industrial European economy.'[16] It seems to us wrong to ascribe primacy either to the forces of production or to the relations of production. 'There seems to be no binding reason, in theory, why one should posit relations of production or forces of production as dominant. Marx himself can be shown to have argued for each',[17] and 'other more subtle texts point to a dialectical conception of the rapport between productive forces and relations of production.'[18] We can also cite Hilton in our favour, who says: 'the "motor" of change in the feudal mode of production cannot easily be ascribed exclusively either to development of the forces

of production or to changes in the balance of production relations (class conflict)',[19] though in particular contexts he can hold: 'It might even be suggested that this crucial change in lord-peasant relationships determined, rather than was determined by, the forces of production.'[20]

That the primacy hypothesis solves no problems whatsoever has been lucidly argued by Hobsbawm as follows: 'Either there is no general tendency for the material forces of production of society to develop, or to develop beyond a certain point—in which case the development of Western capitalism has to be explained without primary reference to such a general tendency, and the materialist conception of history can at best be used to explain a special case. Or else there is such a general historical tendency—in which case we have to explain why it has not operated everywhere, or even why in many cases (e.g. China) it has clearly been effectively counteracted. It would seem that nothing other than the strength, inertia or some other force of social structure and superstructure over the material base could hold up the movement of that material base.'[21]

It would indeed be mysterious, even metaphysical, if the growth of the forces of production, say, in Europe during the transition from feudalism to capitalism (or alternatively, the changes in the relations of production that took place in that period), were autonomous. In that case no scope is left for asking the question why no such growth (or no such changes of production relations) took place in India or China. Stagnation in these countries would then have to be treated as unexplainable given facts.

The second false problem affecting much of the work of Marxist historians is that of the supposed primacy of infrastructure over superstructure. As Hilton says,[22] after arguing about the impossibility of understanding a society 'without understanding the nature of the predominant mode of production within it': 'The precise developmental

process of the society considered will be determined by specific features in it—including superstructural features—as well as by the dynamics of the mode.' We have seen in our previous lecture how Perry Anderson and Brenner emphasize the 'fusion' of the economic and the political (that is to say, the infrastructure and the superstructure) in pre-capitalist societies. Whether one admits it or not while debating on basic Marxist principles, every serious work of history, whether by Marx himself or Marc Bloch, Maurice Dobb or Perry Anderson or Brenner, Hilton or Hobsbawm, shows the very great importance that has to be attached to political and social institutions as well as to ideology in comprehending the process of development.

Ideology is a matter which many Marxist theoreticians have tended to neglect to the great detriment of their analysis. Of all the elements of the superstructure, ideology has been regarded as the most passive reflection of the infrastructure. To suggest that ideology on its part seriously affects the infrastructure has been treated by doctrinaire Marxists as constituting a deviation towards Idealism. It is rare to encounter a detailed Marxian analysis of European feudalism in which the role of the Church and that of the Christian world outlook have been given their due importance. Of course there are exceptions. For instance, in a colloquy organized by the Centre for Marxist Studies and Researches (CERM) of France in 1974, various participants including Parain emphasized the importance of the village community on one side and the Catholic Church on the other for the understanding of European feudalism.[23] More recently, there has been a kind of polarization: in reaction to those treating historical movement as being constituted of an autonomous growth of productive forces or an autonomous process of class struggle, some others are emphasizing the autonomy of the human element with indeterminate end results. They would arm themselves with such well-known passages from Marx as 'History does *nothing*, it is *man*, real

living man who does all',[24] and argue that 'all elements of the ideological superstructure cannot be traced to economic conditions *per se*. Further, the economy creates nothing in vacuum, nor through merely economic agencies. Its influence is often indirect, and works through the mediation of politics, law, religion and many other not strictly economic dimensions.'[25] They would take into account all such things as 'family constitution, inheritance customs, problems of the absorption or rejection of younger sons and daughters by family and village communities and the associated question of non-agricultural occupations in the countryside',[26] and argue that 'the level of rent extracted by landlords, tithes by the Church, and taxation by the State had an important bearing on the deployment of these forces of production. The rules, regulations, values and decisions of the ruling class had an enormous impact on the actual processes of production, and even on the choice of what was to be produced. Similarly it would be folly to downgrade the role of peasant and craft, social mobilization or the nature of popular religion in the face of such domination.'[27]

Hitherto Marxist historians have referred to such things as attitudes, mentality, traditions, etc. only incidentally, almost by way of aberration, as in the following passages:

> 'In France, on the other hand, the entrepreneurial attitudes of the middle peasantry, detectable here and there, succumbed to the rentier mentality of the bourgeois purchasers of the land.'[28]

> '. . . merchants and traders but also members of the old feudal society acquire what we should call today a business-like attitude toward economic affairs.'[29]

> '. . . self-government has only been possible in England, where the class of landowners . . . had not had great corporate military traditions (as in Germany) with the separateness and authoritarian attitudes which derive from these.'[30]

It seems to us, however, that these elements, e.g. mentality, attitude, traditions, etc. have to figure much more centrally than in this half-hearted fashion. To shy away from them in the name of their not having any place in the materialist view of the world betrays gross ignorance of materialism.

