

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara

Defining the Monster: The Social Science and Rhetoric of Neo-Marxist Theories of  
Imperialism in the United States and Latin America, 1945-1973

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in History

by

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June 2018

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April 2017

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I had the benefit of working with many knowledgeable and generous faculty members at UCSB. As my advisor and the chair of my dissertation committee, Nelson Lichtenstein has ushered the project through every stage of its development, from conceptualization to defense. I pitched the idea of writing a seminar paper on Andre Gunder Frank in his office roughly four years ago, and since then he has enthusiastically supported my efforts, encouraged me to stay focused on the end goal, and provided detailed feedback on multiple drafts. That is not to say that I have always incorporated all his comments/criticisms, but when I have failed to do so it is mostly out of lack of time, resources, or self-discipline. I will continue to draw from a store of Nelson's comments as a blueprint as I revise the manuscript for eventual publication as a monograph.

Alice O'Connor, Mary Furner, and Salim Yaqub also read and commented on the manuscript, and more broadly influenced my intellectual trajectory. Salim helped me present my work at numerous conferences, which in turn helped me think through how the project fit in the frame of Cold War historiography. Alice and Mary pushed me to broaden the scope of my narrative, which may otherwise have been narrowly focused on a particular episode in the history of Marxist thought. I benefited immeasurably from their vast knowledge of the history of economic thought and public policy. As with Nelson, when I have fallen short of incorporating their advice I have done so to my own detriment, and to the detriment of the project.

I owe a special debt to Emanuele Saccarelli, who chaired my MA thesis at San Diego State University. Emanuele introduced me to Marxism, opening up a world of ideas that has

consumed my mental energy without interruption for a decade. Though Emanuele has not read this dissertation, and likely would not agree with every word, he heavily influenced the interpretation of Marxism at the core of the narrative.

Angus Bergin, Leo Ribuffo, and Tanya Harmer provided very valuable comments on papers presented at conferences. Jeffrey Sklansky graciously read and provided extensive comments on a draft of a chapter. Thanks also to the anonymous reviewers who read two drafts of the article published by *Modern Intellectual History*, much of which appears in the fourth chapter of the dissertation. As the editor I worked with at *MIH*, Charles Capper patiently helped steward me through my first publication. Thanks to *MIH* for permission to reprint the article.

My fellow graduate students at UCSB provided a constant source of emotional comradery, general intellectual stimulation, and direct feedback on the project. Kit Smemo, Samir Sonti, Tim Paulson, Jesse Halvorsen, Caitlin Rathe, Brian Tyrrell, Andrew Elrod, and Sasha Coles all contributed substantively to the development of the manuscript at one point or another. In many cases they read drafts of chapters, in others they discussed the ideas either in seminars or off campus in social settings. Kurt Newman convinced me to stick it out at a crucial moment, and suggested I write about Paul Sweezy. I have often been amazed to hear other historians describe graduate school as a time of isolation and loneliness. That wasn't my experience at all. On the contrary, as a graduate student at UCSB I found myself in *the* most robust and personally rewarding social network of my entire life. In addition to the names already mentioned, this social network included Jackson Warkentin, Heather Berg, David Baillergeon, Dusty Hoesly, Michael Kinsella, Will Murphy, Morag Murphy,

Sarah Jonson, Chris Kegerreis, Sarah Hanson, Eric Massey, Laura Moore, Anna Rudolph, all members of Dad Strength, and Ryan and Brittney Minor.

My family has offered unfaltering support in my years as a graduate student. They have fielded my abundant anxieties with patience, expressed their admiration at my accomplishments, and picked up more than a few tabs. Thanks especially to my parents, Les Stephens and Debbie Jansson. Thanks also to their spouses, Claes Jansson and Tracey Stephens; my siblings Jake Stephens, Sarah Stephens, Carlie Steele and family, and Chad King; and to my wife, Sasha, and her family, Jeri Coles, Jeff Coles, and Lauren Coles. I never would have made it through without everything you have all done for me. Thank you.

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## ABSTRACT

Defining the Monster: The Social Science and Rhetoric of Neo-Marxist Theories of  
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Drawing from a range of newly available archival materials gathered from multiple countries, my dissertation traces the North American academic reception of Latin American anti-imperialist intellectual traditions in the 1960s and 1970s. Obviously this is a broad story, to which I only contribute a piece. To limit the scope of the narrative, I have focused primarily on the intellectuals surrounding the independent socialist journal *Monthly Review*, and used that as a frame for bringing in other actors. The archival source base includes the personal papers of Paul Sweezy, Paul Baran, Andre Gunder Frank, and Harry Magdoff; the journals *Monthly Review*, *Studies on the Left*, *American Socialist*; and the international records of the Trotskyist Socialist Workers' Party (SWP). The correspondence of the editors of *Monthly Review* and the records of the SWP reveal a broad and overlapping network of actors spanning virtually the entire globe. I have also drawn from a wide range of South American sources to provide the context and background for the intellectual currents these North American thinkers encountered when they turned their attention to South American thought, as indicated in their correspondence. Notable examples include the works of José Carlos Mariátegui, Silvio Frondizi, Milcíades Peña, Sergio Bagú, Theotonio dos Santos,

Ruy Mauro Marini, Regis Debray, and Adolfo Gilly as well as internal documents of the University of Chile's *Centro de Estudios Socioeconomicos*, an interdisciplinary research center that housed many of the most influential *dependentistas* from 1966 to 1973.

The narrative unfolds both chronologically and thematically. Chapter 1 introduces the reader to Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy—the two US-based Marxist economists who collaboratively did the most to work out the holistic theory of political economy behind 1960s neo-Marxist imperialist discourse—and situates Sweezy's magazine *Monthly Review* in the context of the early Cold War New York intellectual scene. Through examining Baran's and Sweezy's early academic careers, we can see the space briefly opened for academic Marxism by the political and social context of the late 1930s and the Great Depression. Prior to the Cold War, Sweezy and Baran personified the blurry, liminal space between Popular Front fellow-traveler and New Deal policy-oriented intellectual. *Monthly Review* came to life amid the erosion of that social-intellectual space. The “independent socialist” journal's editors and regular contributors experienced the erosion as the collapse of their social and material foundations, and the traumatic experience would have a deep impact on their theoretical system. Chapter 2 narrates the solidification of Baran's and Sweezy's unique brand of Marxism against the backdrop of the dominant political and intellectual trends of the United States in the 1950s.

Chapter 3 follows the propagation of *Monthly Review's* brand of Marxism to early New Leftists through the magazine editors' role in constructing a certain interpretation of the origins and significance of the Cuban Revolution. Sweezy and *MR* co-editor Leo Huberman offered the first book-length analysis interpreting Castro's Cuba as a “socialist”



state. This perspective reached an audience of New Left campus radicals through *Monthly Review's* influence over the founders of *Studies on the Left*.

Chapter 4 follows the intellectual biography of a young development economist named Andrew Frank through his radicalization by the Cuban Revolution, subsequent deep immersion in Latin American thought, and emergence as Andre Gunder Frank to introduce dependency theory to English-speaking scholarly audiences in North America. In contrast to the story usually told by historians and social scientists, I argue that a legacy of Latin American Marxist thought dealing with questions of hegemony (in Lenin's sense) and uneven and combined development (in Trotsky's) are crucial to understanding the origins and historic significance of Frank's version of dependency theory. Frank was swept up in the same currents locally that fed into the early New Left. From a solid development economics insider, he became a critic of US imperialism and of modernization theory as its justifying ideology. Motivated by his break with his profession, and what he perceived as an inability to properly understand Latin American underdevelopment from within any of the North American academic disciplines, Frank lived among and absorbed the ideas of Latin American academic leftists. In his synthesis of the intellectual currents he encountered, he was most influenced by a long tradition grappling with the relation between the short-term goals of the nationalist struggle against imperialism and the longer struggle for socialism. Unfamiliar with these debates, or their longer Marxist antecedents, Frank cognized them according to Cold War mental categories and synthesized them with the neo-Marxist ideas he had absorbed through reading *Monthly Review* and Paul Baran's *Political Economy of Growth*.

The fifth and final chapter locates Neo-Marxism as a mobilizing political ideology as it operated in three terrains: US New Left campus radicalism, Santiago-based social science discourse during the “Chilean road to socialism,” and US social science discourse in the transition from the “New Deal Order” to the “Age of Fracture.” In each case, would-be revolutionaries struggled to weaponize their academic theorizing against the monster, and the institutional context of the actors and deeply ingrained assumptions about the theory proved unequal to the task. US campus radicals assumed corporate liberalism locked the American working class in a mass false consciousness for the indefinite future, which led them not even to pose, let alone answer, the question of “hegemony” in the classical Marxist sense. In Chile, dependency theorists did pose the question, and they engaged in a real struggle to win Chilean rural and urban workers over to a program of revolutionary socialism. But they lost to a coalition of local and imperialist reactionary forces, laying the groundwork for the first ever structural adjustment program that would come to be known as the Washington Consensus. North American academics mobilized by Neo-Marxist theory tried to secure a foothold for Marxist scholarship within the academy and use this vital strategic point within the cultural apparatus to disrupt the process of cultural reproduction through which imperialism maintained domestic social stability. Ultimately, this was the most successful effort. The long-run result has been an academic Marxist discourse that has adopted the genre conventions and idioms of the disciplines in which it is embedded.

*Defining the Monster* brings together historiographies of modernization theory and development economics, the history of the left in the United States, and global intellectual history to make broad and more narrow interventions. Historians of modernization theory show the role of ideas in history by demonstrating the direct influence that academic thought

exerts over the ideologies of policy-makers. This literature tends to portray the evolution of academic thought primarily on the plane of ideas, then traces those ideas as they become embedded in various public and private institutions with influence over public policy. My project, in contrast, focuses on academic intellectuals who orient their ideas toward real or imagined counterhegemonic social movements, hoping to shape public policy by generating or gaining influence within publics that will replace or redirect the energies of existing policy-making institutions. By showing how policy-makers come to be constrained in their actions and how academic discourse becomes a site of social contestation, this approach grounds the evolution of academic thought in material social forces and offers a fuller understanding of the role of ideas in historical processes.

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## **Introduction: Awakening Inside the Monster**

*“We [in the US] have the advantage over all other socialists of being situated right in the lair of the monster.” Paul Sweezy and Leo Huberman, 1965.<sup>1</sup>*

*“As people who are located inside the monster, revolutionary Americans are in a position to do decisive damage to the U.S. ruling class’s plans to continue and expand its world rule.” Ted Gold, 1970.<sup>2</sup>*

“There is an old Wobbly poster showing a prisoner behind bars,” wrote Eric Mann to Harry Magdoff in 1971. “He says, ‘we are in here for you, you are out there for us.’” Mann wrote to Magdoff from a prison-cell in Concord, Massachusetts, where he was serving a two-year sentence for vandalism and assault after leading a chapter of the militant student group Weathermen to invade the Harvard Center for International Affairs in the fall of 1969. Magdoff, for his part, had recently assumed co-editorship of *Monthly Review*, a radical journal that catered to academic Marxists. *Monthly Review* was best-known for advancing a specific political economic theory of imperialism. That focus fascinated Mann, who noted, “When I get out we should talk. I want to understand more about the economics of the empire...I still have virtually no real understanding of how an imperialist economy operates. But I am getting a lot better at learning how to destroy it.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Sweezy and Leo Huberman, “Tell the Truth,” *Monthly Review* 17/2 (June 1965), 1-6 at 2.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS*, (New York, NY: Random House, 1973), 593.

<sup>3</sup> Eric Mann to Harry Magdoff, 31 January, 1971, Harry Magdoff Papers, Box 6, Folder labeled “New School Class,” Tamiment Library, New York University. Hereafter I will use the abbreviation HMP to refer to the collection. Magdoff’s papers remain unsorted, so sometimes nothing more than a box number will be used to guide researchers. Where

Mann walked a fairly typical path through the tumult of 1960s youth radicalism. When he began his activism with Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in 1965, the broad-based social opposition historian Van Gosse coined the “movement of movements” had reached full force. Boasting a diverse spectrum of political and social outlooks, the 1960s protest movement eludes simple ideological classification. Historians trying to unravel the ideological threads feeding into the tapestry of the New Left have emphasized radical liberalism, pacifism, anti-racism and the Beat counterculture. After being weaned in the early phases of this movement, characterized by its conscious decentralized structure and ideological diversity, Mann, like hundreds of his generation of radicals, veered sharply in the opposite direction in the late 1960s. Disciplined, ideologically exclusive splinter groups replaced the amorphous ecumenical movement of movements. The Weathermen, Mann’s group, took discipline and ideological coherence to the extreme, requiring members to sacrifice worldly possessions and interpersonal relationships for the single-minded purpose of killing “the monster,” US imperialism. Biographically, Mann thus personifies the consensus narrative, captured and broadly circulated in Todd Gitlin’s conception of the “years of hope” and “days of rage” as the dichotomous phases of the New Left.<sup>4</sup>

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possible, I refer to folders as labeled by Magdoff, which are very frequently misleading as to their actual content. For the incident that led to Mann’s arrest, see: Sale, *SDS*, 602.

<sup>4</sup> Histories of the ideological origins of the New Left stressing pacifism, radical liberalism, and the Beat counterculture are legion. See: Kevin Mattson, *Intellectuals in Action: The Origins of the New Left and Radical Liberalism, 1945-1970*, (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002); Maurice Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer: The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left*, (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1987); Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1987), 12-77. For a semi-auto-biographical account of sixties radicals in their revolutionary Third World Marxist phase, see: Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals turn to Lenin, Mao and Che*, (New York, NY: Verso, 2002). For a more historical account of New

Such a sudden and sharp reversal begs historical explanation. Historians have portrayed sixties radicalism largely through the lens of the generation's own self-perceptions. The term "New Left" originated in England and quickly caught on with the explosion of student radicalism in the United States in the early 1960s. The nomenclature remains current, not simply to honor the self-identity of a group of historical actors, but also as a frame to periodize the broader history of the US Left. Sixties radicals, in the consensus narrative, differed from earlier iterations along virtually every dimension. They hailed from different social backgrounds, organized around different axes of struggle, and, especially, rejected the tired and clichéd theories of an Old Left forged in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution of 1917. While histories of the New Left have expanded to encompass ever-wider social layers and geographic horizons, discontinuity with the Old Left has remained a central theme. This sense of rupture is often captured with the metaphor of "death" and "rebirth," or the image of the New Left arising phoenix-like "out of the ashes" of the Old.<sup>5</sup>

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Left "neo-Bolshevikization," see: Howard Brick and Christopher Phelps, *Radicals in America: The U.S. Left Since the Second World War*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 121-217.

<sup>5</sup> Imagery of death and rebirth, Maurice Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer*. Phoenix metaphor: Lisa McGirr, "Port Huron and the Origins of the International New Left," in Richard Flacks and Nelson Lichtenstein eds., *The Port Huron Statement: Sources and Legacies of the New Left's Founding Manifesto*, (Philadelphia, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 2015), 50-64, at 53 then repeated at 54. Christopher Phelps, "Lefts Old and New: Sixties Radicals, Now and Then," in Howard Brick and Gregory Parker eds., *A New Insurgency: The Port Huron Statement and Its Times*, (Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan Publishing, University of Michigan Library, 2012), makes a valuable contribution, noting that the New Left *created* the category "Old Left" to denote the discontinuity between themselves and older versions of U.S. radicalism. Phelps argues the categories, though meaningful to the generation at the time, simply dissolve on closer historical scrutiny.

Resituating the intellectual history of radical thought in the US around changing theories of imperialism helps better understand the New Left's transmutation from pacifist proponents of participatory democracy to revolutionary anti-imperialists dedicated to slaying the monster. Centering discourses of imperialism, a dialectic of quantitative and qualitative change replaces the resurrection metaphor as a means of thinking through continuities and discontinuities along several dimensions of ideas and programs at the far-left of American politics. A "Neo-Marxist" theory of imperialism compelled the extreme voluntarism of the late 1960s, of the variety that led college students to blow up buildings.<sup>6</sup> But the image of classical Marxism "reborn" for a generation of 1960s youth accurately captures neither the features of Neo-Marxism, nor the social dynamics behind its propagation into the organizations of student radicalism. Tracing the evolution of the Marxist theory of imperialism in US discourse from the 1930s through the onset of the Cold War helps identify important lines of continuity linking the ideas of the Old Left to the those of the New. Historians of the American left have portrayed the rise of the Communist Party following the Russian Revolution as a deviation in American radical thought. By vesting progressive agency in the Soviet Union over and above local class struggle, the Communist Party appeared to be controlled by a foreign element; an image opponents successfully leveraged to create a rift between the party and the deep-seated, long-running tradition of American

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<sup>6</sup> In employing this terminology, I am following the lead of scholars largely referring to Paul Baran's and Andre Gunder Frank's interventions into the subfield of development economics. See: Aidan Foster-Carter, "Neo-Marxist Approaches to Development and Underdevelopment," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 3/1 (1973); Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith* fourth edition, (New York, NY: Zed Books, 2014 [1996]), 109-122; H.W. Arndt, *Economic Development: The History of an Idea*, (New York and London, 1987), 116-120.



radicalism.<sup>7</sup> Yet, by focusing on a continuous and sustained critique of US imperialism as it evolved from the 1930s to the 1970s, we see that the New Left not only repeated this error, but did so by replacing the Soviet Union with the Third World in the analytical and programmatic framework of “imperialism” coming out of 1930s Stalinized Marxism.

Highlighting this broad continuity does not discount real and important changes in discourse of imperialism from the 1930s to the 1960s, but rather recasts those changes as incremental and cumulative impressions shaped through the way dissident intellectuals experienced evolutions in the structure of world capitalism, engaged with the liberal “vital center” of North American thought, and tried to situate their ideas in a rapidly changing institutional context for the production and dissemination of ideas. Intellectuals who saw the US as an imperialist power had to modify classical Marxist definitions of imperialism to adequately apply them to the structure of post-World War Two international relations. Following the war, the US emerged as the unrivalled economic and military leader of the capitalist world. Clearly, the post-war generation no longer lived in the multipolar world order in which Rosa Luxemburg, Rudolf Hilferding, and V.I. Lenin applied their interpretations of Marx’s *Capital* to explain the economic motives behind the scramble for territory at the turn of the twentieth century. In place of a multipolar world order stood a

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<sup>7</sup> This argument is made most explicitly by: James Weinstein, *The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912-1925*; Theodore Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia: The Formative Period*, (New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1960). The argument has received a more textured treatment recently by works from Jacob Zumoff and Bryan Palmer, who map the increasing subservience of the Communist Party to the Comintern against the changing political dynamics within the Soviet Union. See: Jacob A. Zumoff, *The Communist International and US Communism, 1919-1929*, (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2014); Bryan D. Palmer, *James P. Cannon and the Origins of the American Revolutionary Left, 1890-1928*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

bipolar system of international relations perceived by contemporaries as an ideological struggle to the death between capitalism and communism. Internally, the capitalist bloc experienced something closer to what International Relations scholars call “hegemonic stability,” organized under Washington’s leadership.<sup>8</sup> Thinkers working within the Marxist tradition had to reconcile important components of their theory of imperialism to fit the changed situation. Describing the US as an “imperialist” power under conditions of unchallenged US hegemony meant something other than overt political colonization to create spheres of influence against other imperialist rivals. Methods of coercion and exploitation within an organized capitalist bloc became subtler, if no less pernicious. Moreover, the dividends accruing to the metropolitan power in this new type of organized imperialism outweighed those of the earlier competitive variety, enabling Washington to seemingly permanently buy off domestic class struggle through super-exploitation on the capitalist periphery, thus reshaping class relations domestically.

More even than structural changes to world capitalism, the academicization of intellectualism from 1945 to the 1960s transformed US discourse of imperialism. Throughout this period, concepts of “imperialism” and “colonialism” operated in a dual arena, as mobilizing rhetoric for counterhegemonic struggles, and in the academic subfields of development economics and modernization theory, where broad questions about

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<sup>8</sup> Hegemonic stability theory is a specific variant of International Relations realist theory. IR realists argue the structure of the international system—the relative power distributions among nation-states—is the most important independent variable determining the foreign policies of individual states within the system. Scholars trace the origins of HST to Charles Kindleberger, *The World in Depression, 1929-1939*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973). See also: Robert Gilpin, *The Political Economy of International Relations*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987); David Lake, “Leadership, Hegemony, and International Economy,” *International Studies Quarterly*, 37/4 (Dec. 1993), 459-489.

epistemology and holistic social theory were interpreted and debated within a positivist framework, analytically fractured to fit disciplinary conventions. The academy that stood at the center of this institutional context limited the ability to pursue certain lines of thought to the end. Subjects of my study tried to formulate a critical theory of global capitalism by rejecting any rigid epistemological separation between subject and object, the “thing in itself” and the “thing for us.” In other words, they saw studying the causes of “underdevelopment” as inseparable from mobilizing people in underdeveloped nations to break free from imperialist exploitation. Yet, they lacked the transnational organizations to make this theoretical unification between imperialist theory and anti-imperialist revolutionary subject concrete, rendering their theoretical articulations first objectivist and fatalistic, then desperate and voluntarist.

This study attempts to grapple with some of these questions of continuity and change in the discourse of imperialism as a motivating program for the US left from the era of the Popular Front to the New Left. It does so by focusing on an intellectual bloc centered primarily around the socialist journal *Monthly Review*, and its printing press Monthly Review Press. Throughout the 1950s, *Monthly Review* editors and a small but significant network of regular contributors insinuated a critique of US imperialism into public intellectual discourse. They did so through the most extreme period of the Second Red Scare, against the backdrop of the migration of public intellectuals into academic departments in the expanding university system, and the decline of the Soviet Union as a utopian symbol for the left. As it gathered around it a network of credentialed professional economists, historians, sociologists, and anthropologists, *Monthly Review* advanced a theory of imperialism alternately clothed in the formalistic language of social science and the more accessible rhetoric of radical journalism.

As social science, it arose in discourse with the subfield of development economics, and was peculiarly slanted toward debates over the correct state-led policies to expedite economic development and social, cultural and political modernization in ‘backward’ countries. As public rhetoric, the *Monthly Review* variant of Marxist theory of imperialism engaged a different set of questions, bound up with competing interpretations of the nature of the state in modern society, and of the “publics” to which it was nominally bound. These two aspects of their ideas always stood in tension with one another. As academic or academic-adjacent intellectuals critiquing the various disciplinary expressions of modernization theory, neo-Marxists seemed to be interested in honing technocratic theory. But, on the other side, they pitched their revolutionary rhetoric toward vague and undefined publics, which effectively meant toward no one in particular, and its hollow ring dissipated into thin air. This structural asymmetry between real, flesh-and-blood academic and non-academic audiences ensured the steady migration of Neo-Marxism into the realm of academic social science.

In focusing on anti-imperialism as the theoretical foundation for an intellectual bloc formed amidst the “death” of the Old Left, I recharacterize some of the well-recognized antecedents to New Left thought. In addition to bringing those squarely in the *Monthly Review* orbit more fully into light, the following narrative makes a case for rethinking “radical liberalism” as a way to understand the contributions of C. Wright Mills and William Appleman Williams to the programs and strategies of student radicalism in the 1960s. Historian Kevin Mattson advanced the radical liberalism interpretation most explicitly in his book that combines intellectual biographies of Williams and Mills alongside those of Dwight Macdonald, Paul Goodman, Arnold Kaufman, and the academic radical journal *Studies on*

*the Left*.<sup>9</sup> Here, I portray Williams and Mills—each in their own way, and to varying degrees at different moments—in theoretical agreement with the fundamental features of the neo-Marxist theory of imperialism as propounded on the pages of *Monthly Review* and in the books released by Monthly Review Press. Doing so is not necessarily to discard the label “liberal” as applied to Williams and, especially, Mills, but rather to think through the clear similarities in theory and outlook between Mills and Williams at the left end of liberalism and *MR* editors and contributors as the main precursors to academic Marxism, and how their theoretical and programmatic positions were formulated discursively in relation to each other and to broader intellectual currents. The features of this intellectual affinity changed over time, but in general can be characterized by a few broad positions that collectively set this “left-liberal” anti-imperialist bloc apart from the mainstream of Cold War US intellectual life. The main characters of the following narrative all: (1) both assimilated and demurred from the “main drift” or “vital center” of US intellectual life; (2) rejected the validity of a pluralist conception of American democracy, in favor of a conception of hierarchically structured power relations executing public policy and constructing social stability; (3) refused to concede any critique of US foreign policy based on the logic of the totalitarian/democracy dichotomy endemic to Cold War liberalism; (4) viewed skeptically the prospects for the US social structure to produce any internal, bottom-up forces of social

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<sup>9</sup> Kevin Mattson, *Intellectuals in Action: The Origins of the New Left and Radical Liberalism, 1945-1970*, (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), esp. 43-96; 145-186. Mattson is simply the most direct target. A similar interpretation of the significance of Mills underlies many of the histories of the New Left written by New Lefties after they entered the academy. See: Gitlin, *Sixties*, 12-77.

change in the foreseeable future; (5) critiqued academic social science, with special focus on the epistemological premises of “abstracted empiricism” in economics and sociology.

The Neo-Marxist discourse of imperialism fits uneasily into the mold of New Left intellectual historiography, in which historians portray pacifism, democratic socialism, and counter-culturalism as the ideological seedlings that sprouted into the amorphous movement of movements of the 1960s. Throughout the 1950s, each of these ideologies operated relatively free from persecution on the left wing of the Cold War liberal consensus that dominated and structurally shaped the era’s intellectual life. These variants of Cold War leftism wrestled with contradictions in their worldview. Self-identified democratic socialists, such as those writing for *Dissent* or *Liberation* or those organized in SDS parent organization League for Industrial Democracy, had trouble squaring their commitments to pacifism, non-interventionist foreign policy, and democracy with their acceptance of the Soviet aggressor image of the Cold War. As proponents of world-wide democracy (or, more accurately, republicanism), 1950s left-liberal intellectuals wanted to mobilize domestic pressure groups behind electoral strategies that would result in a less interventionist US foreign policy. But as cold warriors, they often accepted and defended Washington’s rationale for those interventions, premised on the need to protect underdeveloped states against the global aspirations of Soviet totalitarianism. These contradictions came to a head in the public debates swirling around interpretations of the Cuban Revolution. Left, even “socialist,” liberals such as Waldo Frank and Carleton Beals represented Castro’s forces as the progeny of the American republican revolutionary tradition, and urged Washington to nurture and support the regime as it flowered into a new, more egalitarian form of Western democracy. To buttress their public appeals, they constructed a narrative of U.S. foreign policy

characterized by mostly altruistic interventions punctuated by the occasional error. Armed with the political economy of their neo-Marxist theory of imperialism, *Monthly Review* intervened with a narrative that celebrated Cuba's transition to socialism as a logical, inevitable, and desirable outcome resulting from decades of US colonialism. Mills and Williams picked up the broad parameters of *Monthly Review's* interpretation, and propagated it to their devoted graduate students who constituted the intellectual core of the burgeoning New Left, properly speaking.

While democratic socialism, pacifism, and radical liberalism characterized the early New Left, these ideologies offer little help in understanding the meanings constructed around the term imperialism by the latter half of the 1960s. By the time 1960s radicals began referring to the U.S. as "the monster," as in the epigraphs above, they had come to feel alienated from and hostile to the political process responsible for U.S. interventions in the Third World. "Imperialism" no longer connoted a set of policies associated with a bloc temporarily in control of a pluralist polity, removable through electoral politics or capable of being swayed by peaceful protest. For this more militant group of radicals, "imperialism" described a systemic process, driven by an objective logic rooted in the very structure of American society. When the objectivist interpretation of imperialism displaced pluralism, peaceful protest seemed futile and blowing up buildings seemed a logical, even heroic response to an unjust social order.

To understand the origins and evolution of Neo-Marxism, in its various forms, we must understand the predominance of a specific interpretation of Marxism in American consciousness throughout the period from the 1930s through the 1960s, constructed in the orbit of the Popular Front era of the Communist Party. Historians have understood the

Popular Front as a broad advance of the American left. Grounded in the first instance in a rearticulation of social forces along class lines during the Great Depression, Communist influence over 1930s social and intellectual radicals has been deployed to understand the rise of new cultural forms expressing proletarian experiences, the origins of the coalitions of race relations that would feed into the Civil Rights movements of the 1950s and 1960s, the stimulus behind industrial unionism, and even the era of progressive domestic politics known as the New Deal Order.<sup>10</sup> Conscience of the successful inroads Communists made into the groundswell of social opposition following their readjustment from the far-left third period to the collaborative Popular Front, historians have defined the strategy itself in terms of the fusion of radical thought and mass social movement that took place as a result. But, the political motives for the Popular Front as a top-down policy, handed down from the Soviet

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<sup>10</sup> For social basis of the Popular Front see: Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1990). For general overviews of the American Communist Party under the Popular Front strategy, see: Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On?: The American Communist Party during the Second World War*, (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1982); Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade*, (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1984). For Popular Front and race relations see: Michael Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights: Organizing Memphis Workers*, (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990). For cultural and intellectual ramifications of the Popular Front, understood as a broad social movement, see: Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*, (New York, NY: Verso, 1997); Robert Cohen, *When the Old Left was Young: Student Radicals and America's First Mass Student Movement, 1929-1941*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993). For Communists in the radicalization of labor, see: Bert Cochran, *Labor and Communism: The Conflict that Shaped American Unions*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977); Harvey Levenstein, *Communism, Anti-Communism, and the CIO*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981).



Union, get lost in this historiographic trend, as do the theoretical justifications for the about face and their implications for the longer history of Marxist thought.<sup>11</sup>

After solidifying power in the early 1930s, the Stalinist bureaucracy wielded the Third International as a tool of Russian diplomacy, leveraging the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's (CPUS) influence over worldwide national Communist Parties to turn them into pressure groups in local politics. Rather than foment revolutions, Stalinized nationalist Communist Parties after the Popular Front primarily sought to influence their government's foreign policy toward the Soviet Union.<sup>12</sup> To this political reorientation corresponded a change in the theoretical articulations of Marxism along several interrelated dimensions, collectively amounting to an inversion of the Marxist theory of imperialism. Still bearing the prestige of the 1917 Revolution, Soviet-affiliated Communist Parties shaped Marxist discourse, and the theoretical articulations of Popular Front Marxism radiated outward into broader public discourse, influencing popular perceptions of Marxism for a generation. As a

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<sup>11</sup> For Popular Front as a turning point in the Third International, see: Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twilight of the Comintern, 1930-1935*, (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1982). For its influence on Marxist thought internationally, see: Perry Anderson, *Considerations of Western Marxism*, (London: NLB, 1976); Emanuele Saccarelli, *Gramsci and Trotsky in the Shadow of Stalinism: The Political Theory and Practice of Opposition*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> In the felicitous words of Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 66: "It was as if Stalin- having started the climb toward socialism in one country- was deliberately kicking away the ladder for others to follow." Throughout this study, I use "Stalinism" to denote not the policies of Stalin as an individual, but rather the process of bureaucratization. For a theoretical justification of this terminology, see: Palmer, "Rethinking"; Saccarelli, *Gramsci*. This usage originates in the writings of Leon Trotsky. For a very thorough historical treatment of the evolution of Trotsky's thought on Soviet bureaucratization, see: Thomas M. Twiss, *Trotsky and the Problem of Soviet Bureaucracy*, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014).

mode of thought in the United States, Popular Front Marxism represented the drawing together, or “convergence,” of liberal and Marxist thought, and forms something of a rightward shift among radical intellectuals that allowed them to meet the leftward shifting liberal intellectuals in a common middle ground.

Neo-Marxist imperialist discourse of the 1960s took shape gradually through the late 1940s and 1950s as the left-liberal convergence of the Popular Front/New Deal era polarized under the centrifugal forces of the Cold War, and then reconvened in the late 1950s on the basis of a shared interpretation of the structures of power in the United States and the world historic significance of the Cuban Revolution. Several interrelated structural and institutional factors contoured the debates that emerged at the left end of the vital center, which would constitute the major intellectual camps vying for ideological influence over the social movements of the 1960s. The resolution of World War Two secured an unprecedented era of prosperity for American capitalism.<sup>13</sup> Concurrently, spurred in part by the passage of the GI Bill, the modern system of higher education took shape. College enrollments doubled in the decade between 1945 and 1955, and the increased demand for faculty drastically extended the one institutional base for intellectuals to pursue their ideas with material security and relative independence.<sup>14</sup> Much of the social foundation for the intellectual convergence between Popular Front Marxists and New Deal liberals collapsed when labor became more bureaucratized, as a consequence of patriotism and the no-strike pledge during the war, and

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<sup>13</sup> For the structure of American capitalism following World War Two, see: Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, *The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Empire*, (New York, NY: Verso Books, 2012), esp. 67-107.

<sup>14</sup> Stanley Aronowitz, *Taking it Big: C. Wright Mills and the Making of Political Intellectuals*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2012), 76.

when the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 purged labor organizations of radicals and severely limited their scope of action.<sup>15</sup>

Against this backdrop of changing meanings of both Marxism and liberalism, academics in the US turned their attention to third world “underdevelopment,” and it is within the context of these debates that the theoretical postulates of Neo-Marxism took shape. As subfields of academic thought, development economics and modernization theory, in their origins and theoretical assumptions, quintessentially expressed the convergence of Popular Front Marxism and New Deal liberalism. In the 1930s and early 1940s, at the height of the Popular Front/New Deal alliance, precursors to post-World War Two “development economics” felt free to abstract lessons for state-led growth from the Soviet industrialization experience. In doing so, they only emulated the pragmatic experimentalism practiced in the New Deal state, where Roosevelt Brain Trusters Rexford Tugwell and Stuart Chase unabashedly praised Soviet state planning. Economists in the United States trying to explain perpetual economic and social stagnation of “backward” nations in the 1940s drew from Marxism as much as Keynesianism, and abstracted their models from the empirical case of Soviet industrialization.<sup>16</sup> As the Marxist economist Paul Baran noted in his critique of the sub-discipline, the very existence of development economics amounted to a tacit admission that the “normal” case of capitalist development could not be replicated in backward

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<sup>15</sup> For bureaucratization of labor during the war, see: Nelson Lichtenstein, *Labor’s War at Home: The CIO in World War II*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

<sup>16</sup> For influence of Soviet industrialization on US theories of development economics and modernization theory, see: David C. Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore: American Intellectuals and the Romance of Russian Development*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), esp. 153-243; Alexander Erlich, *The Soviet Industrialization Debate, 1924-1928*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960).

countries, and the state must be more active in the economic sphere.<sup>17</sup> Recently, historians have drawn parallels between modernization theory and “orthodox” Marxism as competing forms of “high modernism,” and have used this as a lens for understanding the Cold War as a global phenomenon permeating all diplomatic and economic relations among nation-states from the 1940s to the 1980s.<sup>18</sup> This perspective presents a historically specific, and politically constructed, interpretation of Marxism as a timeless orthodoxy, and then compares that orthodoxy to a historicized version of liberal thought.<sup>19</sup> By applying the same sense of historical specificity to the rise and fall of orthodoxies within Marxist thought, we can get a stronger sense of the competing interpretations that vied for a hearing among the social movements of the 1960s, and thus a better understanding of the way social struggle and intellectual contestation interacted in the transition to new policies and theories of development in the 1970s.

