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THE ACCIDENTAL MARXIST: ANDRE GUNDER FRANK AND THE “NEO-MARXIST” THEORY OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT, 1958–1967

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Based on newly available archival records, this article examines the life and thought of Andre Gunder Frank from his years as a graduate student in development economics to the publication of his first and most influential book. A closer look at the evolution of Frank’s thought provides new insight into the relationship of his brand of “neo-Marxist” development theories with both classical Marxism and modernization theory. Frank interpreted Marxist political debates according to the categories of thought of 1950s American development economics, and in doing so he both misinterpreted fundamental aspects of Marxism and simultaneously generated lively theoretical debates that remain relevant today.

Paul Sweezy thought Andre Gunder Frank’s *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (hereafter *CU*) would be a big hit. As the head of Monthly Review Press, a small but important publishing operation held together largely by his own efforts, Sweezy had to choose carefully the projects on which he would expend his and his small staff’s limited time and energy. In the summer of 1964, manuscripts of the essays that would go into Frank’s first and most influential book began pouring into Sweezy’s office on West 14th Street in New York. Sweezy did not hesitate. He told his own copyeditor and close friend, the brilliant but emotionally troubled Jack Rackliffe, that Frank’s work “amounts to nothing less than a complete reinterpretation of all Latin American history.”¹

Frank’s book did enjoy a degree of success in the years immediately following its publication in 1967. Monthly Review ran twelve printings of the two English editions, and the book would be translated into eleven languages.²

¹ Paul Marlo Sweezy Papers, Box 20, Sweezy to Rackliffe, 5 Dec. 1964, Houghton Library, Harvard University (hereafter PMS).

² Sing C. Chew and Robert A. Denemark, eds., *The Underdevelopment of Development: Essays in Honor of Andre Gunder Frank* (Thousand Oaks, CA, 1996), 363–6.

Without question, Frank made a name for himself among academics and intellectuals interested in Third World development in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Frank's ideas became the earliest representative of dependency theory to reach US audiences, and both contemporaries and historians have recognized his intervention as an important shift away from the consensus around modernization theory that reigned earlier in the decade. Moreover, the momentary popularity of Frank's influence extended beyond the academic subdisciplines of development economics and sociology. Painting the entire project of "aid" as little more than imperialism in a new guise, Frank's work resonated with many New Left intellectuals who saw similarities in the power dynamics Frank identified and those operating behind the war in Vietnam and America's racial order. When the 1960s student radicals influenced by Frank began their long march through the university they carried many of his ideas with them, which continue to reverberate through the academy, often in undetected ways.

Yet Frank's book quickly came under attack, and not just from the entrenched modernization theorists it challenged. Even intellectuals sympathetic to Frank's main premise—that the hierarchical structure of global capitalism created systemic barriers to development in peripheral states—found *CU* deeply flawed. By the mid-1970s Frank's work had generated two discernible lines of critique. Development experts committed to objectivity in scholarship criticized the non-falsifiable premises, while simultaneously arguing that many of the concrete hypotheses Frank did put forth did not hold up to empirical scrutiny.³ Marxists, on the other hand, criticized Frank for the lack of precision with which he incorporated Marxist categories. His definitions of "feudalism" and "capitalism," never spelled out explicitly, implicitly rested on relations of circulation and distribution rather than relations of production.⁴ Whether attacking the validity of the Marxist approach or criticizing Frank as a bad Marxist, Frank's opponents agreed that his ideas would sink or swim in Marxist waters. The near unanimous categorization of Frank's work within a Marxist or "neo-Marxist" school of development theory sits uneasily with the author's own frequent public and private denials that he had any affiliation with, knowledge of, or affinity toward Marxism.⁵

³ James H. Street, "Review: Packenham, "On *Capitalist Underdevelopment* by Andre Gunder Frank," *American Political Science Review*, 73/1 (1979), 341–2.

⁴ Ernesto Laclau, "Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America," *New Left Review*, 1/67 (May–June 1971), 19–38. Robert Brenner, "The Origins of Capitalist Development: A Critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism," *New Left Review*, 104/1 (1977), 25–92.

⁵ "I have *never* had the temerity myself to claim to be a Marxist; and nowhere in my published—or unpublished—writings can or will anyone find such a personal claim." Andre Gunder Frank, "Dependence Is Dead, Long Live Dependence and the Class Struggle:

Intellectual production, like all production, is social, and a historical inquiry into the social production of *CU* offers new insights into the text's place within the Marxist tradition.⁶ Two distinct and historically and geographically specific discourses pushed and pulled on the book in its path from conceptualization to bookshelves throughout the world. The push, the intellectual stimulus behind Frank's core insights, came from a revisionist interpretation of Latin American history formulated in polemic with the "stage theory" of Soviet-affiliated communist parties in the 1940s and 1950s. The pull came from the intellectuals surrounding *Monthly Review*, and more broadly the burgeoning North American "New Left" for whom they published. The two intellectual currents operating on either end of the finished product differed primarily in the rigor of their respective cross-examinations of mid-twentieth-century Soviet ideology. The Latin American authors that most influenced Frank wrote to understand and intervene in what they saw as urgent local political crises, in particular in late 1940s Argentina. They perceived Latin American communist parties as an obstacle in presenting a Marxist critique of imperialism without succumbing to the pervasive rhetoric of nationalism. Sweezy and his co-thinker and occasional *Monthly Review* correspondent Paul Baran underwent no similar reckoning with the relationship between the theoretical implications of Soviet ideology and the longer Marxist tradition.

In framing Frank's story around his engagement with the two intellectual currents described above, I aim to write the concept of Stalinism into the intellectual history of New Left Third Worldism. Neither the substantive content of Frank's work nor its reception and categorization are comprehensible outside the historical context of Stalinism and its impact on perceptions of Marxism in different places throughout the western hemisphere.⁷ The Cuban Revolution transformed Frank from a vaguely disillusioned 1950s development economist to a radical dissident, but elements of the one carried over into the other. Whereas the Latin American thinkers Frank admired consciously linked the theory guiding the programs of local communist parties to the ideological

An Answer to Critics," *Latin American Perspectives*, 1/1 (Spring 1974), 87–106, at 96. As the rest of this article will show, the archival record reveals numerous similar private claims.

⁶ Emanuele Saccarelli, *Gramsci and Trotsky in the Shadow of Stalinism: The Political Theory and Practice of Opposition* (New York: Routledge, 2008), ix.

⁷ For historians and political theorists discussing the concept of Stalinism and its importance in the intellectual and political history of the left see Bryan D. Palmer, "Rethinking the Historiography of United States Communism," *American Communist History*, 2/2 (2003), 139–73; Saccarelli, *Gramsci, passim* but esp. 11–18; Jacob A. Zumoff, *The Communist International and U.S. Communism, 1919–1929* (Chicago, 2014), 10–19; Alan Wald, *The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s* (Chapel Hill and London, 1987).

reflections of the degeneration of the Soviet Union, Frank, lacking background knowledge in Marxism, invariably slotted theoretical debates he encountered into Cold War mental categories. “Orthodox” Marxism, equated with the communist party line, produced dogmatic “crap” (Frank’s word) and more sophisticated analyses were thus by definition revisions or adaptations of Marxist thought. Further complicating the picture, Sweezy and the other intellectuals surrounding *Monthly Review*, the editors and publishers of Frank’s work, imposed on it an interpretation of Marxism shaped by their own complex, ambivalent, and changing views on the Soviet Union. The migration of the concept of “dependency” from Latin America to the United States thus passed through these various nodes, each with its own unique relation to Stalinism.

FRANK’S EARLY LIFE AND THOUGHT

According to his own account, Frank fled Nazi Germany in 1933, at the age of four. He did his primary education in Switzerland, went to high school in Ann Arbor, Michigan, earned his bachelor’s degree from Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania, and enrolled in a Ph.D. program for economics at the University of Chicago in 1950. Apparently unsatisfied with his work, the University of Chicago economics department forced him out after one year. After receiving a master’s degree in economics from the University of Michigan, and passing time among the Beats of the San Francisco coffee shop scene, Frank reentered the University of Chicago, as he says, “through the back door” based on a research assistantship at Bert Hoselitz’s Center for Economic Development and Cultural Change (CEDCC). Frank began working at the CEDCC in 1955, and received a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago with Hoselitz as his adviser in 1958. He held a string of academic and research positions as a development economist in the United States between 1958 and 1960, before he left the country to get a view of development from the perspective of the underdeveloped world.⁸

Throughout the period from the mid-1950s to his departure in 1960, Frank exchanged ideas within a network of development specialists from economics, sociology, and anthropology. He assimilated the theory and methods of the prevailing modernization school, but he also engaged in debates and critiques of the theory and of American development policy that fall outside the bounds of the narrow consensus by which the period is usually characterized. Initially influenced by Hoselitz, Frank grew to sympathize with a branch of development economics opposed to the broad-scale planning of modernization theory, and with a leftward shift in American anthropology increasingly interested in the

⁸ Andre Gunder Frank, “The Underdevelopment of Development,” in Chew and Denmark, *Underdevelopment*, 22–3.

revolutionary potential of rural labor. On a personal level, Frank channeled the anti-authoritarian mood already gaining momentum among the pre-New Left generation, reflected in his hostility to what he, perhaps glibly, referred to as the “police-state” and in his sympathy with Third World opposition to American development policy.