We shall now give some arguments of our own as to why we think that in Marx's thought, ideological and cultural factors play a most central and determining role. The most important tool of Marxian analysis is the contradiction between the forces of production and the relations of production, which expresses itself in class struggle. In Marxian literature one uses a language about the growth of the forces of production as if they grow by themselves. However, as Hobsbawm writes, 'History is not like ecology: human beings decide and think about what happens.'[31] Physical objects like machinery and energy do not increase in quantity or improve in quality by themselves. They are *made to do so by human agents working upon them.* The skills of labour and technological knowledge do not improve by themselves. Such improvement is a result of human effort. The correct verb to use is not 'growing' but 'causing to grow'; the correct phrasing ought to be: 'human agents make the forces of production grow through innovations, explorations, investments etc.' These activities call for certain values and attitudes on the part of the human agents working with them. It has been seen in history that in certain times and places (as in post-Renaissance Europe) human agents have worked for the improvement of forces of production with amazing results, whereas in certain other times and places (like Mughal India, as demonstrated by Irfan Habib) human agents were not oriented towards making technological improvements. In accounting for this difference one cannot but look at, among other things, the cultural and ideological factors affecting the minds of men in these two different settings. This does not constitute any kind

of a departure from historical materialism.

A very similar argument applies to class struggle. Doctrinaire Marxists often talk as if class struggle has always been there in every society with equal intensity. That of course is untrue. The intensity of the struggle has varied from very high to very low in different societies at different periods. Brenner quite rightly argues that if the evolution of society has been different in different parts of the world, that has been due to the differences in the nature and intensity of class struggle in those places. But he does not ask what determines those differences. Obviously, these differences are the results of the interaction between a large number of factors, structural and conjunctural. But, surely, as Aymard[32] has demonstrated with the case of Italy, even under similar structural and conjunctural conditions, there can be different courses followed by history. The difference would arise from the differences in the nature and level of class consciousness which the contending classes might have developed. The degree of class consciousness cannot but be deeply influenced by ideological factors. Under one kind of ideology exploited working people might be rebellious in spirit, given to periodic revolts. On the other hand, under an ideology like the one propagated by the Brahmins of India, the poor and the exploited masses might surrender themselves to fatalism and accept their lot without any demur. Whether Max Weber was right or not in attaching the overriding importance that he did to the Protestant Ethic for giving rise to the capitalist spirit, we have no doubt whatsoever that the stagnation of the forces of production and the stability of the Indian social order have been very largely due to the Hindu Dharma.

If it would be impossible to write any serious history of feudal Europe taking account only of serfdom, with or without manors, but without taking into account fief and vassalage, homage and benefice, knights errant and the code of chivalry, marriage patterns and the family, com-

munal organizations of the peasants, military organizations of the Barons, the process of state formation, the role of the Church organization and the ethos of Christianity, it would be equally impossible to write any Marxist history of India without taking into account the caste system, the Jajmani system, untouchability, the rationalizations of Sankaracharya and the rules laid down by Manu, the pervasive influence of the epics and the Puranas, the philosophy of Karma and rebirth, etc. In our judgement the most important source of the utter poverty of Marxist historical accounts of India lies in the neglect of these aspects of Indian society. The attempt to reduce caste to class rather than treating them in their intricate interrelation and remaining blissfully ignorant of our religious literature have been a fatal handicap suffered by Indian Marxists.

While class struggle deserves the importance that it receives in Marxian literature, we would like to make a point about a certain tendency that is revealed in much of contemporary Marxian analysis, both Western and Indian. That is to look at only the struggle between the most exploited class on the one side and the exploiters on the other. Thus, in the latest writings of Hilton and Brenner one finds attention paid only to this struggle between lords and serfs, with no reference at all to the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the nobility. Our difficulty lies not just in that in Marx's own writings as well as in that of Maurice Dobb himself, it is this struggle which seems to play a crucial role in the transition from feudalism to capitalism. At a deeper level, we fail to understand how the struggle between lords and serfs can possibly play that decisive role in history. If class struggle has to play that role, it has to reflect the contradictions between the forces of production and the relations of production. In any historical situation there are classes whose interests are furthered by the growth of the forces of production and therefore they struggle to develop those forces against bar-

riers imposed by the prevailing relations of production. There are other classes whose interests stand to suffer if the relations of production are changed and therefore they struggle to preserve those barriers. It is this struggle which generates movement in history, not just any struggle between any oppressed class and oppressor class. Peasant revolts in feudal Europe might have contributed to the weakening of feudal power; it did nothing to contribute to the releasing of the capitalist forces of production. It could not possibly have. As Cohen[33] says: 'The class which rules through a period, or emerges triumphant after epochal conflict, is the class best suited, most able and disposed, to preside over the development of the productive forces at the given time.' Similarly Parain, in the course of the colloquy organized by CERM referred to earlier, made the following categorical statement: 'The peasant revolts, the peasant wars that marked this long period of crisis gave rise to diverse results but they had one thing in common: none of them could provoke a revolutionary transformation of society, a new mode of production; in this respect they resembled the peasant revolts of the Roman period; they did not carry the means and the conception of a new social regime.'[34] Vilar in the course of the same colloquy insisted upon drawing a distinction between the following two types of class struggles: 'those which reflect a structure (for instance, opposition of vital interests as between lords and peasants) and at the same time a conjuncture (periodical crises of intolerable misery) but which cannot end in any revolutionary transformation of society; and those which reflect the ascendance of a new class, conscious carrier of a new system and strong enough to impose it upon the social order without being able to extend it over all of it'.[35] We are therefore in agreement with Samir Amin[36] that the transition from feudalism to capitalism was the result of class struggle not between two classes but one involving three classes. As one may see, this position is the direct opposite of that of Dobb[37] who

asserted that '. . . the basic conflict must have been between the direct producers and their feudal overlords . . . This was the crucial class struggle under feudalism and *not* any direct clash of urban bourgeoisie elements (traders) with feudal lords.'