Throughout the 1950s, the Marxist critique of development economics and modernization theory remained hamstrung by the dominance of Popular Front Marxism as

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<sup>17</sup> Paul A. Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth*, (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1957), 10-11.

<sup>18</sup> Westad, *Global Cold War*, 33: “[Modernization theory] has many of the same positivist traits as Marxism, with which it self-consciously draws a comparison. Indeed, it could be argued that both constitute a form of ‘high modernism’ that emphasize, in a deterministic form, the unity of all modern development, centered on industry and technology.”

<sup>19</sup> For modernization theory as a specific moment in the historical development of liberalism, see: Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Michael Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and "Nation Building" in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); David Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission: Modernization and the Construction of an American World Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

the perceived orthodoxy in what remained of the North American intellectual left. By looking closely at the logical continuities linking the American New Left's perceptions of Third World nationalism with the version of Marxism propagated internationally by the Soviet Union beginning in the mid-1930s, we can see long term consequences of the rise and solidification of the Soviet bureaucracy as the ultimate arbiter of orthodoxy in the international Marxist intellectual tradition. The left intellectuals who built the symbolism surrounding first Castroism then Maoism largely kept their theory of world history intact by shoehorning their interpretations of those revolutions within the framework they had absorbed in the 1930s. Western Neo-Marxist thought- including dependency theory and Third World Marxism- thus emerged not out of the collapse and rebirth of an intellectual left, but rather through a process of piecemeal evolution of Popular Front Marxism as it passed through the immediate post-World War Two era. Far from new, this accommodation between Marxism and anti-imperialist nationalism finds its origins in the orthodoxy constructed out of the struggle for leadership of the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s, a reflection of Stalin's "socialism in one country" turned into a development model and projected outward onto decolonizing states throughout the world.

The image of the Third World thus stepped into sixties radical consciousness draped in the garb of nationalism and statism. Rightly or wrongly, it was painted in shades of nationalism and technocratic economic development, and only in this image held up as an object worthy of admiration. By the late 1960s, US radicals of all stripes formulated their own goals and strategies through analogies to anti-imperialist nationalist movements in the de-colonizing world, leading to closer engagement with long-running debates over the strategies and tactics of anti-imperialist struggle. This dynamic led to engagement with and

partial recovery of a pre-Popular Front form of Marxist globalism, with a non-technocratic and transnational solution to the problem of underdevelopment, colonialism, semi-colonialism or “backwardness.” Yet, lacking a transnational institutional base comparable to the Second and Third Internationals in their heydays, this intellectual breakthrough never managed to identify and fuse with a viable, transnational revolutionary agent. As the decade wore on, and social struggles mounted on a global scale, radical intellectuals in the United States became increasingly anxious to resurrect transnational, bottom-up organizations capable of coordinating and orchestrating anti-imperialist struggles at different points in the capitalist system. But, doing so meant addressing the long-standing theoretical détente between Marxism and nationalism, the lingering hangover of Popular Front Marxism.

It is a peculiarity of history that these debates over the correct Marxist orientation toward nationalism constantly intermingled with prevailing trends in academic humanities and social sciences. The expansion of higher education in the decades following World War Two wrought far-reaching changes in North American thought. As academic departments increasingly monopolized intellectual production, it became narrower, more specialized, and less accessible to the public at large.<sup>20</sup> Within this context, anti-imperialist nationalism emerged as both a foreign policy concern for Washington and Moscow, and an academic curiosity. In the 1950s, academics and policy-makers cohered around “modernization theory” as a consensus explaining Third World underdevelopment, and prescribing a solution. An offshoot of Cold War liberalism, modernization theory cloaked US political and economic interventions in the decolonizing states with a veneer of scientific legitimacy. Imperialism re-

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<sup>20</sup> The best account of this process remains Russell Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe*, (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1987).

entered public discourse through a critique of both US foreign policy and the academic theories justifying it, and it came from intellectuals embedded in the university and accustomed to the conventions of academic discourse. Mobilized by the rhetoric of anti-imperialism, student radicals mounted a campus insurgency to change the discourse or disrupt the empire, or both, but their battles on the “ideological front” were often waged on the terrain of academic social sciences, where their opponents held the high ground.

While the prevalence of anti-imperialist sensibilities among 1960s radicals is well-known, the intellectual roots of the theories of imperialism floating in American public discourse remain underexplored. In practical terms, campus radicals expressed their anti-imperialist sentiments through their opposition to the war in Vietnam. Logically, many of the contradictions of development economics came to a head in Vietnam. There could be no clearer indication of the limits of prevailing theories than the most well-known development economist, Walt Whitman Rostow, serving as the “architect” of a disastrous effort to forcefully usher Vietnamese through his theoretical stages of growth. Youth understandably resented being sent against their will to die for such a futile, and morally dubious, cause.

Yet, while anti-imperialist sentiment undoubtedly surfaced most concretely in opposition to the Vietnam War, earlier engagement with Latin American anti-Yankee thought laid the theoretical groundwork that would shape the programmatic responses campus radicals seized upon in their struggle against the war. The Cuban Revolution marked the first real intellectual movement out of the 1950s Cold War liberal consensus. Mills and Williams, well-known forebears of 1960s radical thought, joined with Baran and Sweezy to propagate the notion that US imperialism was responsible for the economic stagnation that led to the social unrest behind the revolution, and would continue to foreclose the possibility

for gradual development without major structural changes, including transfers of property ownership that would not sit well with US business interests. Following the spread of this interpretation into early cells of student radicalism, a wave of the young US academic intelligentsia created closer links to Latin American radical academic networks. *Monthly Review* helped cultivate these transnational intellectual networks, and served as a pipeline for translating and circulating South American revolutionary debates among English-speaking North American audiences.

We as historians must grasp the dynamic of social struggles as they unfolded around the axis of imperialist discourse on a world scale in the 1960s and early 1970s. In this admittedly limited study, I have focused on the way neo-Marxism emerged as a unique, holistic set of theoretical coordinates in the minds of a small group of North American intellectuals in the 1950s, how it received a tremendous push in the early 1960s through cross-fertilization with Latin American anti-imperialist programmatic debates, and how the ensuing fusion operated rhetorically inside and outside the academy in the United States and parts of Latin America in the 1960s and early 1970s. The specific features of neo-Marxist theory emerged in relation to the changing structures of global capitalism, the psychological toll of isolation and repression in the Second Red Scare, and the constant effort to stake out a uniquely Marxist perspective in discourse with other major 1950s American intellectual trends. Proponents of the theory, organized around *Monthly Review*, articulated the most ambitious and coherent synthetic model tying together radical impressions of the 1950s. This model circulated internationally, especially after their own intense interest in Latin American development following the Cuban Revolution. By the late 1960s, various offshoots of neo-Marxist imperialist thought wound their way into student radical movements, informing their



revolutionary programs during the days of rage. Throughout the same period, Neo-Marxism also infiltrated academic disciplines, igniting debates over social scientific epistemology and the validity of overt anti-imperialism as a legitimate scholarly posture. As the social movements of 1960s waned in the early years of the 1970s, student radicals settled into secure academic posts, ensuring these epistemological debates would be the most lasting legacy of the 1960s interest in neo-Marxism, which in their suspicion of claims of “value-neutral” scholarship inadvertently contributed to the post-structuralist turn in North American academic thought.

The following narrative unfolds both chronologically and thematically. Chapter one introduces the reader to Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy—the two US-based Marxist economists who collaboratively did the most to work out the holistic theory of political economy behind 1960s neo-Marxist imperialist discourse—and situates Sweezy’s magazine *Monthly Review* in the context of the early Cold War New York intellectual scene. Through examining Baran’s and Sweezy’s early academic careers, we can see the space briefly opened for academic Marxism by the political and social context of the late 1930s and the Great Depression. Sweezy and Baran prior to the Cold War personify the blurry, liminal space between Popular Front fellow-traveler and New Deal policy-oriented intellectual. *Monthly Review* came to life amid the erosion of that social-intellectual space. The “independent socialist journal’s” editors, regular contributors, and, presumably, readership experienced the erosion as the collapse of their social and material foundations, and the traumatic experience would have a deep impact on their theoretical system.

Chapter two narrates the solidification of Baran’s and Sweezy’s unique brand of Marxism against the backdrop of the dominant political and intellectual trends of the United

States in the 1950s. Here I make a case for thinking of Baran, Sweezy, Mills, and Williams as an intellectual bloc whose individual experiences shaped similar worldviews and political orientations by the end of the decade. A shared distaste for intellectual conformity and US foreign policy pushed them to ponder the social role and responsibility of intellectuals, with increasingly sharp criticism of academic social sciences. From their respective liberal and Marxist predispositions, they asked the question “knowledge for what,” which from either direction led them to think through the ways corporate capitalism wielded the state and the cultural apparatus to achieve social and economic stability, at the cost of mass psychological and cultural degradation. These ideas were as much impressions of their personal experiences with social isolation and political repression as their engagement with and synthesis of broader intellectual currents, such as fiscal Keynesian economics and functionalist sociology. They were not the only ones of their era to see pernicious elite power dynamics rather than genuine cultural consensus behind the appearance of social and economic equilibrium spanning from the end of World War Two to the 1960s, but they were among the relatively few who attributed the causes to the objective logic of the political economic structure, still perceived as capitalist and imperialist.

Chapter three follows the propagation of *Monthly Review*'s brand of Marxism to early New Leftists through the magazine editors' role in constructing a certain interpretation of the origins and significance of the Cuban Revolution. Sweezy and *MR* co-editor Leo Huberman offered the first book-length analysis interpreting Castro's Cuba as a “socialist” state. Mills and Williams quickly stepped in to buttress this interpretation. The Cuban Revolution solidified Mills, Williams, and *MR* as a bloc, on the basis of their shared interpretation of the nature of Castro's regime and its significance for the disruptive, anti-capitalist potential of

Third World nationalism. This perspective reached an audience of early New Lefties through the University of Wisconsin, where Williams and Hans Gerth had influence and where students would form *Studies on the Left*. Contrary to the idea of the New Left evolving from “radical liberalism” to terrorism, the theoretical framework that informed the voluntarist strategies during the “days of rage” was already in place before even the Port Huron Statement. This included a model of revolution which saw middle-class or white-collar intellectuals as the group capable of uniting underprivileged groups behind its hegemonic program of anti-imperialist nationalism, an epistemology of science critical of the methods of academic social science and its practical or problem-solving role, and the contradictory fact that these intellectuals remained themselves embedded in the university, which framed their political orientation.

Chapter Four follows the intellectual biography of a young development economist named Andrew Frank through his radicalization by the Cuban Revolution, subsequent deep immersion in Latin American thought, and emergence as Andre Gunder Frank to introduce dependency theory to English-speaking, North American, scholarly audiences. In contrast to the story usually told by historians and social scientists, I argue that a legacy of Latin American Marxist thought dealing with questions of hegemony (in Lenin’s sense) and uneven and combined development (in Trotsky’s) are crucial to understanding the origins and historic significance of Frank’s version of dependency theory. Frank was swept up in the same currents locally that fed into the early New Left. From a solid development economics insider, he became a critic of US imperialism and of modernization theory as its justifying ideology. Motivated by his break with his profession, and what he perceived as an inability to properly understand Latin American underdevelopment from within any of the North

American academic disciplines, Frank lived among and absorbed the ideas of Latin American academic leftists. In his synthesis of the intellectual currents he encountered, he was most influenced by a long tradition grappling with the relation between the short-term goals of the nationalist struggle against imperialism and the longer struggle for socialism. Unfamiliar with these debates, or their longer Marxist antecedents, Frank cognized them according to Cold War mental categories and synthesized them with the neo-Marxist ideas he had absorbed through reading *Monthly Review* and Paul Baran's *Political Economy of Growth*.

The fifth and final chapter locates Neo-Marxism as a mobilizing political ideology as it operated in three terrains: US New Left campus radicalism, Santiago-based social science discourse during the “Chilean road to socialism,” and US social science discourse in the transition from the “New Deal Order” to the “Age of Fracture.”<sup>21</sup> In each case, would-be revolutionaries struggled to weaponize their academic theorizing against the monster, and in each case the institutional context of the actors and deeply ingrained assumptions of the theory proved unequal to the task. US campus radicals assumed corporate liberalism locked the American working class in a mass false consciousness for the indefinite future, which led them not even to pose, let alone answer, the question of “hegemony” in the classical Marxist sense. In Chile, dependency theorists did pose the question, and engaged in a real struggle to win Chilean rural and urban workers over to a program of revolutionary socialism. But they lost to a coalition of local and imperialist reactionary forces, laying the groundwork for the

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<sup>21</sup> The classic study of the New Deal Order is Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle ed., *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989). Age of Fracture comes from Daniel T. Rogers, *Age of Fracture*, (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011).

first ever structural reform program that would come to be known as the Washington Consensus. North American academics mobilized by Neo-Marxist theory tried to secure a foothold for Marxist scholarship within the academy, and use this vital strategic point within the cultural apparatus to disrupt the process of cultural reproduction through which imperialism maintained domestic social stability. Ultimately, this was the most successful effort. The long-run result has been an academic Marxist discourse that has adopted the genre conventions and idioms of the disciplines in which it is embedded.

The afterward and conclusion ties together the threads, and draws out the contemporary and historiographic significance of the intervention, which here I can only summarize preliminarily. The study unifies previously discrete narratives of left intellectual history and the rise and fall of “modernization theory” as a paradigm in academic thought and public policy of Third World development. Historians of Cold War Third World development equate modernization theory and orthodox Marxism as similar holistic social theories grounded in teleological metanarratives of progress. This ignores historical construction and social contestation over definitions of Marxist orthodoxy, and more specifically ignores the way intellectuals borrowed categories from the Marxist theory of imperialism to cognize their opposition to US Third World development programs and the structural functionalist sociology and abstracted empiricist methods used to justify them. The study also contributes to a new direction in scholarship of the “international New Left,” by looking more closely at the formation of “shared ideas, networks, repertoires of protest, and sense of imagined community” along the axis of U.S.-Latin American foreign relations,

while simultaneously taking a critical posture toward the academic context in which those ideas germinated, circulated transnationally, and seeped into local social movements.<sup>22</sup>

The study also makes an intervention that might be called methodological. It provides a historical analysis for rethinking how scholars measure the truth content of social and economic theories. Here, dependency theory meets modernization theory as an antithesis in both the sense of an academic paradigm and as mobilizing rhetoric for political actors. Ensuing conflict played out in multiple institutions, determining the new synthesis around neoliberalism as the ideological glue for the global historical bloc spanning from the 1970s to the early twenty-first century. The rise and fall of paradigms on Third World development in the American academy—modernization theory, dependency theory, and the neoliberal Washington Consensus—did not play themselves out merely on the terrain of ideas. Rather, intellectual proponents simultaneously purveyed these theories rhetorically to their respective “publics,” in the state or social movements, and these theories engendered ideologies that partially determined the way conflict played out among social groups. The outcome of social struggles in turn influenced the ideational debates within the academy, all claims to scholarly neutrality notwithstanding. With this historical method, we see the way policy change emerged out of a triangular relation between ideas, social forces, and political institutions.

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<sup>22</sup> Quotations from McGirr, “Port Huron,” 50.

**Chapter One**  
**Fellow-Travelling Alone:**  
**Paul A. Baran and Paul M. Sweezy Amid the Onset of Cold War Liberalism**

Paul Sweezy was not impressed with James Burnham's influential book, *The Managerial Revolution*. The book's "super-objective tone of fatalistic inevitability," wrote Sweezy in a review for the scholarly Marxist journal *Science and Society*, merely masked its ex-Trotskyist author's "disillusionment with political activity," and served to justify his retreat into the ivory tower.<sup>23</sup> Burnham's book predicted industrialized nations throughout the world had converged around similar dystopian social forms dominated by a bureaucratic ruling class. The tone of Sweezy's denunciation revealed his sense of urgency to combat this intellectual trend, but the method and form of his critique met Burnham on the academic terrain the two authors shared. Like Burnham, Sweezy was, after all, a trained and credentialed Ph.D. As such, he proposed to test the managerial revolution theory by weighing the historical record against Burnham's "crucial theses."<sup>24</sup> On the thesis that the United States was no longer capitalist, Burnham fell short by placing far too much stock in the recently discredited notion of "absentee ownership."<sup>25</sup> On the thesis that Nazi Germany was not capitalist, Burnham failed to understand that increased state control and management of the German economy benefitted "*capital as a whole*."<sup>26</sup> And, finally, Burnham erred when he

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<sup>23</sup> Paul M. Sweezy, "The Illusion of the 'Managerial Revolution,'" *Science & Society* 6/1 (Winter, 1942), 1-23, at 1.

<sup>24</sup> Sweezy, "Illusion," 4.

<sup>25</sup> Sweezy, "Illusion," 6.

<sup>26</sup> Sweezy, "Illusion," 9 (*italics in original*).

classified the Soviet Union as managerial instead of socialist, because he failed to grasp the single party political regime as a necessary stage *on the way* to socialism.<sup>27</sup>

In rejecting Burnham's thesis, Sweezy staked his position against one of the earliest expressions of what would become the dominant intellectual trend in the United States throughout his most fruitful and productive years. As the intellectual historian Howard Brick has shown, 1950s academic social scientists, and many public intellectuals, held that modern industrial societies had entered a "post-capitalist" phase.<sup>28</sup> This "post-capitalist vision" was characterized by a belief that sharp lines delineating socialist and capitalist societies had become passé in a world in which modern states had the capacity and political will to oversee a "social economy," combining private ownership of the means of production with socially conscious regulation. Burnham's widely read and widely criticized book described a dark post-capitalist future—a vision shared by critics of the New Deal inspired by the work of Friedrich von Hayek—but many social theorists saw the same developments in a more optimistic light. For this group, the New Deal brought the promise of democratic socialism to the United States, and left intellectuals needed only to press forward for greater reforms.

While certainly widespread, the post-capitalist vision was not unanimous, and shifting our focus onto continued critiques of U.S. capitalism helps us better make sense of the intellectual trends that competed to shape the programs of the social struggles that emerged in the 1960s. The form, content and trajectory of the continuous critique of the United States as a capitalist, imperialist social system *throughout* the period of the post-capitalist vision

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<sup>27</sup> Sweezy, "Illusion," 12.

<sup>28</sup> Howard Brick, *Transcending Capitalism: Visions of a New Society in Modern American Thought*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).



illuminates the types of discourse of imperialism that intersected with a new generation of radicals in the 1960s. As the co-editor and leading theoretical mind behind the independent socialist journal *Monthly Review*, Sweezy played a central role in maintaining an “anti-capitalist vision” articulated discursively against the era’s dominant “post-capitalist vision.” In doing so, he and his friend and co-thinker Paul Baran synthesized the classical Marxist texts on imperialism, and borrowed categories to cognize the changing structure of post-World War Two capitalism. They thus form a crucial link in the ongoing reception of the Marxist tradition in US thought.

*Monthly Review* in the 1950s offers a compelling lens to deepen our understanding of some of the major dilemmas in the history of American radical thought. The editors and small coterie of regular contributors stand somewhere between the Popular Front and the New Left, and through a close look at their story we get a sense of the way structural and institutional changes in the manner of producing and circulating ideas manifested themselves in the orientation and program of left discourse. Channeling the mood of the Popular Front era, MR took an ecumenical approach. The editors opened the pages to a wide range of left-liberal ideas and exerted a light editorial touch. Affiliated with no organization or party, they nominally avoided the simplicity of a party line, but effectively propagated a definite message of a certain and specific social layer. Anticipating the 1960s New Left, the perspective espoused on the pages of *Monthly Review* was already deeply rooted in academic Marxism, with its increasingly narrow, disciplinary, and specialized focus. A distinctly MR brand of Marxism thus incubated within the institutional context of the academicization of public intellectualism described by historian Russel Jacoby, which would have tremendous implications for their ability to conceive of a viable agent of social change.

## Paul A. Baran and the Origins of Development Economics

*“It’s very easy to accept formulas. It’s very hard to think the way Marx thought, for whom formulas were not really of any great importance. The tendency of the falling rate of profit, the forces of production and the relations of production, modes of production- all of these things are easily formulated as schemas or models, which is very dangerous because you find yourself being guided by seemingly established truths which become the reality rather than simply a guide to the way you organize your thoughts.” Paul M. Sweezy, 1999.<sup>29</sup>*

Though Baran’s and Sweezy’s early lives differed markedly, through their respective paths they had each arrived at a very similar set of ideas about the world by the time they met at Harvard in 1939. Baran hailed from a Polish family that had lived variously in Russia and Ukraine in the years immediately preceding and following his birth. His father had a background in Menshevism. He fled to Vilna after the Bolshevik phase of the Revolution, where young Paul gained Polish citizenship. From there the family moved to Dresden where he underwent his formal schooling at gymnasium. In 1926, he went to study economics at the Plekhanov Institute in Moscow, but found the climate in the Soviet Union at the height of the factional struggles within the Communist Party stultifying, and so jumped at the opportunity to return to Germany when it presented itself. Baran worked as an assistant at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, where he focused on the Soviet economy and wrote a dissertation on planning. In 1934, he returned to Moscow to escape Nazi Germany, and from there made his way to the U.S. via Poland. Upon his arrival to the U.S. then, he was a trained economist with a strong background in Marxist theory and an intellectual interest in “planning.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> “An Interview with Paul M. Sweezy,” *Monthly Review* 51/1 (May 1999), 31-53 at 36.

<sup>30</sup> Information for this paragraph comes from Paul Sweezy, “Paul Alexander Baran: A Personal Memoir,” in *Monthly Review* 16/11 (March 1965), 28-35.

The transient nature of Baran's early life and his cosmopolitan European education broadened his worldview, and would forever subsume his economic analysis within a holistic framework. Baran absorbed the multi-determinate approach practiced at the Frankfurt Institute. Later, as a Stanford professor of economics, he would resist the statistical and econometric turn in the American economics profession. His published contributions to the profession- always presented in the form of a prose essay lacking equations or formal models- often considered psychological, cultural, and social determinants of an evolving, holistic system that at its roots grew out of economic soil. He remained friendly with Herbert Marcuse, the other, more famous, American-based representative of the Frankfurt School. While not delving as deeply into Freudian psychology as Marcuse, Baran undoubtedly carried with him the multi-dimensional analytical framework he acquired as a researcher at the Frankfurt Institute.

His personal experiences in the Soviet Union also left their mark, both intellectually and politically. Baran's first return as an adult to the polity from which his father had felt compelled to flee came in 1926, the most tumultuous year of debates over control of the Party. Baran later claimed to find the whole affair off-putting, but as a student of economics at the Plekhanov Institute at the very height of the industrialization debate, he was privy to the evolution of Marxian political economy from a tool for analyzing inherent contradictions in capitalism to a tool for state-led development of a backward country. When he returned to Moscow in the 1930s, he took a course with Evgenii Preobrazhensky, who had been the chief economist behind the platform of the Left Opposition in the 1920s, in which role he

pioneered the concept of “primitive socialist accumulation.”<sup>31</sup> This level of familiarity with Soviet economic thought, in the early 1940s still something of a rarity in the economics profession in the United States, proved an asset for Baran.

In the 1930s, American economists joined social theorists and philosophers in a broad-based intellectual shift to the left, away from a belief in the infallibility of markets. Images of domestic suffering in the Great Depression offered a contrast to reports coming back from the Soviet Union, which by the early 1930s seemed to have accomplished the historically unprecedented feat of moving into the ranks of a modern industrialized nation through the execution of a state-led five-year plan. Though officially it would remain in the ultra-left “third period” until the announcement of the Popular Front strategy at the Seventh Congress of the Third International in 1935, the American Communist Party began toning down its sectarian rhetoric in 1933-1934, and had made significant inroads into the labor and social movements that surged by the middle of the decade. A smaller but substantial group of intellectuals were attracted to the fascist ideology of Benito Mussolini.<sup>32</sup> Encroached on both ends of the political spectrum, liberal intellectuals sought to adapt their ideals in an act of self-preservation. They did so largely by tacking to the left, elevating a statist current over the traditional liberal posture of *laissez faire*. Editors of prominent liberal magazines, such as Freda Kirchway at *The Nation* or Bruce Bliven at the *New Republic*, demonstrated increasing

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<sup>31</sup> Isaac Deutscher, “Statements by Friends and Associates,” *Monthly Review*, 16/11 (March 1965), 92-6 at 94.

<sup>32</sup> John Patrick Higgins, *Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972).

enthusiasm for the Soviet planned economy, and advocated similar policies for the U.S., short of social revolution.

Buttressed by this liberal sanction, and with the incentive of growing opportunities in the New Deal state, professional economists felt increasingly liberated or compelled to impugn the profit-motive as a mechanism for regulating the allocation of societal resources into industries and branches of production. Economists within Franklin Roosevelt's "Brain Trust" evinced a strong admiration for Stalin's five-year plan. Stuart Chase, author of the 1932 book *A New Deal*, and original Brain Truster Rexford Tugwell advanced an underconsumptionist explanation of the Great Depression. In doing so, they departed methodologically from neoclassicism, which assumed price signals in an unfettered market would optimize allocation of factors of production, including the price and quantity of labor power. Under this model, "underconsumption," a disparity between society's ability to produce and ability to consume, should not have been possible. Informed by the philosophic pragmatism of John Dewey and the institutionalist economics of Thorstein Veblen, both Chase and Tugwell advocated experimenting with Soviet-style state-led planning, though to stave off rather foment a revolution. It is important to emphasize how incommensurable this position was with the central theoretical assumptions that dominated the economics profession for the first decades of the twentieth century. By questioning the ability for markets to efficiently allocate societal resources, Chase, Tugwell, and other statist liberal economists in the New Deal struck right at the heart of the neoclassical theory of value.

While the U.S. economics profession turned an eye to the Soviet Union as the model of planning, Soviet economists, wrapped up in the 1920s struggle for power, debated the meaning and continued significance of the Marxist theory of value. In the lead up to 1917, no

Bolshevik theoretician envisioned a scenario in which Marx's *Capital* would serve as a policy guide for modernizing a backward country. Leon Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution and, later, Lenin's *April Theses* expressed the rationale for pressing workers to channel their opposition to Tsarism into the direct transfer of power to their own, independent institutions, thus bypassing the "bourgeois democratic" phase of the revolution and setting the stage for the immediate transition to socialism. But nowhere did they base their argument on the claim that the Party had at its disposal the theoretical technocratic tools to guide an isolated Russian economy into the modern era. After the revolution, when they found themselves largely isolated from the international division of labor, the party leadership leveraged the political economic theory they had mastered to make sense of the pressing, and at times seemingly insoluble problems plaguing the Russian economy, and threatening to topple the political regime.

A big part of this debate hinged on the extent to which the "law of value,"—capitalism's mechanism for distributing resources into different branches of production—pertained to a socialist society. In fact, in the 1920s the Soviet Union had faced a problem very similar to that plaguing the US economy in the 1930s: how to level out the growing price disparity between agricultural and industrial goods. The circumstances differed though, as the theoretical problem in the Soviet Union centered on which class, the proletariat or the peasantry, would provide the economic surplus that the state-planning agency required for its ambitious industrialization plan. In a polemic with Nikolai Bukharin, Baran's teacher Preobrazhensky articulated the law of "primitive socialist accumulation" as the regulating mechanism of a planned economy, standing diametrically opposed to capitalism's law of value. Capitalism achieves productivity increases under "dynamic equilibrium" because the

spontaneous interplay of supply and demand leads labor power—the social cost of maintaining and reproducing the laborer—to sell below the real value of the goods produced by workers and appropriated and sold by capitalists. A workers’ government could not make recourse to this law of value without maintaining a class living off the surplus-value of laborers and thus setting the stage for the return of capitalism. It must, therefore, deliberately extract the surplus needed for productivity increases from unequal exchange with non-state sectors of the economy, and specifically the nascent rural bourgeois class forming out of the redistribution of land in the countryside.

Thus, Paul Baran entered the US economics profession at a historical moment in which economists in both the United States and the Soviet Union were in the throes of revamping major elements of their theoretical scaffolding to think through the implications of increasing state involvement in the economic sphere. Both dealt with how to equip a ruling bureaucracy to make difficult decisions about centralizing social wealth, the result in the final instance of exploited labor, and reinvesting in strategic industries to ensure optimal levels of growth. Baran’s significance as an economist in the United States from the late 1930s through World War Two rested primarily on his familiarity with theoretical debates over Soviet industrialization, which he quickly leveraged into the first English-language Marxist critique of the emerging sub-field of “development economics.” Many early contributions to development economics came from Russian-speaking economists keeping abreast of theoretical debates in Soviet economic thought. Two of the most important contributors to the early field to come out of the American economics profession, Evsey Domar and Alexander Gershenkron, resembled Baran in biography if not intellectual training or political orientation. All three economists were born into ethnically non-Russian territories within the

Russian Empire on the eve of its collapse, and all three migrated to the United States in the 1930s to escape the tumult of the impending war that would rip apart their Eurasian homelands. Though more hostile than Baran to the Soviet political regime, both Domar and Gershenkron followed Soviet industrialization with keen interest as an economic phenomenon. Like Baran and Sweezy, Domar received his PhD in economics from Harvard, and he and Baran went through the program together in the early 1940s.

Conceptually, Domar's, Gershenkron's and Baran's work in the mid-to-late 1940s reveals the overlap in interests among Marxist and non-Marxist economists at the height of the New Deal/Popular Front social formation. Domar, like much of the profession in the early 1940s, was a Keynesian, but his early work drew liberally from both Keynesian and Marxist economists and considered questions ill-suited to the methods or theoretical assumptions of neoclassicism. Beginning from the assumption that markets optimally distribute societal productive resources, that the invisible hand can and should be allowed to regulate investment decisions, neoclassicists had little room to develop the methodological tools for considering the causes of disproportionality or imbalance among the various branches of production, precisely the set of concerns running through Soviet industrialization, the economic theorists in and around the New Deal brain trust, and development economics as a blueprint for backward nations. As an economist, Domar generally wrote about problems of maintaining proportionality amid capital accumulation. His early work cited institutional Keynesians, such as the Polish Michal Kalecki, Soviet economist Eugen Varga, and Marxists in the American profession such as Paul Marlo



Sweezy.<sup>33</sup> Theoretically, maintaining balance in the circulation among economic sectors in an accumulating economy was essentially the same problem that had plagued Rosa Luxemburg in her massive and influential book *Accumulation of Capital*, though Domar did not make that link to earlier Marxist thought. Domar's contribution to development economics, a 1946 article entitled "Capital Expansion, Rate of Growth and Employment," intervened in the tradition of diminishing returns on capital investment, which in the Marxist tradition is determined by the growing organic composition of capital and in turn partly determines the tendency for the rate of profit to decline, and he attributed its development to a "Little Seminar" whose participants included Paul Baran.<sup>34</sup> Generally considered the inaugural text establishing the subfield in the United States, Domar's brief article contributed to the Harrod-Domar model, which posited that self-sustaining growth in backward countries could be achieved by sufficient initial capital accumulation. As historian Alexander Erlich pointed out, at its moment of inception development economics in the United States prescriptions echoed the Soviet Union's resolution of its own industrialization debates.<sup>35</sup>

Alexander Gershenkron took more of a historical approach, but a view of his work equally reveals the blurry line separating Marxist economists from the mainstream of the profession coming out of the 1930s. His early concentration rested on following Russian-

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<sup>33</sup> See: Evsey Domar, "The Problem of Capital Accumulation," *The American Economic Review* 38/5 (Dec. 1948), 777-94; Evsey Domar, "The Varga Controversy," *The American Economic Review* 40/1 (March 1950), 132-51.

<sup>34</sup> Evsey Domar, "Capital Expansion, Rate of Growth and Employment," *Econometrica* 14/2 (Apr. 1946) 137-47 acknowledgement of Baran at 137.

<sup>35</sup> Alexander Erlich, *The Soviet Industrialization Debate, 1924-1928*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960).

language economic publications, and gleaning from them data about the Soviet economy that were readily available in the 1940s.<sup>36</sup> His 1951 essay, *Economic Backwardness in a Historical Perspective*, posited a universal linear path to development, similar to the “stages of growth” that would become more famously associated with Rostow. But, surprisingly, the essay adopted something very similar to the Marxist concept of *combined development* to suggest that backward countries, by appropriating the technology of earlier developing countries, will actually benefit in their industrialization process from the advantages of backwardness.

Baran was situated right within the thick of these precursors to 1950s modernization theory. Like virtually every other young economist at Harvard, Baran worked for the Office of Strategic Services during World War Two. On returning from the war, he secured a position as a researcher for the New York Federal Reserve, where he worked from 1946 until accepting a professorship at Stanford in 1949. During this period, like Domar and Gershenkron, much of Baran’s claim to fame in the profession derived from his Russian language skills and his familiarity with major trends in both Soviet and Western economic thought. Though placed in charge of the British desk at the Fed, Baran was also tasked with keeping up on developments in Soviet economics, and every one of his published works from the late 1940s dealt with the latter topic.<sup>37</sup> Substantively, these works touched on a range of

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<sup>36</sup> See: Alexander Gershenkron, “Review: *Voyennaya ekonomika SSSR v period otechestvennoy voyny* by N. Voznesenski,” *The American Economic Review* 38/4 (Sep. 1948), 649-57.

<sup>37</sup> See: Paul A. Baran, “New Trends in Russian Economic Thinking?” *American Economic Review* 34/? (Dec. 1944), 862-71; Paul A. Baran, “National Income and Product of the USSR in 1940,” *The Review of Economic Statistics* 39/? (Nov. 1947), 226-34; Paul A. Baran, “Currency Reform in the USSR,” *Harvard Business Review* (March 1948), 194-206;

issues relating to the opportunities and challenges associated with central planning, as opposed to markets, as an interactive mechanism for allocating productive resources and distributing goods and services. Prescriptively, Baran geared his interventions in professional economic discourse toward incorporating the lessons of Soviet industrialization in the hopes that the expanded state control of the economy begun under the New Deal would move in the direction of more planning.

Baran was disturbed when his colleagues began to apply their familiarity with the Soviet experience to articulate a defense of Washington's newfound foreign policy interest in promoting growth in "backward countries," and he began critiquing this line from an anti-imperialist perspective as early as the late 1940s. He launched his critique at the annual meeting of the American Economic Association. Responding to a panel titled "Economic Progress: General Considerations," he slotted the legion obstacles facing backward countries largely into the framework of Soviet industrialization debates of the 1920s. The "foremost need of underdeveloped countries is a substantial and rapid increase of total output," he claimed, which could only come from a proportional growth in technological investment in the agricultural and industrial sectors. He basically agreed with development economists that modernization of agricultural production depended on industry to supply "agricultural implements" and, more importantly, an outlet for the rural labor that would be displaced by more advanced productive techniques. So far, this does not sound different from the "balanced growth" consensus then prevailing in development economics, which drew directly from the experience of dealing with agricultural and industrial disproportionalities in

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Paul A. Baran, "The USSR in the World Economy," in S.E. Harris ed., *Foreign Economic Policy from the United States*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1948), 169-192.