Frank’s first academic achievements came when he reentered the University of Chicago through the CEDCC, which brought him into the field of development economics. At that time, he was a self-titled Keynesian, which situated him well within the ideological parameters of the theory of development dominating the American social sciences in the 1950s. When Frank started his Ph.D. in economics, the University of Chicago served as an important locus for economists increasingly focused on *development*, as opposed to *growth*. Economists analyzing industrial societies could prescribe policies that would presumably optimize the economy’s normal functions to maximize growth. In the underdeveloped world, the task was to create the conditions for a society to “take off” on the path to industrialization, which hypothetically warranted a set of policies far more comprehensive in scope. As opposed to simply maximizing economic growth, the Third World required an all-encompassing social, cultural, and political transformation. Although historians disagree as to the precise date, economic development as a concept applied to the Third World emerged as a specific field of study either during World War II or in the immediate aftermath, triggered by postwar decolonization.⁹

The focus on development brought a unique set of questions to the academy, and throughout the 1950s social scientists across disciplines eagerly applied themselves to solving them. Initially economists agreed that insufficient native capital formation precluded industrialization. The solution, then, was to generate capital, either internally through increased savings or externally through foreign aid and/or private investment from the developed world. Within the consensus on the necessity of capital formation, debates revolved around how to administer investment of scarce capital in such a way as to optimize the accumulation and reinvestment of new capital, with the primary source of contention between advocates of balanced or unbalanced growth. As the field developed the focus shifted from capital formation to fomenting a *culture* of development by investing in human capital. According to the human-capital line, the Third World lacked entrepreneurial spirit and technical know-how, which could be corrected through education and technical assistance rather than capital importation. Notwithstanding important differences in their analyses and prescriptions, the

⁹ For the history of development economics see H. W. Arndt, *Economic Development: The History of an Idea* (Chicago and London, 1987); Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith* (London and New York, 1997).

various trends in development economics in the United States and Britain in the 1950s all shared a commitment to solving underdevelopment through planning.

As development economics tilted toward prescribing investment in human capital, it intersected with modernization theory, a broader intellectual current running through the social sciences in the middle decades of the twentieth century. At its core, and bracketing the many variations, modernization sought to categorize societies on a continuum from traditional to modern, and posited a universal historical progression from one end to the other. They often conflated the concept of society with that of the nation-state, and they tended to view nation-states as discreet entities that had, up until the 1950s, been moving along the teleological path to modernity more or less independently of one another. Having explicated the dynamics of the process, modernization experts could help underdeveloped societies along the path.¹⁰ Although some development economics certainly fit within the precepts of modernization, it is important to view the two as separate fields of study, because modernization came out of a holistic social theory that attributed equal weight to non-economic factors such as culture and politics in its classificatory social scheme. Theoretically, modernization drew from Talcott Parsons's "pattern variables" to create a number of behavioral dichotomies that could account for different levels of development. In practice the approach adopted an essentially empiricist method, arranging societies into groups according to statistically observable criteria, then categorizing those as "stages" of development.¹¹ Normatively, modernization evinced some level of commitment to "planning," led by Western technocrats, as a solution to Third World stagnation.

While at graduate school for economics at the University of Chicago in the 1950s, Frank studied under Bert Hoselitz, a leading early proponent of modernization theory. Hoselitz wrote several articles integrating cultural and social factors into his models of economic development. In one article in the early 1950s, Hoselitz argued that urbanization brought noneconomic "moral and social-psychological" benefits to underdeveloped societies.¹² In another

¹⁰ For the best general intellectual histories of modernization theory and its influence in American foreign policy see Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore and London, 2003); Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and "Nation-Building" in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill and London, 2000); David C. Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore: American Intellectuals and the Romance of Russian Development* (Cambridge, MA, 2003).

¹¹ Most famously in Walt W. Rostow, *Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge, 1990).

¹² Bert Hoselitz, "The Role of Cities in the Economic Growth of Underdeveloped Countries," *Journal of Political Economy*, 61/3 (1953), 195–208, at 195.

article written for the *American Historical Review* in 1957, Hoselitz borrowed modernization economist Walt Whitman Rostow's notion of the "take-off" point at which a society sets off on a self-sustaining course toward modernity, but insisted that preparation for take-off must focus as much on "institutional arrangements in the legal, educational, familial, or motivational orders" as in the development of infrastructures for material production.¹³ The tenor of this work suggests that if development experts can just identify the right combination of the most important, isolated, discreet factors "causing" underdevelopment, they will then be equipped with the proper tools orchestrate a transition. The will is there; all that is missing is the know-how. In the late 1950s, Hoselitz edited the journal *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, which for the next several decades would provide one of the central forums for publishing the works of the leading modernization theorists. Hoselitz employed Frank at the center attached to the journal, where Frank first cut his teeth as a development economist.

At the CEDCC, Frank published a handful of short economic articles and wrote a dissertation on Soviet economics, the methods, questions, and assumptions of which bore the stamp of his training as a development economist within the modernization camp. One study begun in the mid-1950s would be passed as his Ph.D. dissertation in 1958 under the title "General Productivity in Soviet Agriculture and Industry: The Ukraine 1928–1955." In this rather short dissertation, Frank analyzed inputs and outputs in Ukrainian agriculture and industry in order to determine productivity in each sector separately and in Soviet Ukraine generally from 1928 to 1955. The major creative challenge for Frank in this project was coming up with accurate data. Frank compiled his own statistical series based on international trade and price data, which he claimed allowed him to get through the fog of misinformation coming from the Communist state. From his series, he concluded that agricultural productivity declined, industrial productivity stayed roughly the same, and what he called "general productivity" declined more than the relative weight of the decline of agriculture over the period of his analysis. Frank's conclusions seemed to suggest that economic development of the Third World would proceed most efficiently under a "balanced-growth" model. The assumptions here supported the notion of a technocratic planning agent, and for Frank the goal of the exercise seemed to be to demonstrate his ability to generate, manage, and generalize from a set of empirical data.

From 1958 until his break with the academy in 1960–61, Frank toured the various camps within North American social sciences of development.

¹³ Bert Hoselitz, "Noneconomic Factors in Economic Development," *American Economic Review*, 47/2 (1957), 28–41, at 29.

He refused to accept economists' assumptions that human behavior could be reduced to maximization of material interests, and his work regularly incorporated nonmaterial motivators. In his paper "Goal Ambiguity and Conflicting Standards: An Approach to the Study of Organization," Frank extrapolated a general ideal model of human organization from his interpretation of Soviet industry. Frank's paper, which *Human Organization* published in 1958, focused on the decisions available to the manager of a hypothetical enterprise trying to navigate between various, often conflicting, demands within the Soviet industrial system. Frank argued that conflicting demands did not result in wasteful, inefficient and irrational productive outcomes, but rather increased productivity. Knowing that not all goals could be met, individual managers were empowered to map their own strategy. If they contributed to the overall economic, political, and cultural goals of the regime, they would not be sanctioned. Frank saw this as a way to integrate the goals of production with the needs and values of society in a way that seemed much more organic than simply responding to the anarchy of market pressures. On the one hand Frank's line in this piece places agency in the hands of the individual manager, but on the other it could be read as an apology for bureaucratic schizophrenia.¹⁴

Along the same lines, Frank wrote a favorable review of Albert O. Hirschman's book *The Strategy of Economic Development* in which he especially praised the author's concept of "linkages" for its attention to nonmarket motivating factors.¹⁵ It is worth noting that Hirschman's book included an analysis of enclave industries linked as "satellites" to the larger metropolitan economic centers in underdeveloped countries, a concept that did not make it into Frank's review but presumably lodged itself somewhere in his consciousness, to be replicated later in his own model of the structure of global capitalism.¹⁶ Frank opened his review of Hirschman's book by pointing out the obsolescence of Alfred Marshall's version of laissez-faire, which Frank described as a static model, against which he transposed Hirschman's more dynamic model of "built-in destabilization." Moving away from his earlier acceptance of balanced growth, Frank agreed with Hirschman's claim that a developing economy required a certain amount of imbalance, the correction of which would spur innovation and entrepreneurship, and spill over into other sectors through forward and backward linkages. Hirschman's book, and prescriptions for development, share many similarities with the conclusions

¹⁴ Andrew Gunder Frank, "Goal Ambiguity and Conflicting Standards: An Approach to the Study of Organization," *Human Organization*, 17/4 (1958–9), 8–13.

¹⁵ Andrew Gunder Frank, "Built in Destabilization: A. O. Hirschman's Strategy of Economic Development," *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 8/4 (1960), 433–40.

¹⁶ Albert O. Hirschman, *The Strategy of Economic Development* (New Haven and London, 1958), 102–4.

of Frank's "conflicting-standards" model. Both emphasized the importance of flexibility on the path to development, and both posited a development model suggesting a society in transition and evolution, not only in terms of their overarching goals, but also in their legal, social, and political norms. Yet neither marked a fundamental rupture with the underlying assumptions of development economics, which remained committed to the idea of a viable developmental path involving foreign expertise and discernible through comparative analysis by Western experts.

In 1958 Frank stood at the threshold of a fairly conventional career. He had worked within the heart of the modernization school, which was at the height of its prestige. He managed to publish a few articles, was networking with scholars in other disciplines, and held an assistant professorship at Michigan State University. Yet just three years later he made the decision to eschew the academic life to live as a radical intellectual. Although not the only reason, a conflict with the Michigan State University Police undoubtedly has something to do with Frank's decision. In February of 1958, MSU's Department of Public Safety cited Frank for parking in a space reserved for physicians. Frank ignored the citation, and on 24 June 1958 the director of the Department of Public Safety summoned Frank to appear in court.¹⁷ Frank refused the summons on the grounds that the university's Department of Public Safety had no public authority to issue citations, setting off a long exchange with A. F. Brandstetter, the director of public safety, which culminated in a criminal warrant for Frank's failure to appear. In April of 1959, Frank was arrested in his office, an affront which convinced Frank that the American police-state had advanced beyond the point of no return. He likened his arrest to the ROTC controversy that had recently taken place on MSU campus. Frank probably had countercultural inclinations well before this, as, for example, indicated by his allusions to his time among the "beats" of the San Francisco coffee shop scene, all of which just points to discontent simmering throughout the 1950s.