It requires to be emphasized further that the struggle between lords and peasants did not always lead to the advancement of society. Often it retarded the transition to capitalism. As Brenner has argued, one explanation of the retarded growth of capitalism in France lies in the relatively greater strength of the French peasantry compared to their British counterparts. This lesson from European history requires to be carefully kept in mind while working on Indian history in terms of class struggle. The history of colonial India is indeed a history of ferocious class struggles; yet they did not lead to the advancement of the forces and relations of production towards capitalism. We have to try to understand why.

NOTES FOR LECTURE THREE

1. Tom Bottomore (1983).
2. Details about this matter are to be found in Sawer (1977), Melotti (1977) and Krader (1975).
3. Quoted in Sawer (1977).
4. R. S. Sharma (1965); B. N. S. Yadava (1969).
5. Rodney Hilton (1984).
6. D. C. Sircar (1969).
7. Harbans Mukhia (1979).
8. Ashok Rudra (1981).
9. Harbans Mukhia (1979).
10. Daniel Thorner (1956).
11. Irfan Habib (1985).
12. Irfan Habib (1969).
13. G. A. Cohen (1978).
14. David Laibman (1984).
15. Ibid.

16. Robert Brenner (1982).
17. T. J. Byres (1985).
18. Samir Amin (1985).
19. Rodney Hilton (1984).
20. Ibid.
21. Eric Hobsbawm (1984).
22. Rodney Hilton (1984).
23. Charles Parain (1974).
24. Marx and Engels, *The Holy Family*.
25. Asok Sen (1984).
26. Rodney Hilton (1978a).
27. Henry Heller (1985).
28. Patricia Croot and David Parker (1987).
29. Paul Sweezy (1978a).
30. Asok Sen (1984).
31. Eric Hobsbawm (1984).
32. Maurice Aymard (1982).
33. G. A. Cohen (1978).
34. Charles Parain (1974).
35. Pierre Vilar (1974).
36. Samir Amin (1985).
37. Maurice Dobb (1978c).

APPENDIX

The Transition Debate

THE Transition Debate that took place in the pages of *Science and Society* originally in the fifties and is taking place again on a different plane right now in the mid-eighties, and the Brenner Debate that took place in between in the pages of *Past and Present* hold great interest for us social scientists in the Third World, who are naturally interested in understanding why no similar transition to industrial capitalism took place in our countries in the pre-colonial period from whatever pre-capitalist societal organization prevailed in them (we are deliberately avoiding the words 'mode and 'formation'). This is not a matter of mere academic interest. In order to build our future we have to change our present and for that we require to understand our past. We expected to be able to draw two kinds of lessons from the debates and discussions about the West European transition. The first relates to the role that countries of the Third World might have played in that unique transformation process, directly or indirectly. The second is about the method of analysis to be applied to problems of transition and therefore also to those of non-transition.

It is with painful disbelief that one has to conclude, after wading through the not inconsiderable mass of literature that the debates have given rise to, that on both the counts the balance sheet shows a near zero. On the first question, the consensus, from Dobb to Laibman, would seem to be that to all intents, as far as the industrial and capitalist development of West Europe is concerned, the Third World might not have existed at all. (We are of course leaving out the small but important rejoinder by

Samir Amin, who, along with other proponents of the Centre–Periphery approach, did not really figure in the debate.) Social scientists in the Third World cannot think of history without taking into account the Great Divide of the overwhelming distortions their societies suffered under the pressure of colonial exploitation. It is startling for them to discover that English-speaking historians, and Marxists at that, seem to be almost all agreed that the imperialist conquest of the world by the West did not have any effect whatsoever on the emergence and development of capitalism in the European countries. On the plane of method, there are indeed plenty of lessons to draw, but they are all negative in nature. That is, they are lessons about methodological mistakes not to be committed in trying to analyse histories of Third World countries. However uncomfortable, the fact has to be accepted that nobody has been able to shake Hobsbawm's agnostic position that 'the nature of this contradiction (which drives it ever forward towards the victory of capitalism) has not been satisfactorily clarified'.[1] A theory of capitalist development of the West has yet to be written, claims to the contrary notwithstanding. We have in mind the claims made, notably by Laibman[2] and Brenner[3] in the English-speaking world, and Godelier[4] in French. Incidentally, the total absence of any reference in the debate started by Gottlieb to Godelier's attempt to develop such a theory, or to the earlier debate[5] among French Marxists on feudalism, or to the two recently published volumes[6] on the applicability of the concept of feudalism to Third World countries, is an apt commentary on Perry Anderson's exaggerated appreciation[7] of the fruitful exchanges, even across national frontiers, which supposedly mark the remarkable resurgence of Marxism in the English-speaking world.

As a matter of fact, the original Dobb–Sweezy controversy had really very little to say on the Transition. It was almost all about the factors that caused the decline of

feudalism. Breaking a 30-year-long silence, Sweezy[8] has recently clarified that he was concerned about the revival of long-distance trade in the eleventh century having a dissolving effect on feudalism in West Europe, but was categorical that there was 'no significant connection between the two phases of development process—decline of feudalism on the one hand and the rise of capitalism on the other'. The rest of the participants with the exception of Georges Lefebvre confined themselves to pouring scorn on Sweezy's unpardonable sin of quoting Pirenne, Hilton's exhortation[9] to 'absorb positive contributions of non-Marxist scholarship' notwithstanding.