Soviet industrialization. Baran diverged from his colleagues, however, by arguing that their prescriptions could not be realized without a revolution that would modernize and centralize the state apparatus necessary to enact the balanced development program. Because markets cannot stimulate investment necessary for sustained growth in backward countries, argued Baran, the state must do it. But, backward states remained under the control of feudal oligarchies, and thus required structural transformation to achieve the institutional prerequisites necessary to begin the process of development. The development discourse gaining momentum in the United States presented economic development as the *alternative* to revolution, in part of the Cold War dynamic, and in doing so, for Baran, took the very prerequisite necessary to achieve the prescription of balanced growth off the table.

Baran's critique of the still-emerging subfield of development economics reveals and sets the tone for a specific orientation in the postwar period. As he and Sweezy would do in the generation of the ideas undergirding *Political Economy of Growth* and *Monopoly Capital*, he ceded much prescriptive ground to his opponents, but insisted that political control and economic exploitation of imperialist powers effectively blocked the policies being prescribed. Baran's intervention essentially inverted that of a Rexford Tugwell or a Stuart Chase. Whereas they said technocratic methods of Soviet planned economy could be emulated by a centralized US developmentalist state, short of advocating full-scale revolution, Baran said intellectuals could apply the lessons of Soviet industrialization only if a change in property ownership took the planning apparatus out of the hands of private interests, who would otherwise invariably inhibit the full benefits of planned economy from working their course. At least at this juncture, Baran conceived of economic and social development of backwardness areas as a technocratic problem, and objected only to the

forms of property ownership enshrined in the constitution of the state executing a widely agreed upon set of policies.

### **Paul M. Sweezy: Monopoly Market Structure and World-Systems Analysis**

Many years later, Paul Sweezy would claim an instant fondness for Baran when the latter looked him up in Cambridge, on the advice of their mutual friend, the Polish economist Oskar Lange. “He and I,” wrote Sweezy of Baran in 1965, “were drawn together at once, and our intellectual and personal friendship became ever closer and more meaningful to both of us during the next 25 years.”<sup>38</sup> Unlike Baran, Sweezy’s early biography lacks any diasporic themes. He was, rather, quintessentially American in birth, education, culture and physical locale throughout his life. His father worked as a banking executive, affording young Paul a childhood experience that bordered on high bourgeois. He did his prep-school education at the elite private Phillips Exeter Academy, and his undergraduate and graduate training in economics at Harvard.

Harvard of the 1930s offered a fine environment for Sweezy to cultivate a sophisticated Marxist critique of the American economics profession. Sweezy studied under Joseph Schumpeter. Though staunchly anti-Marxist, in public and private, Schumpeter treated the Marxist system of political economy with more intellectual honesty than many anti-Marxist economists, and he proved willing to push a bright young student with an interest in Marxism to pursue his ideas to the fullest.<sup>39</sup> Schumpeter profoundly respected

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<sup>38</sup> Paul M. Sweezy, “Paul Alexander Baran: A Personal Memoir,” *Monthly Review* 16/11 (March 1965), 28-62 at 28.

<sup>39</sup> For Schumpeter on Marxism, see Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, (London: Ruskin House, 1961 [1943]), 1-45.

Sweezy's intellectual capabilities. When the latter returned from the Second World War to find a much less open intellectual climate at Harvard than he had left, Schumpeter alone in the department pushed to reinstate Sweezy to the faculty, and even pushed for him to get tenure. In a confidential letter to dean Paul H. Buck, Schumpeter bluntly stated that Sweezy's capabilities as an economist far surpassed those of John Dunlop, the other candidate for the position. Schumpeter praised Sweezy's first publications in economic journals as "striking proof of outstanding analytic ability." *Monopoly and Competition*, the book published out of Sweezy's dissertation project, deserved recognition for "the felicitous manner in which economic theory is made to serve historical interpretation." *Theory of Capitalist Development*, Sweezy's second book, offered "a remarkable exposition of the Marxian system of thought. This task, which has been attempted by dozens of economists of all countries, has never been done so well."<sup>40</sup> Sweezy knew Schumpeter had defended him, but he did not see the letter until Schumpeter's wife, Elizabeth, mailed it to him after his mentor's death in 1950. At a time when the profession had shunned Sweezy, the letter caused Sweezy to reflect on the difference between Schumpeter- who never allowed personal views to "influence his judgments of scientific ability and promise"- and "the smaller men who constitute the bulk of the academic...community."<sup>41</sup>

As an economist, Schumpeter passed on to his promising young student the notion that Marxist political economy offered useful insights into the laws governing the business

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<sup>40</sup> Joseph Schumpeter to Dean Paul H. Buck, May 18, 1945, PMS Box 1, folder labeled "Correspondence A-Z, 1947-1948."

<sup>41</sup> Sweezy to Elizabeth Schumpeter, February 18, 1950, PMS Box 1, folder labeled "Correspondence A-Z, 1947-1948."

cycle and the secular trend of increasing concentration and centralization of capital. In *Theory of Economic Development*, published in the original German in 1911, Schumpeter took issue with the implication of a static economy that must logically flow from the assumption of exchange equilibrium built into marginal utility models. Classical political economists, such as Adam Smith, David Ricardo and even Karl Marx, took a favorable view of markets as spurs to innovation, increasing productivity and thus expanding the total pool of goods and services. Marginalists justified markets on different grounds- the most efficient allocation of an implicitly given, or static, quantity of goods and services. Market signals arranged production such that scarce resources would optimize value, understood as the expression of subjective wants. For Schumpeter, marginalism, which was a new trend in his early career, explained the systemic forces leading to stability much better than those leading to instability. Much like the critique C. Wright Mills would level against Talcott Parsons's functionalist sociology nearly fifty years later, Schumpeter went so far as to accuse marginalists of lacking any theoretically consistent basis for explaining economic growth or change. He endeavored instead to present a "purely economic theory of economic change which does not merely rely on external factors propelling the economic system from one equilibrium to another." Apparently only later did he conclude "this idea and this aim are exactly the same as the idea and the aim which underlie the economic teaching of Karl Marx."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> For Schumpeter's consideration of the static logic of marginal utility theory, see Joseph A. Schumpeter, *The Theory of Economic Development: An Inquiry into Profits, Capital, Credit, Interest, and the Business Cycle* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949 [1934]), 3-56, esp. 8-9; 41-2. Quotation from Schumpeter's introduction to Japanese translation of the work, quoted in Elizabeth Boody Schumpeter, "Forward" in Joseph A.

Marx occupied a peculiar place in Schumpeter's economic thought and general worldview. Apparently independently from his engagement with Marx's work, Schumpeter developed a holistic critique of the method of modeling from behavioralist assumptions already well under way in the economics profession in Europe and the United States. A contemporary of Thorstein Veblen, Schumpeter similarly stressed the importance of social institutions and historical context for economic analysis. Turning to a closer engagement with Marx's work, he found much to commend. He lauded the synthesis of Marx's system, in which "sociology and economics pervade each other," although he simultaneously cautioned against such a lofty ambition in the hands of thinkers without the same "extensive command over historical and contemporaneous fact," not to mention "erudition in the field of economic theory."<sup>43</sup> More importantly, for Schumpeter, Marx "was the first economist of top rank to see and to teach systematically how economic theory may be turned into historical analysis and how historical narrative may be turned into *histoire raisonnée*." This latter point, for Schumpeter, was of vital significance from the perspective of economic methodology, as only a theory organically built on uncovering the structural logic of economic change over time could possibly explain periodic crises without recourse to exogenous determinants. On the whole, Schumpeter's outlook could be characterized as deep respect for Marx, guarded sympathy with certain elements of Marxist political economy, disdain for "Marxists," and skepticism about the desirability of socialism as an alternative to capitalism.

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Schumpeter *Ten Great Economists from Marx to Keynes*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), viii.

<sup>43</sup> For synthesis, see: Schumpeter, *Capitalism*, 45-6, quotation at 45. For Marx as erudite, Schumpeter, *Capitalism*, 10.



Sweezy adopted his advisors research agenda, focusing on questions relating to recurrent crises and institutional changes arising out of secular economic trends, but he saw much greater value in contributions from the Marxist tradition after Marx than Schumpeter had. With prodigious effort, Sweezy read broadly into Marxist theoretical texts to mine out the tradition's contributions to the pressing questions facing the economics profession of the 1930s. Fluent in German, Sweezy was able to read and synthesize Marxist works that had not yet become widely available in English translations. As a student of *Capital*, he clearly went beyond his academic advisor, reading and assimilating all three volumes plus *Theories of Surplus-Value*, which had not yet been translated into English, and immersing himself in interpretative debates such as Marx's theory of crisis. At the same time, he remained fully engaged with the contemporary economics profession, and kept current with theoretical developments in the United States and Europe.

Intellectual historians have remembered Sweezy's second book, *Theory of Capitalist Development*, as an accessible synthesis of key debates in the history of Marxist thought. As an expression of Marxism, this either understates or overstates the book's importance, depending on one's perspective. Sweezy did indeed synthesize key theoretical debates derived from competing interpretations of *Capital*. But he also weighed those debates against contemporary evidence of capitalist development, took definite positions, discarded elements of the Marxist system he considered outdated, and offered conditional prognoses on the future trajectory of capitalism as a world-system. It is hard to view the book as anything less than a formative experience in his self-identification as a Marxist theoretician, as it contains in various stages of development virtually every aspect of the brand of Marxism that would find its fullest expression in *Monopoly Capital*, a book he co-authored with Baran and

published nearly a quarter century later. In particular, in *Theory of Capitalist Development* Sweezy adopted a stance on what he saw as the *fundamental* contradiction of capitalism, which he would carry over into his political economic analysis throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

In a move that went beyond mere synthesis, Sweezy dissolved the distinction between underconsumptionist and proportionality explanations of crisis, considering them instead as two aspects of the “realization problem.” The idea that they are distinct theories of crisis has no precedent in Marx, according to Sweezy, but rather originated in the thought of the non-Marxist Russian economist Mikhail Tugan-Baranovsky, and only gained popularity in the Marxist tradition when Rudolf Hilferding picked it up from Tugan.<sup>44</sup> Producing the right quantities of producer and consumer goods, ensuring that all commodities are use-values, and thus able to realize their value in terms of socially necessary labor time, has always been a delicate balancing act under the *law of value*, capitalism’s anarchic distribution mechanism. Yet, for the most part, the system has managed through the invisible hand to complete circuits of distribution and renew production on an expanded scale. Attributing crises to “disproportionality,” for Sweezy, meant little more than pointing out that the interlocking circuits of production and circulation of individual capitals produce numerous choke points, at any of which commodities failing to complete the circuit can clog the arteries of the system, leading to crisis. While this is true, the observation does not get us far toward understanding why such congestion in capitalism’s circulatory system appears with periodic

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<sup>44</sup> Paul M. Sweezy, *The Theory of Capitalist Development: Principles of Marxian Political Economy* (London, 1946), 160-1.

regularity.<sup>45</sup> Sweezy found it more useful to question whether capitalism has any inherent tendencies to periodically produce systemic imbalances between the departments, and whether those structural contradictions tend to increase or decrease as capitalism develops. The classic position on this question, that espoused by Marx himself in *Capital: Volume III*, was that capitalism as a system had an inherent tendency to ever deeper systemic crises grounded, in the final analysis, from the growth in the organic composition of capital and the resultant tendency for the rate of profit to decline. Sweezy definitively rejected that perspective in *Theory of Capitalist Development*, and he sustained that position into the 1950s and 1960s. Of all classical theorists, only Kautsky advanced the question when, in his polemic with Eduard Bernstein, he posited a decreasing ability for markets to absorb consumer commodities as capitalism becomes increasingly concentrated and productive. This perspective, that capitalism has a progressive tendency leading to chronic depression caused by structurally insurmountable lack of demand, would underlie Baran's and Sweezy's analysis of stagnation in *Monthly Review*, *Political Economy of Growth*, and *Monopoly Capital*, and surface in many of the ideas about capitalist dynamics held by student radicals.<sup>46</sup>

While Sweezy's exposition drew deeply and extensively from Marxist literature, he also channeled more mainstream economic currents of his era. In the 1930s and early 1940s, before falling under the crosshairs of the perpetrators of the Second Red Scare, Sweezy had

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<sup>45</sup> For discussion of proportional and underconsumptionist theories of crisis, see chapter one. For Sweezy's discussion of proportionality theories of crisis, see Sweezy, *Theory*, 156-61.

<sup>46</sup> For the relation between theories of crisis, imperialism and the political evolution of the Soviet Union, see Richard B. Day, *The "Crisis" and the "Crash": Soviet Studies of the West, 1917-1939*, (London: NLB, 1981).

respectable standing in the American economics profession, and had carved out a niche for himself as something of an expert on the effects of monopolization on the price structure. His first publication, appearing in 1939 in the respected *Journal of Political Economy*, introduced the “kinked demand curve” to illustrate the tendency for prices to rise continuously in an oligopolistic market.<sup>47</sup> His reputation as an expert on monopoly earned him a position after graduate school with the Security and Exchange Commission, making him a low-level technocrat in the expanding New Deal state apparatus. Created in 1934 as Roosevelt’s response to the unchecked securities exchange perceived to have contributed to the financial collapse of 1929, the SEC in the late 1930s housed many figures who would become cornerstones of New Deal liberal statism. As a researcher at the SEC, Sweezy demonstrated an aptitude for historical economic analysis when he headed up an investigation into the “proxy wars” that gripped Chesapeake and Ohio Railways following the death of O.P. Van Sweringen. O.P. and his brother M.J. Van Sweringen had controlled the C & O lines through a complicated system of interlocking directorships. The combined economic collapse of the Great Depression and O.P.’s death set investors on a cutthroat competition to monopolize control of the railroad through speculation in the various holding companies. In a series of concise memoranda prepared for his SEC bosses, Sweezy followed the complicated maneuvers that culminated in the consolidation of control under the Allegheny holding company, headed by Ralph Robert Young. His reports adroitly dissected the web of competing ownership claims, which no doubt provided Sweezy with a level of practical understanding of the ownership and management structure of the modern corporation. It is on

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<sup>47</sup> Paul M. Sweezy, “Demand Under Conditions of Oligopoly,” *Journal of Political Economy*, 47/4 (Aug. 1939), 568-73.

this dual basis, as both a pioneer of the micro-economic theory of market structure under monopoly and as a state technocrat with close practical knowledge of the ownership and management of the railroad industry, that Sweezy in *Theory of Capitalist Development* critiqued Berle and Means famous thesis of the separation of ownership from control, and established the pattern of thought on the distinction between Marxist and liberal theories of monopoly he would maintain throughout the “post capitalist” 1950s.<sup>48</sup> Berle and Means thesis implied a corporate managerial elite without control of private property, directly informing Burnham’s thesis. Sweezy, in contrast, claimed corporate monopolization exacerbated rather than alleviated the potential for a small group to gain both ownership and effective control over not only individual enterprises, but large sections of the economy.

In addition to a mutual desire to insinuate a Marxist current into the American economics profession, Baran and Sweezy shared a similar political orientation founded on their shared interpretation of the path to socialism. Sweezy carved out his life-long niche as the most sophisticated American Marxist economist in the mid-to-late 1930s, just as the Communist Party reoriented itself behind the Popular Front strategy. Assuming a non-antagonistic posture toward Roosevelt and the New Deal, the CP helped create the social and intellectual space in which the distinctions between Marxist and non-Marxist reforms blurred. Journalists surrounding leading liberal periodicals *The Nation* and *New Republic* were willing to entertain Marxist ideas and form coalitions with communists to oppose

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<sup>48</sup> See: Memorandum from Paul M. Sweezy to Mr. Blaisdell, subject line “Directions in which C & O Study Can Proceed,” October 8, 1938; Memorandum from Paul M. Sweezy to Messrs. Rysphan and Blomquist, October 11, 1938; Memorandum from David Rysphan and Paul M. Sweezy to Thomas J. Lynch, subject line “C & O Proxy Fight,” October 22, 1938. All located in PMS Box 11.

fascism.<sup>49</sup> The economics profession in which Sweezy was embedded moved toward institutionalist analysis and policy prescriptions increasingly willing to look to the Soviet Union as positive model. Sweezy's participation in the New Deal state was not anomalous. Many other Marxists or socialist sympathizers secured similar posts, including a New Yorker with personal ties to the old left wing of the Debs-era Socialist Party, Harry Magdoff, who would later serve as Sweezy's co-editor.<sup>50</sup> Becoming Marxist in this era left a strong impression on Sweezy's political sensibilities. As editor of *Monthly Review* (discussed below), and as a perceived expert on Marxism, Sweezy in the immediate post-World War Two period had repeated opportunities to publicly explain his conception of socialism, all of which revealed the formative impact of his experience in Popular Front/New Deal United States. While he believed a wholesale transformation of property ownership necessary to build a socialist society, he perceived the New Deal state as objectively driving in that direction.<sup>51</sup>

As economic theorists, Baran and Sweezy were products of their time. Each insinuated a Marxist point of view into vibrant subfields of 1930s economic thought. Sweezy

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<sup>49</sup> See: Frank A. Warren III, *Liberals and Communism: The "Red Decade" Revisited*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1966); Daniel Geary, "Carey McWilliams and Antifascism, 1934-1943," *Journal of American History* 90/3 (Dec. 2003), 912-934.

<sup>50</sup> Landon R. Y. Storrs, *The Second Red Scare and the Unmaking of the New Deal Left*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013) argues that much of the personnel of New Deal agencies were socialists who either conceived of the growing state as the agency through which socialism would come to the United States, or were biding their time until they could devote their energies in more radical ways.

<sup>51</sup> See especially texts of speeches delivered at the University of New Hampshire and Cornell in the early 1950s: Paul M. Sweezy, "Text of a Lecture Delivered by Paul M. Sweezy to the Humanities Course at the University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH, March 22, 1954," PMS, Box 11; Paul M. Sweezy, "American Capitalism Today: A Marxist View," Text of a speech delivered at Cornell University, PMS, Box 11.

showed how the Marxist tradition offered a rich set of tools for understanding changes to circulation and crises under conditions of monopoly capitalism, problems with obvious salience to 1930s economists. Baran, for his part, overtly pointed to the Soviet Union as the model for future development of what was then still called “backward” regions and which would come to be known as the Third World. Sweezy in the 1930s focused on explaining the dynamics of monopoly capitalism, and in doing so conceded corporate/state collusion had invalidated much of the logic of earlier, more anarchic versions of capitalist mechanisms of circulating goods and services, and that these changes to “circulation” redounded back upon the system as a mode of social productive relations. Baran, abstracting generalizable laws from the experience of Soviet industrialization, proceeded analytically from the assumption that “socialism” could be defined as a set of developmental policies administered bureaucratically in an isolated nation-state, and could and should replicate the brutal mechanisms of capitalism’s stage of “primitive accumulation” to achieve its goals. Prior to their intellectual collaboration, and in its early stages, each defined one of the two poles of the coming Cold War outside of pure ideal type dichotomies such as capitalism/communism or democracy/totalitarianism. Yet, they insisted that changes to capitalism modified rather than invalidated categories of classical Marxist political economy, and that policy-making under U.S. monopoly capitalism remained more elite-driven and fundamentally anti-democratic than under real or imagined socialist regimes.

### ***Monthly Review and the Diminishing Room for Fellow Travelers***

*“I’ve always insisted that it’s very hard for an intellectual in this culture, without an independent income or a secure academic job, to be a left intellectual in any meaningful sense.” (Paul M. Sweezy, 1999).*

The reaction and domestic repression that gripped post-World War Two American society emerged piecemeal, through a series of successive stages. Baran and Sweezy experienced the onset of the Second Red Scare as a slow vice, gradually closing in on the opportunities to direct their abundant talents toward meaningful social change. Their experience, and its impact on the trajectory of their ideas, offer invaluable insight into the psychological effects of terror and ostracism. By the mid-1950s, the pressure to conform to Cold War strictures would reach tremendous proportions. But in the latter half of the 1940s, the vice had only begun to turn, and Sweezy for one had little reason to believe that the left could not regroup. In this environment, he and Leo Huberman established *Monthly Review*. Carrying the subtitle “An Independent Socialist Journal,” the small magazine self-consciously set out to serve as a rallying point for the left that had already begun to lose strength and voice in American society. Though the small publication did little to reverse the withdraw of left intellectuals from the public sphere, it did provide a forum to stay connected, and to continue to generate a real-time critique of American political life according to Marxist categories. The journal and its editors stood at the hub of a network of radical critics committed to carrying forward a long and theoretically rich tradition viewing modern U.S. history through the lens of imperialism.

Returning to the US following World War Two, Sweezy quickly tried to orient himself in what he accurately predicted would be an increasingly hostile environment for Marxists. His outlook on the prospects for the left was sober, but not yet full of despair. By June of 1946, he correctly predicted capitalism and socialism would divide the globe into two worlds, the demarcation line between them “dividing Germany into two parts,” and that this international situation would unleash a “strong wave of American fascism attributing all our



ills to Bolshevism abroad and at home.” In this international and domestic conjuncture, Sweezy formulated a plan to establish a periodical around which socialists in the United States could cohere and defend their position. By the summer of 1946, Sweezy felt a strong sense of urgency for establishing such a journal, which could only weather the coming depression if it had already established a market. He hoped to issue a “pilot copy” as soon as possible, which could be used to drum up investments, which he hoped would reach as much as \$500,000, to secure a small staff of dedicated writers.<sup>52</sup> In the event, it would still be another three years until this project saw the light of day, and then thanks only to a fortuitous investment secured when the socialist Harvard literary scholar F. O. Mathiessen passed on a portion of his unexpected windfall inheritance. Mathiessen’s contribution, “a commitment of \$5000 for three years in succession, totaling \$15,000,” while far more modest than Sweezy’s \$500,000 projection of necessary funds, was enough to get the project off the ground.<sup>53</sup>

By the time Sweezy announced his presence on the New York intellectual scene with the launch of *Monthly Review*, the “little magazine” as a forum for independent leftists to speak to a broad, educated public audience was in decline. Its heyday had been the 1930s; its social foundation the radicalized workers united in the overlapping layers of labor and political organizations that pushed the decades political reforms. The working masses organized to consciously intervene in the political decisions governing their material conditions, and in doing so stimulated demand for pamphlets and journals purporting to

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<sup>52</sup> Sweezy to “Paul” (probably Baran), June 23, 1946, Box 10.

<sup>53</sup> See Christopher Phelps, “Introduction: A Socialist Magazine in the American Century,” *Monthly Review* 51/1 (May 1999), 1-30 at 2.

explain social and historical processes, and infuse high-brow culture with representations of proletarian experiences. The general radicalization drove a demand-fueled upswing in the production and circulation of political and literary little magazines, providing a viable material foundation for intellectuals to make a modest but independent living writing articles and books for a general public audience. One can of course question just how much market pressures limited independence even in this period. Contemporaries grappled with this question in the form of debates over “commitment.” *Partisan Review* and *Modern Quarterly*—the two most prominent magazines of the literary left—held repeated forums discussing issues of political commitment and independence, which in turn reflected the growing pressures to cater art to the political and labor organizations responsible for their expanding market.<sup>54</sup>

New York had been the hub for independent journalistic and literary leftism, and the most prominent of the New York Intellectuals in the 1930s and early 1940s had been attracted to anti-Stalinist Marxism as a political orientation, a posture best represented in the US and internationally by the figure of Leon Trotsky. Exiled from the Soviet Union for his outspoken criticism of bureaucratization and Stalin’s autarkical development program, both of which he claimed betrayed the revolution, Trotsky was himself a gifted and prolific journalist, a sophisticated thinker, and an accomplished literary critic, all of which made him an appealing figure for US intellectuals drawn leftward by the shifting gravity of American politics. Anti-Stalinist Marxism offered a political vision in which a full-scale structural transformation of American capitalism would not lead to the bureaucratism of the Soviet

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<sup>54</sup> Denning, *Cultural Front*, 56-7.

Union. *Partisan Review*, often considered the exemplar of New York intellectual leftism in the 1930s, came under the editorship of Trotskyist sympathizer Dwight Macdonald in the 1930s after a bitter internal rivalry ousted the Stalinist founding editors.

This was the intellectual environment in New York and nationally in which *Monthly Review* launched, and the goals of the new journal reflected the disorientation accompanying the evaporation of the social basis for a viable left-liberal intellectual sphere. Articles would contribute “expert reporting and analysis rather than a programmatic declaration,” but, nonetheless, in the editorial process would be “rewritten and arranged to present a pretty uniform ‘line.’”<sup>55</sup> This sort of ecumenical approach mirrors the hopes of the political movement then rapidly regrouping around the Progressive Party. Hoping to reclaim the progressive legacy of the New Deal, the Progressive Party drew in many of the Socialist, Communist and left-liberal actors who had cut their teeth in the politics of the 1930s. It played out as a last-ditch effort of the Popular Front, and Sweezy reprised his role as fellow-traveling intellectual by actively participating in the New Hampshire chapter of the Progressive Party. As conceptualized, *Monthly Review* would have served as the organ to widely propagate the ideas, goals and strategies of a left with deep cultural and intellectual roots in American society and political representation in a viable third party. In the actual event, the first issue- published in May of 1949- circulated among a disheartened left shortly on the wake of the humiliating implosion of the Progressive Party.

From its inception, the journal carried an undertone of futility, as expressed in the unfortunate series “Cooperation on the Left” that sporadically dotted the pages of the first

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<sup>55</sup> Sweezy to Paul, June 23, 1945, Box 10.

two annual volumes. Intended as a forum for the splintering left to publicly strategize how to rebuild, the series did nothing but reveal the sharp dividing lines separating the end goals, strategy and tactics of the various ideological currents that had cooperated in the more promising radical climate of the 1930s. In initiating the discussion, the editors defined “the Left” as “all classes and strata of the population which are, either actually or potentially, hostile to monopoly capitalism—workers, small farmers, lower middle classes, Negroes, nationality groups, a large proportion of professionals and students.”<sup>56</sup> The strategic difficulties surfaced immediately. In the first issue following the editors’ call, IF Stone criticized Henry Wallace for breaking with the Communists, not out of any ideological affinity with the Communist Party, but because if the Communists fell, “the popular-fronters [would] follow; and when [they had] been taken, the ADAers and the liberals [would] be the next in line of fire.”<sup>57</sup> Wallace, in his contribution, signaled his unmistakable intention to concede the center of the gravity to the growing anti-Communist sensibilities, and spoke only of reuniting the “liberalism” of the halcyon days of FDR.<sup>58</sup> The debate ran for several more issues, and boasted contributions from dozens of renowned intellectuals from the Popular Front era. Many, such as Stone, Harvey O’Connor, Corliss Lamont, Cedric Belfrage, and Scott Nearing would remain, however loosely, in the *Monthly Review* orbit throughout the

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<sup>56</sup> Paul Sweezy and Leo Huberman, “Cooperation on the Left,” *Monthly Review* 1/11 (March 1950), 334-344 at 336.

<sup>57</sup> I.F. Stone, “Problems of the Progressive Party,” *Monthly Review*, 1/12 (April 1950), 379-389 at 382.

<sup>58</sup> Henry Wallace, “Needed: Cooperation Between the US and the USSR in a Strong UN,” *Monthly Review*, 2/1 (May 1950), 7-10.

decade. But the series itself, though a strong indication of the reach and influence of *Monthly Review* at its inception, merely revealed the deep, unbridgeable rifts that had emerged in the increasingly isolated left. After a few issues, it simply petered out without anything approximating a resolution or a platform for moving forward with a renewed Popular Front.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the disheartened political tone, *Monthly Review* stood out among early 1950s little magazines, and in doing so laid the basis for solidarity with the few other prominent intellectuals to dissent from the dominant tendencies of Cold War thought, most notably C. Wright Mills and William Appleman Williams. Mills had moved from Maryland to New York City in 1945, to be closer to the heart of intellectual life. After a stint with the Bureau of Applied Research, which contributed to his lifelong distaste for methodological fetishism, he took a teaching position in the sociology department at Columbia University.<sup>59</sup> Though Mills counted well-known New York intellectuals such as Macdonald, Daniel Bell, and Irving Howe among his friends throughout the 1940s, one-by-one these friendships deteriorated over significant ideological and political disagreements. To put it simply, Mills moved to the left while the rest of his intellectual cohort moved to the right. With his characteristic knack for branding social processes with pithy colloquial phrases, Mills dubbed the rightward shift the “American celebration.” In his standout contribution to *Partisan Review*’s symposium “Our Country and Our Culture,” Mills displayed his disdain and contempt for American celebrants, denouncing their “shrinking

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<sup>59</sup> Mattson, *Intellectuals*, 47.

deference to the status quo,” “soft and anxious compliance,” and “feeble search to justify [their] intellectual conduct.”<sup>60</sup>

*Monthly Review* opposed these perspectives from the outset in at least three analytically distinct but interrelated ways: by maintaining an instrumentalist class analysis of the US state, by extrapolating the mechanisms of coercion and control to the level of the world economy, and by depicting Washington as the aggressor in the Cold War. Their pro-Soviet orientation ensured a longer path to traverse between Marxism and anti-Communism, making them stand out from the anti-Stalinist New York intellectuals. But their ideological commitment to Marxism differentiated them from the liberal pragmatists who had been willing to draw on the Soviet Union as an experimental model for state-led development.

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<sup>60</sup> C. Wright Mills, “Contribution to ‘Our Country and Our Culture: A Symposium,’” in John H. Summers ed., *The Politics of Truth: Selected Writings of C. Wright Mills*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 37-42 at 38.

## Chapter Two: Knowledge for What in the Age of Academe

While writing *The Cultural Apparatus*—a manuscript that would remain unfinished at the time of his death—C. Wright Mills had recourse to revisit his 1944 essay “The Powerless People.” He was struck by just how much thematic continuity linked his earlier and later work. “It may be that I have had no really new themes since then,” he wrote in the manuscript’s preface, “although I have of course had many topics.” Mills had spent the better part of his academic life trying to understand the role of intellectuals in society. Though this was a subset of his broader concern, the link between biography and social structure, it nonetheless constituted a specific issue that absorbed a large share of his mental energies. Most of this intellectual effort had taken place under a cloud of disillusion. But his immersion in a new transnational network of left intellectuals and, especially, the excitement generated by his firsthand observation of Fidel Castro’s revolutionary government energized him and infused a hint of optimism into *The Cultural Apparatus* not seen in any of his work since *New Men of Power*. For the first time, Mills in the unpublished *Cultural Apparatus* and in his published “Letter to the New Left” overtly called on the “young intelligentsia” to leverage its position within the cultural apparatus to mobilize “oppositional publics” behind a new left program.<sup>61</sup>

The *Monthly Review* crowd shared Mills’s newfound sense of optimism in the late 1950s. This general mood, which was certainly in the ether, contributes to the New Left resurrection

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<sup>61</sup> Daniel Geary, *Radical Ambition: C. Wright Mills, the Left, and American Social Thought*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), quotation at 190.

narrative. Yet when the groundswell of social opposition began bubbling to the surface at the end of a decade remembered for conformity, Mills, Sweezy, Baran, William Appleman Williams and others met it with a set of mental categories that bore the indelible stamp of their experiences and mental trajectories over the two decades stretching from the late 1930s to the late 1950s. Their enthusiasm stood out in contrast to the depths of their previous despair, but they could not and did not shed their experiences with isolation and repression, nor the profound consequences of those experiences on their world outlooks. As they took intellectual leadership of campus radicalism, they passed on to the “New Left” ideas deeply imbued with 1950s contestations over the fate of theories, strategies and programs of the “Old Left.”

In this chapter, I make a case for understanding Baran and Sweezy as the two most important figures to synthesize 1950s dissident thought into a holistic political economic theory of US-led world imperialism, which following the Cuban Revolution would wend its way into 1960s campus radicalism, and from there get rearticulated in various academic disciplines as a social scientific theory explaining the causes and solutions to Third World underdevelopment. In the course of working out and articulating this theory, *Monthly Review* gathered around it a bloc of intellectuals solidified in the latter half of the 1950s around a firm rejection of the pluralist view of the state, in favor of a vision in which economic and political power remained in the hands of interlocking networks of corporate and state executives. The prerogatives of this group, whether described as a “ruling class,” “power elite,” or “corporate liberals,” were the most abundantly apparent in foreign policy, which was formulated in the interests of the material beneficiaries of the “permanent war economy.” By formulating a theory in which objective imperatives rooted in the political



economic structure drove US imperialism, Baran and Sweezy stood out from even the more critical, left-leaning intellectuals of their era. Yet, they shaped their ideas isolated from any mass social movements and in discourse with other intellectuals, which effectively meant they assimilated and inverted rather than transcended major trends in US Cold War thought.

Unpacking this theory of imperialism, which would come to be known as Neo-Marxism, offers important understandings of the way impressions of 1950s American social and economic life were woven into the variants of liberal and Marxist thought that emerged from the 1930s. As seen in the last chapter, Sweezy had founded *Monthly Review* amid polarization of the Popular Front/New Deal social alliance, and the corollary implosion of the secure space for intellectual radicalism. From the late 1940s to the late 1950s, the market for socialist journalism shrank and career opportunities in academic humanities and social sciences expanded dramatically. As Mills, Williams, Baran and Sweezy launched their respective critiques of the “main drift” or “vital center” of American thought, they grappled in real time with the implications of the transformation of the institutional basis for producing and circulating socialist ideas. A persistent problem of audience plagued their ability to articulate a viable anti-imperialist program, which in turn built a certain inertia into their theory of imperialism. They chose other intellectuals as their interlocutors, which increasingly meant subjecting their attempts at holistic theorizing to the compartmentalizing effects of academic disciplines. By implicitly choosing academic disciplines as their terrain of struggle, they ensured much of their mental efforts would go toward justifying holistic theorizing as a fundamental part of the scientific enterprise, and one poorly suited to the narrow methodological empiricism coming to dominate the major social scientific disciplines of the era. They passed this legacy onto New Left campus radicals, many of whom were

equally entrenched in academic social sciences, ensuring that, to an unrecognized extent, much of the neo-Marxist challenge to modernization theory revolved around questions of epistemology and the potential for seizing the university to disrupt the reproduction of consensus at a major institutional hub of the cultural apparatus.

### **Repression and Isolation in Cold War America**

*“Shortly after the war, there was a kind of conscious planning to disrupt and disintegrate this feared regrouping of the left, with ominous consequences for further down the road. The Cold War, McCarthyism, and redbaiting were connected to the necessity to split up and fragmentize all those remnants of the 1930s, a very important part of the shameful history of the period from about 1948 to 1956 or 1957.”* Paul M. Sweezy, 1999.