By early 1960, Frank had decided to take time off from American academic life. It is difficult to determine exactly why, but it was likely a combination of a general dissatisfaction with both the intellectual climate in which he had been operating and the conformity of 1950s US social and cultural life. For several years he had been sort of an intellectual tourist within the broader field of development studies, migrating rapidly not just among the various camps in development economics, but even among various methods and disciplines outside economics. Clearly he had not yet found answers to appease his intellectual curiosity. Frank's

¹⁷ Andre Gunder Frank Papers, Box 51, A. F. Brandstetter, director of Michigan State University Department of Public Safety, to Frank, 24 June 1958, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam (hereafter AGF).

knowledge of the underdeveloped world drew mostly from books and models. He wanted to observe his subject matter firsthand. On 16 June 1960, the Michigan State University Board of Trustees approved Frank's request for an unpaid leave of absence to last 1 September 1960 to 31 August 1961.¹⁸ Frank had some money from a research grant, and he presented the leave of absence as a research trip, but he had no concrete plans. In fact, his first goal appeared to be aimless world travel, starting with Europe, where he had several contacts.¹⁹ Thirty-one years old, educated, with no significant ties holding him to the United States, Frank embarked upon a journey that, perhaps unbeknownst to him at the time, would ultimately forsake the comfortable life of American academia and elude any sort of economic security for almost twenty years.

ENCOUNTERING MARXISM

Frank made the most of his year-long research leave from MSU. Although officially his leave began in September, Frank went abroad in June of 1960, setting off a two-year stint of nearly constant travel. He first spent a month in the Soviet Union, funded on a research grant from MSU. He had accepted an invitation from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for anthropological research to participate in a conference in Austria on Economics and Anthropology: Capital, Saving and Credit in Peasant Societies to be held from 21 to 27 August.²⁰ After the conference, he returned to the United States and briefly moved to Boston before first setting off for Cuba, where he spent a month, and then moving on to Eastern Europe and Africa.²¹

The Cuban Revolution had a formative impact on the political consciousness of Frank's generation. It stands with SNCC sit-ins, the Port Huron Statement, and the antinuclear movement as one of the most radicalizing moments of the early 1960s. Cubans' national liberation struggle resonated with university students ready to break free from the stifling environment of the Cold War, with growing racial liberation movements within the US, and with the organizations critical of American foreign policy that would help mobilize a broad antiwar movement later in the decade.²² This multifaceted social vortex drew in an equally eclectic

¹⁸ AGF, Box 1, MSU Board of Trustees to Frank, 16 June 1960.

¹⁹ AGF, Box 1, Sidney Mintz to Frank, 14 June 1960.

²⁰ AGF, Box 1, Wenner-Gren Foundation, 10 May 1960.

²¹ PMS, Box 5, "Gunder File," Frank to Sweezy, 1 July 1964. It is not clear to me where Frank got the money for all this travel.

²² Van Gosse has pioneered the effort to foreground the Cuban Revolution as a crucial event drawing together the forces of the New Left. See Van Gosse, *Where the Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America and the Making of a New Left* (London and New York, 1993).

range of intellectuals, from disillusioned Old Lefties, through the left fringe of the liberal establishment, and including even the traditionally most disaffected voices in North American society.²³

It is worth dwelling for a moment on one particular bubble in the intellectual froth forming atop the ferment of social support for the Cuban Revolution. As the intellectual core of *Monthly Review*, Paul Sweezy and Paul Baran would play a substantial role both in the formation of Frank's ideas and in polishing his work for public consumption. As early, active, and very public proponents of the Cuban Revolution, Sweezy and Baran form an underrecognized line of continuity linking the Old Left to the New. The pair were the only open Marxists to retain any standing within the North American economics profession in the 1950s.²⁴ Politically, their Marxist views had been forged in the Popular Front era, and they carried the outlook of "fellow travelers" well past the point at which the left-liberal alliance of the 1930s had any foundation in American society. They suffered materially and psychologically from their persecution in the postwar witch hunt atmosphere. By the time they threw their weight behind Cuba, they held ambivalent views about the Soviet Union, derided the American Communist Party, and feared and reviled the American public.²⁵ Their enthusiasm for Cuba thus came out of a persistent inability to locate a more local political subject, and followed in the wake of their deteriorating hope that the Soviet Union would lead the way in a slow global evolution toward socialism. They travelled to Cuba multiple times in an advisory capacity, and were enthused to apply their abstract economic knowledge to concrete problems in a society in transition to socialism, which is how they interpreted Cuba from the outset. Sweezy and *Monthly Review* coeditor Leo Huberman were in Cuba in fall of 1960, although their trip may

²³ See Rafael Rojas, *Fighting over Fidel: The New York Intellectuals and the Cuban Revolution* (Princeton, 2016). The reader is free to decide who from Rojas's book falls into each of my categories.

²⁴ This is not to say that they were not marginalized and even persecuted within the discipline. But Baran did retain his position at Stanford until his death, and Sweezy maintained ties with the professional association, and taught intermittently at elite universities, including Cornell, Harvard, and Stanford.

²⁵ For McCarthyist persecution see "Academic Freedom and the Sweezy Case," 29 Nov. 1954, PMS, Box 11; letters from Baran to Sweezy discussing climate at Stanford, 9 Jan. 1953, 18 Jan. 1953, 3 March 1953, Baran, Paul A. and Sweezy, Paul M. (1949–64). Correspondence with Paul M. Sweezy, Stanford Digital Repository, available at <http://purl.stanford.edu/km151hd0812> (hereafter listed with acronyms PAB and PMS, letter writer connected to receiver through hyphen followed by date). Letters referring to the psychological toll are numerous. For a small sample see PAB-PMS, 27 May 1956; PAB-PMS, 4 June 1956; PMS-PAB, 4 July 1956; PAB-PMS, 11 May 1957; PMS-PAB, 26 May 1957; PMS-PAB, 4 Oct. 1957; PAB-PMS, 9 Oct. 1957; PMS-PAB, 14 Oct. 1957. For views of the American public as "fascist" and "worse than the Nazis" see PAB-PMS, 27 April 1954.

have been just after Frank's and there is no evidence that they met at that point. Frank's correspondence with Sweezy begins in 1963, as do references to Frank in Sweezy's and Baran's correspondence.

Baran's 1957 book *Political Economy of Growth* influenced Frank and is commonly cited as either a precursor to or the earliest example of the neo-Marxist theory of imperialism that formed the broader intellectual backdrop for dependency theory.²⁶ Baran began working out a Marxist critique of "development economics" as early as 1952, as a subset of his general interest in defending Marxian economic categories against the neoclassical synthesis gaining momentum throughout the profession in general and in his department at Stanford specifically. Sweezy shared Baran's motivation to preserve a legitimate, even if marginalized, Marxian wing within professional economics. By the middle of the 1950s they formalized this desire into a specific task. They would write a book that would retrieve Marxian economics by updating the analytical categories of *Capital* to reveal the underlying laws of motion of capitalism in its monopoly phase. Invariably referred to simply as the "opus," this project absorbed the lion's share of their intellectual efforts from its conception until its publication under the title *Monopoly Capital* in 1966, two years after Baran's death. The left wing of Keynesianism seems the intended audience for the opus, which is pitched at a high level of abstraction and interspersed with arguments aimed at that crowd.

Political Economy of Growth synthesizes Baran's running critique of development economics with his and Sweezy's progress at that moment in formulating the abstract laws of monopoly capitalism that would underlie the analysis of the opus. The first half of the book, sort of a trial run for the opus, demonstrates that capitalism in its monopoly phase generates more surplus than it can absorb, forcing various means of wasteful expenditure to perpetuate economic cycles and hindering the *potential* surplus that might be produced if class contradictions did not preclude the economy from operating at full capacity. The most important such wasteful expenditure is on military equipment, the production of which is the true motive for maintaining an empire under capitalism in its monopoly phase. In an indication of Baran's continued faith in the ultimately progressive nature of the Soviet Union, he contrasted wasteful and inefficient monopoly capitalism to the greater use of potential surplus possible in a socialist society, illustrated with the Soviet Union as the model. The second half of the book focuses on the long-term consequence of the extraction of surplus from colonial economies. As we will see, Frank clearly read *Political Economy of Growth*, and he met personally with Baran in Brazil immediately prior to composing his first articulations of dependency theory.

²⁶ See Diana Hunt, *Economic Theories of Development: An Analysis of Competing Paradigms* (Savage, MD, 1989), 64.

Frank's correspondence from his travels after Cuba reveal a restless soul critical of the role of the US government in world affairs, disillusioned with development economics, and searching for something more gratifying to do with his life. He did not save the carbon copies of letters he sent, but it is clear that respondents found Frank idealistic, that his letters posed, in David Reisman's words, "profound questions" about his place in the world, and that Frank actively sought work outside the academy well before he resigned from MSU.²⁷ Through conversations with people he met abroad, Frank worked the countercultural inclinations he had been harboring since at least the mid-1950s into a sophisticated critique of the role of Washington in world affairs, and in particular its use of development aid as a rationale for pursuing geopolitical interests.²⁸ This idealism motivated his decision, made from a hospital bed in Cairo, to reject the life of a North American academic. His resignation letter, of which he sent a "public" copy to be published in the MSU newspaper, reads as a sort of a *mea culpa* for his participation in a discipline that, in his words, "far from aiding, detracts from economic development." Frank, moreover, blamed his colleagues' systematic sidestepping of the negative impact of US development policy on the general complacency of society as a whole, which enables foreign policy.²⁹

In the spring of 1962, Frank left the United States for Latin America. Between his trips to the Soviet Union and Cuba, Frank had become a socialist, and committed to the idea of developing policy-oriented research for a socialist country, or at least one that he believed fit that description. He returned to the United States late in 1961, after his European travels, intending to stay only until he managed to secure a position in Cuba. Again growing restless, he decided to tour Latin America in the meantime. Frank traveled to Mexico, Guatemala, Venezuela, Peru, and Chile, hoping to deepen his understanding of the "political determinants of development and underdevelopment." In Chile he met Marta Fuentes, whom he married after a three-month courtship.³⁰ By the end of 1962, the fruits of Frank's freewheeling research trip began to blossom in the form of several journalistic articles significantly different in tone, if not method, from his earlier work.