About the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries—the period of the Transition agreed upon by all—there were some skirmishes about how to characterize it, capitalist or feudal or neither. In comparison with the analysis of this phase in terms of the concepts of subsumption real and subsumption formal as recovered from the writings of Marx by Godelier and in the light of the vast advances made in the Marxian theory of the State, the arguments advanced by Dobb and supported by others now appear to have been simplistic in the extreme. 'The Tudor and early Stuart State was essentially an executive institution of the feudal class',[10] and therefore the period has to be characterized as feudal. The class character of the State was thus assumed and made the basis of characterizing the class composition of the society instead of the other way round. Again, 'to speak of it as a distinct mode of production *sui generis*, which is neither feudal nor capitalist', seemed to Dobb's mind 'an impossible procedure' and Sweezy also thought 'it would be going too far'; yet neither of them gave any reasons why not. Bezbach[11] has recently argued precisely for a full-fledged mode of production to span the period in question and one cannot think of any criterion in the literature by which the thesis may be dismissed. It is curious, however, that while both Dobb and Sweezy agree that these two centuries fall out-

side the boundary of any mode of production *sui generis*, they all the same talk in terms of a mode precisely for that period. Dobb speaks of 'the petty mode of production' and Sweezy suggested the term 'precapitalist commodity production'.

It is the negative lessons that we shall now go over one by one. The first and also the most important methodological rock on which the search for a key to the transition problem has foundered is of course the idea of there being 'determinate laws of motion' which 'governed the development and transitions between modes of production',[12] the idea that 'there is a law of motion of feudal (as of other) societies which eventually generates the conditions for the transition from feudalism to capitalism',[13] that there are 'laws relating to the origin, the existence, the death of a given social organism and its replacement by another superior one',[14] that there is a 'mechanism which necessarily leads feudalism to be replaced by capitalism, as the historic tendency of capital accumulation, in Marx's analysis, leads capitalism to its doom',[15] etc. We are of course aware that Marx himself may be quoted in support of these propositions, even using such phrases as 'iron necessity'. But then we have no hesitation in saying that Marx was wrong on this particular point. For us, Marxism is a method and not a body of doctrines, a method that cannot be stated as a set of formulae but is to be read in the analysis of concrete problems by Marx. Any number of specific propositions made by Marx may be regarded as false and yet his method may be treated as valid, and this is as it should be in any science. History can be scientific without having any laws. Not even all the physical sciences have got laws. There are laws in physics and chemistry but not in geology or botany. Gottlieb[16] indulges in self-contradiction while talking about 'soft laws' and 'hard laws'. Laws are necessarily 'hard' and they have no place in the social sciences or history. What he means by soft laws are regularities and similitudes which may be

subjected to analytical comprehension. While this view of ours may not be generally accepted, can there be any difference of opinion that neither Marx nor any of his followers have been able to formulate any laws of motion for any mode of production other than the capitalist one? Even for the latter, has Sweezy or anybody else really got a 'pretty good idea about the nature of Prime Mover' and 'why socialism is necessarily the successor form of society'?[17]

As to the so-called feudal mode, some have indeed tried to formulate its 'laws of motion'. Thus, Takahashi[18] presents a condensed account of the transition process, attaching a great deal of importance to the conversion of labour rent into money rent, and calls that account 'the laws of motion'. Hilton likewise presents a slightly different account with much less importance attached to demesne farming and labour rent and then calls it the 'prime mover'. Neither he nor anybody else, however, has demonstrated how 'the dialectical interaction of the forces of production and the accumulated surplus product should result first in the expansion, then in the decline of the mode of production (slavery or feudalism)'.[19] For instance, the extensive writings of Brenner, careful reading shows, do not anywhere bear upon the expansive phase of feudalism which would appear to be a mode with only a tendency to decline.

The idea of a Prime Mover (alternatively called 'motive force', 'motor force', etc.) is the ultimate crystallization of the idea of laws of motion. The term obviously invokes the image of an engine generating movement in history. We are at one with Samir Amin in decrying this 'vulgar interpretation of Marxism',[20] but cannot but be impressed by the hold it has got on Marxists, even of the latest vintage. Thus, Laibman (along with Cohen and many others) would locate in the productive forces the 'motor force: a fundamental, immanent pressure for progressive change. The qualifier "immanent" refers to the endo-

genous character of this force, which does not require determination from outside itself.'[21] He ends his paper with a lot of self-satisfaction for having answered all the questions that have plagued generations of historical materialists: 'It is clear why the transition occurs only in Western Europe; why the expansion of trade has different effects in East and West Europe; why, in the internationalization of capitalist relations, it is Europe that colonizes Africa and Asia, and not vice versa.' Fine! And what are the answers to all these 'why's? 'Intensive development of the PFs largely for geographical reasons occurred first in the West.' As a corollary, we suppose, 'largely for geographical reasons', such intensive development did not take place in India or China. Thus, geographically uneven development is explained in terms of geographical factors which are left unspecified! We have got our answer and can go home contented.

Then there are others who read the exactly opposite meaning in Marx, namely that the relations of production change autonomously and bring about changes in the forces of production. According to this line of analysis, the transition took place in West Europe and not in East Europe or Asia as some unspecified processes established class structures in West Europe which made possible such class struggle as made possible the Transition there. It is of course utterly true, as any tautology is, but is not particularly enlightening. As Wood points out, 'Marxist theory can point us in the direction of class struggle as the operative principle of historical movement and provide the tools for exploring its effects, but it cannot tell us a priori how that struggle will work out.'[22] And Wallerstein is entirely right[23] when he says, 'Progress is not inevitable'—one has to fight for it. We must reject both the approaches of autonomous growth of productive forces and autonomous change in production relations as being equally metaphysical.