Both Baran and Sweezy faced significant persecution within the witch hunt atmosphere of McCarthyist America. While they handled this persecution admirably, even heroically, it undoubtedly took a psychological toll. For Baran, McCarthyism was a slow, dull ache, manifested in the form of the ever-present fear of being driven from his Stanford position and thus having the material rug pulled from underneath him. Occasionally the drumbeat would grow louder, and meetings with his department chair, provost, or the university president would lead him to formulate concrete plans for finding a small place on the East Coast, near Sweezy, to retrench and support himself as a freelance writer.<sup>62</sup> For Baran, the sense of utter isolation heightened the trauma of the experience. Aside from

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<sup>62</sup> Baran frequently described intolerable conditions at Stanford. See: PAB-PMS, January 9, 1953; PAB-PMS, March 3, 1953. For plans to quit and move to New Hampshire, see: PAB-PMS, January 18, 1953.

Moses Abramowitz, not a single Stanford economist defended Baran's academic freedom and, if his letter's to Sweezy are to be believed, he was personally and professionally ostracized within the department.

If Baran's McCarthyist experience resembled a chronic tooth-ache, Sweezy's resembled an appendicitis: a sharp, potentially life-threatening pain leading to full recovery upon surgical removal. In October of 1953, New Hampshire State Attorney General Louis C. Wyman summoned Sweezy to answer questions regarding allegations of a 'subversive' lecture on socialism Sweezy had delivered at the University of New Hampshire for three consecutive years.<sup>63</sup> The summons set off a three-year-long ordeal that would ultimately result in Sweezy's victory in 1957 in the Supreme Court case *Sweezy v. New Hampshire*. The outcome seems almost foreordained in the strategy Sweezy consciously adopted even prior to his first public grilling in January of 1954. Sweezy went into his initial hearing with two concerns in mind. Behavior in front of witch trials was a moral issue among what remained of the left in postwar America, and Sweezy approached the hearing conscious of his public image and resolved not to grovel.<sup>64</sup>

Secondly, Sweezy approached the hearings with a deliberate strategy aimed at exposing the unconstitutionality of McCarthyism. The strategy he called the "Huberman-Larchmont" line had been tested by Huberman a year earlier, and was ultimately inspired by

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<sup>63</sup> "Academic Freedom and the Sweezy Case," November 29, 1954, PMS, Box 11.

<sup>64</sup> As an indication of the extent to which this mattered to Sweezy and Baran, see their reaction to long-time Shigeto Tsuru's cooperation in 1957: PMS-PAB, "probably May 20," 1957,

Einstein and Ghandi.<sup>65</sup> This strategy entailed refusing to cooperate on First rather than Fifth Amendment grounds. But, refusal at the initial stage risked losing the battle for public opinion by relinquishing the opportunity to make it clear that one is neither a communist nor a subversive threat. So, Sweezy agreed to be sworn in, and agreed to answer questions at his discretion without conceding that the state had the right to ask them. He confirmed that he considered himself a Marxist and a socialist, but denied being a Communist to establish the record. Beyond denying that he had publicly advocated violent revolution he refused to answer questions about the UNH lecture, and refused to answer any questions at all pertaining to his involvement in the New Hampshire Progressive Party on the grounds that such questions were irrelevant to the line of inquiry. Wyman charged Sweezy with contempt, and the New Hampshire Supreme Court upheld the verdict in March of 1956. Applying the “Huberman-Larchmont” line throughout every phase, Sweezy successfully appealed the case to the Supreme Court in 1957. The Supreme Court verdict in *New Hampshire v. Sweezy* has since been considered a landmark ruling on academic freedom, and an indication of the thawing of the worst phase of McCarthyism.

In addition to state repression, Baran, Sweezy suffered personally and intellectually from their sense of being alienated from any progressive social forces. The intellectual radicalization of the 1930s, in which they had cut their teeth as left academics, was closely linked to the dramatic upsurge of labor militancy in that decade. In the immediate post-World War Two period, labor leaders such as Walter Reuther still considered themselves democratic socialists, and intellectuals on the left still thought labor would be the institutional

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<sup>65</sup> Huberman case and link to Einstein and Ghandi, PMS-PAB, July 24, 1953. “Huberman-Larchmont line” PMS-PAB (and Arthur and Hi), January 10, 1954.

basis for pressing the New Deal order in a socialist direction. However, during the war labor had become bureaucratized and closely tied with the Democratic Party, and the onset of the Cold War solidified these processes. The Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 purged radicals and required loyalty oaths from union leaders, and it routinized labor-management negotiations. Both measures institutionalized the labor movement as a permanent feature of American politics, while simultaneously restricting the possibilities for the type of spontaneous militancy industrial unionists had displayed at the height of the Great Depression. Henry Wallace's campaign, which Sweezy participated in as a delegate for the New Hampshire Progressive Party, sought to channel the progressive democratic socialist elements around labor into third party, which would take up the mantle of the New Deal. Truman's reelection in the 1948 presidential campaign stymied the effort and solidified the close relationship between the AFL-CIO bureaucracy and the Democratic Party that endures two decades into the twenty-first century.

C. Wright Mills set the tone for 1950s left intellectual discussions about the implications of labor bureaucratization for radical thought in general and for Marxism in particular. His widely read trilogy sought to build a comprehensive image of the US social structure from the bottom-up. *New Men of Power* (1948) examined labor, *White Collar* (1951) the salaried professional classes, and *The Power Elite* (1956) the interlocking military, corporate, and governmental institutions holding the preponderance of power. These works collectively portrayed an American social and political order defined by the concentration of power in the hands of a small group of self-interested elites. Written at different times, they also reflect Mills's changing assessment of the prospects for mobilizing the subjects of the first two volumes in opposition the subjects of the third. Along with articles intended for the

educated public, two book-length polemical pieces, and his unfinished manuscripts, Mills's oeuvre also reveals an underlying discourse with the Marxist tradition, the best-known outcome of which was his critique of the unwarranted, what he saw as faith-like assumption in the historically progressive agency of the proletariat.

But before Mills became known for his rejection of the Marxist "labor metaphysic," he briefly envisioned a future for himself as a "labor intellectual," operating in a liminal space somewhere between the academy and the labor movement. When Mills came to New York City to work for the Columbia sociology department's Bureau of Applied Social Research (BASR) in 1945, many of his friends on the New York intellectual scene had already moved away from a progressive social vision premised on the objective antagonism between capital and labor. In 1946 Dwight Macdonald published "The Root is Man," declaring the need for a moralist humanism to resolve the crisis of Enlightenment ideas of progress, in which he included the Marxist view of class struggle. Mills, then friendly with Macdonald and Daniel Bell and contributing regularly to *politics* and *New Leader*, the magazines they respectively edited, resisted Macdonald's turn away from labor. While at the BASR, he contributed to J.B.S. Hardman's Inter-Union Institute for Labor and Democracy, where he participated in a roundtable on the role of intellectuals in the labor movement and served as contributing editor to *Labor and Nation*. His concurrent research for the BASR employed state-of-the-art sociological methods to survey hundreds of labor leaders, which provided the empirical data that would go into *New Men of Power*. Though the book, Mills's first, criticized the bureaucratization of the labor movement and contained some ambiguity

for the way forward, it nonetheless placed labor at the center of any program for the socialist left.<sup>66</sup>

Virtually by the time the book went to the press, Mills had shifted toward the position he would maintain until his death, and for which he would be more rightly remembered. Already *New Men of Power* displayed ambivalence about the prospect of a labor-centered progressivism. Mills believed labor could be the institutional base for a new radicalism, but only if a new labor intellectual managed to shake off the bureaucrats. His outlook was not exactly optimistic, as indicated in his bleak closing sentence: “Never has so much depended upon men who are so ill-prepared and so little inclined to accept the responsibility.”<sup>67</sup> By the time he completed his next book, *White Collar*, Mills had grown much more skeptical about prospects for bottom-up social change. Published in 1951, *White Collar* identified salaried professionals as the new cornerstone of the American economy. Mills exhaustively examined the middle-class occupations that had been created by 1940s transformations of American capitalism, and he analyzed the structural pressures exerted on these workers by their place within the bureaucratized structure. Though this analysis yielded insights about the mechanisms of social control, the subjects of the book are portrayed as more-or-less passive recipients of structural pressures, and mindless regurgitators of mass culture. Mills doubted white collar workers could be mobilized to oppose capitalism.

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<sup>66</sup> For Macdonald’s essay, see: Gregory D. Sumner, *Dwight Macdonald and the politics Circle: The Challenge of Cosmopolitan Democracy*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996), 151-159. For biographical information on Mills while writing *New Men of Power*, see: Geary, *Radical Ambition*, 81-89; Aronowitz, *Taking it Big*, 83-104.

<sup>67</sup> C. Wright Mills, *New Men of Power*, pp. Quoted in Geary, *Radical*, 104.

The minds behind *Monthly Review* had no direct ties to labor, but suffered a similar disorientation toward the organized political left with the collapse of “fellow-traveler” as a common and more-or-less socially acceptable category. Privately, they maintained doubts and criticisms of the Soviet Union, but they agreed that to criticize it publicly only provided fodder for reactionaries.<sup>68</sup> Even in private, they rationalized many Soviet atrocities that repelled so many liberals. When rumors of Soviet gulags began circulating in American media, Sweezy and Baran partially dismissed them as “fantastic exaggerations,” partially deflected by equating them to semi-slave labor in the United States, and partially justified them as necessary growing pains for the sake of building a better future.<sup>69</sup> Throughout the 1950s, they categorically rejected any talk of “Soviet imperialism,” and argued that spreading socialism to Soviet “satellites” was historically progressive, even when it involved deceit and/or force.<sup>70</sup>

If they were ambivalent about the Soviet Union, they held much firmer views on Stalin as a person and of the Leninist party as an instrument in the struggle for social

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<sup>68</sup> See, for example, exchange over Baran’s efforts to enter Soviet Union to see his dying mother. He says it’s hard not to join the baiters. Sweezy defends the importance of protecting the iron curtain, and advises against any public criticism. PAB-PMS (and Huberman), March 28, 1950; PMS-PAB, March 31, 1950.

<sup>69</sup> Quotation from PMS-PAB, January 25, 1951. Equivalency to U.S. labor see: PMS-PAB, February 28, 1951; PMS-PAB, April 6, 1951.

<sup>70</sup> See defense of “Czech affair” on ground that the masses have “to be bribed, tricked, maneuvered into tolerating and cooperating with the government while it carries out social transformation which later on will make those bribes unnecessary,” PAB-PMS (and Huberman), November 29, 1952. PAB-PMS, January 18, 1955, Baran ridicules the very notion of “Soviet imperialism.” PAB-PMS, April 6, 1957: “To speak of ‘colonial exploitation’ on the other side of the iron curtain is really insane.”



revolution. Toward the latter they assumed an invariably derisive posture, while upon Stalin as a leader and Marxist theorist they lavished no end of praise. On the surface, these two positions may seem incommensurable, but in fact their hostility toward “sectarianism” and their appreciation of Stalin as the promoter of cross-class alliances both come from the foundational influence of the Popular Front in their political consciousness. They called Stalin “Uncle Joe” and praised his originality as a thinker. In particular, they were impressed with Stalin’s 1952 booklet “Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR,” calling it “Marxism at its truly best,”<sup>71</sup> which “proves conclusively that Joe belongs with Marx, Engels, and Lenin as general theorists. I am even inclined to believe that it puts him above Lenin in this regard.”<sup>72</sup> Their praise largely focused on Stalin’s reinterpretation of the law of value in both monopolistic capitalism and socialist societies. This insight set off a flurry of correspondence interpreting, debating, and drawing conclusions from the implications of Stalin’s analysis, all of which strongly point to Stalin’s booklet as the major impetus setting in motion the ideas that would undergird both *Political Economy of Growth* and *Monopoly Capital*.<sup>73</sup> It also indicates something of a notion of “convergence” in economic thought in socialist and capitalist countries underlying and corresponding to the idea of peaceful coexistence and similar academic approaches to the question of diplomatic relations between the first two worlds and the third.

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<sup>71</sup> PAB-PMS, October 12, 1952.

<sup>72</sup> PMS-PAB, November 20, 1952.

<sup>73</sup> In addition to two already cited, see: PAB-PMS, October 19, 1952; PAB-PMS, November 22, 1952.

Stalin's genius stood in inverse proportion to the simple-minded idiocy of your average CP member, which in turn stemmed from the blind fanaticism required for party membership. Notwithstanding their own adoration for Stalin, they routinely used religious terminology to describe the faith-like behavior of Stalinists.<sup>74</sup> Party members were "fanatics," when the CP critiqued *Monthly Review* it came from "the Bible," and on the whole they saw Stalinists as a group incapable of articulating any idea not directly handed down from Stalin himself.<sup>75</sup> This seemingly contradictory political attitude, characterized by a commitment to the Soviet Union as the leading force in the global transition to "socialism" while simultaneously assuming a hyper-critical attitude toward the revolutionary party as an organizational form, constitutes an important line of continuity connecting the Monthly Review School to the New Left near the end of the decade and start of the 1960s. Cold War liberals saw the bureaucratized Soviet Union as the logical, and inevitable outcome of Marxist-Leninism. In the US in the 1950s, one could advocate socialism, and even do so from within a small, sectarian organization, but only on the condition of unfaltering criticism of the Soviet Union as the aggressor in the Cold War. This was the posture espoused by "Third Camp" socialists such as Max Shachtman's Independent Socialist League and, after 1954, Irving Howe's and Lewis Coser's magazine *Dissent*, both of which retained currency on the New York Intellectual scene. The first real disputes between the young generation of radicals and their organizational forebears occurred over the tentative and cautious willingness to portray the US as the main aggressor on the world stage, while simultaneously

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<sup>74</sup> Sweezy very consciously puts forth this formulation in PMS-PAB, June 4, 1951.

<sup>75</sup> PMS-PAB, December 30, 1950.

professing boredom and/or moral aversion to the organizational forms of the “Old Left.”<sup>76</sup> *Monthly Review* certainly stands out as a precursor to this position more than some of the other groups that have been identified as the bridge between the Old Left and the New.

*Monthly Review* frequently ran editorials or articles advancing a class analysis of American society, but primarily in relation to explaining the formulation and beneficiaries of public policy. In 1951 Sweezy ran a two-part article defining the term “ruling class” as applied to American politics, and outlining an instrumentalist view of the American state. Drawing on the sociology of Lester Ward and William Graham Sumner, Sweezy put forth a social theory of class as both a logical category for social analysis and as an expression of elite self-consciousness. The unit of class membership, he argued, is the family, and the defining feature of family class affiliation is the realistic ability to intermarry. Property ownership largely determined familial intermarriage, but imperceptible shades rather than sharp lines separated class gradations. For Sweezy, this commitment to class analysis garnered a single fundamental analytical insight: the ability to understand how the ruling class rules. The interlocking family networks of large property owners shape policy in their own interests by governing directly, by hiring and firing those who do govern, or by funding the political machinery.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Richard Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s*, (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1985) characterized the dominant intellectual trend in this era as “popular front liberalism,” which entailed a commitment to Keynesian economics combined with firm anti-Communism.

<sup>77</sup> Paul Sweezy, “The American Ruling Class,” *Monthly Review* 3/1 (May 1951), 10-17; Paul Sweezy, “The American Ruling Class: Part II,” *Monthly Review* 3/2 (June, 1951), 58-64.

In 1958 *Monthly Review* published an issue on labor jointly edited with *American Socialist*, which shows the extent to which they had assimilated Mills's positions on the "labor metaphysic." Though brief-lived, *American Socialist* like *Monthly Review* anticipated many of the themes of early 1960s New Left theory. Bert Cochran, Harry Braverman, and George Clarke started the magazine in 1954 after their split with the Trotskyist Socialist Workers' Party. In the factional dispute that precipitated the split, the "Cochranites" pushed to Americanize the party and foster greater alliances with organized labor. During the 1930s, Cochran had worked as a labor organizer within Michigan and Ohio metal and auto industries on behalf of the SWP and its precursor Trotskyist and Musteite groups. Through his experience as a labor organizer, Cochran established close contacts with militant workers in the 1930s, who would go on to hold positions in the more bureaucratized labor movement of the 1950s.<sup>78</sup> Harry Braverman also had a past in labor. He had come to Marxism when he was recruited as a rank-and-file metal worker by Trotskyists within the Young People's Socialist League. In the post-World War Two period, the Cochranite faction began pushing the SWP party to back away from its allegiance to Trotsky, a figure they believed seemed arcane and foreign to most American workers, prompting SWP leader James P. Cannon to accuse the Cochranites of currying favor with union contacts who had abandoned their thirties radicalism as they gained social standing through their status in the union bureaucracy.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> See, for example, his personal obituary of MESA leader in *American Socialist*.

<sup>79</sup> See: Bryan Palmer, "Before Braverman: Harry Frankel and the American Workers' Movement," *Monthly Review* 50/8 (Jan., 1999) 33-46, esp. 40-41; Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism, 1929-1985: A Documented Analysis of the Movement*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1991), 835-842. For a polemical account of the split from Cochran's perspective, see: Editors, "Founding of the Socialist Union," *American*

As editors of *American Socialist*, Cochran and Braverman sought to execute their Americanization agenda by writing about contemporary labor issues and by hearkening back to the pre-Russian Revolution era of US radicalism. Speaking to a group of supporters in Chicago at the end of the journal's third year, Cochran identified the central propositions under which he and the other editors had launched their enterprise. They saw the need for a left publication "friendly to the work of socialist building in Russia and elsewhere," that recognized "splinters and groups were impotent and valueless, and a new cooperative beginning had to be made."<sup>80</sup> These stated goals closely aligned with those of *Monthly Review* at its inception half a decade earlier, and *American Socialist* brought the same intellectual network into its orbit before its collapse in late 1959 after a six-year run. In its last two volumes, for the years 1958 and 1959, regular *Monthly Review* contributors William Appleman Williams, Harvey O'Connor, and Arthur K. Davis sat on *American Socialist's* board of contributing editors, and the two magazines organized collaborative speaking tours, in which C. Wright Mills would participate. Editorials and articles by Cochran routinely invoked memories of the early twentieth-century Debsian Socialist Party as the "heyday" of American radicalism, and lamented the ascendancy of the Communist Party as an unfortunate deviation opening a schism between Marxist thought and American radical traditions. This is a position with which Williams agreed, and that he would pass on to the

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*Socialist* 1/1 (Jan., 1954), 3. For a polemical defense of Cannon's position, with reference to the historical documents, see: David North, *The Heritage We Defend: A Contribution to the History of the Fourth International*, (Detroit, MI: Labor Publications, 1988), 198-211.

<sup>80</sup> Bert Cochran papers, Chicago Speech, Box 2, Folder labeled "Speeches, (American Socialist Banquet and others), Tamiment Library.

New Left through his influence over editors of the *Studies on the Left*, especially James Weinstein.

The 96-page *American Socialist/Monthly Review* collaborative issue on labor came out in the summer of 1958. Contributors to the issue included Sweezy, Huberman, Cochran, and Braverman. Most of the contributions to the labor issue read like a conversation with Mills, in which the authors concede Mills's major premise but try to rebut some of the derivative claims circulating in public discourse.<sup>81</sup> Marxism, in the United States and elsewhere in the world, had a long tradition of condemning the labor bureaucracy. But the contributors to the *MR/American Socialist* labor issue went further than denouncing the bureaucrats as "mis-leaders" of the working class. Following the logic of Baran's and Sweezy's developing theory of monopoly capitalism (discussed below), the political economy of the labor issue assumed American capitalism had virtually limitless, or at least indefinite, ability to coopt the labor rank-and-file as well as the bureaucrats. Cochran, who devoted his best years organizing auto-workers in the 1930s, concluded that the US proletariat at mid-century was "kept reasonably contented... with bread and circuses" and, thus, "the outlook of the ranks [had] grown philistine."<sup>82</sup> While it is debatable how central the "labor metaphysic" is to a Marxist analysis, it is clear that *Monthly Review* and *American Socialist* were trying to preserve Marxism against what they perceived as the clear lack of a progressive proletariat on which to pin their hopes, at least for the foreseeable future.

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<sup>81</sup> Not every contribution follows this line, Harry Braverman's piece being the most notable exception.

<sup>82</sup> Bert Cochran, "American Labor in Midpassage," *Monthly Review* 10/3&4 (July-August 1958), 76-88 at 81.

## Intellectualizing Personal Despair

*“I thought the Soviet Union was on a good course. Later on, we did take a position on the Soviet Union which was much more critical. But in 1957, I think there were still quite a few illusions.”* Paul M. Sweezy, 1999.<sup>83</sup>

Though they both behaved admirably, and Sweezy won a significant victory, the cumulative effects of McCarthyism, deteriorating faith in the Soviet Union and the inability to locate a political subject in the United States took a psychological toll on both Baran and Sweezy. By the middle of the decade, they began to speak increasingly of “fascism” in reference to more than just the political establishment in the United States. At Stanford Baran’s alienation turned to contempt for faculty and student body alike, the latter he described as “a horde of stupid, selfish, greedy animals.” Stanford was worse than Nazi Germany; whereas Nazi’s at least had an ideal, at Stanford the “feeding, chewing, spitting, scheming potential or actual juvenile (or adult) delinquents believe nothing, think nothing, aspire nowhere.”<sup>84</sup> Marx believed cultural degradation under advanced capitalism would only affect the bourgeoisie; for Baran in postwar America it affected the entire nation, which was irremediably lost for any but the most reactionary politics. Sweezy was not given to such vitriolic outbursts, but he undoubtedly shared the essence of Baran’s skepticism.

Baran and Sweezy suffered recurrent bouts of deep depression that would virtually paralyze their productivity for weeks at a time. Their correspondence frequently dealt with

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<sup>83</sup> Sweezy, “Interview,” 51.

<sup>84</sup> PAB-PMS, April 27, 1954.

their low “*stimmung*” (German word for “mood”).<sup>85</sup> They discussed its effect on their work habits, ruminations on its origins—alternately located in the constitution of the human psyche or in the social and cultural irrationality of late capitalism—and methods for coping and managing depression. While their main expertise lay in Marxist political economy, personal experience with depression, continual dialogue with Baran’s old Frankfurt academy comrades, and, at least for Baran, extensive psycho-analytic treatment, gave the pair more than passing familiarity with psychological theory and terminology. To the extent that he saw unhappiness as a perennial feature of the human condition, as opposed to a historically specific feature of 1950s American society, Baran attributed it to the “asymmetry of positive and negative sensations.” In other words, the suffering caused by the absence of a thing was a weightier emotional experience than the joy of fulfilling that desire.<sup>86</sup> Sweezy agreed with Baran’s theory, adding that for the child life in general is such a “negative sensation,” the fulfillment of which invariably does not provide the positive satisfaction of childish anticipation.<sup>87</sup> This view, which both Baran and Sweezy seemed genuinely to share, resulted in a positively bleak outlook for anything other than a miserable adulthood, regardless of existing social conditions.

Aside from the enormous and constant psychological pressure exerted by the repressive environment of Cold War America, there is an indication that Baran and Sweezy

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<sup>85</sup> These are too frequent to mention exhaustively, but for a sample of letters dealing substantially with depression of one or another correspondent, see: PAB-PMS, May 27, 1956; PAB-PMS, June 4, 1956; PMS-PAB, July 4, 1956; PAB-PMS, May 11, 1957; PMS-PAB, May 26, 1957; PMS-PAB, October 4, 1957; PAB-PMS, October 9, 1957; PMS-PAB, October 14, 1957.

<sup>86</sup> PAB-PMS, June 4, 1956.

<sup>87</sup> PMS-PAB, June 6, 1956.



understood the adverse psychological impact of being a Marxist with no confidence in the revolutionary potential of the proletariat, or any other class for that matter. In the wake of Khrushchev's revelations of Stalin's crimes at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, Baran and Sweezy had to deal emotionally with the abrupt loss of their faith in the moral superiority of the Soviet Union. Initially *Monthly Review* responded favorably to the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress, viewing it as an indication that the Soviet Union had veered in a more democratic trajectory. Baran and Sweezy had long been prone to rationalize the coercive methods through which the Soviet bureaucracy achieved industrialization, either denying the most extreme forms of repression or justifying them as necessary means of overcoming Russia's historical backwardness. The editorial in the summer double edition of *Monthly Review* hailed the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress as the indication of the dawn of a new era in Soviet history. Though the coming epoch would be characterized by socialist democracy, this democratization ultimately rested on the social foundation of the elevated standard of living and sweeping social and cultural changes brought on by industrialization. Stalin achieved "good ends through bad means" and still deserves to be seen as "one of the greats of Soviet history."<sup>88</sup> As long as they viewed the Soviet Union as a workers' state moving in a more egalitarian and ultimately more democratic trajectory, they felt their sacrifices were connected to proletarian agents somewhere in the world, even if not directly linked to any mass movement of their own.

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<sup>88</sup> Paul Sweezy and Leo Huberman, "RoM: After the Twentieth Congress," *MR* 8/3&4 (July-August 1956), 65-83.

By November of that year, the editorial line and the tone of private correspondence shifted, and it would be hard to exaggerate the psychological toll. Baran explicitly linked a low stint in November of 1956 to his loss of confidence in the East as the bastion of “Reason” in an irrational world. “The miserableness of personal existence in all of its elements has much to do with this dimness of outlook.”<sup>89</sup> Sweezy for his part noted “I don’t especially like the form that events are taking in the USSR” but claimed to be “too dispirited to care.”<sup>90</sup> When literary scholar, long-time friend and initial financier of *Monthly Review* F.O. Matthiessen committed suicide in 1950, Sweezy may have been projecting when he speculated that “Matty’s” depression stemmed from wanting but not finding an authentic social movement.<sup>91</sup> Later, in the fall of 1957, in the midst of a prolonged “lack of zest for life” and “complete lack of confidence that we will ever make the contribution that we theoretically can make”<sup>92</sup> Sweezy wondered if Matty had not “adopted the right strategy.”<sup>93</sup> While this is probably better viewed as a passing comment than any genuinely suicidal tendencies, the despair underlying the comment surfaced consistently on both sides of the correspondence, and the anguished need to make a lasting theoretical contribution to Marxist thought gained intensity as their contempt for American “fascist” culture extended to broader and broader layers of society.

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<sup>89</sup> PAB-PMS, November 28, 1956.

<sup>90</sup> PMS-PAB, July 4, 1956.

<sup>91</sup> PMS-PAB, April 10, 1950.

<sup>92</sup> PMS-PAB, October 14, 1957.

<sup>93</sup> PMS-PAB, October 4, 1957.

The combined effect of the 1950s left the *Monthly Review* crowd in a theoretical haze. Sweezy openly contemplated the divergence between his personal despair and the necessity for feigned optimism on which his livelihood depended. “I’m afraid that the horrible truth, which I have long resisted, is that there is not a scintilla of hope for this country,” Sweezy wrote to Baran in 1958. “And it is obvious that MR couldn’t survive a year purveying the kind of black pessimism (for the US) which I know in my bones to be the truth. All of which adds up to intellectual confusion, moral doubt, and psychic torture.”<sup>94</sup> It would have been impossible to separate such internal turmoil from intellectual production, and throughout the late 1950s an unquestionable undertone of defeatism crept into the editorial line of *Monthly Review*, and was built into the theoretical scaffolding for Baran’s and Sweezy’s larger intellectual projects.

### **Anti-Imperialism Against the Main Drift**

*“Then the second theme is Baran’s breakthrough on the relation between the developed and underdeveloped parts of the capitalist world. The theory that capitalism doesn’t spread by creating a homogenized system in the image of the advanced countries that lead the way, but rather creates a polarized global system between the developed and the underdeveloped areas, so that the two are dialectically interrelated as parts of a single whole, but not homogenous parts and not ones that are ever going to become homogeneous.”* Paul M. Sweezy, 1999.<sup>95</sup>

What Mills called the American celebration found unique expression in various 1950s academic disciplines, according to their distinct methodological and theoretical boundaries.

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<sup>94</sup> PMS-PAB, July 2, 1958.

<sup>95</sup> Sweezy, “Interview,” 47.

In his 1959 book *The Sociological Imagination*, Mills famously lambasted its expression in his own discipline by translating impenetrable passages of Talcott Parsons's structural-functional "Grand Theory" into plain English.<sup>96</sup> Parsons saw sociology as the supreme social science, and sought to construct a holistic "general theory of action" that could subsume the concerns of other social sciences. He especially hoped to dethrone economics, which many saw as the most "scientific" of the social sciences. For Parsons, economic theory should be "construed as a special case of a more general theory of social systems," and only sociologists could develop the more general theory that would explain not just economic rationality as a subset of human behaviors, but the entire gamut of norms and values that orient human action. Enormous amounts of public and private funds flooded the university to aid the scientific advancement that would help win the Cold War, which helps explain this anxiety to establish sociology as a legitimate social science, emulating the rigor of economics and the natural sciences.<sup>97</sup> As the founder of Harvard's Department of Social Relations, Parsons oversaw an ambitious effort to synthesize findings from other social sciences into an all-encompassing theory, resulting in *Toward a General Theory of Action*, a volume he co-edited with Edward Shils. In the *General Theory of Action*, Parson and Shils posited social and cultural systems "institutionalize" actors into roles. Based on shared values and expectations, members of society enforce these roles, or patterns of action, by enacting their own roles and sanctioning asocial behavior. Much like Schumpeter's criticism of neoclassicism, structural-functional theory depicted a society with strong tendencies

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<sup>96</sup> C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000 [1959]), 25-40.

<sup>97</sup> Latham, *Ideology*, 48.

toward equilibrium, and had a hard time accounting for social change based on factors endogenous to their theory.<sup>98</sup>

The Cold War elevated development studies from a relatively minor subfield of economics to a thriving, well-funded interdisciplinary research paradigm. Historians of Third World development disagree over its origins, but generally agree that a policy consensus around “modernization theory” had crystallized by the 1950s. Harry Truman’s Point Four serves as good inflection point. At his inaugural address in 1949, Truman’s fourth foreign policy point proposed the US government should mobilize technological know-how to facilitate economic growth in underdeveloped nations. In his second term, Truman established an agency in the State Department to oversee what came to be known as “Point Four Programs.” While Truman’s speech channeled ideas in circulation more than originating a new line of thinking, he did initiate a foreign policy agenda that would run at least through the Johnson administration, and, as historian Michael Latham argued, was resurrected in spirit with the nation-building rationale given for the twenty-first century invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>99</sup>

The ideology underpinning modernization theory mirrored that of the predominant academic paradigms, and social scientists contributed to state-led Third World development programs in their research and as policy advisors. Modernizers abstracted their image of modernity, the goal toward which Third World nations should strive, from a particular

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<sup>98</sup> Parsons quoted in Gilman, *Mandarins*, 80. For general discussion of Parsons and the structural-functionalism, see: Gilman, *Mandarins*, 74-92; Latham, *Ideology*.

<sup>99</sup> Ekbladh, *Mission*, 97-102; Gilman, *Mandarins*, 70-71; Arndt, *Development*, 63-65; Latham, *Revolution*, 31-32.

reading of the US history and present. Consensus historiography portrayed an America “born free,” lacking a legacy of class division comparable to other Western nations. In this historical narrative, the cultural, political and economic modernity achieved by the United States in the twentieth century could be attributed to the steady progress of a functional society with a shared set of values. In identifying functionalist sociology as *the* most important intellectual precursor to modernization theory, historian Nils Gilman pointed out that the abstract ahistorical schematic “blueprint” for modernization derived from Talcott Parsons’s pattern variables characterized “modernity” itself as value orientation “uncannily similar to Parsons’s understanding of his own contemporary United States.”<sup>100</sup>

Modernization theory drew together elements of the discrete academic expressions of the American celebration into a single metanarrative of progress abstracted from a mythologized image of the shared values and configuration of political and economic institutions responsible for the nation’s twentieth century economic dynamism, then projected that metanarrative onto third world states. But to spread the benefits of American-style liberal modernity, modernization theorists in academia and the state resorted to illiberal means. This contradiction opened a chink, which critics would eventually exploit to pierce the myth of a liberal national consensus at its weakest point. Against the holistic narrative of a society fully integrated around liberal values, Neo-Marxists would level a counternarrative in which the domestic social integration depended on imperial expansion. But the holistic theory behind modernization was implicit. Taken at the level of assumptions, its empirical dimensions were

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<sup>100</sup> Gilman, *Mandarins*, 88-89.

fractured in a division of labor spread out across disciplines. The efforts to formulate a holistic counternarrative butted up against these disciplinary fractures.

For Baran and Sweezy, that meant primarily operating in the discursive field of professional economics. In the context of their disillusion and despair, they channeled their intellectual energy into working out the abstract laws governing capitalism in its monopoly phase. They waged a struggle on a terrain of pure abstraction, into which they poured all their frustration and anger with the existing social order. Their opponent in this great battle was the profession that had ignored and ostracized them, and a victory would entail rescuing basic principles of Marxian economic analysis. To do so, they had to define the debate on their own terms, which meant in the first instance refusing to engage the extent of monopolization or concentration of the American economy on empirical grounds. They lacked the material resources to harness data on the scale of the profession at large. They agreed to begin by working out an ideal-type model of monopoly capitalism and formulate its essential laws of motion.<sup>101</sup> Only then would they proceed to concrete empirical referents, organized and arranged with a new appreciation of their underlying causes. The more cynical they grew about the prospects for witnessing socialism in their lifetime, the more desperately they clung to their “opus,” vesting in it all their now vanquished youthful idealism.

At the most basic level, Baran’s and Sweezy’s analysis of monopoly capitalism envisioned a system free of inherent tendencies toward cyclical booms and busts, and, especially, crises caused by the falling rate of profit due to the rising organic composition of capital. Their whole theoretical system hinged on the concept of “economic surplus.” Baran

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<sup>101</sup> PMS-PAB, January 16, 1956; PAB-PMS, January 31, 1956.

and Sweezy had first visited the idea of writing a comprehensive analysis of the inner-workings and dynamic of monopoly capitalism in 1952, spurred by their laudatory reception of Stalin's ruminations on the Marxist concept of value in the Soviet Union. By the mid-1950s, after years of intense theoretical dialogue, their conception of monopoly capitalism as a historically specific mode of exploiting labor and distributing surplus had largely taken shape, and the scaffolding for their 1966 collaborative work was in place.