Determining Latin American influences on Frank's intellectual trajectory requires both a general understanding of the currents he would have encountered

²⁷ AGF, Box 1, David Reisman to Frank, 3 Aug. 1960; AGF, Box 1, Hoselitz to Frank, 5 Sept. 1961; AGF, Box 1, Higgins to Frank, 18 Oct. 1960.

²⁸ AGF, Box 1, Frank to Chester Bowles, 11 Feb. 1961.

²⁹ AGF, Box 51, Frank to Lanzillotti, 14 Sept. 1961; AGF, Box 51, Frank to the editor of the *State News*, Michigan State University, 11 Aug. 1961.

³⁰ PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy, 1 July 1964.

and piecing together clues from his publications during this period and whatever information remains in the archive. Most extant English-language scholarship identifies Raúl Prebisch and the other “structuralist” economists surrounding the Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) as *the* major Latin American antecedents both to Frank’s ideas specifically and to Latin American *dependentistas* more generally.³¹ Prebisch, the former president of the Argentine central bank, formulated his theory while working for CEPAL as an exile from Perónist Argentina. He came across a paper written by fellow UN economist Hans Singer that empirically demonstrated a secular decline in terms of trade for developing countries. Similar to his own as-yet unsubstantiated assumptions, Singer’s work inspired Prebisch to formulate the general tendency into a “manifesto” for Latin America, entitled *The Economic Development of Latin America and Its Principal Problems*, which he presented at the ECLA meeting in Havana in 1949.³² The “Prebisch–Singer” hypothesis gained proponents in Latin America throughout the 1950s, and became the theoretical justification for a set of policies collectively known as “developmentalism” in the late 1950s and early 1960s.³³ Analytically, CEPAL thinking is said to have contributed the “core–periphery” model, which neo-Marxist *dependentistas* such as Frank appropriated, and CEPAL is thus a link in the evolution of thought leading to dependency theory. Prescriptively, cepalistas called for opening up the region to foreign capital but setting high tariffs on consumer imports to promote domestic manufacture.

Frank also encountered a strand of thought pre-dating structuralism and reaching its most polished expressions simultaneously with CEPAL’s most important discoveries, although the two remained largely independent of one another in terms of both questions and methods. From its earliest inceptions, Latin American Marxism had struggled to apply categories derived from

³¹ See especially Joseph Love, *Crafting the Third World: Theorizing Underdevelopment in Rumania and Brazil* (Stanford, 1996), 182. Also Gilman, *Mandarins*, 235–6; Latham, *Revolution*, 165; Hunt, *Economic Theories*, 121–97; H. W. Arndt, *Economic Development*, 115–29. For an exception see Robert A. Packenham, *The Dependency Movement: Scholarship and Politics in Development Studies* (Cambridge, 1992). These theorists are called “structuralist” because they pursue “theoretical efforts to specify, analyze, and correct economic structures that impede or block the ‘normal,’ implicitly unproblematic, development and functioning allegedly characteristic of Western economies.” Love, *Crafting the Third World*, 1.

³² For an intellectual biography of Prebisch see Edgar J. Dosman, *The Life and Times of Raúl Prebisch, 1901–1986* (Ithaca, 2008). For Prebisch’s ideas as precursor to dependency theory see Love, *Crafting the Third World*, 119–39.

³³ Kathryn Sikkink, *Ideas and Institutions: Developmentalism in Brazil and Argentina* (Ithaca and London, 1991).

European capitalist development to their own region's history.³⁴ To what extent were Latin American economic institutions precapitalist, Latin American variants of their European counterparts during the feudal ages? Or, in contrast, to what extent were they products of capitalism, shaped in and through a relationship with international markets during the colonial era? For Marxist militants, the answer to these theoretical questions would determine revolutionary strategy and tactics, in particular the types of class alliance and fronts with other political organizations they deemed acceptable in contemporary local anti-imperialist and anticapitalist struggles.

From relatively free and open theoretical discussions in the early 1920s, these terminological historical debates over Latin American institutions by the 1940s had become inextricably intertwined with partisan struggles over competing claims to the heritage of revolutionary Marxism. As the political center of international socialism by the 1940s, the Soviet Union also maintained a de facto hold over the center of gravity of international Marxist thought. From the 1930s up to and beyond the period in which Frank came to Latin America, the Soviet Union urged affiliated parties in semicolonial countries, those economically subordinate to imperialism despite a degree of political autonomy, to lead the proletariat into a national struggle in alliance with the peasantry and progressive layers of the national bourgeoisie. This Popular Front strategy placed the "bourgeois democratic" revolution as the immediate historical task for backward countries, a move theoretically justified by an insistence on the necessity for every society to pass through the same universal historical stages, in this case from feudalism to capitalism, on the path to socialism. The official policy of the Soviet-controlled Third International (Comintern) from the mid-1930s until the organization's dissolution in 1943, the Popular Front strategy filtered into Latin American interpretations of Marxism both through Stalinist parties directly affiliated with the Comintern and through more reformist Marxist organizations attracted to the less antagonistic rhetoric of the cross-class alliance.

Out of the social and political formation of the Stalinist and socialist parties adhering to a Popular Front strategy, a number of Latin American Marxist intellectuals developed an interpretation of underdevelopment as a consequence of the remnants in whole or in part of its feudal past. The Argentine Stalinist Victorio Codovilla stood at the center of the pan-Latin American network of political parties propagating the line of revolution by stages in adherence to the

³⁴ See Michael Löwy, "Introduction: Points of Reference for a History of Marxism in Latin America," in Löwy, ed., *Marxism in Latin America from 1909 to the Present: An Anthology* (New Jersey and London, 1992), xiii–lxv.

mandate of the Third International.³⁵ The political program, and its corollary theoretical insistence on the region's current passage through "feudalism" as a universal historical stage, found expression in a number of works in Latin American countries with significant communist parties, notably Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. In Argentina, the historian Rodolfo Puiggrós wrote a history emphasizing the feudal nature of Spain and Portugal at the time of the "discovery" of America, and the persistent stagnation in his own country caused by the inability to overcome that feudal legacy.³⁶ In Chile, where the Popular Front achieved political power through a coalition composed of the Communist Party, the Socialist Party, and the Radical Party, Julio César Jobet, a leading figure in the Socialist Party and a prominent Chilean social theorist, developed a Marxist analysis that explained the contradictions of Chilean history as a consequence of the dual structure of Chilean society. Not a Stalinist, and by no means an unsophisticated thinker, Jobet argued that "semifeudal" forms of production inhered in Chilean rural society while the country's urban centers had developed capitalist production.³⁷

While Frank travelled through Latin America conducting his "informal interviews" and reading up on Latin American history, his early writings demonstrate an engagement precisely with the problem of defining colonial Latin America relative to medieval Europe. The first article to come out of his travels, published in *Monthly Review* in 1962 under the title "Mexico: The Janus Faces of 20th-Century Bourgeois Revolution," hinted at his later thought by suggesting that production of crops for export explains the comparatively unequal distribution of the benefits of capitalist growth in post-feudal Mexico versus the more equitable distributions in countries that achieved their bourgeois revolutions prior to the twentieth century. Yet unlike his later analyses, Frank in "Janus Faces" accepted the prevailing Popular Front Marxist consensus that Latin America had a feudal past similar to that of medieval Europe, from which flowed the implicit conclusion that they would eventually morph into replicas of northern capitalist democracies.³⁸

The content of Frank's work in his intermediary phase shows that he was grappling with questions raised by the Latin American left, not the technocratic developmental policy questions of CEPAL. And the fact that they were published in the *Monthly Review*, setting off a close correspondence and incorporation

³⁵ See Löwy, *Marxism*, xxiii; Manuel Caballero, *Latin America and the Comintern, 1919–1943* (Cambridge, 1986), 28.

³⁶ Rodolfo Puiggrós, *De la colonia a la revolución* (Buenos Aires, 1943).

³⁷ Julio César Jobet, *Ensayo crítico del desarrollo económico-social de Chile* (Santiago, 1955).

³⁸ Andrew Gunder Frank, "Mexico: The Janus Faces of the 20th-Century Bourgeois Revolution," *Monthly Review*, 14/7 (1962), 370–88.

of Frank into the relatively small group of *Monthly Review* affiliates, shows an orientation toward the New Left that was just beginning to emerge in full force. Critiquing US foreign policy would play prominently in New Left thought, and from 1960 on Frank would be a consistent and outspoken critic. Frank's early articles from Latin America have the air of a foreign reporter. He was still an outsider slowly familiarizing himself with the region's debates and history. But, to Frank's credit, he dug deeply into Latin American intellectual networks and he would soon produce something that moved beyond surface reporting by synthesizing trends in Latin American left thought.