Not only laws of motion or the idea of a Prime Mover:

the problems have deeper roots and arise out of the very theoretical attempt at translating 'the view of history as a succession of class systems, with social revolution (in the sense of the transfer of power from one class to another) as the crucial mechanism of historical transformation'[24] into a theory of a sequence of modes of production. As we have seen in Lecture One, the unilinear view of the standard sequence slavery–feudalism–capitalism lost its credibility a long time back. But this has only given place to a pluralistic view of there having been several alternative sequences of modes in different parts of the world. The fact remains that there has been no working out of these different modes and the way they are interlinked. Mclennan rightly holds that 'the "Asiatic" mode has had its day', and 'the "Ancient" is under fire too',[25] but very surprisingly thinks that disputes about feudalism among Marxists have become weak. We have seen in Lecture Two that the very opposite is true. We have also discussed in that lecture the inadequacy of the serfdom definition of feudalism by which is understood any production relation involving coerced labour. We have further seen that this definition, which relies only on the relations of surplus extraction, with no reference to the forces of production and therefore violates the general definition of a mode of production in terms of forces as well as relations of production, not surprisingly received a wide acceptance among Marxists as this was laid down as a Party Line. (In 1931 Stalin put a halt to the ongoing controversy about the Asiatic Mode of Production and conceded the demand of the Chinese party that the European scheme of slavery–feudalism–capitalism be adopted as universally applicable to all societies.)[26] Hilton defended this definition against more specific ones at the time of editing the Transition volume in the following words: 'rigour may be wasted when devoted to categories of analysis of limited significance',[27] but later on he himself discovered its inadequacy and wrote: 'The exploitation of servile peasants by

a landowning class is widespread in world history, from Asia to the Americas, from ancient to modern times. If this is the feudal mode of production then feudalism has been almost everywhere at some time or another.'[28] It has been increasingly recognized (e.g. by Hilton, Perry Anderson, Brenner) that one cannot work with just a labour process definition of feudalism but has to take into account all kinds superstructural features. In retrospect Sweezy seemed to have been well advised to avoid the term 'feudal mode' in his very first intervention.

The bigger part of the original debate, however, comprised a futile and wasteful exchange involving errors of no Marxian method but of elementary logic, the failure to distinguish between necessary and sufficient conditions, between generative and contributory factors. This is the question of so-called 'internal' and 'external' forces. Sweezy made the initial mistake of describing as 'external' towns and long-distance trade. He did not take care to reflect upon the boundaries which necessarily the division internal–external implies. The result has been a disaster for three decades of Marxian historiography in the English language. In their burning zeal of defending 'the general Marxist law of development that economic societies move by its own contradiction'[29] and yet not being able to demonstrate the working of the law, his opponents ended up by taking the absurd position that conquest of the world by European powers did not have any effect whatsoever either on the decline of feudalism or on the emergence of capitalism.

Dobb's initial reaction was quite reasonable. He emphasized what ought to be obvious, namely, the interaction of internal conflict and external forces.[30] He denied that his view was 'that the decline of feudalism was solely the work of internal forces and that the growth of trade has nothing to do with the process'.[31] But as the polemic heated up, this resonableness was abandoned. Takahashi imputed to Sweezy insistence on 'external causes *only*'[32] (emphasis

added). Sweezy was time and again reminded of what he himself had said quite clearly in the following words: 'But historical preconditions do not in themselves provide a sufficient explanation. After all, the ancient world was characterized by highly developed commodity production without ever giving birth to capitalism.'[33] Finally, Hilton did away with all hesitations and made the pronunciamento: 'The so-called commercial revolution in no way altered the feudal mode of production.'[34]

If the effect of long-distance trade prior to the sixteenth century on intensifying the class struggle between lords and serfs was simply wished away, the idea that Primitive Accumulation in Europe must have been strengthened by the inflow of wealth from the colonies through imperialist exploitation was summarily dismissed by later discussants with the help of a quotation from Marx to the effect that the process involved a dissociation of the direct producer from the means of production. Dobb was initially open to the idea that the imperialist domination of the world might have had something to do with the acceleration of capital formation in Europe: 'It seems an hypothesis worthy of investigation that in the 18th century there was a good deal of selling of bonds and real estate to such persons as retired East Indian "nabobs" by men who, then or subsequently, used the proceeds to invest in the expanding industry and commerce of the time.'[35] Further, 'Much of the capital for the expanding cottage industry in the early 19th century came from textile merchants.'[36] But there soon came the point where Brenner could ask: 'Why such a build-up of wealth "from the outside"—from the periphery to the core—was necessary for further economic advance at the time of the origin of capitalism?'[37]