In its earlier phase, competition among many capitalists had driven the logic of innovation, as rival capitals could increase their share of the total, aggregate surplus-value by lowering their production costs. But, in an economy in which monopoly and oligopoly constituted the dominant form of economic organization throughout key industrial sectors, large firms colluded on prices and market share, virtually eliminating the effects of competition. The concept of economic surplus, mentioned in 1951 but taking firmer shape near the middle of the decade, posited the excess of total output over the socially necessary costs of producing that output as the central contradiction in the era of monopoly capitalism. In the place of business cycles, the mounting economic surplus would act as a constant, and ever more severe drag on monopoly capitalism, which could dispose of this surplus (and thus keep the profit-system cycling) only by increasingly "wasteful" expenditure, including military production, unnecessary product differentiation, advertising to boost consumer spending, and, when compelled by class pressures, redistributive measures through the welfare state. Although *actual* surplus continued to rise under conditions of monopoly capitalism, *potential* surplus was hindered by wasteful expenditure. Taking the Soviet Union under Stalin as a model, Baran and Sweezy argued that socialist societies made greater use of potential surplus by avoiding wasteful expenditure and reinvesting the maximum possible



surplus into productivity increases, realized in productive consumption in a rationally organized society. Their lever for mobilizing social opposition hinged on the ability to articulate the difference between actual and potential surplus. The cycle of wasteful expenditure would proceed into the indefinite future, but only at the expense of chronic stagnation and irrational forms of wasteful expenditure, which would come to stand out in contrast to the rationality of a planned economy.

Understanding the effort to take it big, to level a holistic political economy from within the compartmentalized academy, helps understand the significance of Paul Baran's 1957 book *Political Economy of Growth*, which was simultaneously an ambitious attempt at holistic theorizing (a rough draft for *Monopoly Capital*) and the summation of Baran's cumulative interventions into the subfield of development economics. Like in his earlier intervention, Baran saw a tension between the logical prescriptions for third world development flowing from predominant theories of economic development and the political possibilities given the real interests involved. Keynesianism had stabilized the US economy, and locally the American profession was returning to bourgeois economic concerns of inflation. But Baran saw the problem of development of "backward" countries (a terminology still in use) as in essence a political problem for Washington driven by the pressures of Cold War international relations. Requiring more dynamic rates of growth in the backward regions, development economics, led by Baran's old Harvard cohort Evsey Domar and his British counterpart Roy Harrod, continued to consider the market as an institution poorly suited to balancing investment and consumption decisions, which would be required to channel surplus behind a program of robust growth. Much like Williams (discussed below), but for different reasons, Baran depicted a tragic tension between the ideals and

political possibilities behind US-led economic development projects. The Cold War narrative of triumphant capitalism compelled “various government agencies and private foundations, economists, anthropologists, social psychologists, and other social scientists” propagating Washington’s development policies to rewrite the history of Western capitalism as the product of a long period of slow growth. But in doing so, they delegitimized the technocratic tools that could make a viable development program possible.

Intellectual historians have remembered Baran’s book as an intervention in development economics, notable for insinuating a neo-Marxist line in US thought that would mature into dependency theory following the 1960s cross-fertilization with concurrent trends in Latin American development thought.<sup>102</sup> But it was far more ambitious than simply a polemic in the subfield of development economics. Rather, Baran sought to synthesize major trends in postwar economics, sociology, and social psychology into a counter-narrative explaining domestic equilibrium in terms of a US ruling class benefiting from world exploitation and local political and ideological manipulation. *Political Economy of Growth* contained in underdeveloped form many of the themes that would appear in *Monopoly Capital* in 1966. Denying the same tendencies toward crises, Baran critiqued capitalism in its monopoly phase largely for causing cultural degradation through its various forms of wasteful expenditure. In polemic with his profession, he argued against models built on ahistorical assumptions about consumer behavior. Consumer decisions, like social action

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<sup>102</sup> See: Aidan Foster-Carter, “Neo-Marxist Approaches to Development and Underdevelopment,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 3/1 (1973); Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith* fourth edition, (New York, NY: Zed Books, 2014 [1996]), 109-122; H.W. Arndt, *Economic Development: The History of an Idea*, (New York and London, 1987), 116-120; Gilman, *Mandarins*, 234-239; Latham, *Revolution*, 165-167.

generally, are shaped by social institutions, and under monopoly capitalism, unnecessary product differentiation and the sales effort help “absorb” the growing surplus, while simultaneously degrading the culture. While still underdeveloped in 1957, this part of his analysis very much resembles Mills and other contemporaries critical of salesmanship and its effects on mass culture.

William Appleman Williams offered a similar holistic theory of imperialism from within the discipline of history. Whereas Baran’s work polemicized primarily with Keynesian and “post-Keynesian” economists, Williams took on the so-called consensus school of US history that expressed a similarly non-antagonistic view of American society. Williams body of academic work returned to the Progressive historiography that had been eclipsed by the consensus school. His PhD dissertation, *American-Russian Relations*, unified Fredrick Jackson Turner’s thesis with the Charles Beard’s economic interpretation of the founding and government of the United States. Williams argued economic elites pursued an imperialist foreign policy at the end of the nineteenth century to resolve the crisis of the closed frontier by turning the world into its market.<sup>103</sup>

Informed by his historical research, Williams regularly wrote on the pages of *Monthly Review*, *The Nation* and *American Socialist* to argue against the Soviet aggressor explanation of the Cold War. Major framing issues of Williams groundbreaking 1959 book, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* made their first public appearance in articles published on the pages of *Monthly Review*. Read in tandem with the book, Williams’s more polemical *Monthly Review* articles offered a richer sense of the way economics and ideology interact in his

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<sup>103</sup> Mattson, *Intellectuals*, 148.

theory of history. His first article, “A Second Look at Mr. X”- published in August 1952 before the appearance of his first book- already contained the combination of economics and ideology that Williams would later wrap up in the concept of *weltanschauung*. He criticized George Frost Kennan’s famous telegram *both* for failing to recognize “the relationship between economic forces and foreign policy” in the U.S. *and* for failing to acknowledge the symbolic potency of the Soviet Union as an alternative to capitalist society. Williams depicted a subtle tension between ideology and material interests interacting in the psyche of policy-makers, offering a far more sophisticated view than Kennan’s essentially mythologized liberal interpretation of U.S. foreign policy. In a January 1953 article in *Monthly Review* titled “Republican Foreign Policy from McKinley to Eisenhower” Williams linked the emergence of an imperialist faction of American policy-making elites with the rising production indexes of the gilded age, compelling corporate capital to “sit in at the game of dividing the markets and the sources of supply throughout the world.” In this account, economic interests quite formally linked the need for expansion to the coming glut of overproduction, as articulated in no uncertain terms by Brooks Adams, a close friend to the Teddy Roosevelt, Henry Cabot Lodge wing of the Republican Party orchestrating the turn to empire.<sup>104</sup> Much of this article would make its way into *Tragedy*, in which Williams presented a narrative of U.S. imperialist foreign policy motivated by the reformist impulse of American Progressivism. In this account, Williams did not question the legitimacy of reformists’ good intentions, but argued they coincided with, indeed were indelibly wrapped

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<sup>104</sup> William Appleman Williams, “Republican Foreign Policy from McKinley to Eisenhower,” *Monthly Review* 4/9 (Jan., 1953) 317-328 at 318.

up in, a worldview in which the greatest human good would be advanced through securing liberal governments abroad to simultaneously ensure stable markets for American exports.<sup>105</sup>

Williams synthesized his ongoing 1950s critique of US foreign policy into his most famous work, *Tragedy of American Diplomacy*. First released in 1959, In *Tragedy*, Williams simultaneously took on the historical narrative of US foreign policy used to justify the policy of containment, and the consensus historiography that portrayed domestic US history in terms of broad-based social unity behind shared liberal values. He wrapped these two critiques into a single package, analytically linking foreign expansion and domestic stability as two aspects of single process. From the closure of the frontier at the end of the nineteenth century to the Cold War, Washington pursued the foreign policy of the Open Door to secure markets for US agricultural and manufacturing exports and supplies of raw materials. Dumping excess production in foreign markets decreased farmer unrest by buttressing agricultural prices, and it decreased labor antagonism to capital by allowing corporate elites to continually expand production without cutting into profit margins by undercutting their own demand. The Open Door contrasted to other forms of empire by specifically negating the strategy of creating spheres of influence with protected trading rights. With its unmatched productive potential, the US economy had more to gain from dismantling such self-enclosed trading blocs in favor of an Open Door, which would allow all industrialized states equal access to export markets in underdeveloped countries, especially China. Williams linked this foreign policy to the regulatory and redistributive state that had developed in tandem with

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<sup>105</sup> See Williams' discussion of *weltanschauung*: William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, (New York and London, W. W. Norton and Company: 1972 [1959]), 37.

America's imperialist presence on the world stage. For Williams, reformist US statesmen from Robert La Follette, through Woodrow Wilson and a recuperated Herbert Hoover, to Franklin Delano Roosevelt understood the preservation of liberalism in the corporate era depended on constantly expanding the market for American commerce.<sup>106</sup> Perhaps the most nuanced of the critiques of the liberal consensus myth behind modernization theory, Williams did not impugn liberal motives by questioning the sincerity of their desire to extend the benefits of liberal capitalism throughout the world. He simply argued that the belief in the value of spreading commerce stemmed from a world-view that simultaneously happened to rationalize policies that directly served the material interests of American corporate capitalism, and facilitated the liberal reforms domestically necessary to maintain private ownership against the threat of revolution.

On some level, Mills's holistic social theory is revealed across his entire corpus of work. But in another sense, it culminates in *Power Elite*. Published in 1956, *Power Elite* established Mills's reputation as a lone maverick; a rebel from the university and an independent dissident standing outside the main currents of Cold War thought.<sup>107</sup> In *The Power Elite*, the third book in his trilogy on the American social structure, Mills focused on the interlocking networks of executives in control of the US corporate, military, and governmental institutions. He rejected the prevailing pluralist view of the American state. Upper-class "cliques" centered in the major economic sectors—banking, retailing, industry, etc.—“judge and decide the important community issues, as well as many larger issues of

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<sup>106</sup> William Appleman Williams, *Tragedy*, La Follette 62-63; Wilson, 99-107; FDR, 165-201.

<sup>107</sup> For discussion of views of Williams as maverick, see: Geary, *Radical*, 1-3.

state and nation in which the ‘the community’ is involved.”<sup>108</sup> A structure of corporate, state, and civil society organizations extends from the cliques to the “rank-and-file of the professional and business strata.” The lower level of this hierarchical structure of organizations includes the leaders of the strata Mills examined in *White Collar*. But power resides at the national level. The mid-level organizations serve primarily to integrate lower class into the social system. For Mills, foreign policy most abundantly demonstrated the lack of real power vested in the working and middle classes. He saw foreign policy formulated at the nexus of corporate, military, and state-bureaucratic directorates. The entire political economic structure grew around the interests of the leaders of the military-industrial complex, and the policies of the “permanent war economy” reproduced and entrenched the hierarchy.

A similar theoretical scaffolding undergirds the major works of Mills and Williams in the era and the Neo-Marxist theory of imperialism worked out by Baran and Sweezy. Even while taking pains to adapt the prose to appeal to broader publics, they were framed discursively against assumptions and methods behind the dominant paradigms in their respective disciplines. They did not participate in “normal science” of the dominant paradigms within their respective academic disciplines, but rather leveled big interventions that challenged those paradigms at the level of their basic assumptions and value-orientations. Williams wielded interpretations from the Progressive era of US historiography against the consensus school that had eclipsed it. Baran tried to hold development economics up to the institutionalist theory and methods out of which it had emerged in the 1930s, while

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<sup>108</sup> Mills, *Power Elite*, 36-37.

the profession more broadly moved toward what he saw as empiricist fetishism. Mills, in *White Collar* and *Power Elite* counter-posed a theory of hierarchically organized power structures to the structural-functionalist sociology, with its assumptions that widely diffused values determined the tightly integrated social system. In all cases, the authors placed corporate capitalism at the center of a social system producing and reproducing disparities in power, and in all cases the institutions of government served those interests, though the authors varied in the degree of autonomy they ascribed to policy-makers from the corporate elite. Moreover, each tried to build a holistic social theory out of their conception of corporate capitalist political economy structure. Social, cultural, political, and economic phenomena hung together. The dynamics of continuity and change, equilibrium and disequilibrium, in any one of these analytical spheres could only be grasped in the inner-connections with the others.

But paradoxically, to a large extent each of these works affirmed more than they negated the impressions underlying the paradigms they critiqued, which is to say they acknowledged the same phenomena but attributed them to different underlying causes. At the end of the day, these works explain a social system that is indeed “functional,” in the sense of successfully producing and reproducing a stable society with shared values and common sense, and well-entrenched political and economic institutions. Baran made major concessions to Keynes and Alvin Hansen, but portrayed the system they lauded in a negative light. Mills, for as much as he ridiculed Parsons, held an essentially functionalist view of American society, defined in the first instance by overwhelming tendencies to stability and integration. Williams accepted and even admired the republican values that consensus historians saw binding Americans together in non-antagonistic history of steady progress, but



lamented the fact that maintaining those values at home depended on restricting them from neocolonial subjects abroad. Mills first, then Baran and Williams, articulated a vision of social reality that appeared “functional” (stable, in equilibrium), but theorized that apparent stability as the illusion behind which operated definite mechanisms of ideological control and repression.

### **Hegemony of the “Independent” Intellectual**

From 1968-1971, dozens of North American cultural anthropologists debated their discipline’s epistemological premises on the pages of several volumes of the journal *Current Anthropology*. Influenced by 1960s anti-imperialist sentiment, scholars questioned the possibility of value-neutral social scientific knowledge, and the usefulness of assumptions about scholarly objectivity. While this challenging epistemological consideration has repeatedly extended into all social sciences, it was especially concerning to cultural anthropologists. If the US reined over a neocolonial empire, held together as much by ideological coercion as military repression, then the discipline of cultural anthropology was deeply implicated in colonialism. Their fieldwork into primitive cultures served the imperialist state in their efforts to catalogue and ultimately control world populations. While competing scholars in this debate invoked many names from the Western tradition of philosophy and social science to buttress their respective positions, C. Wright Mills and Paul Baran were commonly cited as the best articulations of the need for radically-committed, anti-imperialist social scientific scholarship.

Mills frequently wrote about the impossibility and undesirability of neutrality in the social sciences, while simultaneously defending the notion of an objective and objectively knowable truth. His two essays most directly related to this question were “The Powerless People,” published in Dwight Macdonald’s *politics* in 1944, and “On Knowledge and Power,” published in *Dissent* in 1954. These essays most clearly lay out Mills’s conception of what it means to be a “political intellectual” in a bureaucratized society. Mills saw a vital role for the intellectual in a society characterized by “organized irresponsibility,” but to play this role the intellectual must remain independent of the institutions of power and resist the de-skilling of intellectual production. Intellectuals should identify large structural causes of problems facing individuals, consider them objectively by remaining conscious of their own social position, then communicate knowledge clearly to the public.<sup>109</sup> In these essays, Mills tried to thread a very fine-headed needle. He wanted to cast official social science as the purveyor of elite interest without abandoning the notion of objective truth. For Mills, there was such a thing as non-relative knowledge, and pursuing it was an act of moral will and intellectual courage on the part of the independent intellectual.

In the late 1950s, the ideas that would undergird Baran’s “Commitment of the Intellectual” began to appear in his correspondences with Sweezy, reflecting the extent to which he was dabbling with the “independent intellectual” as the historically progressive agent capable of replacing the Soviet Union. Though *Monthly Review* had and would continue to criticize the sociology of C. Wright Mills for rejecting the “labor metaphysic” in favor of an intellectual agency, Baran’s thoughts on this question are undoubtedly cut from

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<sup>109</sup> “Powerless People” reprinted in Summers, *Politics*, 13-23. “On Knowledge and Power” in Summers, *Politics*, 123-137.

the same cloth. By the late 1950s, on the eve of the radical revival that would sweep the '60s, Baran and Sweezy maintained no more than a rhetorical commitment to the working class. They had long since abandoned even the slightest confidence that American mass society would produce any historically progressive, let alone revolutionary force any time in the near future. The reactionary nature of the masses formed the base-line assumption motivating Baran's rumination on the role of the intellectual in society. He attributed the quasi-fascistic nature of the American public to the intellectuals abandoning their social responsibility to pursue Reason, understood as thought that seeks to transcend the irrationalities of the given society and pursue a higher social order. To Reason he contrasted "Practical Intelligence," which seeks to identify the sources of stability within the system. Anti-intellectualism in his own time stemmed from the prominence of Practical Intelligence among academic thought. Conflating all intellectual activity to the maintenance of the system they despised, the American working class threw its hands up in despair, rejecting Reason and Practical Intelligence alike. Relatively few continued to defend Reason in American society, among whom the paramount examples were none other than the self-same Baran and Sweezy.<sup>110</sup>

The parallels to Mills's contemporaneous analysis are indeed striking. Baran's "pure Reason" equated with Mills's "sociological imagination," his "Practical Intelligence" with Mills's dual promoters of the status quo, "grand theory" and "abstracted empiricism." In *The Sociological Imagination*, Mills articulated most fully his view of the role of intellectuals in social change, at least until his unpublished *Cultural Apparatus*. Mills depicted a "public" desperate for intellectuals possessed of sociological imagination to advance a "quality of

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<sup>110</sup> PAB-PMS, June 5, 1958.

mind” to “develop reason.” Imbued with the sociological imagination, intellectuals could explain to the public “how individuals, in the welter of their daily experience, often become falsely conscious of their social positions.”<sup>111</sup> Explaining social stability in terms of widespread “false consciousness,” Mills saw no way to move society forward outside of independent intellectuals such as himself galvanizing them out of their complacency. Baran’s “The Commitment of an Intellectual” similarly began from the assumption that the “intellect worker”—a category identical with Mills’s salaried professional middle-class in *White Collar*—had become the “faithful servant, the agent, the functionary, and the spokesman of the capitalist system.”<sup>112</sup> The “intellectual” in Baran’s account differed from the “intellect worker” in precisely the same way those possessed of “sociological imagination” in Mills’s differed from the “journalists and scholars, artists and publics, scientists and editors” locked in a mass false consciousness. In both cases, the good intellectual was concerned with “the larger historical scene” in Mills’s words or “the entire historical process” in Baran’s.<sup>113</sup> As elaborated by Baran, the intellectual as opposed to the intellect worker *necessarily* pursued holistic theorizing, “systematically seeking to relate whatever specific area he may be working in to other aspects of human existence.”<sup>114</sup>

In contrast to Baran’s pure Reason and the Mills’s sociological imagination stood academic intellectuals concerned with narrower issues of Practical Intelligence, abstracted

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<sup>111</sup> C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000 [1959]), 5.

<sup>112</sup> Paul A. Baran, “The Commitment of the Intellectual,” *Monthly Review* 16/11 (March 1965) 1-11 at 2.

<sup>113</sup> Mills, *Imagination*, 5; Baran, “Commitment,” 5.

<sup>114</sup> Baran, “Commitment,” 5.

empiricism, or Grand Theory. Practical Intelligence and abstracted empiricism, much like Reason and sociological imagination, were virtually identical terms. Both connoted something very similar to what Thomas Kuhn would describe as “normal science” in his influential 1962 book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, or what International Relations theorist Robert Cox called “problem-solving” in contrast to “critical theory” in his 1981 article “Social Forces, States and World Orders.”<sup>115</sup> All described a type of intellectual division of labor producing narrow knowledge that, while perhaps objectively true, did not and could not answer questions of its own usefulness, or weigh in on the desirability of the social order it helped reproduce. For Mills, Grand Theory and abstracted empiricism were equally complicit in this narrow type of knowledge production. By seeking a universal grand theory of explaining all social systems everywhere, structural-functionalists such as Talcott Parsons worked at such a level of abstraction they failed to acknowledge the real-world impressions from which they abstracted their general models. At this height of abstractions, practitioners of Grand Theory could not logically get back down to the level of empirical observation, the fundamental concrete failure of which was the inability to recognize what they “value orientations” and “normative structure” are actually “master symbols of legitimation” masking relations of power and exploitation.<sup>116</sup> Grand theorists snuck value-laden terms in through the backdoor, such as when it employed the “universalistic-

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<sup>115</sup> Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1962); Robert W. Cox, “Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 10/2 (June 1981), 126-155.

<sup>116</sup> Mills, *Imagination*, 34-37.

achievement” pattern variable to characterize modernity “with no mention of the changing nature, meaning and forms of success characteristic of modern capitalism, or of the changing structure of capitalism itself.”<sup>117</sup> By failing to recognize the historical particularity of the social systems from which they draw their models, grand theorists end up reifying and legitimating forms of domination.

Abstracted empiricism, more directly resembling what Baran meant by Practical Intelligence, similarly legitimated existing power structures by rejecting criticism in general as a part of the scholarly pursuit of knowledge. With the increased funding flooding the university system, social scientists tried to emulate the rigor of natural sciences by recreating a laboratory mindset and limiting themselves to pursuing objective knowledge with clear empirical referents. For Mills, any research produced under such self-imposed arbitrary epistemological limitations could only be of administrative significance, but never merit the label social science.<sup>118</sup> Similarly, Baran argued the important criterion of science was not whether truth was being told, “but also what *constitutes* truth in any given case as well as *about what* it is being told and *about what* it is being withheld.”<sup>119</sup>

Given that the most ardently Millsian New Left intellectuals were also the most prone to denounce the inherent authoritarianism of Leninism, it is worth dwelling for a moment on the implications of the conception of the role of intellectuals in social change articulated here by Mills and Baran. By the end of the 1950s Mills had indeed become more optimistic about

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<sup>117</sup> Mills, *Imagination*, 43.

<sup>118</sup> Mills, *Imagination*, 53-55.

<sup>119</sup> Baran, “Commitment,” 9.

the prospects for generating opposition, but in many ways his orientation toward real social forces had not changed from the time he wrote *White Collar* in the early 1950s. His second book offered a structural analysis of the psychology of the new salaried professional middle classes that had replaced the traditional artisanal and independently employed middle classes. Much like Sweezy and Baran, Mills sharply criticized the hierarchical power structures responsible for alienation and conformity of the new middle class that composed the core of American “mass society.” Sales and advertising homogenized and degraded middle-class culture. De-skilling and division of labor dumbed down intellectual production. But the middle classes themselves were portrayed as passive recipients of these cultural stimuli, with little or no agency to react against the structures determining their social realities. Following on the wake of his disillusion with labor, Mills viewed skeptically the prospects for organizing white collar workers. This outlook for white collar resistance as a form of working class struggle had not changed by the time Mills posited a vanguard role for the “young intelligentsia.” Those intellectuals capable of mustering the moral strength could work *within* the cultural apparatus to redirect its socializing functions to create radically conscious rather than conformist “publics.” Mills saw the cultural apparatus performing this socializing function, but argued that intellectuals within that system could harness it for more radical ends.

A well-defined sense of contempt for the masses underlies both Mills’s and Baran’s stance on the role of intellectuals, reflecting the internalization of their experiences of isolation in 1950s society. In “Powerless People,” Mills placed the blame for “organized irresponsibility” on mass society. While he attributed the lack of political will to a sense of despondency in a public going against the centralized decision-making of a modern

bureaucratic state, to the extent that individuals have agency they choose to sit on the sidelines and watch.<sup>120</sup> We see an even more pernicious hostility toward mass culture in Baran's private correspondence with Sweezy. This came out most strongly in his reaction to the "Czech affair," which probably referred to the Stalinist Czechoslovakian state's repression of riots in 1953. For many left-leaning intellectuals internationally, the actions of the government further strengthened disillusion with the autocratic methods of Soviet rule. Baran drew different conclusions. He suggested that under the ideology of "bourgeois-feudal repression" bottom-up change could only be reactionary. According to Baran, the "*vox populi*" should be repressed, only to be restored after it had been shaped under the hand of a socialist government.<sup>121</sup> His first published critique of development economics struck a similar tone.<sup>122</sup> The editorial line of *Monthly Review* throughout the period supported the policy of the Soviet "peace offensive," suggesting that a truce between Washington and Moscow would allow the slow, gradual evolution to world socialism to run its course, without any need for radical transformation.<sup>123</sup> On the American side, the left could facilitate this process of evolution in, for example, Latin America by reviving the popular front and putting in a government that like FDR would act as a good neighbor and allow the twentieth century Latin American revolution, fundamentally bourgeois in nature, to run its course. It

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<sup>120</sup> C. Wright Mills, "Powerless People," in Summers ed., *Politics*, 13-23 at 16.

<sup>121</sup> PAB-PMS and Huberman, November 29, 1952.

<sup>122</sup> Paul Baran, "Economic Development of Backward Areas," *MR* 3/4 (Aug, 1951), 128-32.

<sup>123</sup> Paul Sweezy and Leo Huberman, "RoM: The Peace Offensive and the Job Ahead," *MR* 5/1 (May 1952), 1-4.



would take decades for the tasks of the bourgeois revolution to play themselves out before socialism could be put on the agenda.<sup>124</sup> In both Mills and Baran, the “commitment of the intellectual” assumes a role toward their “publics” very similar to that of modernization theorists toward the Third World.

### **Conclusion**

Intellectual historian Kevin Mattson clearly identified his present-day political motives for placing Mills and Williams (along with Paul Goodman and Arnold Kaufman) at the center of his history of the 1950s origins of New Left thought. His subjects, who he characterized as “radical liberals,” offer a glimpse at “a non-Marxist and democratic model of political change” which, when retrieved “could help enliven contemporary political discussions.”<sup>125</sup> While sharing Mattson’s concern over the state of contemporary political discourse, I find the category “non-Marxist” summarily unhelpful in thinking through what we stand to gain by revisiting the works of Mills and Williams, or Baran and Sweezy. Far more interesting are the shared assumptions underlying all their works, regardless of whether the authors considered themselves Marxist, non-Marxist or somewhere in between.

Mills’s place in the pantheon of precursors to the New Left is well-established. Early 1960s radical youth had a faith-like devotion to Mills. Writing more than fifty years after his role in founding Students for a Democratic Society, Tom Hayden described the mystical fascination with which his generation explored every page of Mills’s texts “like tea

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<sup>124</sup> Paul Sweezy and Leo Huberman, “RoM: United States and Latin America,” *MR* 6/3 (July 1953), 97-101.

<sup>125</sup> Mattson, *Intellectuals*, 4.

leaves.”<sup>126</sup> Historians of the New Left have unanimously recognized Mills as a founding influence.<sup>127</sup> But, situating Mills discursively in relation to the intellectual network surrounding *Monthly Review*, and *American Socialist* changes our perception of “radical liberalism” as the most important legacy of Millsian thought. Of all the left-liberals to make peace with Marxism, few went further than Mills. In his last book, *The Marxists*, published in the year of his untimely death, Mills praised Marx’s holistic model while critiquing some of the subsidiary hypotheses derived from that model and outright rejecting some of its core elements. Contrary to predictions derived from Marx’s “misleading and unfruitful” theory of class, workers in “advanced capitalist societies” had improved their social standing and material comforts through the institution of labor unions.<sup>128</sup> But, despite the general failure of this major aspect of dogmatic Marxism, radical intellectuals could still work within the tradition as long as they avoided the temptation to “save the theory by attaching to it supplementary hypotheses,” in the process rendering Marx’s elegant model “bulky” and “clumsy.”<sup>129</sup> Mills identified, among others, Sweezy and Williams as examples of intellectuals applying Marx in this way, and thus advancing the tradition. Mills thus stands

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<sup>126</sup> Tom Hayden, *Listen, Yankee!: Why Cuba Matters*, (New York, Oakland: Seven Stories Press, 2015), 35.

<sup>127</sup> For example, see: Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope Days of Rage*, (Bantam Books, 1987); Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s*, (Oxford University Press, 2008), 171; Kevin Mattson, *Intellectuals in Action: The Origins of the New Left and Radical Liberalism, 1945-1970*, (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).

<sup>128</sup> C. Wright Mills, *The Marxists*, (New York: NY; Dell Publishing, 1962), 96; 106-107.

<sup>129</sup> Mills, *Marxists*, 108-122.

out not simply for his radical liberalism, but as an indicator of an important shift in the way left-leaning academic intellectuals engaged with Marxism.

Just as Mills and Williams would pass on a willingness to reconsider the value of Marxism to their student admirers, one of the era's most dominant voices of Marxism had become theoretically very hard to distinguish from "radical liberalism." Like Mills, Baran and Sweezy had a difficult time transcending the various expressions of the vital center of American intellectual life. The impressions of social stability, working-class and middle-class complicity in the system, and seemingly permanent material affluence were too strong. *Monthly Review* did continue to espouse rhetoric of class struggle, but it also routinely acknowledged such struggle would not emerge any time soon. The private correspondence indicates the latter belief was much stronger. It permeated their entire conception of what it meant to be a Marxist, and determined their choices about political behavior. At the most basic level, this revealed itself in the continuous effort to establish a foothold for Marxist-influenced scholarship in the US economics profession. Isolated from any real forces of social struggle, their revolutionary rhetoric was vague and abstract, and practically indistinguishable from Mills's desire to build "radical publics" by seizing an advantageous position within the cultural apparatus. In this, at least, *Monthly Review* was of the spirit of the New Left.

**Chapter Three:  
The Cuban Factor:  
Marxism and Anti-Imperialist Nationalism in Early New Left Thought,  
1959-1962**

By the time Fidel Castro's rebel forces seized control of Havana, the intellectual left in the US had weathered the worst phase of McCarthyism, processed Khrushchev's secret speech, and grudgingly accepted the academy as the terrain on which they would make gains on the ideological front. Their experiences through the 1950s had taken a toll. Damaged but not defeated, they looked beyond their immediate surroundings for indications of mobilizing forces that could act as an agency of change within global capitalism. Thus-primed, they did not hesitate to throw their almost wholly uncritical support behind the new Cuban regime. Almost instantaneously, a symbolic, one-sided, representation of Latin American anti-imperialism stepped into the void in American radical consciousness previously occupied by the Soviet Union, bifurcating liberal and left intellectuals in the process. The "independent socialist" intellectuals surrounding *Monthly Review* intervened in the initial collective cognition of events in Cuba. The narrative they constructed reached an audience of young aspiring intellectuals poised to play leading roles in articulating the goals and strategies of radical social movements in the 1960s.

Huberman and Sweezy set the tone of this narrative, and in doing so insinuated Baran's and Sweezy's political economy into broader public discourse. By the summer of 1960, the *MR* editors had already adopted a stance that Cuba was objectively moving toward socialism. The intentions of Cuban revolutionary leaders were irrelevant in the analysis. Though Sweezy, Huberman, Baran, Mills and Williams held Fidel Castro and Che Guevara

in nothing but the highest esteem, the narrative of the revolution these authors insinuated into public discourse focused on objective processes inhering in the logic of international relations rather than deliberate socialist consciousness, either of leaders or the masses. Within the broader surrounding public discourse, this interpretation represented an intellectual bloc carving out a unique position, which became embedded in early organs of New Left thought as they polarized from the 1950s main drift.

But the recipients of these ideas, the first intellectuals of the New Left, were even more firmly rooted in the expanding university system than their predecessors. Set off by the dual spurs of the technological needs of the military-industrial complex and the student influx of the GI Bill, university growth galloped at a steady clip throughout the 1950s. This growth was sustained by a constant infusion of public and private funds motivated by the Cold War, and major Cold War tropes of “freedom” and “totalitarianism” lingered at the level of unexamined assumptions behind prevailing theories and methods of social science. The Cuban Revolution coincided with a new upsurge in university growth in response to the launch of Sputnik in 1957 and the shifting Soviet approach toward Third World diplomacy as part of Khrushchev’s destalinization campaign. This academic environment set the discursive parameters of the neo-Marxist interpretation of the world-historic significance of the Cuban Revolution. For Cold War liberals, Castro symbolized an escalating threat that decolonization would strengthen the socialist bloc. In the face of this threat, modernization moved from theory to practice, and became fully institutionalized in US foreign policy. For early adopters of the neo-Marxist theory of imperialism, Third World nationalism represented a non-capitalist, non-Communist future, and any effort by the US government to curtail the self-determination of that future was necessarily imperialist. Thus, the debates

surrounding the Cuban Revolution offer an interesting glimpse into the beginning of a process whereby rifts in public discourse and social cohesion came to be played out as competing paradigms of social science.

### **From Despondent Stalinists to Ebullient Castroites**

*“I thought the Soviet Union was on a good course. Later on, we did take a position on the Soviet Union which was much more critical. But in 1957, I think there were still quite a few illusions.”* Paul M. Sweezy, 1999.<sup>130</sup>

The 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union impacted the left throughout the world, and the MR group was certainly no exception. Despite a good deal of private ambivalence on Baran’s and Sweezy’s part, publicly they continued to support the Soviet Union as the beacon of the future and the harbinger of a better world. In fact, they genuinely believed in that future, and the vision served an important psychological function for them through their travails in 1950s American society. As discussed in the last chapter, their changing outlook on the Soviet Union in the latter half of the 1950s drastically increased Baran’s and Sweezy’s sense of isolation and depression, which in turn influenced their still-developing theoretical system. Forced to reevaluate the moral leadership of the Soviet Union in the light of the crimes of Stalinism, they entered a period of doubt, that ultimately ended only when they managed to project their image of progressive agency on anti-imperialist struggles throughout the world, but particularly in Latin America.

Slowly, almost imperceptibly, third world revolutionary nationalism crept into the hole in their world vision left by disillusion with the Soviet Union. At the height of despair

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<sup>130</sup> Sweezy, “Interview,” 51.

with both the Soviet Union and the American public, Baran went back to the basics, re-reading classic works of Marx, Engels and Lenin in preparation for a course on Marxism he was slated to teach at Stanford. What struck him most was the realization, already present in Marx's early writings and more fully developed by Lenin, that it fell to the lot of the producing classes in the underdeveloped countries to "pay the bill" of capitalist irrationality. The real genius of Lenin lay in identifying the "complex, infinitely involved and conflict laden struggle of the underdeveloped countries for national and social liberation" as the most important battleground of struggle.<sup>131</sup> Sweezy and Baran had always had contradictory views on this. Rhetorically, of course, they publicly supported national liberation struggles from imperialism. But when and where those conflicted with the goals of the Soviet Union, in the early decade they invariably came out on the side of stability and "peaceful co-existence," the better to allow the objective historical growth of planning to play itself out.

Baran's newfound appreciation of Lenin's writings on anticolonial nationalism coincided with rapid changes in Cold War dynamics, and their cognitive reflections in American social science. The Twentieth Congress signified more than simply the public revelation of past atrocities committed by the Soviet bureaucracy. Khrushchev's "de-Stalinization" campaign sought to loosen the cult of personality, with its definite strictures on thought. Later, French Communist philosopher Louis Althusser would point to this as the moment in which European Communists could discuss Marxist philosophy from *within* the Communist movement without being hemmed in by the crusty mold of Stalin's rigid interpretation of historical materialism. Perhaps more importantly, de-Stalinization marked a

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<sup>131</sup> PAB-PMS, February 3, 1957.

shift in Soviet foreign policy, defined by overtures to form less antagonistic diplomatic relations with the West, while simultaneously increasing tensions by ramping up its own Third World aid programs, which was viewed very much as a provocation by Washington.