TAKING ON THE MYTH OF FEUDALISM

Frank formed the broad contours of his most important and lasting contribution to dependency theory while living in Brazil between 1963 and the spring of 1964. Immediately after marrying Marta Fuentes in Chile in December of 1962, the young couple moved to Brasília, where Frank took a temporary visiting professorship. He taught a graduate seminar in sociology and set out to process the data he had gathered over the preceding year. In his seminar he worked with Ruy Mauro Marini, Theotonio dos Santos, and Vania Bambirra, all of whom would become important figures in Latin American development theory. The four worked together as colleagues again later in the decade at the Centro de Estudios Socioeconómicos at the University of Chile, Santiago.³⁹

In moving to Brazil to study development in the early 1960s, Frank entered into a highly charged intellectual atmosphere. In no other Latin American country had the "developmentalist" perspective achieved a greater level of political support than in Brazil in the late 1950s under the presidency of Juscelino Kubischek.⁴⁰ Prebisch's protégé Celso Furtado—arguably in the long run the most influential of all the CEPAL structuralists—stood at the intellectual center of the developmentalist program in Brazil, actively seeking to insinuate Prebisch's work and the CEPAL line into political discourse. He served as director of a regional planning agency, the Superintendency for the Development of the Northeast (SUDENE), from 1959 to 1964. As extraordinary minister of planning for the government of João Goulart he fought to move economic policy toward autonomous development, opposing in particular participation in the Alliance for Progress, the archetypical US modernization program.⁴¹

Frank's most immediate network included not the Brazilian chapter of CEPAL, but a group of young economists and sociologists who can be characterized

³⁹ Frank, "Development," 25.

⁴⁰ Sikkink, *Ideas*, esp. chap. 4.

⁴¹ Love, *Crafting the Third World*, 153–7.

in a range from slightly left CEPAL collaborators to far-left critics seeking a more transformative solution to the problem of underdevelopment. He attended the first international conference for students from underdeveloped countries in the summer of 1963, and he presented at a symposium with Octavio Ianni and Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who “talked about development in much my terms.” Robert Packenham spends a good deal of time debating whether Cardoso or Frank deserve credit for originating neo-Marxist dependency theory. He suggests that both of their ideas came out in the late 1960s, with Frank’s just a couple of years earlier.⁴² In fact, in the early 1960s the two had a collaborative working relationship, and Frank claimed that Cardoso responded favorably to his first articulations, presented as a critique of the concept of a Latin American feudal stage of development.⁴³ Rodolfo Stavenhagen, who worked in Rio, also heavily influenced Frank, possibly as much as Baran or Sweezy up to that point. In a letter to Stavenhagen, Frank referred to plans that had fallen through earlier that year to bring the Mexico-born sociologist, then working at the Centro Latino-americano de Pesquisas em Ciências Sociais in Rio, to the University of Brasília for a talk.⁴⁴ Frank frequently referred to Stavenhagen as a co-thinker in his correspondence with Sweezy.

In Brasília Frank began working on the first piece that would appear in his most famous collection. He outlined his thoughts for an article that would become “Capitalism and the Myth of Feudalism in Brazilian Agriculture” in June of 1963, just prior to moving from Brasília to Rio. For several months he had been intending to dismantle the myth that Latin American underdevelopment could be attributed to the legacy of its feudal past. As he told Sweezy, however, by the time he sat down to write, his focus had shifted. Because “some Marxist types” in Brazil had already begun to take on the claim that Latin America was feudal, Frank aimed instead “to demonstrate, or at least to suggest . . . that the apparently feudal relations in the countryside were constructed and are here and there maintained by the capitalist structure of the economy, and even of agriculture.”⁴⁵ Although aiming to disprove all variants of the argument that Latin American institutions were feudal, Frank in particular attacked the thesis of the “dual

⁴² Packenham, *Dependency*, 20–23. Packenham ultimately determined that Frank deserved credit for what he called the “thunderclap,” but his determination was based exclusively on the publication dates of the major works, and some hearsay about collusion before publication. Because both Frank’s and Cardoso’s work came out of a collaborative exchange of ideas, I see little relevance in trying to identify the thunderclap. To the extent that it is relevant, Frank’s archives show pretty clearly that he formulated his main thesis by November of 1963 at the latest.

⁴³ PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy, 18 July 1963.

⁴⁴ AGF, Box 1, Frank to Rodolfo Stavenhagen, 1 June 1963.

⁴⁵ PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy, 1 June 1963.

society,” proponents of which claimed that Latin American and other colonized countries contained both feudal and capitalist sectors. Nominally attacking both the “bourgeois” and “traditional Marxist” proponents of the dual thesis, Frank refers to the former only in the introduction. The main body of the essay consists primarily of a critique of what he understands to be “traditional Marxism” on the question of feudalism and capitalism in Brazilian agricultural production. In the “Myth of Feudalism” Frank for the first time posited a global capitalist system extending back several hundred years to the epoch of the mercantile expansion of the European metropolis. Mercantile capital penetrated and colonized Latin America early, and any institutions resembling those of Europe in the feudal era were actually forged within the furnace of capitalist expansion, and therefore capitalist.⁴⁶

Understanding all of the subsequent work that went into *CU* as extending and deepening his argument against the myth of feudalism allows us to resituate Frank within an intellectual tradition distinct from both the structuralists and neo-Marxist imperialism. The correspondence with Sweezy shows that reinterpreting the “feudal” history of Latin America is the main entry point for Frank into his version of dependency theory, and throughout the book that would eventually be published Frank approaches this question as a hypothesis of underdevelopment which he is testing through analysis of historical empirical data. It is the central axis around which all of the subsequent organization of his thoughts revolves, at least throughout the 1960s. It is not clear who he meant by the “Marxist types” that had begun to address this question in Brazil. Although in his essays on Brazil in *CU*, Ianni, Cardoso, and Stavenhagen are three of his most commonly cited opponents representing what Frank called the “traditional Marxist” position supporting feudalism, it is not so clear that they held those positions at that point.⁴⁷ In a letter to Sweezy, Frank claims that Cardoso defended Frank’s thesis on feudalism against “a vicious emotional attack from a partyline panelist” when the two presented on the same panel at a symposium in 1963.⁴⁸ Stavenhagen, for his part, would publish his own theses rejecting both the “dual thesis” and feudal legacy of Latin America in 1965 on the grounds that both the “archaic” and the “modern” sectors “represent the functioning of a single global society, of which both poles are integral parts.”⁴⁹ Stavenhagen’s short article ran a full

⁴⁶ Andre Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil* (New York, 1967) (hereafter *CU*), 221–77.

⁴⁷ Frank, *CU*, 224–9. None of the works cited for the “traditional Marxist” view pre-dates 1961.

⁴⁸ PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy, 18 July 1963.

⁴⁹ Rodolfo Stavenhagen, “Siete Tesis Equivocadas Sobre América Latina,” *El Día*, 25–6 June 1965.

two years before Monthly Review put out the first edition of *CU*, but that should not be taken as an indication that Stavenhagen rejected the myth of feudalism before Frank, or vice versa. Rather, just as in the case of Cardoso, it shows that many of those most associated with dependency theory developed this idea simultaneously, and in close collaboration with one another.

More importantly, a branch of Latin American Marxist historiography had developed all of the elements of Frank's critique of the "traditional Marxist" position on feudalism well before Frank arrived in Latin America, and Frank drew liberally from their work in formulating his ideas. As in the case of the Popular Front Marxist interpretation of Latin America's feudal past, the theory behind the alternative interpretation linked directly to debates within political Marxism over the strategy and tactics of Latin American revolution. Denying that Latin America retained traces of feudalism meant denying the necessity of supporting local capitalist classes in a broad coalition against the rural aristocracy. Although this view found expression in many countries, its strongest articulation came in Argentina in the late 1940s, under the impulse of a national anti-imperialist current then surging through Argentine society. Credit for originating the idea usually falls on Sergio Bagú, whose 1949 book *Economía de la Sociedad Colonial* applied to the region as a whole and made a sharp, resounding rejection of the feudal thesis.⁵⁰ Bagú undoubtedly influenced Frank's thought. Not only is he cited in the final version of *CU*, but Frank wrote a proposal for a graduate course to be taught at the University of Brasília in 1963 organized around "myth" and "reality" of underdevelopment. The syllabus for the course listed Bagú under the "reality" column for the section on Latin American colonial economy.⁵¹

Although less commonly recognized, the work of another Argentine anti-Stalinist Marxist deserves mention in any discussion of the origins of the historiography denying any feudal history to Latin America.⁵² Virtually ignored in English-language scholarship, Silvio Frondizi's *La Realidad Argentina* had a clear influence on Frank's thought. As discussed below, Frank remained largely ignorant of any of the classical Marxist texts relating to his topic throughout the writing of his book, but he did engage secondary syntheses of Latin American Marxism, including Frondizi's book. Frondizi's two-volume opus unfolds around a conceptual framework he had worked out in the late 1940s in an effort to make sense of his current political reality. Although opposed to Perón,

⁵⁰ For scholars who credit Bagú with the thesis, see Löwy, *Marxism*, xxxix.

⁵¹ AGF, Box 201, "Proposito para um curso de post-graduação para o segundo semestre de 1963 no Departamento de Ciências Humanas ad UNB," 1 July 1963.

⁵² As far as I know, only Löwy, *Marxism*, even mentions Frondizi in the same breath as dependency theory.