This indeed is an alarming attempt to wish away a fact of history. It is indeed a fact of history that there was a sudden increase of wealth made possible by trade and plunder in the hand of traders and princes. Hilton, one of the protagonists of the 'internal factors alone' school, him-

self says, 'Money Wealth, which was not based on the possession of landed property, came from trade which was in the hands of monopoly companies of merchants like the Merchant Adventurers and the Merchants of the staple',[38] and Hobsbawm makes the stronger statement that Britain's 'industrial economy grew out of her commerce, and especially our commerce with the underdeveloped world'.[39] But is it really necessary to seek support from authorities for such a blatant fact of history, known to all schoolboys? French Marxists, it may be noted, did not ever fall into this absurd trap of a debate about the 'internal' against the 'external'. Vilar explicitly formulated the problem of the transition as that of defining the correct combination of 'endogenous' agrarian and 'exogenous' urban–commercial changes, while emphasizing the importance of the new Atlantic trading economy in the sixteenth century.[40] Georges Lefebvre, in his brief but brilliant comment on the original Transition debate, presented a balanced summary account as follows: 'The merchant created manufactures, his interests coincided with those of state, and of the great landowners who were enclosing estates and evicting tenants, to transform agriculture. After them, peasants who had amassed savings and artisans who participated in primitive accumulation also strove to renew agriculture or establish manufactories. Since the state ignored them, they were jealous of merchants and aristocrats alike, and sought political influence to do away with privileges and monopolies, and to obtain public contracts themselves.'[41]

It is of course possible that none of that wealth found its way to any kind of productive investments; but then that requires to be demonstrated. Nobody has carried out the task. But 'trade is no factor' dogmatists have tended to minimize the importance of the possible contributions of trade by suggesting that in quantitative terms the inflow of wealth was not very large. An effective answer to this line of defending the undefendable has been given by

Patterson in terms of his concept of the 'the socio-political multiplier', by which he means 'the explosive effect of new wealth concentrated in the right hands at the right time. From this point of view it really matters little whether the West Indian slave trade and slavery contributed 1% or 20% to the growth of national income in Britain during the late 17th and 18th centuries. More important is the fact that the wealth generated was monopolized by a new entrepreneurial class at a time when it could use it to seize control of the critical levers of economic and political power.'[42] Dobb himself admitted that not much work had been done on 'the sources on which such constructional projects as the early canals and railways in England were financed'.[43] Hilton admitted 'ignorance of the artisans of town and country, whether organized in gilds or not'.[44] In the face of these gaps in knowledge Georges Lefebvre warned that it would be 'futile and even dangerous'[45] to pursue the debate further in abstract terms and called for fresh researches. No heed was paid to that caution and his fears have come to be true. We now have an idyllic scenario of a gradual evolutionary process of petty producers securing 'partial emancipation from feudal exploitation',[46] accumulating a 'feudal surplus'[47] and becoming 'an upper layer of relatively well-to-do improving farmers'.[48] That this account is pure speculation is clear from the use of verbs by Laibman writing as late as in 1985: 'It is possible to imagine the slow accumulation of surpluses accruing to innovators, the fortunate, etc., with gradual differentiation among commodity producers and gradual proletarianization. Given the magnitude of the struggles over primitive accumulation, however, it is hard to see how that movement could be carried through without relying on pre-existing surpluses with their own generating mechanism . . .'[49] This process is supposed not to have been affected in the least by the triangular trade imposed by force on the rest of the world! The bourgeoisie would seem not to have played any role in the process, so much

so as not to deserve even a mention! The process led not only to the development of agrarian capitalism but also to that of industrial capitalism, though it is not shown how.

This of course is quite staggering. Marx himself clearly stated that 'the genesis of the industrial capitalist did not proceed in such a gradual way . . . The snail's-pace of this method corresponded in no wise with the commercial requirements of the new world market that the great discoveries of the end of the fifteenth century created.'[50] Also, 'the modern history of capital dates from the creation of the 16th century of a world embracing commerce and world embracing market . . . The colonies secured a market for the budding manufactures and through the monopoly of the market an increasing accumulation. The treasures captured outside Europe by undisguised looting, enslavement and murder floated back to the mother country and were turned into capital.'[51]

Brenner is of course entirely right in insisting that 'capital accumulation via innovation, built into a historically developed structure of class relations of free wage-labour',[52] is the essential characteristic of capitalist development and this could not have been brought about by any amount of merchant-capital accumulation nor by any demographic factors. We shall add that not only innovation in production technology but also such institutions of surplus mobilization as banks, equity shares, etc. were also necessary and a process indigenous to West Europe and so was the emergence of a type of new men, the entrepreneurs. But none of these innovations can be explained solely by class struggle either, nor are their 'agrarian roots' obvious. If Hilton is right that 'the necessary if fluctuating pressure by the ruling class for the transfer to itself of peasant surplus labour or surplus product was the root cause of the technical progress and improved feudal organization which made for the enlargement of the disposable surplus',[53] then one fails to understand why such

developments did not take place in other parts of the world. The usurpers of surplus product in pre-colonial India or elsewhere were no less rapacious, no less extravagant, no less war-mongering; but their drive to extract surplus did not generate any process of innovations or entrepreneurial activities.

This indeed lies at the heart of what has been called the European miracle. Class struggle of course played a *necessary* role, but so did demographic factors and so did trade and the international division of labour. Brenner tries to advance class struggle as a *sufficient* factor, but then, in order to explain the different results of class struggle in different societies at different times, he has to assume the primacy and autonomy of the different class structures in which the struggle took place. Brenner's attempt is no doubt heroic but fails, as it is bound to. Given the chorus of assertions that capitalist development in Europe was due entirely to so-called internal factors, it requires to be squarely stated that methodologically it is an untenable position. We may point out with Irfan Habib 'the influence of barbarian invasions in the evolution of West European feudalism; or of 1066 on English feudalism'.[54]