This element of de-Stalinization, a renewed drive for peaceful coexistence hearkening back to the World War Two alliance, aggravated already-existing tension between the USSR and China. Although played out in the secretive domain of inner-party circles, rumblings of the Sino-Soviet split surfaced in the early 1960s, and intermingled with the first wave of US intellectuals' serious efforts to make sense of the Cuban Revolution. Mao had long held the US represented a 'paper tiger,' strong in appearance but internally weak. As the CPSU's de-Stalinization program progressed, it became clear that its foreign policy doctrine would counter the aggressive anti-Americanism implied by the paper tiger theory. Rather than a push toward confrontation, Khrushchevism sought to take greater steps toward ensuring 'peaceful coexistence' between the US and the USSR, the better to allow the latter's rational, planned economic system to compete economically with the anarchy of capitalism's law of value. Initially receptive to the liberalization of de-Stalinization, the Chinese Communist Party quickly initiated an anti-rightist campaign which indirectly criticized the entire program of the CPSU as a form of right-wing opportunism. From indirect "shadow boxing," in the words of historian Gregory Elliott, these disputes came out in the open in October 1961 when the CPC publicly condemned the resolutions of the Twenty-Second Congress of the CPSU.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Gregory Elliott, *Althusser: The Detour of Theory*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2006), 4-5.



To understand the significance of *Monthly Review's* response to the Cuban Revolution, it is necessary to situate it within their evolving world-historic outlook, which always played out on the terrain of international relations. In the first editorial after the Chinese Communist Party defeated the Kuomintang, *Monthly Review* hailed the victory as a step in the direction of the global evolution from capitalism to socialism. Sweezy predicted China's future in largely technocratic terms. "Eventually," he wrote, "after a period which will probably be measured in decades rather than years- these processes of economic transformation and development will have reached a point at which China will be ready to take the last step to full-fledged socialist planning."<sup>133</sup> Throughout the 1950s, *Monthly Review* and, later, *American Socialist* evaluated the significance of Third World revolutionary struggles primarily through a mirror reflection of Washington's domino theory. The victory of the Chinese Communist Party enlarged the "socialist bloc," and thus objectively weakened imperialism by hemming in the geographic territory in which it could resolve its economic contradictions.

When the first signs of a rift between Beijing and Moscow began to circulate in international public discourse, Sweezy, Baran, and Huberman initially rebuked Chinese Communists for causing turmoil in the socialist bloc. The Chinese position offered "a typical example of dogmatic leftism" the *MR* editors wrote in their Review of the Month on the Sino-Soviet split in 1961. Provoking Washington could only disrupt the balance of global peace, vital for providing the space for planning to prove its superiority to capitalism.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Paul Sweezy and Leo Huberman, "China and Socialism," *Monthly Review* 1/1 (May 1949), 5-8 at 7.

<sup>134</sup> Paul Sweezy and Leo Huberman, "The Sino-Soviet Dispute," *Monthly Review* 13/8 (Dec. 1961), 337-346 at 344-5.

Baran buttressed this line with a technocratic application of the concept of *uneven development*, which illustrated the group's mechanistic interpretation of the relationship between "economic development" and "socialist democracy." The split, for Baran, derived from the "different stages of economic development" achieved by socialist countries, and their resulting unequal ability to "move forward along the road of balanced economic progress."<sup>135</sup> To unequal economic development corresponded unequal needs for political repression. In Russia, Baran argued, "Stalin [had] done his duty and Stalin must go." But, less-developed China still required the methods of Stalinism, and Chinese workers and peasants understandably resented the flowering of political liberties in the Soviet Union. For Baran, Soviet leaders faced the difficult challenge of determining how much of their accumulating socialist surplus to direct toward increasing consumption domestically, and how much to direct to "aid" for developing socialist countries. Baran's conception of the split in 1961 still fully reified the nation-state, and pitted the struggle for world socialism at the level of international relations, among states defined politically by social processes adhering within the confines circumscribed by national boundaries.

As late as Spring of 1962, Sweezy still clung to this essentially mechanical Marxist interpretation of the worldwide evolution to socialist democracy. Socialism, he wrote, "first appeared in Russia, for the most part an extremely backward country, already ruined economically by an exhausting war and under attack by powerful external enemies. Under *these* conditions, it was inevitable that the authoritarian phase should last a long time, that its methods and practices should become thoroughly institutionalized, and that an elaborate

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<sup>135</sup> Paul Baran, "A Few Thoughts on the Great Debate," 14/1 (May 1962), 34-45, at 35.

apologetic ideology should be developed.”<sup>136</sup> But, as indicated by the program of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the, this regrettable but necessary authoritarian phase was rapidly giving way to a future “no honest person” could continue to believe would resemble a “nightmare of the kind described in Orwell’s *1984*.”<sup>137</sup>

In the Spring of 1963, the *Monthly Review* editors made a sharp reversal on the Sino-Soviet dispute, and in doing so resolved a long-standing cognitive tension in different elements of early New Left thought. In the May 1963 Review of the Month, Huberman and Sweezy explicitly renounced their pro-Soviet editorial from December of 1961. The Sino-Soviet debate, wrote the editors, went to the very heart of “the nature of the historical period through which the world [was] passing and what [could] and should [have] been done to advance the cause of world socialism.” The Russians believed that peace must be maintained at all costs, to avoid unprecedented destruction and to demonstrate “the superiority of socialism over capitalism.” Moscow’s strategy flowed from the erroneous assumption that imperialism could contain its objective expansionary tendencies, and was thus desirable but not realistic. Instead of “peaceful coexistence,” the coming period would require aggressive struggle against imperialism “conducted on all levels and by all available methods.”<sup>138</sup>

The *Monthly Review* crowd used these shifting alignments among the nations of the socialist bloc as their compass for their own rudderless political orientations. It would have

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<sup>136</sup> Paul Sweezy, “The 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress and International Socialism,” *Monthly Review* 14/1 (May 1962), 45-53, at 50.

<sup>137</sup> Sweezy, “22<sup>nd</sup> Congress,” 52-3.

<sup>138</sup> Paul Sweezy and Leo Huberman, “The Split in the Socialist World,” *Monthly Review* 15/1 (May 1963), 1-20 quotes at 1, 2, 6.

been impossible for them not to. Aside from a small network of like-minded intellectuals, they had no ties to any counterhegemonic social forces at the local level. By the late 1950s, they had long-since ingrained the habit of vesting their hopes for the future in a foreign nation-state.

Against the backdrop of the Cuban Revolution and the Sino-Soviet split, third world anti-colonial nationalism moved from one among their list of possible historically progressive world forces to the prime position. Sweezy and Huberman traveled to Cuba in the spring of 1960, and from that moment on they threw their undying and unmitigated support behind Castro as an individual and behind the Cuban project. Although Cuba had not been on the *Monthly Review* radar in the early stages of the revolution, despite popular sympathy and favorable coverage in the more mainstream U.S. media, after Castro and his small band of guerillas assumed power Sweezy and Huberman were instantly primed for it to fill the role of mass struggle they had been searching for. As Sweezy said in a letter to Baran, “I badly need to see and feel and be revived by a real revolution.”<sup>139</sup> Baran for his part initially did his best to dissuade Sweezy from making the journey. The two were in the throes of the opus, and Baran’s eagerness to see it completed outweighed his desire to see and partake in the revolution.<sup>140</sup> Castro and Che Guevara instantly charmed Sweezy by offering him his first opportunity to apply his economic analysis in a technocratic advisory capacity. Sweezy’s letters to Baran from Cuba portray the revolutionary regime in heroic dimensions, without any hint of qualification or doubt.<sup>141</sup> The *Monthly Review* editors received a friendly

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<sup>139</sup> PMS-PAB, December 19, 1959.

<sup>140</sup> PAB-PMS, Dec 17, 1959.

<sup>141</sup> PMS-PAB, March 7, 1960.

welcome. Working at the Agricultural Reform Institute, they were treated as experts on planning. Sweezy delivered a speech, which he reprinted in *MR*.

Support for the revolution was the beginning of a process of trying to reconcile nationalism with Marxism, while merely displacing the historically progressive force from the Soviet Union onto the Third World. Throughout the early 1960s, their support for Cuba did not diminish, and it was the opening sequence in a turn to Latin America as the locus of international revolution. They developed a distinct analysis in which Latin American anti-imperialist struggles, even when led by calls for an all-inclusive, cross-class nationalist alliance, would objectively move toward socialist ends. The driving force of this process was not the logic of class struggle in the third world, but the unassailing force of imperialism. Because the US would not be able to tolerate even the slightest reform to the exploitative structure in its semi-colonial Latin American neighbors, it would respond violently, pushing nationalist regimes unalterably into the socialist bloc and compelling even greater expropriations and planning. Their analysis thus continued to be mired in the predominant mode of Cold War analytical nationalism characteristic of both Stalinist Marxism and modernization theory.

### **Filling the Void: Radical Intellectual Enthusiasm for the Cuban Revolution**

*“The position we took was at the time a very unusual one, which was that the Cuban Revolution was a socialist revolution, and I think that’s been borne out. We were totally devoted to it, enthusiastic- naively, I suppose- about this wonderful revolution.” ~ Paul M. Sweezy, 1999.<sup>142</sup>*

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<sup>142</sup> Sweezy, “Interview,” 50.

Sweezy and Huberman were among the first in the United States to write a book-length study of Castro's ascension to power, from any perspective. In their capacity as editors and regular contributors to *Monthly Review*, they had grown accustomed to a quick turnaround on writing projects. But their book, *Cuba: Anatomy of a Revolution* stood out even by their own rapid standards. After traveling through Cuba for three weeks in late February and early March of 1960, the *MR* editors produced their study of the origins, nature, and trajectory of the revolution in just under four months. This is a remarkable accomplishment considering they went into the project with very little background knowledge of Cuban history or politics, but the end result reflects the haste with which it was produced. The bulk of the book appeared in the summer double-issue of *Monthly Review*. At the end of the summer the pair convinced Baran to accompany them on a second trip to Cuba, the results of which were summed up in a brief post-script to the *MR* articles, which *Monthly Review Press* released as a book before the end of the year.<sup>143</sup>

To properly understand the significance of *Anatomy of a Revolution* and *Monthly Review's* articles on Cuba, they must be situated in relation to the broader concurrent discourse on Castro's regime. From the 1950s to around the end of 1960, Castro was not a major polarizing figure in American discourse. For most of the 1950s, left-liberal intellectuals did not pay much attention to Castro's 26<sup>th</sup> of July Movement. The *New York Times* did more to shape impressions of the Cuban guerrillas prior to the revolution than any of the political or literary little magazines on the New York intellectual scene. *Monthly*

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<sup>143</sup> For travel dates, see: PMS-PAB, February [no day] 1960; PMS-PAB, March 7, 1960 [written from Cuba]. For first run of the book, see: Leo Huberman and Paul M. Sweezy, "Cuba: Anatomy of a Revolution," in *Monthly Review* 12/3&4 (July/Aug. 1960), xi-176.

*Review*, for example, did not run a single article on Castro or the 26<sup>th</sup> of July Movement prior to *Anatomy of a Revolution*, and this despite a growing presence of Latin American issues on the pages near the end of the 1950s. *New York Times* journalist Herbert Matthews portrayed Castro as a middle-class liberal intellectual and the revolution as worthy of US support; even reflecting the best of American republican values. Castro did much to sustain this interpretation. He had frequently portrayed his movement as the defender of the 1940 Cuban Constitution, and he played up his liberalism in his pre-revolutionary interviews with Matthews and in his immediate post-revolutionary speaking tours in the US.

The Castro-as-liberal imagery worked in tandem with the equilibrium narrative of US past and present underlying the major academic tributaries to modernization theory. The few major public intellectual works to appear on the scene concurrently with *Anatomy of a Revolution* interpreted the regime as the progeny of the American (North and South) revolutionary tradition, carrying the torch of the “New World” begun by the US in its war against England and the legacy of Simón Bolívar. Waldo Frank exemplified this interpretation. Seventy years old when he visited Cuba in 1959, Frank had accrued a long career in left journalism and deep knowledge of Latin American literature and culture, though not about Cuba specifically. Frank was of the generation of American men of letters pulled to the left by the romance of the Russian Revolution. In the 1930s he had headed the Communist Party fronted League of American Writers. Like Sweezy then, his first political orientation was as a fellow traveler, though his intellectual activity took place outside the university. Frank sympathized with Trotsky’s self-defense from Mexico following the Moscow trials. He split from the Communist Party and like so many anti-Stalinist

intellectuals made peace with US capitalism in proportion to growing horror at Soviet totalitarianism throughout the 1950s.

This biography shaped the impression of Castro's regime advanced in his 1961 book, *Cuba: A Prophetic Island*. Frank's book stood between the liberal pro-Castro *New York Times* articles and the sharp condemnation of the revolutionary government that would follow the Cuban Missile crisis. The government commissioned the book, intended as an ode to the revolution. And the book did portray Castro in a positive light, though Frank could not resist airing his reservations Castro's charm and bond with the masses could lead to dictatorship. More importantly, Frank's anti-Communism determined his hope that the new Cuban government would move into the US diplomatic orbit, which in turn led him to temper his narrative of US foreign policy toward Latin America. He emphasized the 1898 Teller Amendment, declaring Cuba's right to "independence and liberty," rather than the repeated military invasions under the Platt Amendment or the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. Frank's narrative depicted a republican revolutionary tradition, dating back to José Martí, stymied by the sugar economy under US companies and Cuban oligarchs. Yet, he envisioned a future of closer US-Cuban relations. By carrying on the republican tradition, Castro would help infuse its spirit anew into the United States.<sup>144</sup>

*Monthly Review* countered with a narrative in which the revolution would be objectively compelled to enact socialist measures to overcome a long legacy of US economic imperialism. The neo-Marxist theoretical scaffolding underlying *Anatomy of a Revolution*

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<sup>144</sup> This interpretation is drawn from Rojas, Rafael, *Fighting Over Fidel: The New York Intellectuals and the Cuban Revolution*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 62-75.



reveals itself from the opening observation that the “problem was sugar,” and proceeds to frame a laudatory historical narrative, bordering on a hagiography of Castro, topped with an empirical demonstration of the revolution’s accomplishments and probable future. Through each of these phases, the analysis rested on a few interrelated concepts, which collectively amounted to a theory that exchange on the world market systematically benefits industrial capitalist countries at the expense of agricultural or raw material producing countries. Sweezy and Huberman thus inverted Ricardian comparative advantage, an intellectual move that had already gained currency in Latin America through the work of Argentine economist Raúl Prebisch, and which would garner worldwide attention through briefly influential dependency theory (see next chapter). In Sweezy and Huberman’s analysis, investment in sugar displaced investment in other economic sectors as Cuba became a specialized sugar producer in the global economy, which forced Cuban consumers to rely on imports to meet most of their basic material necessities.<sup>145</sup> In the Ricardian system of thought, then implicitly dominant in the North American academic economics profession, that should not have been a problem. Rather, specialization should have increased the global division of labor to the mutual benefit of Cuba and its trade allies. Huberman and Sweezy asserted more than demonstrated that Cuban dependence on sugar export, to be refined and processed elsewhere in the global economy, placed them in a position of vulnerability and disadvantage relative to industrially developed countries. They made little effort to process in terms of Marxist categories exactly *why* that should result in unequal distribution of the benefits of capitalist production.

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<sup>145</sup> Leo Huberman and Paul M. Sweezy, *Cuba: Anatomy of a Revolution*, (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1960), 9-10.

Nonetheless, proceeding from the (probably correct) assumption that monocrop export produced a disadvantageous position *vis-à-vis* more powerful trading partners, they posited several interrelated theoretical claims. The pre-revolutionary Cuban government was unable to achieve (or even formulate) realistic state-directed economic development goals when state revenue depended on sugar sales, and sugar prices fluctuated wildly on world markets. Foreign investment only resulted in types of “development” that facilitated, and thus reinforced, the monocrop export economy. These economic processes shaped the incentive structure of ruling elites, resulting in class structures unique to underdeveloped countries. Specifically, the class structure resulted in a bourgeois class torn between nationalist anti-imperialism and sympathy to the goals of global capitalism and a landowning oligarchy deeply entrenched from its economic function as the producer of the nation’s primary export.<sup>146</sup> The ruling class bloc in Cuba was composed of a vacillating bourgeoisie and a semi-feudal landowning oligarchy, which together presented a definite obstacle to industrialization and robust capitalist development.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the book is the authors’ reliance on non-logical rhetorical strategies to paint a sympathetic portrait of the new regime. They evidently went to great lengths to pitch the book to a non-academic audience, and the result is a simple, bordering on simplistic, tone and style. *Anatomy of a Revolution* opens with a juxtaposition between a short first chapter describing Cuba’s “Rich Land” and a slightly longer second

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<sup>146</sup> On the following topics refer to corresponding page numbers in Huberman and Sweezy, *Anatomy*: 1) link between global sugar prices and Cuban development goals (20-21); 2) skewed development under foreign capital (19); 3) export economy and domestic class structure (17).

chapter describing the island's "Poor People." Setting up their description of poverty, Huberman and Sweezy wrote "three hundred twelve pesos means \$6 a week. That's what the average person had to live on in Cuba in those years. It wasn't enough." Further in the chapter, they identify the culprit in a terse, four-word paragraph: "The trouble was sugar."<sup>147</sup> Passages such as these abound, indeed constitute the norm more than the exception, leaving little doubt that the authors made a deliberate, concerted effort to wring any academic- or even particularly literary- language out of the book. They routinely employ analogies to US experiences to provide a frame of reference for understanding Cuban hardships. The \$6 per week income amounted to only half of the average income in Mississippi, the poorest part of the United States.<sup>148</sup> The normal level of unemployment in pre-revolutionary Cuba equaled US unemployment in the worst year of the Great Depression.<sup>149</sup> When they got to descriptions of Castro as a person, they could hardly contain their giddiness. Following a series of juxtapositions casting the land, the peasants and the workers as hapless victims of imperialist capital and its local political cronies willing to "bend the knee," Castro entered the story as the man with the audacity to speak with the voice of the exploited peasantry. With "characteristic energy and singleness of purpose,"<sup>150</sup> Castro led his small revolutionary force to victory, allegedly in the name of the peasantry. In the Cuba Sweezy and Huberman visited in early 1960, Castro as a single individual had become "the embodiment of the

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<sup>147</sup> Huberman and Sweezy, *Cuba*, 3, 7 respectively.

<sup>148</sup> Huberman and Sweezy, *Cuba*, 3.

<sup>149</sup> Huberman and Sweezy, *Cuba*, 7.

<sup>150</sup> Huberman and Sweezy, *Cuba*, 28.

revolutionary will and energy of the peasantry.”<sup>151</sup> Based almost entirely on their assessment of Castro alone, the *Monthly Review* editors concluded by the summer of 1960 that Cuba had already become a socialist society, founded on peasant control as embodied in the individual person of Fidel Castro.

Mills, who had already moved closer to *Monthly Review* and *American Socialist* in the late 1950s, amplified the basic message of *Anatomy of a Revolution* by stitching much of the economic analysis into his more famous book, *Listen Yankee*. Mills had little prior knowledge about Cuban history or culture before deciding to travel to the island.<sup>152</sup> In the late 1950s, following the publication of *Power Elite*, he had moved closer to European Marxist intellectuals, which solidified his impression that the “young intelligentsia” in the advanced nations would provide the impulse for progressive change moving forward. In 1959 and 1960 he travelled to Brazil and Mexico respectively. The radical enthusiasm he encountered in Latin America thrust a new prospective progressive agent into his consciousness: the “hungry-nation bloc” as exemplified by Castro’s Cuba. When Mills travelled to Cuba in August of 1960, he met with Fair Play for Cuba Committee founder Robert Taber who introduced him to the organization’s national student leader—and future *Studies on the Left* editor—Saul Landau.<sup>153</sup> Mills and Landau spent two weeks in Cuba interviewing revolutionary leaders, including three eighteen-and-a-half-hour days of one-on-

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<sup>151</sup> Huberman and Sweezy, *Cuba*, 78.

<sup>152</sup> Van Gosse, *Where the Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America and the Making of the New Left*, (New York, NY: Verso, 1993) 177; Geary, *Radical*, 207.

<sup>153</sup> Gosse, *Boys*, 178.

one interviews with Castro, who had publicly proclaimed his admiration for Mills's *Power Elite*.<sup>154</sup>

Though *Listen Yankee* sold more copies than any other book Mills wrote—four hundred thousand copies—it has not held up well.<sup>155</sup> If Huberman and Sweezy felt unconflicted about ascribing the voice of the peasantry to Castro the individual, Mills took this logic one step further; he used interviews with the leaders of the revolutionary government to literally speak to the American public in a fictionalized Cuban voice. The three-and-a-half eighteen hours days Mills spent interviewing Castro consumed at least a quarter of Mills's two-week trip, and it is safe to say that Castro's views enjoy the preponderance of representation in the amalgamated voice of the hypothetical Cuban addressing his Yankee audience. But, this "Cuban" narrator was also Mills, and the form Mills chose to present his analysis makes it impossible to disentangle his own views from those of his interviewees.

In the discourse swirling around Cuba in the uncertain days between late 1959 and the Bay of Pigs invasion in April of 1961, Mills's political orientation in *Listen Yankee* more closely approximates Huberman's and Sweezy's than any other. Like the *Monthly Review* editors, Mills was enamored with Castro. Those who ascribed the origins of the revolution to the peasantry, the middle classes, or anti-imperialist ideology got it wrong. The revolution

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<sup>154</sup> Tom Hayden, *Listen, Yankee!: Why Cuba Matters*, (New York, Oakland: Seven Stories Press, 2015), 37; Geary, *Radical*, 208. Aronowitz, *Big*, 208 mistakenly claims Mills spent a month in Cuba in spring of 1960.

<sup>155</sup> For sales figures see: Mattson, *Intellectuals*, 81.

really began when a “man [Castro] said No! to a monster.”<sup>156</sup> Adulation for Castro was not uncommon, but in very subtle ways had become a point of divergence in the liberal and radical intellectuals gathered around the FPCC. Frank’s *Prophetic Island*, published just three months after *Listen Yankee*, mitigated its heroic imagery of Castro. Similarly, subtle yet meaningful differences divided Mills’s classification of the political regime from others on the “democratic socialist” US left. Contributing what would be a central trope of New Leftism, Mills’s argued the Cuban revolutionaries had escaped the “terribly destructive process” of old leftism, and did not fit into any of the ideological molds of the Cold War.<sup>157</sup> Mills described the policies of the revolutionary as “non-ideological” and “plainly anti-Stalinist.”<sup>158</sup> Bracketing the paradox of being simultaneously non-ideological and (ideologically) anti-Stalinist, this most likely reflected Mills filtering his interpretations of what he observed through the lens of his long-held pragmatist predisposition than anything he culled from interviews with the leaders themselves. Still, this interpretation did not stand far outside the intellectual center of gravity in late 1960 through early 1961. Most of Mills’s cohort within the old “Third Camp” orientation hoped Castro’s government would be the bearer on the world stage of the political utopian they had clung to throughout the 1950s.

But in the narrative of US foreign relations with Cuba, Mills stood squarely apart from virtually every current other than *Monthly Review*. He, like Sweezy, portrayed the revolutionaries liberating the Cuban *pueblo* from decades of economic exploitation at the

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<sup>156</sup> C. Wright Mills, *Listen, Yankee: The Revolution in Cuba*, (New York, Toronto and London: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1960), 40.

<sup>157</sup> Mills, *Yankee*, 43.

<sup>158</sup> Mills, *Yankee*, 71-81.

hands of US imperialism, and, in doing so, opening up a real possibility for the restoration on a world level of a non-Soviet socialist vision for the future. Mills did not pull any punches in his condemnation of US corporate, government, and military exploitation of the Cuban people. The Platt Amendment, which converted Cuba to a US protectorate, served to protect the interests of the \$50 million of US corporate capital invested in the island's sugar production. The terms of this agreement were enforced through repeated military invasions. Manhattan investors controlled 40 percent of the island's sugar production, and in their interests the US supported the Batista regime, guilty of castrating men and raping women. Cuba was simply an "imperialist colony" of the United States, and for Mills this was the first historical fact that must be acknowledged to grasp the logic of the revolutionary dynamic unfolding on the island.

The period from 1960-1962 was crucial in defining the image of Cuba in US popular consciousness, and in that period *Monthly Review's* and Mills's interventions stood out as a unique position. *Dissent* and *Liberation* magazines produced analyses closest to Mills and Sweezy and Huberman, but the contrast stands out all the more in the proximity. Michael Walzer at *Dissent* and David Reynolds at *Liberation* recognized the legacy of colonialism in both the causes of the revolution and the continuing conduct of Washington's contemporary treatment of Castro's regime. Ultimately far more morally opposed to authoritarianism than Washington imposing limits to self-determination, Walzer wound up in a posture more-or-less commensurate with modernization theory. He believed the cultural, political, and intellectual traditions of the United States could be held up as a model to be emulated, but only if contemporaries recuperated the "radicalism" in American liberalism. This radicalism, if recovered by intellectuals and infused into the public, could influence the Kennedy

administration to open diplomatic relations with Cuba and facilitate a transition to socialism without recourse to dictatorship.<sup>159</sup> While perhaps similar to Mills's warning to Washington not to intervene lest risk pushing Castro into the Soviet camp, Mills used this more as a rhetorical device to highlight the hypocrisy of a foreign policy he saw as largely immune to pressure from below. For Walzer, Kennedy could be pressured not only from social forces from below, but even ideologically converted to "radicalism," an ideal which Walzer de-moored from any structural foundations and infused with quasi-mystical attributes.

While the self-described democratic socialists were trying to infuse the spirit of radicalism into the Kennedy administration, the main core of the vital center doubled down on the liberal consensus myth to ideologically justify the foreign policy the administration actually pursued. One month before he authorized the CIA to orchestrate the Bay of Pigs invasion, Kennedy launched the Alliance for Progress. Though the roots of the Alliance for Progress extend back to the late 1950s, the hardening line toward Cuba and the ramped-up modernization efforts toward the rest of the Western hemisphere sung in chorus. Kennedy and his advisors dangled the carrot of increased aid to the members of the Organization of American States while simultaneously ostracizing Cuba to illustrate the consequences of straying from the Western commitment to "personal dignity and political liberty." To further this objective, Kennedy enlisted the aid of academic experts to formulate a concrete modernization program culled from an interpretation of US history. Historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., who coined the very phrase "vital center," played a crucial role in the Kennedy administration's efforts to control the narrative. The US could and should engineer

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<sup>159</sup> See: Rojas, *Fighting*, 48-54.



a “middle class revolution” in Latin American countries, which would bring “such necessities of modern technical society as constitutional government, honest public administration, a responsible party system, a rational land system, an efficient system of taxation.” With such obvious benefits, resistance to the spread of modernity was explicable only with recourse to Walt Whitman Rostow’s wildly successful *Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*. Rostow identified a “take-off” point, at which the mechanism of capitalist accumulation and reinvestment became self-sustaining. While crucial in the transition from backwardness to modernity, the take-off stage disrupted primitive institutions and dislocated social forces from the “semi-feudal” to “modern” labor systems. While ultimately this would benefit everyone by instituting, in Schlesinger’s words, a “framework of civic freedom,” the transition would be messy and present opportunities for Communists to depict capitalism as inherently wrought with class antagonism.<sup>160</sup> It is impossible to overemphasize the extent to which this rested on an assumption that US modern liberal capitalism had transcended class conflict.

The anti-Communist historian Theodore Draper furthered Kennedy’s policy aims by propagating a “betrayal” narrative in intellectual discourse that provided a sense of continuity between the early liberal enthusiasm for the 26<sup>th</sup> of July Movement and the growing diplomatic tensions. Draper published several articles in the *New Leader*, later collected into a volume entitled *Castro’s Revolutions: Myths and Realities* (1962). Under the editorship of Daniel Bell for a short period following World War Two, the editorial line of *New Leader* closely maps onto the trajectory of the anti-Stalinist left. From a moderate democratic

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<sup>160</sup> For this interpretation of the Alliance of Progress, see: Latham, *Ideology*, 69-108, quotations at 79, 80-81, 82.

socialist line in the late 1940s, it had become a common public forum for the staunchest defenders of the Soviet-aggressor Cold War narrative by the late 1950s. Every notable Trotskyist-cum-neoconservative graced the pages of *New Leader* in the 1950s and 1960s, including Bell himself, Irving Kristol, and Max Eastman. Draper's articles appeared in the wake of Bay of Pigs, and sought to justify the shifting strategy by portraying Castro and his guerrillas as knowing, conscious misleaders of the social forces they galvanized to make the revolution. For Draper, the non-Communist portrait of Castro that had been propagated by *New York Times* columnists in the 1950s accurately captured the middle-class origins of the revolutionaries and the liberal rhetoric they employed to gain support for their movement. The US should and would support a revolution that proceeded with the values Castro espoused in this period. But by pursuing socialist policies and moving closer to the Soviet bloc, Castro betrayed his own revolutionary principles and the Cuban people.<sup>161</sup> With the Alliance for Progress, the Kennedy administration very consciously tried to engineer "middle class revolutions." They enticed regimes to pursue middle class values with foreign aid, and threatened them with isolation, economic sanctions, and military intervention if they failed to stay within the confines of civic freedom represented by those middle-class values. Draper's articles sought to shore up a domestic consensus behind this program by casting Castro as a dictator and a threat to US national security.

In *The United States, Cuba, and Castro*, published by Monthly Review Press in 1962, Williams wielded Sweezy and Huberman's interpretation in a polemic against Draper. He charged recent authors, including Draper, Karl E. Meyer, Tad Szulc and Nicolas Rivero, of

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<sup>161</sup> Theodore Draper, *Castro's Revolution: Myths and Realities*, (New York and Washington: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1962).

trying to “circumnavigate” the issue of American empire in their accounts of Cuba. Though Williams polemicized with several authors, Draper functioned as the primary foil against whom he constructed his narrative. Like Mills and Huberman and Sweezy, he sought to convince readers that US imperialism deserved its fair share of blame both for the radical turn in the revolution and for the deteriorating diplomatic relations between Washington and Havana. Williams proceeded from much the same set of assumptions underlying his historical scholarship throughout the 1950s, which he had just synthesized into his groundbreaking book *Tragedy of American Diplomacy*. He argued in effect that Castro’s revolutionary army represented a national movement with broad, cross-class support seeking to fulfill rather than “betray” the national goals embodied in the Cuban Constitution of 1940. Trying to break free from the suffocating dichotomies of Cold War thought, Williams interpreted the Constitution as simultaneously democratic and socialist, the realization of non-Communist non-capitalist society around which radicals worldwide could pin their hopes. The hypocrisy, or tragedy, of US foreign policy lay in its inability to uphold its putative commitment to democracy when doing so threatened capitalist property relations.

Though not his most successful book, *The United States, Cuba, and Castro* elicited a heated exchange between Williams and Draper which revealed a good deal about the interpretation of Marx that Williams had assimilated, and which elicited a show of support from the student radicals then cohering around Williams at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. *New Leader* published Draper’s rebuttal to Williams book. In the reply, titled “The Strange Case of Professor Williams,” Draper tugged at some of the empirical and logical threads of Williams’s argument, and used the fraying edges to impugn the author’s integrity

as a professional historian.<sup>162</sup> Draper, like many Cold War liberals, had more-than-passing familiarity with Marxist theory acquired through his affiliation with the Communist Party in the 1930s and his authorship of the authoritative historical account of the American Communist Party. Among his other arguments, he dismissed Williams's (and, by proxy, *Monthly Review's*) peasant-based class analysis of the Cuban Revolution, which, he claimed, rested on a dubious interpretation of Marxist theory. Draper ridiculed Williams for allegedly designating Castro a member of the peasantry, and for suggesting that the peasantry could constitute the 'driving force' in a socialist revolution, an idea Draper claimed Marx would have found "unthinkable." Williams spent some length on this question in his response, constructing what was then a relatively uncommon interpretation of Marx out of select passages from *Capital*, especially *Volume III*, Marx and Engels correspondence, and some contemporary secondary literature. Williams quoted at length from a draft of a letter Marx wrote to Russian socialist Vera Zasulich to demonstrate a basis for assuming Marx would not have found peasant-led revolution in a colonized country "unthinkable." In Williams reading, both Marx and Engels believed the peasantry could 'drive' the revolution in dependent, colonial or semi-colonial countries, and the commune could even serve as the basis for transition directly to socialism, but only if assisted by revolution in more advanced capitalist states.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Theodore Draper, "The Strange Case of Professor Williams," *New Leader* (April 29, 1963).

<sup>163</sup> William Appleman Williams, "Historiography and Revolution, The Case of Cuba: A Commentary on a Polemic by Theodore Draper," *Studies on the Left* 3/3 (Summer, 1963), 78-102. Williams discussion of Marx and Engels on the Russian peasantry on 91-101.

It is worth pausing for a moment to dwell on Williams' curious interpretation of Marxism, because he had tremendous influence over the graduate student editors of *Studies on the Left*, and through them a voice in the student New Left more broadly. 1) Compare against the predominant view of "orthodoxy." Usually dated to the Second International, and used to characterize all major leaders of European Marxism. Originated with Kautsky, who is thought to have applied a rigid and deterministic interpretation of Marxism as science. As the theoretical leader of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), Kautsky held great theoretical influence over the sections of the Second International. Thus, he is thought to have spread this rigid, teleological interpretation widely, including to the Russian Social Democratic Party (RSDLP, which would split into Bolsheviks and Mensheviks). This was the dominant interpretation of the intellectual history of Marxism at the time, the basis on which Marx was then and since often cited as claiming "I am not a Marxist," and generally then and now what is meant when one refers to "orthodox" Marxism. Williams is thus recuperating a "heterodox" interpretation of Marxism, one in which world-systemic forces and the outcomes of class struggles can alter the trajectories of capitalist development in individual nation-states.

Williams, based on his own reading of Marx, intuitively something like a theory of Permanent Revolution. Go over this in relation to the question of "hegemony" as originally introduced into the Marxist movement. Then consider the fact that he is applying something like a theory of permanent revolution as the outcome of uneven and combined development, under the hegemony of a tiny group of petty bourgeois intellectuals.

To varying degrees, Mills, Williams, and Huberman and Sweezy all suffered from uncertainty about the intended audience for their interventions surrounding Cuba.

Huberman's and Sweezy's book fails the worst on this score. The tone and emotional appeals suggest some conscious effort to galvanize US workers and farmers in support of Cuba. But this squares poorly with the fact that they had clearly written off both groups as potential revolutionary, or even reformist, social forces in the United States, a predisposition they held before, during and after their encounter with the revolution and their redaction of the book. To the extent that they maintained hope that the US had "at least the potential of producing a meaningful Left at some time in the future" Sweezy, at least, identified that potentiality exclusively in a "relatively small group of intellectuals, especially young students of outstanding ability and insight."<sup>164</sup> Here, *Monthly Review* and Mills were in perfect agreement. It is thus fitting that their perspective would get taken up primarily by young graduate students and, eventually, inform and undergird the perspectives of a generation of academic Marxists.