Fronidzi immediately, almost instinctively, rejected the Democratic Union, a multiparty coalition backed by US ambassador Spruille Braden that constituted Perón's main challenger in the 1945 election. Headed by Codovilla and Rodolfo Ghioldi, the Communist Party of Argentina (CPA) stood at the center of the Democratic Union, which it used to propagate the Latin American Stalinist program of revolution by stages and peaceful coexistence between the periphery and Washington.⁵³ Equally repulsed by what he saw as Perónist hypernationalism and the CPA's concessions to US imperialism, Frondizi located the roots of his country's political crisis in domestic class divisions indelibly shaped by Argentina's, and Latin America's, subordinate economic role within the global economy. His theory of "global capitalist integration" (*integración capitalista mundial*), first articulated in 1946, drew from Marxist theory to predict a new epoch in the evolution of capitalism. Marked by organization of the global capitalist economy under US leadership, the epoch of global integration would see economic forms of control replace overt political colonialism on the global periphery. This theory, worked out in polemic with the CPA in the late 1940s, served as the framework for a rigorous investigation of Argentine political economy in which the economic and social structure developed according to class divisions linked at each juncture to an evolving international capitalist system.

Frank's tool set for interpreting these multifaceted, long-running, complex debates over Latin American history and development policies did not include Marxist analytic categories, nor much knowledge of the intricacies of interparty polemic. As a graduate student in economics, Frank had not studied Marx or any of the classic Marxist writings on imperialism, as he himself repeatedly admitted to Sweezy.⁵⁴ He became a proponent of socialist revolution as a product of his times, based on his favorable impressions of the Cuban Revolution and his disillusion with what he saw as the hypocrisy and contradictions of American foreign policy during the Cold War. Yet his distaste for Cold War hypocrisy extended to the Soviet Union, which Frank had visited twice for research. He had undisguised disdain for many self-proclaimed Marxists in Latin America, whom he viewed as dogmatic and unoriginal thinkers. In particular, he resented the Brazilian Communist Party members, whose rigid adherence to Marx's formula of historical stages led them to reject Frank's "revisionist" thesis that later industrializing countries had skipped the feudal stage and been incorporated directly into a global system of mercantile capitalism.

⁵³ This line came through in a string of pamphlets. See especially Victorio Codovilla, *Batir al Nazi-Peronismo: Para Abrir una Era de Libertad y Progreso* (Buenos Aires, 1946); Rodolfo Ghioldi, *Los Comunistas al Servicio de la Patria* (Buenos Aires, 1945).

⁵⁴ PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy, 4 Nov. 1963.

Sweezy instantly supported Frank's vision underlying his "myth of feudalism" piece. He encouraged Frank's effort to recast Latin American institutions as a product of the historical development of capitalism—as a consequence rather than cause of underdevelopment—but urged Frank to situate his work as a contribution to the Marxist tradition rather than a refutation of it. Over the next couple of years, as Frank wrote the other articles that would go into *CU*, Sweezy worked closely to give the various pieces theoretical coherence, and he systematically pushed Frank toward a certain conception of Marxism. For Sweezy, the idea that development and underdevelopment are two sides of the same coin had precedent in Marx's conception of primary (not primitive) accumulation.⁵⁵ This interpretation of primitive accumulation was not uncontroversial. In the late 1940s Sweezy had been involved in a polemic with the English Marxist economist Maurice Dobb over competing interpretations of the transition from feudalism to capitalism.⁵⁶ As Robert Brenner would note later in the 1970s, Sweezy's conception that primitive accumulation, the literal extraction of resources from colonies, fed early industrialization linked directly to his belief that the spread of markets provided the crucial stimulus to capitalist development.⁵⁷ He pushed Frank to engage this theoretical tradition by reading volume 1 of *Capital*, and Rosa Luxemburg's *Accumulation of Capital*, which perhaps not coincidentally are the *only* two works of classical Marxism to make it into the "References Cited" section of the published book.

Frank and his wife moved to Rio de Janeiro in August of 1963, where he acquired a working space at the Latin American Center for Research in the Social Sciences to pursue his work on the historical sources of underdevelopment, a job secured through his connection to Stavenhagen, who also worked at the center.⁵⁸ Frank's ideas on underdevelopment had been germinating in Brasília, and he tried to respond to Sweezy's attempts to get him to engage Marxism but claimed he was unable to do so in underdeveloped Brasília, which lacked any adequate libraries to support his reading agenda. In Rio, he began reading works which synthesized the classical Marxist positions on imperialism, noting favorably the influence of Demetrio Boersner's "Los Países Subdesarrollados en las doctrinas socialistas," and the work of the brothers Silvio and Arturo Frondizi.⁵⁹ Paul Baran came to Rio in September of 1963, and Frank talked to him several times about his changing views on underdevelopment. Shortly after Baran left and having

⁵⁵ PMS, Box 5, Sweezy to Frank, 7 Jan. 1964.

⁵⁶ Paul M. Sweezy and Maurice Dobb, "The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism," *Science and Society*, 14/2 (1950), 134–67.

⁵⁷ Brenner, "The Origins of Capitalist Development."

⁵⁸ PMS, Box 5, Frank to Huberman and Sweezy, 15 Aug. 1963.

⁵⁹ PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy, undated letter most likely written in September of 1963.

accessed some fresh materials unavailable in Brasilia, Frank sat down in October for three solid weeks of writing, out of which he produced a 150-page manuscript that, once broken up into separate pieces and seriously reworked, formed the first draft of some of his most important works.⁶⁰

As Frank's manuscripts poured into *Monthly Review's* office in New York in late 1963 and early 1964, Sweezy and his team edited Frank's work, provided feedback and reading suggestions, and pushed Frank toward a Marxist line. Frank wrote poorly, especially in draft form. The task of cleaning up his manuscripts tried the patience of every editor he worked with. Jack Rackliffe, to whom much of the stylistic editing work fell, hated Frank, calling him "that little fucking martyr," among other equally ungracious nicknames.⁶¹ Amazed that Frank had the audacity to ask Rackliffe if he knew of any university work in Canada, the latter wrote to Sweezy, "One of the most restful things about metropolitan Toronto is the fact that Gunder ain't here, and I don't look forward to seeing this happy situation changed."⁶² Even in the cleaned-up versions, Frank's writing never achieved much elegance or grace, not due to lack of effort on Rackliffe's part.

Frank responded sensitively, and sometimes almost violently, to criticism. He claimed to solicit and even welcome constructive criticism of the content, but when it came he invariably became defensive. He deflected Sweezy's and Huberman's critiques by attributing the sloppy presentation and thin content of his manuscripts to the working conditions in underdeveloped Latin America. Criticisms of his style infuriated him. Tasked with working his contributions into printable form, Sweezy and Huberman repeatedly asked Frank to be more professional in his presentation. Frank saw this as nitpicking. "If you want to learn something about underdeveloped countries that is not available from Harvard, Michigan State, or Washington," Frank told Sweezy, "you may have to learn that you are likely also to receive the stuff in underdeveloped form."⁶³ Frank responded somewhat differently to Sweezy's substantive critiques of Frank's ambiguous relation to Marxism. He still tried to defend himself, insisting that his work was substantively different from Marxism as he understood it, but conceded that he knew little about it. In response to Sweezy's efforts to get him to situate his work

⁶⁰ PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy, 28 Oct. 1963.

⁶¹ Another time, Rackliffe quoted a passage of a letter Frank had sent to him, and followed up with the comment "Christ he sounds like a real prick." PMS, Box 20, Rackliffe to Sweezy, 2 Oct. 1965. For numerous other examples peruse the correspondence between Sweezy and Rackliffe in 1964, 1965, all in Box 20. Not many letters from Rackliffe to Sweezy fail to disparage Frank.

⁶² PMS, Box 20, Rackliffe to Sweezy, 13 Sept. 1965.

⁶³ PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy and Huberman, 15 Aug. 1963. This was a common refrain for Frank, and made him the unknowing subject of ridicule at the hands of the merciless, but witty, Rackliffe.

within the Marxist tradition, Frank responded, “I cannot, at this time, fulfill the task you set me of pointing out to my readers . . . that what I say is true Marxism, the tradition extended, rather than revisionism. I can’t because I don’t know the tradition. I am trying to find out what it is, but that takes time.”⁶⁴ Again, he attributed his inability to work his way through Sweezy’s reading lists to the material conditions in which he worked, claiming, for example, that he failed to find a single copy of Luxemburg’s book, in any language, anywhere in Brazil.⁶⁵

The manuscript Frank entitled “Capitalism and Underdevelopment” consisted of three parts. The last section would eventually be published as a short article under the same name in *Monthly Review*, and consisted of the basic outline of Frank’s thesis. The first section would ultimately get scrapped, and the middle section, consisting of a lengthy critique of American development studies, would get published originally in the journal *Catalyst* in 1967 under the title “Sociology of Development and Underdevelopment of Sociology.” In this article, Frank took aim directly at *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, the journal affiliated with the CEDCC that had so influenced Frank’s early career. “Sociology of Development,” while not an important positive exposition of dependency theory, levels a serious critique against modernization theory along many of the same lines that historians would criticize the theory more than forty years later. It is a valuable contribution worth the read for any historian trying to understand modernization theory and its response.

CAPITALISM AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT

The mid-1960s marked a particularly difficult period of Frank’s life. He left Brazil in early 1964, just weeks before the coup that ousted Goulart, and moved first to Mexico in the latter half of 1964, and then in 1965 to Santiago, where Fuentes had family. Frank had published a handful of articles, but had not yet made a name for himself as a serious left intellectual and had difficulty securing stable work. More than anything he wanted time to work his way through his ideas. He had a number of manuscripts in the process of editing, the sum total of which already contained his major contribution to the field, but Frank was a terrible writer and his manuscripts needed a heavy overhaul before they could see the light of day.

Before he could even think about his manuscripts, Frank needed to provide for his material needs and those of his family. Now several years removed from the young man who had petulantly resigned from an assistant professorship at MSU, Frank was eager to get back into North American academic circles.

⁶⁴ PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy, 15 Jan. 1964 (misdated 1963).

⁶⁵ PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy, 9 March 1964.

