

Comment by Noam Chomsky (ZNET Sustainers Forum (See <http://zmag.org>))

A subscriber asked Noam Chomsky recently:

"Martin Wolf the chief economics commentator of The Times cites World Bank figures according to which absolute poverty has declined: 'The data shows a decline since 1980 of 200m people in the category of the absolutely poor. This is a fall from 31 per cent of the world's population to 20 percent. That is a spectacularly rapid fall in poverty by historical standards. It makes a nonsense of the idea that poverty alleviation has been blighted by globalisation.' Are the figures he cites correct and if so is the decline as spectacular as he claims? "

Noam Chomsky responds:

"The World Bank figures have been subjected to careful expert analysis, and prove to be worth very little. There is a detailed and important paper by Sanjay Reddy and Thomas Pogge coming out on this.

... What happened to poverty depends very heavily on how it's measured. There's a lot of technical literature on this, also some quite accessible discussion in sources like UN Development Report. "