

for revolution leads him to discount how many of those movements, as Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui theorize, also drew on a “long memory,” not of national revolution but rather of indigenous resistance to colonialism. This memory, too, furnishes people with a deep sense of equality and justice and a demand for unquestioned access to land and water. The indigenous orientation and epistemology of those movements, as well as those of the Zapatistas in Chiapas and more recent North American indigenous movements such as Idle No More and the encampments at Standing Rock, are important to count among the “glimmers of hope” Amin’s memoir locates. While his brief rejoinder to anti-“progress” environmentalists is cogent — “it is only when humanity has designed a way of prioritizing use values instead of the exchange values associated with the valorization of capital that the conditions for a better management of the relations between humans and nature will come together” (49) — one wishes he had engaged more with the practices of those who currently thwart capitalist development and model a different path. This wish, like that for his thoughts on Hong Kong, makes sense exactly because Amin was such a formidable intellectual; it is hard to believe he will not be around to pronounce on new developments. This book gives readers ample reason to mourn him, and to celebrate the tireless work he did to imagine and bring about a different, better world.

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*Only People Make Their Own History: Writings on Capitalism, Imperialism, and Revolution*, by Samir Amin. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2019. \$89.00; paper, \$17.00. Pp. 246.

*Only People Make Their Own History* is a sampling of Samir Amin’s late essays, recently published by Monthly Review Press, that commemorate the life and work of this prolific Marxist scholar and activist. This well-curated collection spans the last 20 years of his writing and serves as an excellent introduction for readers unfamiliar with his contributions, especially since the essays persistently reference his earlier scholarship and reassert its conclusions, generally unchanged.

As the fine introduction by Aijaz Ahmad reminds us, Samir Amin (1931–2018) was born in Cairo to an Egyptian father and a French mother and joined the Egyptian Communist Party upon graduating high school. He moved to Paris in 1947, where he attended college, joined the French Communist Party, and received his doctorate in economics at the University of Paris. After earning his doctorate in 1957, he returned to the African continent, where he spent much of the remainder of his life, working as a senior economic adviser in Nasser's Egypt and then in the newly independent state of Mali. He returned to academe as a professor at various institutions in France and Senegal; yet he always had a foot in praxis through his work at the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (which he directed from 1970 to 1980) and at the Third World Forum, which he founded.

Amin came of age at mid-century, as part of a generation of anticolonial intellectuals who helped place imperialism at the center of Marxist analysis. For him, capitalism is marked by a constitutive polarization between center and periphery, sustained by the mechanism of "imperialist rent" that transfers surplus value from south to north. Moreover, this relationship can only be abolished from below through the agency of the "popular classes" (workers and peasants) of the periphery, whose actions have persistently shaped the course of capitalist development. True to his generation to the end, he believed revolutions needed to be both socialist and national, capable of building up structurally underdeveloped forces of production in the periphery on their own national terms, and in ways that bring benefits at each developmental stage, rather than wholly deferring them to some future communist horizon (Amin saw China as the historical power that has come closest to achieving this ideal, and that holds the most promise for the future). After reading *Monopoly Capital* (1966), his particular brand of Marxist anti-imperialism was shaped by the work of Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy; hence his close relationship to *Monthly Review* and its press, which became the primary publisher of his French-penned books in English.

Readers of the volume will encounter Amin's writings on topics ranging from imperialism and the global distribution of wealth, national sovereignty and sites of resistance, agricultural systems and primitive accumulation, political Islam and the resurgence of fascism, and the re-interpretation of Marx's *Capital*. The most interesting essay in the collection is also, perhaps, its most contentious. Entitled "China 2013," it takes issue with writers and scholars, even those on the left like David Harvey, who see China as having taken a fundamentally neoliberal road. Rather, Amin sees 21st-century China as an un-financialized, state-managed (or "state capitalist") market economy, and its much lamented inequalities still remain far less than in other countries of

the periphery (most significantly, India). Much of its achievement, to Amin, lies in the fact that it consciously avoided a devastating primitive accumulation. China retained petty peasant production — with the state as creditor and buyer of produce — while also creating diversified production in rural areas and erecting massive worker housing complexes in urban ones to absorb a controlled migration from the countryside. It thereby avoided the sprawling slum districts one finds around so many cities of the global south. This reading, coupled with his explicit use of Mao's writings and advocacy of peasant-worker revolution, perhaps make Amin one of the last Maoist theoreticians whose writing is available in English.