He sent a form letter off to his affiliates bluntly acknowledging his newfound commitments to revolutionary socialism, as he understood it, but also appealing for work in whatever capacity he could find it. In the meantime, he accepted a short-term job writing a study on Chilean agriculture for 350 dollars from CEPAL, and he took a 150-dollar advance from Sweezy based on their informal contract to turn the Brazilian feudalism piece into a short book.⁶⁶ Also, probably largely thanks to behind-the-scenes support from Sweezy, Frank applied to and received a five thousand-dollar grant from the Rabinowitz Foundation.⁶⁷ Harry Magdoff, a *Monthly Review* affiliate who would soon become the coeditor following Huberman's death in 1968, worked for the foundation, which had by 1965 an established tradition of funding *Monthly Review*-related projects.

Throughout most of 1965 Frank tried to fill the gap in his knowledge of Marxist theories of imperialism. At the beginning of the year, he had admitted to Sweezy that he had never read Marx, Lenin, or Luxemburg. By June of that year he claimed in a letter to Hamza Alavi, an Indian Marxist and *Monthly Review* contributor, that he had read Lenin's *Imperialism* three times, but still had never read Marx.⁶⁸ In a letter to Sweezy pitching an edited volume on imperialism, an idea he harbored for years but never accomplished, Frank praised Silvio Frondizi's "Imperialismo y Burguesía Nacional" from the second volume of *La Realidad Argentina* as "the only serious Marxist attempt to draw on [theories of imperialism] and interpret current reality on this continent that I know. Others merely quote the masters and then mechanically apply them supposedly and come out with crap."⁶⁹ In the chapter Frank mentions, Frondizi concluded that the Argentine anti-imperialist movement must struggle against their local bourgeois classes, who had been formed in a subordinate position to imperialism and thus had no interest in leading the country in an independent, "bourgeois democratic" revolution. Frank adopted this political conclusion both in *CU* and in an essay entitled "Who Is the Immediate Enemy?," and it has since been interpreted a major thesis underlying "orthodox" dependency theory.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy, 30 May 1964.

⁶⁷ AGF, Box 1, Frank to Rabinowitz Foundation, 17 Nov. 1964.

⁶⁸ PMS, Box 5, Frank to Hamza Alavi, 24 June 1964.

⁶⁹ PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy, 23 Nov. 1964.

⁷⁰ Frank, *CU*, xvi; André Gunder Frank, "Who Is the Immediate Enemy? Capitalist Underdevelopment or Socialist Revolution," in Frank, *Latin America: Underdevelopment or Revolution: Essays on Development and Underdevelopment and the Immediate Enemy* (New York and London, 1969), 371–409. Packenham describes this as one of the more egregious examples of non-falsifiability, substantive utopianism, and politicized scholarship endemic to the dependency approach. See Packenham, *Dependency*, 31; 116–17.

Contrasting the way in which the respective authors arrive at the conclusion illustrates the differences in their reckoning with Stalinism. Frank, as we have seen, plucked the argument wholesale from Frondizi, and juxtaposed it to the Marxist tradition more broadly, hailing Frondizi as a rare exception able to apply Marxist ideas to a contemporary problem of underdevelopment. Frondizi, in contrast, only arrived at the conclusion through deep engagement with a long tradition of Marxist thought on program and tactics of revolutionary struggle in the periphery of global capitalism. In his second volume, subtitled *La Revolución Socialista*, Frondizi drew his political conclusions for Argentina through close reading of the programs of the entire gamut of Argentine left parties, no matter how small or sectarian. A number of Trotskyists and Trotskyist sympathizers, including a young genius named Milcíades Peña, helped with the redaction of parts of the book.⁷¹ He also drew parallels to similar debates in Russia and Eastern Europe in the years leading up to the Revolution.⁷² In short, the political crisis in Argentina in the late 1940s represented a particular example of a generally recurring problem for later-developing countries within global capitalism, and Marxism, as a series of strategic and tactical lessons, provided valuable tools for understanding and orienting oneself within the social dynamics of peripheral capitalism.

During his precarious year, Frank had also begun to outline his thoughts for applying his still-developing model of dependency to a case study of Chile. Frank lived in Chile for most of 1965, and during that time he took an active interest in Chilean politics and history. The political terrain seemed to provide promising ground for the left, which had already begun to mobilize around the popular reformist, and self-described Marxist, Salvador Allende. Still viewing his main task to be debunking the myth of feudalism, in Frank's reading the "best and most progressive of Chilean economists and historians . . . say that [Chile] used to be a closed economy until, depending on which is speaking, 19, 18, century." Frank told Sweezy in August of 1964 that he had half-written a polemic against this view, in which he argued that Chile had, since the first encounter with mercantile capital, been an "open" economy, linked through exports to an expanding capitalist metropolis. Frank proposed, and Sweezy agreed, that the piece on Chile and the two he had written on Brazil should be combined in a

⁷¹ Peña's work, published in serial form in the 1950s and early 1960s, was collected and published posthumously as a single volume by the Argentine historian Horacio Tarcus. See Milcíades Peña, *Historia del Pueblo Argentino, 1500–1955* (Buenos Aires, 2012).

⁷² For an excellent discussion of the evolution of "Permanent Revolution" in Marxist thought see Richard B. Day and Daniel Gaido, "The Historical Origin of the Expression 'Permanent Revolution,'" in Day and Gaido, *Witnesses to Permanent Revolution: The Documentary Record* (Chicago, 2009), 1–58.

volume to be put out by Monthly Review Press.⁷³ Despite the direct pertinence to his earlier debates with Dobb, Sweezy gave no indication either of objecting to or supporting the definitions implied in Frank's use of openness or closure as measures of Chilean feudalism and capitalism. Equating links to external markets with capitalism would become a major critique of Frank's work in the 1970s, and Sweezy gave a tacit approval of this position.

At this point, all of the features of the argument that would go into Frank's opus were in place. Ultimately, the dual thesis proved just one variant of Frank's larger opponent: Latin American historiography that drew on Europe's feudal past to derive categories to describe Latin America's political economic institutions. Frank tackled the larger historiography most successfully in his essay "Capitalist Development of Underdevelopment in Chile," which he wrote in 1964 and 1965 while supported by his Rabinowitz grant. His case study of Chile and its Brazilian counterpart marked his most impressive historical work up to that point. Both "Capitalist Underdevelopment" essays proceed from the view that the historical development of global capitalism explains Latin America's current underdevelopment. Contemporary Latin American political-economic institutions, such as the *latifundia*, despite superficial similarities to feudal estates, function within and for the purposes of a global capitalist system of surplus extraction. Moreover, these specifically Latin American forms of mobilizing agricultural labor were formed in and through mercantile colonialism. Unlike the closed, autarchical feudal estate, the Chilean *hacienda*, a large landed estate run by a patron, produces for trade and exists primarily to supply export-oriented Chilean urban metropolises with their necessary food and raw materials.⁷⁴

Frank's famous metropolis-satellite model came out of his effort to reclassify Latin American agricultural institutions as capitalist rather than feudal. The owner of the estate exercised monopoly control over tenant farmers and small-farm owners on the *hacienda*. Although admitting that these small farmers produced primarily for themselves, Frank insisted that they must be seen as an agricultural working class whose surplus production flowed upward to the regional micrometropolis and ultimately to the global macrometropolis.⁷⁵ Frank's study of Latin America's colonial legacy convinced him that the capitalist system in the contemporary world functions through a global structure of metropolises and satellites. With the US at the pinnacle, as the global metropolis, "a whole

⁷³ Quotations, discussion of Chilean politics, and proposal and outline of Chilean history from PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy, 18 Aug. 1964. Sweezy responds favorably in a letter dated 26 Aug. 1964.

⁷⁴ Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment*, 37.

⁷⁵ Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment*, 50.

chain of metropolises and satellites” can be traced all the way down to the level of the most rural peasant.⁷⁶ Even the most rural region, according to Frank’s model, links into the global capitalist system by producing for a local micrometropolis. The extraction of surplus through this global metropolis–satellite structure did not just inhibit economic and social development in the Third World; it positively precluded it. Frank’s use of the concepts of “surplus” and “monopoly” in this analysis come from Baran rather than Marx, drawn from the former’s claim that monopoly capitalism creates a consistent inability to produce maximum potential surplus, which it would be unable to absorb. Frank’s unfamiliarity with the longer tradition is abundantly apparent in the way he uses “monopoly,” which does not refer, as in the work of Lenin or Baran and Sweezy, to a specific historical stage of development of capitalism marked by consolidation and concentration, but rather is presented by Frank as a perennial feature of capitalism roughly meaning simply any condition of unequal distributions of power and control over economic resources.

Although the position against feudalism and Frank’s political conclusions were influenced by ideas of the Latin American anti-Stalinist left, the presentation remained very much that of a North American development economist attempting to solve the riddle of underdevelopment. Throughout the work, there is a certain formalistic, hypothesis-testing feel to Frank’s approach to questions of historical interpretation that do not easily lend themselves to that kind of formalism. Latin American historical scholarship is plugged in as data in a prolonged string of interrelated “either–or” questions. The references to Marxist categories are clunky add-ons rather than the abstractions framing the historical inquiry. There is probably no way of determining how much of an editorial hand Sweezy had on the introduction, but it there is little doubt that Frank felt compelled to present this as a work of Marxism, and that he was not entirely comfortable operating within that tradition.