So the European miracle remains a miracle, that is, a problem defying any solution. Given that this is the state of affairs in Marxian historiography, scholars working in the Marxian tradition would do well to be less intolerant about the original attempts by Perry Anderson or Samir Amin, who seek explanations (in their very different ways) in the parcellization of sovereignty (dismissed as a non-Marxist idea by Hilton)[55] and the relative weakness of the state in West Europe, and the unorthodox approaches tried out by people like Wallerstein or even outright non-Marxist scholars like Max Weber (emphasizing ideological forces) or Levi-Strauss (with his brilliant application of the concept of probability to the concept of Conjuncture).[56]

We draw the following important lessons to guide our

own work regarding the non-transition in our own history. Firstly, there are no means of judging what is more basic between two factors both of which might have played necessary roles in a process, just as one cannot say that either hydrogen or oxygen is more basic in the composition of water. Secondly, even if a factor be not necessary, it can still make contributions which ought not to be denied or underestimated. The fact that plants can grow without irrigation water cannot be an argument for denying that increased production in a specific case was largely due to irrigation. Thirdly, it is illegitimate to speculate on what might have happened in history if certain things which happened did not happen. To speculate that capitalist development in Europe would have taken the same course even if there was no Third World to exploit involves the same kind of fallacy as in arguing that India would have developed capitalistically if not prevented by British imperialism. Finally, the instrument of analysis has to be the interaction between forces of production and relations of production, with no primacy or autonomy attached to either. Class struggle, development of the forces of production and changes brought about in the relations of production are all functions of different ideologies in different societies affecting human agents in different ways. The Transition Debate from the fifties till the eighties has neglected this factor almost totally along with all other cultural factors to the extent of not even mentioning the role of the Church.

NOTES FOR THE APPENDIX

1. Eric Hobsbawm (1978).
2. David Laibman (1984).
3. Robert Brenner (1976 and 1982).
4. Maurice Godelier (1981a and 1981b).

5. CERM (1974).
6. The two books are: Edmund Leach and others (1985) and Byres and Mukhia (1985).
7. Perry Anderson (1983).
8. Paul Sweezy (1986).
9. Rodney Hilton (1978a).
10. Christopher Hill (1978).
11. Pierre Bezbach (1983).
12. David Laibman (1984).
13. Rodney Hilton (1978a).
14. I. Kaufman (1972), quoted in Godelier (1981a and 1981b).
15. Eric Hobsbawm (1978).
16. Roger S. Gottlieb (1984).
17. Paul Sweezy (1978b).
18. Kohachiro Takahashi (1978).
19. Rodney Hilton (1978b).
20. Samir Amin (1985).
21. David Laibman (1984).
22. Ellen Wood (1984).
23. Immanuel Wallerstein (1984).
24. Maurice Dobb (1978a).
25. Gregor Mclennan (1986).
26. Details about this matter are to be found in Sawer and Melotti.
27. Rodney Hilton (1978a).
28. Rodney Hilton (1984).
29. Maurice Dobb (1978a).
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Kohachiro Takahashi (1978).
33. Paul Sweezy (1978b).
34. Rodney Hilton (1978a).
35. Maurice Dobb (1978a).
36. Ibid.
37. Robert Brenner (1977).
38. Rodney Hilton (1978a).
39. Eric Hobsbawm (1968).
40. Pierre Vilar (1974).
41. Georges Lefebvre (1978).
42. Orlando Patterson (1979).
43. Maurice Dobb (1978a).
44. Rodney Hilton (1978a).
45. Georges Lefebvre (1978).
46. Maurice Dobb (1978c).
47. The expression 'feudal surplus' is used by Laibman as well as Guy Bois.

48. Maurice Dobb (1978c).
49. David Laibman (1984).
50. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. III.
51. Ibid., vol. I.
52. Robert Brenner (1977).
53. Rodney Hilton (1978a).
54. Irfan Habib (1985).
55. Rodney Hilton (1978a).
56. Claude Levi-Strauss (1961).

References

Amin, Samir (1980). *Class and Nation, Historically and in the Current Crisis*, Monthly Review Press.

——(1985). 'Modes of Production, History and Unequal Development', *Science and Society*, vol. XLIX, no. 2, Summer.

Anderson, Perry (1979). *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, Verso Edition.

——(1983). *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism*, Verso Edition.

Aymard, Maurice (1981). 'L'Europe Moderne: Féodalité ou Féodalités?', *Annales*, no. 3, Mai–Juin.

——(1982). 'From Feudalism to Capitalism in Italy: The Case That Doesn't Fit', *Review*, VI, 2, Fall.

Bezbach, Pierre (1983). *La Société Féodo-Marchande*, Editions Anthropos.

Bloch, Marc (1961). *Feudal Society*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.

Bois, Guy (1984). *The Crisis of Feudalism*, Cambridge University Press and Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.

Bottomore, Tom (1983). *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, Blackwell Reference.

Brenner, Robert (1976). 'Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe', *Past and Present*, no. 70.

——(1977). 'The Origins of Capitalist Development: A Critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism', *New Left Review*, July–August.

——(1982). 'The Agrarian Roots of European Capitalism', *Past and Present*, no. 97.

Brown, E. A. R. (1974). 'The Tyranny of a Construct: Feudalism and Historians of Medieval Europe', *American Historical Review*, vol. 79.

Byres, T. J. (1985). 'Modes of Production and Non-European Pre-colonial Societies: The Nature and Significance of the Debate', *in* Byres and Mukhia (1985).

Byres, T. J. and Harbans Mukhia (1985). 'Feudalism and Non-European Societies', special issue of *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 12, nos. 2 & 3, January–April.

CERM (1974). *Sur le Féodalisme*, Editions Sociales.