It's hard to read such praises of China amidst its current crackdowns in Hong Kong and, more horrifically, its detention of perhaps a million Muslim minorities. But his essay also raises a question central to Amin's praxis-oriented Marxism of the periphery: what do you do, in the real world, to bring millions of people in the global south out of misery, people beset not only by their own comprador classes but by a globalized world system that is stacked against them? Fully rejecting every existing state in its entirety simply will not do. For Amin, Western Marxists who see the Chinese revolution as a failed experiment ultimately read it through the prism of their own powerlessness, and there is probably some truth here. Still, there has to be a way to theorize the abuses of the Chinese state along with its very real accomplishments. The author, to his credit, begins to do so by reminding us that the revolution must be democratic at every stage. His idea of democracy, it should be noted, is more direct and less representational: it is not, in other words, the dominant political ideal provided by liberalism.

To be sure, Amin's analysis sometimes brushes aside crucial, local details, as is inevitable in capacious and sweeping analyses of the global scene. His analysis of fascism in "The Return of Fascism in Contemporary Capitalism" does not add much to our understanding of the subject. It restates the basic Marxian point that fascism is an expression of the contradictions of capitalism, without fleshing out the monster itself. Without an analysis of the class fractions on the right and the mechanisms of authoritarian othering — markers of the best antifascist writings in the Marxist tradition — we get a highly amorphous sense of fascism that expressly (and unproductively) encompasses Latin American dictatorships as well.

Such limits aside, *Only People Make Their Own History* is an excellent overview of a prolific scholar who produced what remains a highly generative analysis of the capitalist world system. Apropos the title, one of the strengths of Amin's thought, on full display in this volume, is something often forgotten even in Marxist analysis: that is, his view of the popular classes as actively shaping the course of capitalist development. Discussing the period from 1945 to 1975, for instance, he writes:

The double defeat of fascism and old colonialism had indeed created a conjuncture that allowed the popular classes, victims of capitalist accumulation, to impose variously limited or contested but stable forms of capital regulation and formation, to which capital itself was forced to adjust, and which were at the roots of this period of high growth and accelerated accumulation. (39.)

In line with the best of the Marxian tradition, he sees resistance from below not as *potentially* shaping the global political economy at some future point, but as a force that shapes the structures of daily life *historically*. The volume also reveals a mind that reads the world dialectically, as always presenting opportunities due to its own internal contradictions. Yet Amin's dialectic is without teleological guarantees of an immanent socialist horizon: the future could bring socialism or barbarism, stagnation or revolution. Only people make their own history, after all, and Amin certainly lived this maxim.

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*Intelligent Materialism: Essays on Hegel and Dialectics*, by Evald Ilyenkov. Edited and translated by Evgeni V. Pavlov. Historical Materialism Book Series, Volume 181. Leiden, The Netherlands/Boston, Massachusetts: Brill, 2018. \$138.59. Pp. 253.

Ilyenkov is undoubtedly one of the most original and important Soviet Marxist philosophers of the post-Stalin period, yet knowledge of his work is only slowly filtering through to the West. He was born in 1924 and became a student of philosophy at Moscow University at the end of World War II, when philosophy in the USSR was most restricted. There was a short-lived thaw under Khrushchev after the death of Stalin in 1953, during which Ilyenkov emerged at the center of a small band of "creative Marxists." But orthodoxy was reimposed under Brezhnev, and Ilyenkov clashed with the authorities because of his philosophical ideas. He worked under increasingly restrictive conditions until he took his own life in 1979.

A number of Ilyenkov's most important works covering some of the main themes of his work were translated into English and published by the Soviets, although sometimes in abridged editions and poor translations. (A