AFTERWORD AND CONCLUSIONS

By the late 1960s, the *Catalyst* piece and *CU* had gained Frank a certain amount of élan within a growing group of US scholars and intellectuals critical of the modernization approach. As the 1960s student protest movement underwent a tactical shift from passive resistance into a more militant phase, Latin American guerrillas assumed a central symbolic significance. As an English-speaking ex-academic who had forgone a good deal of potential material comfort to live amongst Latin American revolutionaries, Frank had an almost guaranteed place

⁷⁶ Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment*, 146–7.

within the Third Worldist turn of US radicalism. Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) leader Don McKelvey organized a Radical Education Project (REP), which consisted of a reading list to be distributed among SDS cells on the methods for achieving radical structural change. McKelvey considered Frank, Sweezy, and Baran prime representatives of the theory behind Latin American revolutionary anti-imperialism, and he solicited an annotated list of Frank's work to include in his project.⁷⁷ Frank's book and article made it onto the REP list, and were thus in a literal sense "required" reading for SDS-affiliated New Lefties in the late 1960s. A radical history graduate student from University of Wisconsin–Madison, one of three epicenters for student radicalism, wrote Frank a letter saying that his book had been assigned by Thomas Skidmore in his seminar on Brazilian history, and the graduate students defended Frank's ideas against the attacks of the more conservative professor.⁷⁸ Initially, at least, Frank's book captured the changing mood of the times and carried the almost mystical aura of armed insurrection. The real analytical value of the book's contents was almost beside the point. As long as its author was liberal with his use of the word "revolution" and could speak authentically about Latin American conditions, the book had a ready-made audience.

At the same time, by the time *CU* hit shelves Frank already lagged behind other Latin American *dependentistas*. The idea of dependency, or the dependent situation of a country, had been moving on a very different theoretical plane than the one in which Frank trained before arriving in Latin America. Despite fully immersing himself in the discourse, he never really managed to assimilate the theoretical underpinnings, which required a much fuller grasp of Marxism than Frank achieved at least until the 1970s, if ever. By the late 1960s, most of Frank's cohort of Latin American *dependentistas* had moved beyond him in their grasp of, to use Ruy Mauro Marini's phrase, the "dialectic of dependency."⁷⁹ Frank worked with his Brazilian friends Marini, Theotonio dos Santos, and Vania Bambirra at the Centro de Estudios Socioeconómicos (CESO) from 1969 until the downfall of the Allende government in 1973. CESO marked the high point of a self-described school of "dependency theorists" trying to deepen the theoretical basis and develop empirical, practically oriented research from its central tenets. This entailed a number of rifts and schisms, especially surrounding the nature of the Chilean road to socialism. Nonetheless, the center produced a remarkable amount of valuable scholarship which appeared in its bulletins

⁷⁷ AGF, Box 1: Frank to McKelvey, 20 Oct. 1967; Frank to McKelvey, 26 Jan. 1968; McKelvey to Frank, 8 Feb. 1968.

⁷⁸ AGF, Box 1, anonymous student to Frank, 26 May 1968.

⁷⁹ Ruy Mauro Marini, "Dialéctica de la dependencia: La economía exportadora," *Sociedad y Desarrollo*, 1 (1972), 35–51.

and notebooks.⁸⁰ Despite his nearly three full years of employment at CESO, Frank's name is virtually absent from the work. Throughout this period, he was primarily interested in publishing the many essays he had written by the middle of the decade in several languages in various collected volumes throughout the world. Although the sheer number of these publications baffles the mind, they did little to develop or build upon *CU* in any meaningful way.⁸¹ Frank also spent this time working and reworking a two-volume reader on "underdevelopment," in collaboration with Said Shah, which never saw the light of day.

Despite helping trigger the growth of the dependency critique of modernization and the Third Worldist radical orientation in the United States, *CU* by the early 1970s had been dismissed from multiple directions as a serious theoretical accomplishment. For the positivist social scientist, Frank overshot the mark in attempting to generalize from the Latin American case a model of underdevelopment applicable across time and space. Scholars such as Robert Packenham, who believed in a distinction between ideology and social science, found Frank's work tautological for causally attributing underdevelopment to capitalism while simultaneously linking capitalism and underdevelopment by definition.⁸² Even while varying widely in their measurement of the overall value of Frank's intervention, most reviews coming from US social scientists level some kind of criticism at the simplicity, rigidity, or tautological nature of Frank's metropolis-satellite model, which could not explain, for example, how countries like the United States were able to move from the position of underdeveloped satellite to industrial metropolis.⁸³

On the left end of the spectrum, Frank's work generated fruitful criticisms that ultimately might be the book's most enduring achievement. Eugene Genovese, the US historian of slavery with Marxist inclinations, lauded Frank's effort even while sharply rebuking parts of his analysis. For Genovese, Frank's book fit within an exciting trend in comparative history that could help draw new generalizations from the variety of unfree labor systems in various times and places in modern history. The value of Frank's work, for Genovese, lay in showing that Latin American rural labor relations were shaped under the integrative market forces of the expanding capitalist economy. Yet, by dismissing nonmarket or subsistence

⁸⁰ The entirety of CESO's work is held at the Biblioteca Nacional de Chile in Santiago.

⁸¹ In English, these essays were gathered in a volume entitled *Latin America: Underdevelopment or Revolution: Essays on the Development of Underdevelopment and the Immediate Enemy* (New York, 1969).

⁸² Robert Packenham, "On *Capitalist Underdevelopment* by Andre Gunder Frank," *American Political Science Review*, 73/1 (1979), 341-42.

⁸³ See Richard Graham, "Review," *American Historical Review*, 74/5 (1969), 1757-8; Emanuel de Kadt, "Review," *International Affairs*, 45/2 (1969), 396-7; Street, "Review," 885-6.

relations, Frank “ceases to make sense.”⁸⁴ On a similar note, but with more punch, Ernesto Laclau published a lengthy critique of Frank’s work in *New Left Review* in 1971. Like Genovese, Laclau appreciated the spirit of Frank’s effort to take on the “dual thesis,” but heavily criticized him for lack of clarity in his definitions of feudalism and capitalism. Considering that Frank’s primary goal was to redefine Latin America’s political economic system, he is shockingly fast and loose with his definitions. Although Frank never clearly defines what he means by “capitalism” or “feudalism,” Laclau infers that Frank’s definitions of both rest primarily on relations to the market. In short, capitalism is production for the market and feudalism is production for subsistence. Thus defined, Frank’s conception of capitalism is so loose “that he is unable to derive any concrete consequences from it about anything.”⁸⁵ In 1974 Immanuel Wallerstein picked up Frank’s “development of underdevelopment” framework and placed it at the center of the first volume of his ambitious history of the “world-system.”⁸⁶ Building on Laclau, Robert Brenner criticized Wallerstein, Frank and Sweezy for their circulationist Marxism. All of these debates provided healthy stimulus to discussions of the applicability of Marxism in medieval Europe and the colonial world, which continue to inform even the most current historical scholarship. No matter how discredited Frank may be among social scientists, bits and pieces of his thought remain and even thrive in the general framework behind much of the so-called “new history of capitalism,” and as at least two critics have recently pointed out it would be helpful for this new cottage industry to revisit the historical origins of those ideas.⁸⁷

Tracing Frank’s thought as he tried to navigate distinct, contradictory, and at times competing interpretations of Marxism helps us understand some of the ambiguity in and interpretive disagreements over the finished product. Frondizi, Peña, Bagú, and other Latin American intellectuals from whom Frank either

⁸⁴ Eugene Genovese, “The Comparative Focus in Latin American History,” *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, 12/3 (1970), 317–27, at 325.

⁸⁵ Ernesto Laclau, “Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America,” *New Left Review*, 67 (1971), 19–38, at 28.

⁸⁶ Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York and London, 1974), 98.

⁸⁷ Jeffrey Sklansky, “Labor, Money, and the Financial Turn in the History of Capitalism,” *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, 11/1 (2014), 23–46; Scott Reynolds Nelson, “Who Put Their Capitalism in My Slavery,” *Journal of the Civil War Era*, 5/2 (2015), 289–310. Sven Beckert’s *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (Knopf, 2014) is heavily framed around Wallerstein’s model. In his depiction of the way cotton merchants structured peripheral economies, particularly in India, around monocrop exports, he is undeniably making claims that mimic the dependency tradition.

directly or indirectly appropriated the main contours of his intervention found in Marxism a useful tool for orienting themselves within a rapidly changing class environment. They paid particular attention to the way that local economic forms and structures of power diverged from the European model as capitalist development moved from the core to the periphery, an insight premised on the observation that the structural contradictions operating on the motives of their national and regional ruling classes played out on a terrain of ever-increasing global economic integration. Analytically, this early variant of what we would now call “globalization” theory appealed to Frank. He cognized it according to the formalism he acquired from development economics, and produced a model locating the social, economic, and political causes of development and underdevelopment at the international rather than the national level. Ironically, even Frank’s commitment to socialism, triggered by his support for Cuba, retained something of the 1950s North American academic technocrat looking to bring his skills in dissecting and analyzing the factors of underdevelopment to the aid of a planned economy in its nascent stages. Frank neither joined a revolutionary organization nor became a technocrat within any government, but whereas he rejected the former on principle he retained the hope throughout the decade of making himself “consequential” by obtaining a technocratic post.

Frank thus reintroduced the theoretical dilemmas of revolution on the periphery of global capitalism to a mass audience of New Leftists in the United States, but he filtered the ideas through a distinctly academic, technocratic lens. Sweezy and, to a lesser extent, Baran facilitated this, because their own interpretations of Marxism had been similarly shorn of any link to a revolutionary agent. Their turn to abstract economic theorizing for a future generation of planners in the course of their isolation and persecution in American society throughout the 1950s stands in stark contrast to the growing sense of urgency to prove consequential in the real, immediately present social struggles throughout the continent that motivated Latin American Marxists through the same period. The consequences remain with us to the present. Even while elements of Frank’s work have wound their way indelibly into still-current academic trends, the simplicity of his model and its true but misunderstood Marxist roots have contributed to the persistent dismissal of Marxism as a theory applicable in the global periphery.