Cohen, G. A. (1978). *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence*, Clarendon Press.

Coulborn, Rushton (1956). *Feudalism in History*, Princeton.

Cronne, H. A. (1939–40), 'The Origins of Feudalism', *History*, 24.

Croot, Patricia, and David Parker (1978). 'Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development', *Past and Present*, no. 78.

Dobb, Maurice (1946). *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.
——(1978a). 'A Reply', *in* Hilton (1978).
——(1978b). 'A Further Comment', *in* Hilton (1978).
——(1978c), 'From Feudalism to Capitalism', *in* Hilton (1978).

Gellner, Ernest (1984). 'Along the Historical Highway', *TLS*, 16 March.
Godelier, Maurice (1970). *Sur les Sociétés Pré-capitalistes*, Editions Sociales.
——(1981a). 'La Théorie de la Transition chez Marx' (mimeo).
——(1981b). 'D'un Mode de Production a l'Autre: Théorie de la Transition', *Recherche Sociologique*, vol. XII, no. 2.
Gorreau, Alain (1980). *Le Féodalisme: Un Horizon Théorique*, Le Sycomore.
Gottlieb, Roger S. (1984). 'Feudalism and Historical Materialism: A Critique and a Synthesis', *Science and Society*, vol. XLVIII, no. 1, Spring.

Habib, Irfan (1969). 'Potentialities of Capitalistic Development in Mughal India', *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 29, no. 1.
——(1985). 'Classifying Pre-Colonial India', *in* Byres and Mukhia (1985).
Heller, Henry (1985). 'The Transition Debate in Historical Perspective', *Science and Society*, vol. XLIX, no. 2, Summer.
Hill, Christopher (1978), 'A Comment', *in* Hilton (1978).
Hilton, Rodney (1978). *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, Verso Edition.
——(1978a). 'Introduction', *in* Hilton (1978).
——(1978b). 'A Comment', *in* Hilton (1978).
——(1984). 'Feudalism in Europe: Problems for Historical Materialism', *New Left Review*, no. 147.
Hindess, Barry and Paul Q. Hirst (1975). *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production*, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
Hobsbawm, Eric (1968). *Industry and Empire*, Penguin Books.
——(1978). 'From Feudalism to Capitalism', *in* Hilton (1978).
——(1984). 'Marx and History', *New Left Review*, no. 143, January–February.

Krader, Lawrence (1975). *The Asiatic Mode of Production*, Van Gorcum and Comp B.V.
Kula, Witold (1976). *An Economic Theory of the Feudal System*, NLB.

Laibman, David (1984). 'Modes of Production and Theories of Transition', *Science and Society*, vol. XLVIII, no. 3.
Leach, Edmund (1985). 'Talking about Talking about Feudalism', *in* Leach et al. (1985).
Leach, Edmund, S. N. Mukherjee and John O. Ward (1985). *Feudalism: Comparative Studies*, Sydney Association for Studies in Society and Culture.
Lefebvre, Georges (1978). 'Some Observations', *in* Hilton (1978).
Levi-Strauss, Claude (1961). *Race and History*, UNESCO.

Marx, Karl. *Capital*, vol. I.
——. *Capital*, vol. III.
——. *Grundrisse*.
Marx and Engels. *The Holy Family*.
Mclennan, Gregor (1986). 'Marxist Theory and Historical Research: Between the Hard and Soft Options', *Science and Society*, vol. L, no. 1, Spring.
Melotti, Umberto (1977). *Marx and the Third World*, Macmillan.
Moore, Barrington (1967). *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, Penguin Press.
Mukherjee, S. N. (1985). 'The Idea of Feudalism: From the Philosophers to Karl Marx', *in* Leach et al. (1985).
Mukhia, Harbans (1979). 'Was There Feudalism in Indian History?' Presidential Address, Section II, Indian History Congress.

Parain, Charles (1974). 'Caractères Généraux du Féodalisme,' *in* CERM (1974).
Patterson, Orlando (1979). 'On Slavery and Slave Formations', *New Left Review*, no. 117, September–October.
Perlin, Frank (1985). 'Concepts of Order and Comparison, with a Diversion on Counter Ideologies and Corporate Institutions in Late Pre-Colonial India', *in* Byres and Mukhia (1985).
Postan, Michael (1977). 'The Feudal Economy', *New Left Review*, no. 103, May–June.
Pryor, John H. (1985). 'The Historical Foundations of a Feudal Mode of Production', *in* Leach et al. (1985).

Rudra, Ashok (1981). 'Against Feudalism', *EPW*, vol. XVI, 26 December.
——(1982). *Indian Agricultural Economics: Myths and Realities*, Allied Publishers.

Sawer, Marian (1977). *Marxism and the Question of the Asiatic Mode of Production*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague.
Sedov, L. A. (1968). 'La Société Angkorienne et le Problème du Mode

The author, in these lectures, points out to certain forces which in his opinion worked to prevent a transition from pre-capitalist society to industrial capitalism in the economies of the third world. He emphasizes the role played by the forces of superstructure which for long had been overlooked by the radical Marxian scholars to be of any significant importance in explaining social transition.

Professor Ashok Rudra has been a prominent scholar and commentator on Indian economic and social problems. His works on Indian agriculture and planning have made a deep and permanent mark in modern economic literature. Professor Rudra had been associated with Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta, Government of India and other institutions in India and abroad. Currently he is in the faculty of Viswa-Bharati.

Orient Longman

ISBN 0 86131 754 8

Price Rs. 25