From a Marxist perspective, Sweezy and Huberman's and Williams's interventions surrounding Cuba must be considered a tremendous piece of revisionism. Their unmitigated adulation of Castro is, perhaps, understandable. Intellectuals often find revolutions intoxicating, and are attracted to idealistic leaders. But to classify the society as socialist, and the leadership as the voice and will of the peasantry seriously misrepresented the real history of the revolution and abandoned a simple Marxist principle that oppressed classes must liberate themselves. Their admiration for the voluntarist approach reflected and grew directly from their frustrated efforts to push the New Deal to the left, and their increasing disillusion with local revolutionary prospects. One can easily detect the excitement when they recount

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<sup>164</sup> PMS-PAB, January 2, 1959.

the heroic tale of 12 men who toppled an army of 30,000.<sup>165</sup> This must have had a cathartic effect given their sense of the power disparities they faced in their own, more local struggles.

### **The New Generation Responds**

Almost instantaneously, young intellectuals who had been moving into the orbit of the rearticulated left-liberal space began applying the lessons of the story of the Cuban struggle constructed by MR, Mills and Williams to social opposition in America. The University of Wisconsin, Madison, experienced some of the earliest rumblings of campus radicalism that would be a defining feature of 1960s American social life. This was due in no small part to the addition of William Appleman Williams to the faculty in the history department in 1957, and the longer presence of Mills's closest sociology colleague Hans Gerth. Two years Williams arrived, Williams published his most famous book *Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, much of the analytical basis and substantive content of which had appeared in installments in *Monthly Review*, *The Nation*, and *American Socialist*.

Whatever else Williams may have accomplished in the history profession, he earned the loyalty and shaped the intellectual horizons of a generation of graduate students in Madison. According to biographer Paul Buhle, the publication of *Tragedy* had the effect for Williams of "solidifying a radical, dissenting scholarly climate of opinion around him and probably pulled [him] further to the left."<sup>166</sup> As we saw in his polemic with Draper, Williams openly defended a Marxist interpretation of the Cuban Revolution, and demonstrated that he

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<sup>165</sup> Huberman and Sweezy, *Cuba*, 56.

<sup>166</sup> Paul Buhle and Edward Rice-Maxim, *William Appleman Williams: The Tragedy of Empire*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995), 116.

had been reading in and around the tradition. In *Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, he laid out a sweeping revision of US history linking progressive reformism to the drive for constant expansion, all ultimately traced to economic motives of ruling elites. University of Wisconsin graduate students in 1959 placed this theoretical framework at the center of *Studies on the Left*, a new journal intended to provide the US counterpart to the British *New Left Review*. The journal's founding editors were virtually all students of Williams and/or Gerth. Throughout its nearly ten-year run, the journal would boast most of the big names of 1960s campus radicalism, as either editors or regular contributors. With the benefit of hindsight, it provides a who's who guide to 1970s academic leftism.<sup>167</sup>

The initial political and intellectual orientation of *Studies on the Left* reflected the outlook of the late 1950s radical-liberal intellectual formation centered around the *Monthly Review* interpretation of imperialism. Like Mills's depiction of the leaders of the Cuban revolution, the *Studies on the Left* crowd believed they represented something new, fitting neither into the mold of Cold War liberalism nor the tired and sterile debates of the "Old Left." Following Williams's lead, they unflinchingly critiqued the "devil theory of communism," with which nominally progressive intellectuals wrote a blank check for US imperialism.<sup>168</sup> This drew harsh criticism from the 1950s democratic socialist cold warriors. *Dissent* editor Irving Howe asked *Studies* editor Tom Hayden "how he could be an editor of a

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<sup>167</sup> Editors included, at one time or another: Tom Hayden, James Weinstein, Martin Sklar, Eugene Genovese, and Saul Landau.

<sup>168</sup> Editors, "The Cuban Revolution: The New Crisis in Cold War Ideology," *Studies on the Left* 1/3 (1960) 1-3 at 2. This phrasing shows the extent to which the perspective of the journal was shaped by professionalization in the discipline of history. It is clearly borrowed from Charles Beard's *The Devil Theory of War*.



journal that was part of the Soviet World.”<sup>169</sup> This was, of course, an exaggerated interpretation, revealing more about *Dissent’s* capitulation to Cold War intellectual pressures than anything about the tone or outlook of *Studies on the Left*. Editors and contributors refused to give Washington a pass, but they also distanced themselves from any of the “old” debates within Marxism, not for moralistic reasons but, essentially, because they found them boring. They were not, at least not yet, in any meaningful sense “part of the Soviet world.” James Weinstein, the journal’s leading editor, used the space of the journal to launch a critique of historiography of the American Left which would form the basic underlying framework of his 1967 book *The Decline of American Socialism*. Published by Monthly Review Press, *Decline of American Socialism* located the great tragedy of American Leftism in the effort to ape Bolshevism, a perspective influenced by Williams, Sweezy, and the editors of *American Socialist* in the 1950s.

The main theoretical framework employed by the *Studies on the Left* crowd was heavily influenced by the *Monthly Review* theory of monopoly capitalism. An almost absurdly large group sat on the journal’s editorial board. At various times this group included those who would become the leading scholars of the “corporate liberal” interpretation of US history. Though *Studies* editors would popularize the term, *Monthly Review* had worked out the political economy behind corporate liberalism in the 1950s, which found regular expression in the “Review of the Month” section, in articles from the editors and close associates such as Paul Baran and William Appleman Williams, and in Baran’s *Political Economy of Growth*, which introduced the theory of monopoly capitalism behind his and

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<sup>169</sup> Quoted in Buhle and Rice-Maxim, *Empire*, 140.

Sweezy's *Monopoly Capital*. As discussed earlier, from the perspective of a structural logic of capitalism, Baran's and Sweezy's economic thought differed little from left Keynesians such as Joan Robinson. They shared the view that capitalism in the era of the modern large corporation had developed tools for macroeconomic regulation that kept the system largely free from major episodic crises. For Baran and Sweezy, "wasteful expenditures" and operating below full capacity functioned as the safety valves that released the mounting surplus and kept the whole rotten system turning over. This, incidentally, also formed the basis of their fundamental agreement with Mills over the reactionary nature of the American working class, which benefited from some of the wasteful expenditures and thus could only be considered "immiserated" in a spiritual, rather than a material, sense. It also provided a framework for thinking about "welfare," in any form, as serving a vital economic function for capital to dispose of its growing surplus, the basic political economic theory undergirding corporate liberal historiography. The *Monthly Review* line had long been that welfare and warfare served the same economic function for the ruling class, but the ruling class preferred warfare because too much welfare elevated the social position of the working class, potentially threatening property relations.

The *Studies* editors assimilated Baran's and Sweezy's political economic theory of monopoly capitalism and shaped it into an empirically rigorous interpretation of modern US history, from which they drew political conclusions. For corporate liberals, a segment of corporate capital pushed statist liberal reformism from the Progressive era through the New Deal. State agencies served corporate interests by regulating capitalism and reigning in its excesses, or at least purchasing domestic harmony through foreign exploitation. Like *Monthly Review*, and despite their admiration of Mills, this analysis resisted any deviation

from a strict “ruling class” analysis of US political history. Because of the influence of Williams, foreign policy was overrepresented in the analysis, and *Studies on the Left* unabashedly characterized Washington as an imperialist power at a time when this interpretation was not in vogue, even among the young student radicals who would so enthusiastically advance that interpretation later in the decade.

The theoretical overlap between corporate liberalism and monopoly capitalism came out clearly in an exchange spanning several issues of *Monthly Review* in 1960-1961. Ronald Radosh Wisconsin history graduate student Ronald Radosh elicited sharp rebukes from old-school Communist Party stalwarts when he published an article entitled “American Radicalism: Liberal or Socialist,” in which he severely critiqued the American Left for its decision to buttress corporate liberalism in the era of the “united front” against fascism. For Radosh, FDR, and even Henry Wallace, were expansionists who consciously understood their Progressive agenda for domestic reform depended in the final analysis on extending the domain of American capitalism. Programmatically, at least, this critical interrogation of the Popular Front, inaccurately conflated with the “united front” strategy pursued by the Comintern in the early 1920s, separated Radosh, and other corporate liberal theorists who would come to his support, from the traditional line, which had for most of the 1950s hoped above all to revitalize some version of Popular Front/New Deal Progressivism. But the programmatic shift merely reflected the younger cohort’s cognition of the political economic analysis *MR* had been advancing since around the mid-1950s.

The polemic illustrates the evolution of program as the working out of a logical tension between the theory of imperialism and the hope for peaceful coexistence. Rebuttals to Radosh’s programmatic statement invoked the threat of nuclear war as a defense for

continuing with the effort to rebuild a left-liberal alliance capable of staving off a far-right government eager for a hot war with Moscow.<sup>170</sup> This had been the initial *Monthly Review* line. Until the mid-1950s, the editors placed primary importance on avoiding World War Three as the necessary precondition for building socialism, both worldwide and within the United States. To avoid WWII, Sweezy and Huberman had urged readers to throw their weight behind efforts to build a “New New Deal” around a foreign policy “which recognizes frankly that peaceful coexistence of capitalism and socialism is the only alternative to war and that colonial and backward countries have the right to revolt.”<sup>171</sup> Yet, they advocated this program even while repeatedly critiquing liberal intellectuals for assuming “we” had any control over policy and deepening their analysis of the structural importance of the war production machine to monopoly capitalism. As Popular Fronters, they seemed to suggest a left-liberal coalition could tame US foreign policy and allow the objective superiority of nationalized industry and planning to slowly supersede capitalism on a global scale. As theorists of imperialism, they denied such a coalition was possible, and portrayed US aggressive expansionism as the outcome of an objective structural logic of monopoly capitalism, which was the key distinguishing feature separating them from the self-identified democratic socialists on the New York intellectual scene.

The symbolism 1960s radicals would build around Cuba originated in the works of Mills, *Monthly Review* and Williams, passed through *Studies on the Left*, and seeped from

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<sup>170</sup> See especially Robert Forrey, “American Radicalism: A Reply to Mr. Radosh,” 14/11 (March 1963), 621-627; Max Gordon, “American Radicalism: Further Discussion,” *Monthly Review* 14/12 (April 1963), 693-7.

<sup>171</sup> Paul Sweezy and Leo Huberman, “The Outlook for American Socialists,” *Monthly Review* 4/1 (May 1952), 1-11 at 4.

there into student organizations forming on campuses throughout the country. The first several volumes of *Studies* were replete with references to Cuba. In the fall of 1960, opening their third edition, the lead editorial declared that the “editors consider the Cuban Revolution to be the most important and least understood social development in the recent history of the Western Hemisphere.”<sup>172</sup> Editor Saul Landau- who had accompanied Mills in his voyage to Cuba that resulted in *Listen, Yankee*- assumed a national leadership position in the US Fair Play for Cuba Committee, around which cohered many of the forces that would go on to form the Students for a Democratic Society. Dale Johnson, who would later co-edit a volume on Latin American dependency theory with Andre Gunder Frank, published a short piece reporting on campus radicalism in California’s Bay Area. A graduate student at Stanford, Johnson was doubtless influenced by Baran and Sweezy, who went on a pro-Castro propaganda offensive at Stanford in the 1960-61 academic year. After returning from Cuba with Sweezy and Huberman on their second trip in fall of 1960, Baran overcame his initial reticence and became a devotee of Castroism, a perspective he propagated through a short pamphlet entitled “Reflections on the Revolution in Cuba” put out by Monthly Review Press, and through a series of broadcasts in Berkeley over KPFA radio.<sup>173</sup> Like Mills, Baran believed above all that Cuba represented something new; an opportunity to implement a planned economy free from the repressive legacy of the Soviet Union. Johnson, in his piece titled “On the Ideology of the Campus Revolution” under the “Communications” section of

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<sup>172</sup> “The Cuban Revolution: The New Crisis in Cold War Ideology,” *Studies on the Left* 1/3 (1960), 1-3 at 1.

<sup>173</sup> Paul A. Baran, *Reflections on the Cuban Revolution*, (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1962), 8.

the fourth issue of *Studies on the Left* echoed this interpretation. Much more than describing the growing radicalism at Stanford and Berkeley, Johnson sought to characterize the movement ideologically, and he did so primarily through a comparison with Cuba. American students and Castroism shared ideological affinities “to a remarkable degree.” “Most important, their motivating ideologies are neither socialism —Marxian or otherwise — nor liberalism, although they combine elements of both. Rather, the ideology of both the *Barbudos* of Cuba and the campus revolutionaries is a refreshing combination of humanism and rationalism.”<sup>174</sup> This last phrase, humanism and rationalism, resembled Huberman and Sweezy’s characterization of the revolutionary government as “rational humanist” in *Anatomy of a Revolution*.<sup>175</sup> Johnson was the executive-secretary of the Palo Alto Fair Play for Cuba Committee, and it is safe to say that the organization’s guiding ideologies drew heavily from the late 1950s radical intellectual formation.

Another central plank of the New Left thought- Black Nationalism- also made its way onto the pages of an early issue of *Studies on the Left*, by way of comparison with the Cuban Revolution. Harold Cruse, who would later author the influential book *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, worked out some of his arguments for the book on the pages of *Studies*. His 1962 article “Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American” praised the Cuban Revolution as proof that the axis of revolutionary struggle had shifted decisively away from the (white) proletariat in advanced capitalist countries, toward the victims of colonialism, in which category he included black people in the United States. According to Cruse, “the

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<sup>174</sup> Dale L. Johnson, “On the Ideology of the Campus Revolution,” *Studies on the Left* 2/1 (1961), 73-5 at 74.

<sup>175</sup> Huberman and Sweezy, *Anatomy*, 93.

Negro has a relationship to the dominant culture of the United States similar to that of colonies and semi-dependents to their particular foreign overseers: the Negro is the American problem of underdevelopment.”<sup>176</sup> In a reply to a critique of his article by *Studies* cultural correspondent Richard Greenleaf, Cruse makes clear he had not intended to start a constructive dialogue between the Negro movement and Marxism. Like Mills and Sweezy, he assumed as a matter of course that Marx had erred in conceiving the (white) working class as a revolutionary force. “The belief in the revolutionary potentialities of white workers is a carry-over from 19<sup>th</sup> century classic Marxism,” wrote Cruse. “In my opinion, the changes that have taken place both in the structures and relationships of western capitalism and the underdeveloped world have rendered 19<sup>th</sup> century Marxist concepts obsolete.”<sup>177</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Writing about the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, the historian Van Gosse claimed the Cuban Revolution signified the US proto-New Left coming together as part of a “pragmatic awareness rooted not in Talmudic disputation about the past, but in human connection with the onrushing tide of a revolution in motion.”<sup>178</sup> With this statement he captured something true, but one-sided. I understand this to be a statement about structure and agency, as indicated by his rather offhand comment that Cuba offered a “vision of praxis” in the next sentence. He seems to suggest that the symbolic injustice of US treatment of Cuba, and the

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<sup>176</sup> Harold W. Cruse, “Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American,” *Studies on the Left*, 2/3 (1962), 12-25 at 12.

<sup>177</sup> Harold W. Cruse, “Reply,” *Studies on the Left*, 3/1 (1962), 60-65 at 61.

<sup>178</sup> Gosse, *Boys*, 137.

call for “fair play,” resonated with a more-or-less spontaneous social unrest simultaneously breaking out of the mold of 1950s social life, and in their spontaneous fusion newly oppositional forces created their own meanings and “pragmatic” solutions. If this is indeed what he means, I think he misses something crucial about the episode, because FPCC was an organization of intellectuals, and, it was an organization of intellectuals who had long-since grown accustomed to leveling their discourse primarily in the direction of the academy, and even specific disciplines within the academy. Gosse’s derisory dismissal of “Talmudic” disputes about the past notwithstanding, the realignment of social forces within the United States taking place concurrent with and partly in response to the Cuban revolution *was* quintessentially, and in the first instance, a matter of competing narratives of US history. Faced with the prospect of “losing” Latin America, Kennedy brought historians and historically minded social scientists into his administration to articulate and propagate a narrative of benevolent US-Latin American relations, punctuated by the occasional error. The first intellectuals who would be in and of the “New Left,” properly speaking, cohered around an alternative narrative, in which the US imperialist legacy was rooted deeply in its political economic structure.

But these early New Lefties weren’t “vanguardists” for the simple fact that they had no conception of social forces to lead. Beyond vague reference to “publics,” neither *Monthly Review* nor Mills had resolved the question of the audience for their “independent” radical intellectualism. Cuba helped them resolve the dilemma into non-existence. Subsequent historical scholarship largely discredited the Huberman-Sweezy-Mills interpretation of the Cuban Revolution. As the Cuban-born historian Samuel Farber pointed out, the base of peasant support for Castro’s guerrilla army never amounted to more than one or two



thousand. Ascribing to Castro the “voice and will of the peasantry” is thus empirically suspect, but the ideological appeal of doing so for disillusioned and isolated US radical intellectuals is obvious. Huberman, Baran, Sweezy, and Mills adulated Castro because, to be blunt, it allowed them for the first time to realistically envision themselves in a consequential social position, at the head of a revolution they could in the early 1960s still paint in world-historic proportions. Surely this provided a much-needed boost to their *stimmung*.

By characterizing the regime as objectively socialist, because anti-imperialist, Huberman, Sweezy, Mills, Williams, and Baran applied a dubious interpretation of Marxism. But, regardless of its scholarly merits, the interpretation held symbolic meaning for a generation of middle-class, college-educated youths grappling with perceived hypocrisies in Cold War liberal ideology. Castro’s allegedly anti-ideological revolutionary government spoke to the newness in the US New Left’s own self-identity. Like the *Barbudos*, radical students in the United States wanted the autonomy to shape their own future without the stultifying influence of tired debates between Marxists and liberals, among competing sects of Marxists, or between the narrower left and right wings of the ‘vital center.’

The US student New Left’s belief in its own newness is rendered no less historically significant by the fact that it was completely illusory. The interpretation that permeated so pervasively into New Left thought materialized out of the same, ongoing, contested reception of Marxist theory they found so boring and distasteful. Castroism seamlessly stepped into Sweezy’s and Baran’s world-historical political prognosis in precisely the place that had been previously occupied by the Soviet Union, and the symbolism they constructed around guerrilla warriors, and Castro the hero, cannot be neatly separated from their desperation to locate a political subject on which to hang their hopes for a socialist future. Only once the

new force, Third World nationalism, had moved in could the Soviet Union be fully discarded, and sometime around the early 1960s *MR* shifted into an anti-Stalinist posture. But the theoretical and programmatic continuities linking their Stalinist and Castroist phases far outweighed the ruptures. They remained essentially committed to the conception of socialism they had acquired in the era of the Popular Front, basing their prognosis for the future on the ability for Third World nationalist revolutions to plan their way out of backwardness and deal a decisive blow, ideologically, politically, and economically to Yankee imperialism in the process.

**Chapter Four:**  
**Intellectual Cross-Fertilization:**  
**Andre Gunder Frank, *Monthly Review*, Argentine Trotskyism, and the Origins of**  
**Dependency Theory<sup>179</sup>**

In 1974, the scholarly journal *Latin American Perspectives* launched its first issue, devoted entirely to the theme of reassessing dependency theory. This interdisciplinary social science journal carried the subtitle “A Journal on Capitalism and Socialism,” and it would go on to become the flagship for the academic discipline of Latin American Studies. In the inaugural issue the coordinating editors- all of whom held professorships at universities in California- identified two main objectives: the journal would “bridge the gap between Latin American and non-Latin American scholars,” and push recent research on capitalism and socialism past its “primarily descriptive” content into “wider and deeper theoretical analysis of the Latin American reality of the sort which is essential for viable political strategies.”<sup>180</sup> Judging by the selection of topic and the tenor of the discussion, the 39 scholars from academic institutions in North and South America that constituted the journal’s coordinating and contributing editors saw dependency theory as the primary school driving scholarship toward both objectives in the recent past.

Analyzing the contributions for purpose and audience reveals two distinct rhetorical agendas. Reflecting the journal’s mission to publish scholarship promoting viable political strategies, many discussions revolve primarily around the political program for proletarian

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<sup>179</sup> Much of this chapter was first published in *Modern Intellectual History*. See: “The Accidental Marxist: Andre Gunder Frank and the ‘Neo-Marxist’ Theory of Underdevelopment, 1958-1967,” *Modern Intellectual History, First View*, (27 April 2016), 1-32.

<sup>180</sup> *Latin American Perspectives* 1/1 (Spring 1974), 2.

revolution implicitly or explicitly posed in the works of prominent dependency theorists. Thus, contributions to a peer-reviewed English-language scholarly journal earnestly, without any hint of contradiction, assumed the tone and posture of the vanguard of the working class. Strongly hinting at Maoist or Stalinist political affiliations, contributors largely criticized their interpretation of *dependentistas'* prescriptions concerning when and under what circumstances workers should form alliances with other classes, and the relationship between the struggle for national liberation and socialist revolution. So, facing the left, academics in and around the dependency perspective engaged debates over the heritage of revolutionary Marxism, with discourse apparently deeply embedded in what contemporary scholars would call the sectarian left. Yet, simultaneously, much of the discussion revolved around the strengths and/or weaknesses of dependency theory as an objective social scientific model. Here, contributors shift their rhetorical posture to the right, defending or critiquing dependency in the language and assumptions embedded in mid-to-late twentieth century North American academic social science, implicitly or explicitly searching for models that could generate falsifiable hypotheses that could withstand the rigor of scientific scrutiny.

In chapter three, we saw how *Monthly Review* led the charge in insinuating a specific interpretation of the Cuban Revolution into public discourse. Baran's and Sweezy's political economic analysis, the basis of what would come to be called "neo-Marxism," operated rhetorically as a trumpet call for a rapidly mobilizing social bloc that would alter the political course in the 1960s. But Paul Baran was a professional economist with socialist predispositions, not a revolutionary socialist with specialized knowledge in political economy. His ideas operated, in the first instance, on the terrain of academic economics, and thus came couched in the conventions of the professional economist and judged by those

standards. While Baran remained marginalized, even ostracized, in the profession for most of his career, he did develop and sustain a running critique of development economics, arguably the most vibrant sub-field within the discipline in the early years of the Cold War. The most theoretically advanced articulation of his and Sweezy's system of thought prior to the final publication of their "opus" in 1966, Baran's *Political Economy of Growth*, cohered as a work around an intervention in development economics, and only implicitly suggested a specific program of action for revolutionary socialists, either in the United States or in the underdeveloped world. This dichotomy between public and academic audiences characterized neo-Marxist thought throughout the 1960s, and to fully grasp its logic we must now turn our attention to the peculiar way the ideas of Latin American anti-Stalinist Marxists seeped into North American intellectual discourse couched in the academic language of development economics and modernization theory.

Dependency theory most clearly illustrates this complicated interplay between academic social science and anti-imperialist rhetoric as the ideas that shaped the programs and outcomes of real social struggles in the US and Latin America in the 1960s. The meaning and implications of dependency theory varied widely depending on who was using it, for what purposes, and, especially, in what institutional context. In both North and South America, it functioned simultaneously as an intervention in the academic fields of development economics and sociology, and as a historical narrative implying a specific program for anti-capitalist revolution. When it assumed the form of a social scientific model, it entered a conversation shaped by the conventions of objectivity and value-neutral scholarship. When deployed to frame a program of revolutionary struggle, its proponents spoke in overtly partisan tones.

The intellectual biography of Andre Gunder Frank encapsulates many of these contradictions. As a young, educated man radicalized by his impression of the Cuban Revolution, Frank embodied the experience of the early New Left intellectual. He imbibed the symbolism Sweezy and Huberman helped build around that event, and his radical journalistic and scholarly efforts would virtually all reach North American audiences through the filter of *Monthly Review*. As a development economist educated entirely within the period of the Second Red Scare, his intellectual biography illustrates the consequences of burying Marxism. Almost completely ignorant of the Marxist tradition, and lacking any background in political leftism of any kind, either Old or New, he stepped mid-stream into long-running debates over the relationship between liberal (“bourgeois-democratic”) and socialist goals in Latin America’s struggle for national liberation, and interpreted all manifestations of nation-statist Marxism as the “orthodox” position. He cognized these debates with the only intellectual tools he had at his disposal, which were those running through North American development economics and modernization theory in the 1950s. Frank’s story explains how dependency theory entered English-speaking, North American discourse in its strange, amalgamated academic and rhetorical form. Through an examination of Frank’s life and thought, we can also untangle the different intellectual strands that fed into this hybrid form, which helps understand its divergent impacts in academic thought and social movements through a crucial transformative period in American history.

### **Biography of a Fairly Typical Development Economist**

Andrew Frank came to the US in 1933, at the age of four, when his Jewish novelist father fled Nazi Germany.<sup>181</sup> He was thus of the generation that came to social and political consciousness in the context of the early Cold War, and began his college education at the height of McCarthyism. Little information remains about Frank's early life, but by all indications he was both a bright and restless youth. His education maps onto all the hotspots of 1960s radicalism, but in the years before they became such. He went to high school in Ann Arbor, Michigan, the hometown of SDS founder Al Haber and the place that Tom Hayden would pen the first draft of the famous New Left manifesto, *The Port Huron Statement*. Frank received his bachelor's degree from Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania, where dozens of student radicals in the early 1960s would drop out of college to live amongst the poor. After being ousted from a PhD program in economics at the University of Chicago in 1951, Frank moved to California's bay area to, in his words, "pass time among the Beats of the San Francisco coffee shop scene."<sup>182</sup> The bay area would witness the first scenes of student radicalism to shock the conservative national conscious, but not until several years after Frank had moved back to the Midwest.

Frank re-entered the Chicago economics PhD program in 1955 when he took a research assistant position under development economist Bert Hoselitz at the Center for

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<sup>181</sup> Andrew is given name, and the "Gunder" is not a given middle-name, but one he adopted himself in his adult life out of a nickname he acquired in high school. When he moved to Latin America, he started signing letters and publishing as Andres Gunder Frank, and then ultimately dropped the "s" and became, permanently, Andre Gunder Frank, or André Gunder Frank. His friends and acquaintances called him Gunder.

<sup>182</sup> Andre Gunder Frank, "The Underdevelopment of Development," in Sing C. Chew and Robert Allen Denmark eds., *The Underdevelopment of Development: Essays in Honor of Andre Gunder Frank*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1996), 22-3.

Economic Development and Cultural Change (EDCC). By the mid-1950s, development economics had grown from a minor area of interest to a vibrant subfield within the discipline, thanks in no-small part to Washington's desire to present the decolonizing world with a non-Communist path to modernity.<sup>183</sup> As professional economists devoted increasing attention to explaining the lack of economic growth, their debates evolved against the backdrop of broader changes in the methods and theoretical assumptions within the discipline. The peculiar problems of "backward" nations fit more neatly into the theoretical models of the institutionalist approach prevalent in the 1930s and 1940s, and early contributors to the field felt free to borrow theoretically not only from the most institutionalist readings of Keynes, but even from the Marxist tradition. But the logic of Cold War anti-Communism worked to squeeze Marxist approaches out of the economics profession entirely, and reduce the broader institutionalist moment out of which Keynesianism emerged to a narrower set of fiscal and monetary tools for managing cycles. By the late 1940s, business and intellectual elites had already begun to close ranks against the ideology of a controlled capitalism, mobilized by Friedrich von Hayek's warning that all planning would set any given society on the *Road to Serfdom*, the title of his 1944 book.<sup>184</sup> The growth of the university system in post-war

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<sup>183</sup> For the history of development economics see: H.W. Arndt, *Development: The History of an Idea* (Chicago and London, 1987); Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: from Western Origins to Global Faith*, (London, New York, 1997). For competing visions of modernity as central to Cold War foreign policy in both the United States and the Soviet Union, see Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>184</sup> F. A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, (The University of Chicago Press, 2007). For historical accounts of the consolidation of a conservative social movement around Hayek's thought, see: Kimberly Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: Businessmen's Crusade Against the New Deal*, (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009).



United States channeled resources into academic economics, fueling a hyper-specialized division of intellectual labor that fostered improved techniques. Responding to the material incentives, economists of the era devoted more intellectual energy to mastering the new approach, centered on manipulating data and formal mathematical modelling.

An uneasy analytical tension drove development economics forward through the 1950s. As Baran routinely pointed out, the very need to explain prolonged stagnation served as a resounding indictment of any alleged universal benefits of capitalism. And, indeed, many of the important theoretical contributions to the field implicitly assumed technocratic experts, rather than entrepreneurs, would take the lead in economic development of backward countries. Even Henry C. Wallich- economic advisor to Eisenhower who would later become a leading neoliberal thinker- believed in 1952 that the state, responding to the “widespread desire for higher living standards,” would provide the driving force for consumer-based expansion in underdeveloped countries in the absence of an innovative entrepreneurial class.<sup>185</sup> Yet, most development economists grounded their analyses in the rhetoric of Cold War anti-Communism, and were anxious to differentiate Western-style “free economy” from the socialist alternative, which came to mean even the most tepid forms of planning as the decade wore on. Moreover, they continued to apply institutionalist methods and assumptions to analysis of “underdevelopment” even while the center of the gravity of the broader profession moved toward neoclassical synthesis, with its narrower methodology, and the

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<sup>185</sup> Henry Wallich, “Some Notes Towards a Theory of Derived Development,” reprinted in A. N. Argawala and S. P. Singh eds., *The Economics of Underdevelopment*, (Oxford University Press, 1958), 189-204, esp. 190-192.

political climate domestically became less sympathetic to the political implications of institutional Keynesianism.

Being so indelibly wrapped up in Cold War thought, development economics had a blind spot when it came to theories attributing causal influence for underdevelopment to past or present US imperialism. Development economists applied what can be described as a *discrete comparative* method to their study of the causes of underdevelopment. They gathered statistical data measuring economic factors such as per capita income, gross national product, unemployment, etc. of different nation-states across the world, or even at different moments of their history, then used that data to derive a model of successful and less successful utilization of available factors of production.<sup>186</sup> This method *assumed* rather than proved that the causes of underdevelopment could be located within the particular history of the discrete geopolitical entity of the nation-state, and that scientific study of the phenomena should thus gather as much data as possible of individual nation-states, and compare that data to explain current economic disparities. 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

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<sup>186</sup> For an example of discrete comparative method cutting across time and space, see: Simon Kuznets, "Underdeveloped Countries and the Pre-Industrial Phase in the Advanced Countries: an Attempt at Comparison," reprinted in Argawala and S. P. Singh eds., *Underdevelopment*, 135-153. Influential development economist Jacob Viner defined "underdevelopment" as a country using capital, labor or natural resources significantly below its potential. Jacob Viner, "The Economics of Development," reprinted in Argawala and Singh eds., *Underdevelopment*, 9-31.

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 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 theory sought to categorize societies on a continuum from traditional to modern, and identified the prevalence or absence of a culture of entrepreneurship as the primary factor explaining the difference. A multi-disciplinary approach drawing in sociologists, political scientists and economists, modernization theory derived from the predominance of a particular reading of the German social theorist Max Weber, a reading transmitted to American audiences through the work of Talcott Parsons.<sup>187</sup> Modernization theorists thus tended to adopt a structural functionalist approach, yet, like

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<sup>187</sup> For discussion of Weber's influence on modernization theory, see: Vivek Chibber, "Rescuing Class from the Cultural Turn," *Catalyst* 1/1 (Spring, 2017). For Talcott Parsons, see: Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America*, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), esp. 74-96.

development economists, they applied this theory to questions of development/underdevelopment within a similar discrete comparative framework. They conflated the concept of society with that of nation-state, and they tended to view the latter as discrete 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.<sup>188</sup> Although some development economics certainly fit within the precepts of modernization theory, it is important to view the two as separate fields of study, because modernization theory 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. In practice, the approach adopted an essentially empiricist method, arranging societies according to statistically observable criteria into groups, then categorizing those as “stages” of development.<sup>189</sup> Normatively, modernization theory evinced some level of commitment to “planning,” led by Western technocrats, as a solution to Third World stagnation.

Bert Hoselitz, Frank’s boss and advisor, well-represented the center of gravity in development economics at its point of intersection with interdisciplinary, holistic modernization theory. Hoselitz edited the journal *Economic Development and Cultural*

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<sup>188</sup> 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*, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and “Nation-Building” in the Kennedy Era*, (North Carolina, 2000); David C. Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore: American Intellectuals and the Romance of Russian Development* (Cambridge, 2003).

<sup>189</sup> Most famously in Walt W. Rostow, *Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, (Cambridge University Press, 1990).

*Change*, the flagship for interdisciplinary scholarship relating to questions of development and underdevelopment. He himself 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 non-economic “moral and social-psychological” benefits to underdeveloped societies.<sup>190</sup> In another 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.<sup>191</sup>

At the EDCC, 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 PhD 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 to determine productivity in each sector separately and in Soviet Ukraine generally from 1928-1955. 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

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<sup>190</sup> Bert Hoselitz, “The Role of Cities in the Economic Growth of Underdeveloped Countries,” *Journal of Political Economy*, 16/3 (1953), 195.

<sup>191</sup> Bert Hoselitz, “Noneconomic Factors in Economic Development,” *American Economic Review*, 47/2 (1957), 29.

data, which he claimed allowed him to get through the fog of misinformation coming from the Communist state. From his series, he concluded 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 1960-1961, Frank toured the various camps within North American social sciences of development. He refused to accept economists' assumptions that human behavior could be reduced to maximization of material interests, and his work regularly incorporated non-material 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 apologia for bureaucratic schizophrenia.

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 non-market motivating factors.<sup>192</sup> 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.<sup>193</sup> 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." It must be noted that Frank's sympathy with a "dynamic" growth model is a step *away* from the socialist views he would later espouse. For development economists, a static model applied concepts of classical liberal economics to determine optimal efficiency in allocation of resources. Whether determined by market signals or the central planner, the optimum allocation at any given moment was a real, and thus on some level knowable, quantity. A "dynamic" model on the other hand envisioned humans in a

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192 Andrew Gunder Frank, "Goal Ambiguity and Conflicting Standards: An Approach to the Study of Organization," *Human Organization*; Andrew Gunder Frank, "Built in Destabilization: A. O. Hirschman's Strategy of Economic Development," *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 8/2 (1960), 433-440

<sup>193</sup> Albert O. Hirschman, *The Strategy of Economic Development* (New Haven and London, 1958), 102-104.

struggle against nature, which contained intangibles such as unforeseen, and unpredictable spurts of ingenuity. Prescriptively, then, dynamic models at the level of their assumptions advocated creating the institutional conditions for such ingenuity to thrive, including free and competitive access to capital and the profit-motive to incentivize ingenuity. By throwing his intellectual support behind built in destabilization, Frank was turning toward a greater role for market forces and a culture of entrepreneurship to set off the “dynamic” growth potentialities of capitalism. 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.

Development economics was simultaneously the point at which the analytical nation-statism of the New Deal was most pronounced, and where it rubbed against the greatest tensions. The very assumption of reified nation-states passing as discrete entities along their respective paths was belied by the foreign policies increasingly under the sway of the theory of the development economists. It was only a matter of time before the reintroduction of the discourse of imperialism wound its way into critique of development economics as just another avenue of imperialist exploitation. This attack, when it came, came from the inside, leveled by a disillusioned young economist who had failed to the answers he sought within academia.

### **Frank as an Early New Leftist**

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 June 24, 1958 the director of the Department of Public Safety summoned Frank to appear in court.<sup>194</sup> 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.

His personal run-in with the law was probably just an incidental factor in Frank's life-trajectory, ultimately less important than the broader structural and cultural factors bearing down on the consciousness of his generation. Records from his life in this period are very limited, but it is possible to make a few inferences about his personality, and the social,

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<sup>194</sup>Andre Gunder Frank Papers, Box 51 A.F Brandstetter, director of Michigan State University Department of Public Safety to Frank, June 24, 1958, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam (hereafter AGF).

intellectual and cultural factors motivating his professional and political turn. Academically, he began in the 1950s to align himself with Marxist or Marxist currents. It is difficult to say when he read Baran's work, but it obviously made a major impact on his thought. He also increasingly thumbed his nose at economics in favor of anthropology, where he sympathized with the work of Eric Wolf and Sidney Mintz, Marxist-influenced anthropologists working on peasant studies in relation to global capitalism. Whatever else one can say about Frank, he had a genuine intellectual curiosity that constantly pressed him to challenge his own assumptions. At MSU, in East Lansing Michigan, he was no doubt exposed to early murmurs of the countercultural/student New Left. Michigan was, not accidentally, ground zero for 1960s student radicalism. In the 1950s, Michigan in general and Detroit in particular was still the epicenter for the U.S. automobile industry, which also meant the epicenter for the strongest segment of organized labor which had grown with the help of Popular Front radical organizers. Many student New Leftists were "red-diaper" babies, the children of Communist parents who had flocked to Michigan when it was the center of working class militancy. Frank had spent his adolescent years in Ann Arbor, and knew future Students for a Democratic Society founder Al Haber personally.

Clearly, he had not yet found answers to appease his intellectual curiosity, and he approached the topic of Third World development with earnest concern. Frank's knowledge of the underdeveloped world drew mostly from books and models. He wanted to observe his subject matter firsthand. On June 16, 1960, the Michigan State University Board of Trustees approved Frank's request for an unpaid leave of absence to last from September 1, 1960 to

August 31, 1961.<sup>195</sup> He 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.<sup>196</sup> 31 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 at least a decade.

It is also beyond question that the Cuban Revolution, and, more specifically, the narrative of that revolution by radical US intellectuals, influenced Frank. Frank made the most of his yearlong 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 August 21-August 27.<sup>197</sup> After the conference, he returned to the United States and briefly moved to Boston before setting off first for Cuba, where he spent a month, then moving on to Eastern Europe and Africa.<sup>198</sup> Frank was thus in Cuba in the fall of 1960 amidst a profound personal and existential transformation. He joined

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<sup>195</sup> AGF, Box 1, MSU Board of Trustees to Frank, June 16, 1960.

<sup>196</sup> AGF, Box 1, Sidney Mintz to Frank, June 14, 1960.

<sup>197</sup> AGF, Box 1, Wenner-Gren Foundation, May 10, 1960.

<sup>198</sup> PMS, Box 5 "Gunder File," Frank to Sweezy, July 1, 1964. It is not clear to me where Frank got the money for all this travel.

the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, and his trip coincided with the release of Huberman and Sweezy's book, which had a big impact on the outlook of leading figures within that organization.

Frank's correspondence from his travels after Cuba reveal a restless soul critical of the role of the U.S. 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 of the academy well before he resigned from MSU.<sup>199</sup> 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.<sup>200</sup> 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

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<sup>199</sup> AGF, Box 1, David Reisman to Frank, August 3, 1960; AGF, Box 1, Hoselitz to Frank, September 5, 1961; AGF, Box 1, Higgins to Frank, October 18, 1960.

<sup>200</sup> AGF, Box 1, Frank to Chester Bowles, February 11, 1961.

sidestepping of the negative impact of U.S. development policy on the general complacency of society as a whole, which enables foreign policy.<sup>201</sup>

### **Encountering Marxism: Frank and the Genealogy of Dependency Theory**

*“I have never had the temerity 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, 1974.<sup>202</sup>

To the extent that Frank still occupies a place in North American academic thought, it is for his role in developing dependency theory. The exact nature of that role is a matter of some debate, as is the explanatory value of the theory as expounded by Frank and his cohort of *dependentistas*. 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.<sup>203</sup> Prebisch, the former president of the Argentine central bank, formulated his theory while working for CEPAL as

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<sup>201</sup> AGF, Box 51, Frank to Lanzillotti, September 14, 1961; AGF, Box 51 Frank to the Editor of the *State News*, Michigan State University, August 11, 1961.

<sup>202</sup> Andre Gunder Frank, “Dependence is Dead, Long Live to Dependence and the Class Struggle: An Answer to Critics,” *Latin American Perspectives* 1/1 (Spring 1974), 87-106, at 96.

<sup>203</sup> See especially Joseph Love, *Crafting the Third World: Theorizing Underdevelopment in Rumania and Brazil* (Stanford University Press, 1996), 182. Also: Gilman, *Mandarins*, 235-6; Latham, *Revolution*, 165; Diana Hunt, *Economic Theories*, 121-97; H. W. Arndt, *Economic Development*, 115-129. 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*, 1).

an exile from Peronist 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-of-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.<sup>204</sup> 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.<sup>205</sup> 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 the region to foreign capital but setting a high tariff on consumer imports to promote domestic manufacture.

In this widely-circulated origin story, the life and death of dependency theory played out almost exclusively on the academic stage. The structuralist core-periphery model, as originally expounded by Prebisch and advanced by his protégé Celso Furtado, was out there in the academic ether, circulating among Latin American scholars attempting to insinuate an independent perspective into international discussions of the causes and consequences of unequal international economic development. Structuralists empirically demonstrated

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<sup>204</sup> For an intellectual biography of Prebisch, see Edgar J. Dosman, *The Life and Times of Raúl Prebisch, 1901-1986*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008). For Prebisch's ideas as precursor to dependency theory, see Love, *Crafting*, 119-139.

<sup>205</sup> Kathryn Sikkink, *Ideas and Institutions: Developmentalism in Brazil and Argentina* (Cornell, 1991).

deteriorating terms of trade for agriculture and raw materials relative to manufactured goods on the world market. Thus, economies locked in a primary good export structure systematically lost ground to advanced economies in the world economy. From this empirical demonstration of exploitation and vulnerability on the world market, it was a short step to posit a systematic and deliberate structure of exploitation in the world capitalist system. Though dependency theorists rather than CEPAL structuralists made the intellectual leap, the dots had already been provided and all that remained was to connect them.

Following closely Frank's immersion as a dependency theorist reveals this narrative is not wrong so much as one-sided. As a trained development economist, Frank certainly knew of and engaged the work of Prebisch, Furtado, and other structuralists. But, on his tour of Latin America he also encountered a strand of thought predating structuralism and reaching its most polished expressions simultaneously with CEPAL's most important discoveries, although the two remained largely independent from one another both in terms of questions and methods. From its earliest inceptions, Latin American Marxism had struggled to apply categories derived from European capitalist development to their own region's history.<sup>206</sup> To what extent were Latin American economic institutions pre-capitalist; 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 to international markets during the colonial era? For Marxist militants, the answer to these theoretical questions would determine revolutionary strategy and tactics, in

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<sup>206</sup> Löwy, Michael and Michael Perlman eds., *Marxism in Latin America from 1909 to the Present: An Anthology* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1992), xiii-lxv.

particular the types of class alliances and fronts with other political organizations they deemed acceptable in contemporary local anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist struggles.

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. He grappled with questions circulating among the revolutionary left, pertaining directly to the strategy for mobilizing a broad-based anti-imperialist social movement, much more intensely than academic theories in this period. 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 explained 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 Face” accepted the prevailing consensus that Latin America had a feudal past similar to medieval Europe, from which flowed the implicit conclusion that they would eventually morph into replicas of northern capitalist democracies.<sup>207</sup> In this transitional phase, Frank was still more modernization theorists than *dependentista*, arguing that the barrier to Latin American and social development could be found in the persistence of a feudal sector of the economy, which acted as an institutional drag inhibiting the country from achieving “take-off.” This was indistinguishable from the concurrent mode of thought in the Kennedy administration, as expressed by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., quoted in the last

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<sup>207</sup> Frank, Andrew Gunder, “Mexico: The Janus Faces of the 20<sup>th</sup> – Century Bourgeois Revolution” *Monthly Review*, 14/7 (1962).



chapter. It is also commensurable, though not identical, with concurrent CEPAL developmentalism, which wanted a strong national state to empower entrepreneur-led industrialization through the combined use of protectionist measures (import-substituting industrialization) and the strategic use of foreign private capital and government aid.

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 Brasilia, 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.<sup>208</sup>

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.<sup>209</sup> Prebisch’s protégé Celso Furtado- arguably in the long-run the most influential of all the ECLA structuralists- stood at the intellectual center of the developmentalist program in Brazil, actively seeking to insinuate Prebisch’s work and the ECLA line into political discourse. He served as director of a

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<sup>208</sup> Frank, "Development," 25.

<sup>209</sup> Sikkink, *Ideas*, esp. Chapter Four.

regional planning agency, the Superintendency for the Development of the Northeast (SUDENE), from 1959-1964. 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 arch-typical U.S. modernization program.<sup>210</sup>

Frank's most immediate network included not the Brazilian chapter of CEPAL, but a group of young economists and sociologists who can be characterized 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." Anti-dependency-theorist Robert Packenham spent a good deal of time debating whether Cardoso or Frank deserve credit for originating neo-Marxist dependency theory. He suggested that both of their ideas came out in the late 1960s, with Frank's just a couple years earlier.<sup>211</sup> 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.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Love, *Crafting*, 153-7

<sup>211</sup> 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.

<sup>212</sup> PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy, July 18, 1963.

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 American de Pesquisas em Ciencias Sociais in Rio, to the University of Brasilia for a talk.<sup>213</sup> Frank frequently referred to Stavenhagen as a co-thinker in his correspondence with Sweezy.

In Brasilia 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 Brasilia 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.”<sup>214</sup> Although aiming to disprove all variants of the argument that Latin American institutions were feudal, Frank in particular attacked the “dual society” thesis, 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 referred

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<sup>213</sup> AGF, Box 1, Frank to Rodolfo Stavenhagen, June 1, 1963.

<sup>214</sup> PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy, June 1, 1963.

to the former only in the introduction. The main body of the essay consisted primarily of a critique of what he understood 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.<sup>215</sup>

Understanding all the subsequent work that went into *CU* as extending and deepening his argument against the myth of feudalism allows us to resituate Frank’s intellectual biography within a tradition distinct from both Latin American structuralist economics and neo-Marxism à la Baran and Sweezy. 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

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

supporting feudalism, it is not so clear that they held those positions at that point.<sup>216</sup> In a letter to Sweezy, Frank claimed that Cardoso defended his 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.<sup>217</sup> 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.”<sup>218</sup> Stavenhagen’s short article ran a full two years before Monthly Review Press 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, nor 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.

### **Frank’s Dependency Theory in the Intellectual History of Latin American Marxism**

*“Silvio Frondizi’s ‘Imperialismo y Burguesía Nacional’ is the only serious Marxist attempt to draw on [theories of imperialism] and interpret current reality on the continent that I know. Others merely quote the masters then mechanistically apply them supposedly and come out with crap.” ~ Andre Gunder Frank, 1964.*<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Frank, *CU*, 224-9. None of the works cited for the “traditional Marxist” view predates 1961.

<sup>217</sup> PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy, July 18, 1963.

<sup>218</sup> Rodolfo Stavenhagen, “Siete Tesis Equivocadas Sobre América Latina,” *El Día* June 25, 26 1965.

<sup>219</sup> PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy, 23 Nov. 1964.

The stimulation for this major theoretical breakthrough came from Frank's engagement with an anti-Stalinist Marxist tradition in Latin American thought, especially in Argentina. A few works not widely read among North American development economists had a profound impact on Frank's thinking. Among these included Sergio Bagú and Silvio Frondizi, both of which Frank took as exemplars of the argument against the myth of feudalism. To properly understand these influences on Frank, and how he perceived in relation to orthodox Marxism as he understood it, we need to go on a digression of the longer history of Marxist thought in Latin America.

The Russian Revolution generated pro-socialist sensibilities among workers' organizations and intellectuals throughout the world, and Latin America was no exception. In several countries throughout the region, including Mexico, Argentina, Chile and Brazil, left leaders heeded the Comintern's call to form Communist Parties in 1919. Initially, only loose ties bound these parties to the International organization. Historians have interpreted the scant direct support from the Comintern to nascent Latin American Communist parties as an indication that Bolsheviks had little interest in the non-European countries in general and in Latin America in particular.<sup>220</sup> This interpretation misconstrues the real situation by confusing the Comintern's "interests" with its organizational capacities, and those of Latin American Communist Parties. The Soviet Union undoubtedly assumed a leadership position in the Third International and through the 21 points for membership sought to institutionalize

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<sup>220</sup> Alberto Flores Galindo, *La Agonía de Mariátegui: La polémica con la Komintern*, (Lima, Peru: Centro de Estudios y Promoción del Desarrollo, 1980), 21: "But, despite the existence of Communist Parties in the great majority of Latin American countries, the International's interest in the continent, as José Aricó has pointed out, was very scarce: first, because its attention had been directed almost exclusively toward Europe, and, after, because among backward countries its functionaries became interested primarily in Asia."

a certain “model” derived from their successful revolution. Much of the negotiations surrounding incorporation of national sections into the international organization entailed adapting the model to local particularities while retaining its core principles. One should not underestimate the logistical enormity of the task, which ran up against a multilateral knowledge deficit among *all* national sections of the local culture and politics of every other national section (including Russia), language barriers, technical organizational inexperience, ongoing worldwide social crisis, and hostility and repression from capitalist governments.<sup>221</sup> The leaders of the largest sections, including Russian Bolshevik leaders, were certainly “interested” in revolutions in all parts of the world, including Latin America.<sup>222</sup> But their ability to develop an independent analysis of Latin American particularities was limited by the relative weakness of the Latin American delegations, the technological limitations of the time (universities worldwide had not yet developed robust ‘regional studies’ programs), and the severe time constraints under which the first several meetings took place. Given the lack of specific attention to Latin American particularity and scant ground-level organization in

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<sup>221</sup> The lack of knowledge of local peculiarities was a two-way street. As historians of the U.S. left have pointed out, the majority of U.S. socialists prior to the revolution lacked any detailed knowledge of Russian history in general and certainly had not followed closely the factional debates in Russian Social Democracy in the years leading up to the Revolution. As a consequence, Russian members who fundamentally misunderstood certain aspects of Bolshevism leveraged their new-found elan to steer the parties down an ultra-left course, eliciting a sharp rebuke from Lenin in 1920 and making for a particular painful and contentious formative period for American Communism. See: Jacob Zumoff, *The Communist International and US Communism, 1919-1929*, (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2015), 24-48. The Latin American situation was perhaps worse, as both organized labor and native Marxism were less developed in Latin America than in the United States.

<sup>222</sup> As indicated for example by an appeal to Latin American workers published by the Comintern in January 1921. See: “On the Revolution in America,” in Michael Löwy, *Marxism*, 8-16.

the region in the early 1920s, historians claim the Comintern “discovered” Latin America at its Sixth Congress World Congress in 1928, and as a consequence the region’s Communist history lacks a significant “pre-Stalinist” period comparable to that of the U.S.<sup>223</sup>

Although weaker than in other parts of the world, Marxism as an intellectual current in Latin America predates the region’s so-called discovery by the Comintern. Early Latin American Marxists include Julio Antonio Mella and Luis Emilio Recabarren, founders of the Cuban and Chilean Communist Parties respectively. Mella and Recabarren, situated their analysis of local and imperialist power structures within the mobilizing narrative of European Social Democracy of the first decades of the twentieth century. They posited certain definite conceptual relationships, illuminating structural pressures acting on local and imperialist actors. In terms of maintaining capitalist property relations, and the regime of accumulation as such, imperialist and local bourgeoisies formed a transnational bloc in opposition to the local proletariat. At the same time, national bourgeois classes existed in competition with one another, as did factions of the domestic bourgeoisie. Like European Social Democrats, they saw the role of these ideas to be bringing a narrative of liberation to what they believed would be a receptive audience. More than in later years, they believed the Third International offered a robust, democratic and essentially just institutional context in which to unite domestic struggles behind a unitary, transnational objective. They thus opposed nationalism to construct a transnational historical narrative of proletarian liberation, the major moments

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<sup>223</sup> For “discovery” of Latin America, see: Horacio Tarcus, *El marxismo olvidado en la Argentina: Silvio Frondizi y Milcíades Peña* (Buenos Aires, 1996), 68-9; Robert J. Alexander, *Communism in Latin America* (New Brunswick, 1957). For a detailed first-hand account of the first Latin American Communist conference, see: P. González Alberdi, *La primera conferencia comunista latinoamericana*, (Buenos Aires, 1978).



of which include the Paris Commune and the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917.<sup>224</sup> In these early formulations, Latin American Marxists depicted a bourgeoisie with enemies on two fronts. The Latin America bourgeois, they argued, feels animosity and resentment towards the imperialist bourgeoisie, but more than that fears the threat from below to its property relations. The imperialist bourgeoisie seeks allies to maintain stability to exploit markets, from which it wants to exclude other imperialist powers. In the best-case scenario, it will not dominate “but rather wants to rent their services and even improve their situation, provided it can exploit them for its own purposes.”<sup>225</sup> This already recognized that unevenness taken to an extreme level created a temporary stasis in competition, an idea later developed more fully by Silvio Frondizi with his concept of global integration.

In the early-to-mid 1920s, the Comintern had not yet condemned as heterodox deviations these applications of Marxist categories to local Latin American peculiarities. Mella, writing in the middle of the decade, and the Peruvian Jose Carlos Mariátegui believed they were applying the correct interpretation of the “united front” tactic discussed at length among all sections and adopted as a formal strategy at the Comintern’s Second Congress. In essence, the united front represented the attempt to draw a baseline set of strategic principles from the lessons of Bolshevism, and in a certain sense formalized their conception of uniting broad social layers behind proletarian hegemony. This would be applied differently depending on the local context, which remained to be worked out in practical struggle and included mitigating circumstances such as the level of capitalist development of a given

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<sup>224</sup> Recabarren, 4; Mella, 23.

<sup>225</sup> Mella, 27.

country and the extent to which political authority allowed workers' parties to operate openly. But at a certain level of abstraction, it also contained "universal" principles, the first and foremost of which was to maintain the political independence and revolutionary perspective of Communist Parties while forming coalitions with other organizations sharing a common "progressive" objective, meaning the fight for the greatest level of political liberties and economic advancement for the laboring classes. Mella's strategy of opposing Yankee imperialism without ceding the national liberation struggle to the local bourgeoisie included a long quotation from Lenin, advising that Communists in "colonial and underdeveloped countries" should enter only "into temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy...but should not merge with it, and under all circumstances should maintain the independence of the proletarian movement, even in its most rudimentary forms."<sup>226</sup> Mello and, later, Mariátegui polemicized primarily against APRA, and their characterizations of the latter rested on a political sociology bearing remarkable continuity with the concept of permanent revolution to level a critique that could just easily be directed at Latin American Communist Parties in the Popular Front era.

Mariátegui in particular constitutes an important and complicated figure whose thought must be grasped to get a sense of what was lost in the construction of a Stalinist orthodoxy in Latin American Marxist thought. Scholars of Latin American Marxism often stress the heterodoxy and creativity of Mariátegui's thought, opposing him to the more dogmatic center of gravity and aligning him with "Western Marxists" such as Antonio

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<sup>226</sup> Julio Antonio Mella, "La lucha revolucionaria contra el imperialismo," in Löwy, *Marxism*, 26-8 at 28.

Gramsci, György Lukács and Karl Korsch.<sup>227</sup> But, even when scholars specifically identify Stalinism as Mariátegui's foil, their definitions of Marxism consistently equate orthodoxy with rigidity and thus fail to understand Mariátegui on his own terms, for the latter undoubtedly believed creative adaptation of the revolutionary proletarian narrative to local contexts captured rather than betrayed the essence of Marxist orthodoxy. Mariátegui grew up in the small southern Peruvian town of Moquegua. His young consciousness grasping for its first impressions of the world encountered not just the Latin American periphery, but the Peruvian periphery of Latin America, and a relatively small provincial satellite within Perú. In this context, he developed an intimate connection to his country's Indigenous population, a connection he retained throughout his life and which left an indelible mark on his mature social thought, which contained among the most developed Marxist sensibilities of the question of race of his time. Though lacking a formal education, he demonstrated from an early age an appreciation of culture and a knack for writing, which he cultivated as a journalist in his teenage years in 1910s. His early journalistic accomplishments in the short-lived periodicals *Nuestro Epoca* and *La Razón* earned him a period of European exile at the hands of the repressive government of Augusto Leguía. As an exile, Mariátegui undertook his first serious study of European social thought, interacted with Italian and French Communists, and returned to his country in 1923 a "convinced and committed Marxist."<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> See: Harry E. Vanden and Marc Becker, "Amauta: An Introduction to the Life and Works of José Carlos Mariátegui," in Vanden and Becker eds., *Mariátegui*, 11-61; Alberto Flores Galindo, *La agonía de Mariátegui: La polémica con la Komintern*, (Lima, Perú: Desco, 1982), 12. For Western Marxism, see: Anderson, *Considerations*; Gregory Elliott, *Althusser: The Detour of History*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2006), 31-6.

<sup>228</sup> For biographical sketch, see Vanden and Becker, *Mariátegui*, 14-15.

Mariátegui's understanding of Marxism explicitly linked the limits of determinism with the need to give concrete local particularity to universal categories. From his return to Perú in 1923 until his death in 1929, he consistently polemicized as a proponent of Marxism. Most of these polemics appeared on the pages of the magazine he founded and edited, *Amauta*, and the shorter-lived *Labor*, but his collected works also include university lectures, letters, and a few short books. Mariátegui's work reveals several recurrent themes, many of which pertain to central theoretical dilemmas in development studies and anticipate the dependency approach. He consistently worked on the classification of Peruvian agrarian institutions, exploring the extent to which they could be understood as products of native Peruvian history or the legacy of colonialism. His answer: they are both. Inca civilization had a system of centralized agrarian communism under autocratic control. Spanish colonialism wiped out the central institution, the *ayllu*, and replaced it with the *encomiando* in the agricultural producing coastal and highland regions and the *mita* in the mining areas. Mariátegui characterized these as feudal institutions primarily based on the enforced, semi-slave nature of their labor regimes. Only in the coastal region did capitalist forms of exploitation of the native labor force emerge. It is worth noting that Mariátegui's criterion for determining how to classify these institutions is free versus unfree labor, in contrast to much of later dependency theory which would define "feudalism" and "capitalism" according to their relationship to the world market.

Mariátegui explicitly drew a distinction between particularities produced by a country's discrete history, and those produced by unitary history of the modern capitalist system, a world-systemic approach that ultimately earned him the ire of Popular Front Marxism. "An Indigenous, organic, native economy develops alone," he wrote. "It alone

spontaneously determines its institutions. But a colonial economy is established on bases that are in part artificial and foreign, and subordinated to the interests of the colonizer.”<sup>229</sup>

Scholars see Mariátegui’s reconciliation with colonial nationalism as the most heterodox element of his thought, but it is probable that he believed he was the most orthodox interpreter on the South American continent of the Marxist tradition on questions of nationalism and internationalism. Mariátegui’s encounter with European Marxism postdated the disintegration of the Second International in a wave of wartime patriotism, and it coincided with the rise of hyper-nationalist fascist movements. While European nationalism all along the line served reactionary ends, Mariátegui believed colonial nationalism had “a totally different origin and impulse. In these peoples, nationalism is revolutionary, and therefore ends in socialism.”<sup>230</sup> He was not an uncritical nationalist, but rather approached nationalism as an objectively real phenomenon, and therefore a valid social question to be analyzed dialectically. In an astute analogy, he argued that nationalism stands to internationalism as Galilean physics stands to Einsteinian relativism; similar to “relativists before Galileo’s physics, internationalists do not discard the entire nationalist theory.” Rather than viewing the two exclusively and fundamentally in antagonism, he aimed to show how internationalism could best serve its world historical cause by reproducing and supplanting the mobilizing rhetoric of nationalism on a higher level. Moreover, he interpreted neither

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<sup>229</sup> José Carlos Mariátegui, “The Land Problem,” in Vanden and Becker, *Mariátegui*, 69-116 at 74.

<sup>230</sup> José Carlos Mariátegui, “Reply to Luis Alberto Sánchez,” in Vanden and Becker, *Mariátegui*, 173-77, at 175.

nationalism nor internationalism as inherently revolutionary or reactionary, but rather considered how each could serve either purpose depending on their class content.

Ultimately, Mariátegui ran afoul of the Comintern in a particular moment of one of the latter's deviations, damaging his reputation as a Marxist and dampening enthusiasm for his ideas among dedicated political Marxists on the continent. Much like Lenin in his time, Mariátegui in the late 1920s polemicized along a "left" and a "right" front. From the right, he fended off criticisms of Marxist Eurocentrism from Victor Haya de la Torre's Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA). Late in the 1920s, however, he was forced to defend his interpretation of Marxism from the left against an assault from Comintern affiliates, then passing through the "ultra-leftism" of the so-called third period. Due to health restrictions (he was missing a leg and he would die within a year) Mariátegui was not able to attend the first Latin American conference of Communist Parties, held in Montevideo in June of 1929, and he sent in his stead Julio Portocarrero and Hugo Pesce. At the conference, delegates advanced their interpretation of the line formalized at the Sixth Comintern Congress in 1927, in which the semi-colonial status of Latin America gave rise to objective social coalitions committed to upholding feudal political institutions domestically. As such, the imperialist bourgeoisie, in the form of big trusts, and the local landholding oligarchs constituted the two immediate enemies, and only a nationalist "bourgeois-democratic" revolution could sweep away the two allied enemies and "create the conditions for independent economic development."<sup>231</sup> At this juncture, Codovilla couched his recognition of the bourgeois-democratic nature of Latin America's revolution in the ultra-left, class-

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<sup>231</sup> Quoting Victorio Codovilla's opening speech, June 2 1927. See P. González Alberdi, *La primeria conferencia comunista latinoamericana*, 21.

versus-class rhetoric of the third period. But the significance rested in his ability to anticipate the importance that Stalinism would place on the bourgeois-democratic nature, and the apparatus as a means of enforcing a strict interpretation.<sup>232</sup>

With the passing of Mariátegui from the scene, the center of gravity of Latin American Marxist thought moved to Argentina and the quality of that thought entered a pronounced period of Stalinist orthodoxy. Oscillations, even wild ones, were built into Stalinism. These oscillations flowed naturally from its *raison d'être*: protecting the national security of the Soviet Union and maintaining the power of the bureaucracy. Political imperatives at any given moment can change drastically on the constantly shifting terrain of international relations. Yet, as a world movement requiring dedicated, self-sacrificing revolutionaries in every country, Stalinism was compelled to justify each political oscillation in terms of some timeless Marxist principle. As numerous historians of Marxist thought have noted, the end result was a tremendous stultification of Marxist theory internationally. If this seemed contradictory in general, in the case of Argentine politics from World War Two through the 1950s, it appeared downright schizophrenic. As US-Soviet relations moved from wartime alliance to Cold War hostility, Argentine Stalinists struggled to keep current in their articulations of the correct “Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist” approach to Peronism, the dominant domestic political force throughout most of the period, and Washington, the unquestionably dominant international force in the Western hemisphere after the war. Following the tactical programmatic deviations throughout the period is difficult, as in many cases a line would be over before it began. Yet, reviewing the period as a whole, a constant, even consistent

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<sup>232</sup> Löwy, *Marxism*, xxiii.

theoretical refrain emerged from the cacophony of deviations. In all cases, the security needs of the Soviet Union came first. Argentine Stalinism consistently rejected even rhetorical claims that socialist revolution could be placed on the immediate horizon for Argentina or Latin America. They sought the most favorable alliances with liberal and even centrist parties in a continual effort to have representation in some sort of coalition government that could orient foreign policy toward overt support for the Soviet Union. This meant pandering constantly to nationalist, populist sentiment. It meant emphasizing “national unity” over class conflict, and it meant appropriating liberal appeals to liberty and democracy.

Frank drew the impressions that went into his battle against the myth of feudalism from this expression of Latin American Marxist orthodoxy, and the intellectual contestation against this current from anti-Stalinist Marxists. Silvio Frondizi, whose work Frank lauded as the almost exclusive example of non-dogmatic Marxism, solidarized himself with an anti-Stalinist Marxist political current during his 1940s encounter with Peronism, and that experience deeply shaped the content of his book *El Sistema Marxista*.

Frondizi suffered directly at the hands of Peronism, and his work reveals the sharpest and most anguished need for political reorientation. Born in Paso de los Libros in 1907 to Italian immigrant parents, Frondizi was the twelfth of fourteen children. The large family placed a high value on culture and education, and the three youngest sons, Silvio and his brothers Arturo and Risieri, would all become prominent Argentine intellectuals. Arturo, closest to Silvio both personally and in age, went into politics. He helped form the Unión Radical Intransigente in 1950 and held a leadership position within the party for nearly forty



years, including a four-year stint as the President of Argentina from 1958-1962.<sup>233</sup> Silvio and Arturo were in classes together from the years of their primary education in Concepción, through their university education at el Colegio Nacional Mario Moreno in Buenos Aires, up to and including law school at the University of Buenos Aires. At law school, their career paths began to diverge. Silvio concurrently enrolled in the Nacional Instituto del Profesorado, and emerged in 1930 with both a law degree and a professorship in history. While Arturo went on to practice law, eventually moving into politics, Silvio continued his postgraduate study, and in 1936 received his doctorate in jurisprudence.<sup>234</sup>

As a young doctor of philosophy in the late 1930s, Frondizi was drawn into the newly formed philosophy department at the Universidad Nacional de Tucumán (UNT). Argentine students began agitating against the traditional system, which tied universities to the church, as early as the end of the nineteenth century. In 1918, students throughout the country organized a national federation pushing for university reform, including the nationalization of many of the largest universities and the creation of widely accessible public education, which achieved results throughout the 1920s under the sympathetic presidency of Hipólito Yrigoyen. The student movement protested the 1930 coup, led by General José Felix Uriburu with the backing of US Standard Oil, and the subsequent dictatorship. To quell this opposition, the military regime expanded a number of universities throughout the country, including UNT. In December of 1936, the Inspector General of Schools, Don Pascal

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<sup>233</sup> See: Rodolfo Pandolfi, *Frondizi por él Mismo* (Buenos Aires, 1968); Pisarello Verasoro-Menotti, *Arturo Frondizi: Historia y problemática de un estadista* (Buenos Aires, 1983).

<sup>234</sup> Tarcus, *Marxismo Olvidado*, 50-52.

Guaglianone, in an effort to increase the role of humanities in public education, presented a proposal to add a department of philosophy to UNT, which previously had offered courses of study only in Engineering and Pharmacy. In 1937, Julio Prebisch took over as rector of UNT, and attracted a group of humanist philosophers to form the new department, many of whom had recently fled from Nazi Germany or the turmoil of the Spanish Civil War. At the center of this new faculty stood Manuel García Morente, who had served as the deacon of the University of Madrid before escaping first to France then to the United States with the eruption of the Civil War. As director of the new department, Morente designed a curriculum with an emphasis on history, theory and method. To execute his vision, he reached out to progressive young professors in different parts of the country, including Risieri Frondizi to teach logic. Risieri came to teach logic, and secured a position for his brother Silvio to teach political theory.<sup>235</sup>

Frondizi's comfortable, middle-class academic life came to an end in 1943. The military coup in June of that year placed Gustavo Martínez Zuviría as Minister of Justice and Public Instruction. Openly identifying as a fascist, Martínez Zuviría made it his mission to fight against the education reform of the late 1930s, and replace the liberal, humanist curriculum with religious education. Tucuman underwent a complete fascist overhaul of the local government, and UNT set out to implement the new religious curriculum. Frondizi refused to submit. In November of 1943 he denounced Academic Council of UNT and wrote in an open letter to his colleagues and students: "The jackals and crows circling around

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<sup>235</sup> See Lilian Vanella, "Los Orígenes de la Facultad de Filosofía de la Universidad de Tucumán: Principales Acciones, Actores y Entramado de Relaciones, 1936-1938," *Cuadernos de Educación*, 5/5 (Cordoba, July 2007).

modern culture have it wrong, it is not yet a cadaver and will not be; those of us who know and love our culture are disposed to defend it, because its death would mean our own death.”<sup>236</sup> By 1946, Frondizi had been stripped of his professorship, and relocated to Buenos Aires to work as an attorney and integrate himself into the political circles of his brother Arturo.

The rise of Peronism politicized Frondizi for the first time. He approached politics as an academic matter while at UNT, but having been forced out of his position by the changing political winds, he turned his attention to his country’s current political crisis with a newfound sense of urgency. Later in his life, he saw this as a decisive turning point in his transition from a “petty bourgeois intellectual” to a “revolutionary socialist.” After having been a titled and published professor, he personally experienced the crisis by having to live for a number of years on a very modest salary.<sup>237</sup> His first serious effort at analyzing his contemporary Argentine political and social reality, a pamphlet entitled *La Crisis Política Argentina*, reveals a definite shift to the left in Frondizi’s thinking. For Frondizi, Peronism emerged out of a nearly two-decades-long crisis of leadership in Argentine politics. In the early years of the twentieth century Radicalism carried the promise of progress for the Argentine people, but rested on a foundation of heterogeneous and antagonistic social groups. Hipólito Irogoyen allowed the conservative landowning oligarchy and the church to

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<sup>236</sup> Silvio Frondizi, *Doce Años de Política Argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1958), 23. Quotation translated from Spanish by the author. Other information for the paragraph comes from Tarcus, *Marxismo Olvidado*, 78.

<sup>237</sup> Silvio Frondizi, “Interpretación Materialista Dialéctica de Nuestra Epoca,” Introduction to the Second Edition of *La Realidad Argentina, Ensayo de Interpretación Sociológica: Tomo II, La Revolución Socialista* (Buenos Aires, 1960), III.

retain political influence, creating a constant drag on progressive legislation at odds with the almost mystic aura of modernity surrounding the Radical label. The Radicals' inability to resolve these contradictions and the absence of a developed socialist movement to take up the mantle opened the door for traditional conservative forces, operating through the military. Once in power, however, the conservative dictatorship could only keep Radicalism at bay through force and fraud, which caused the repression and corruption that generated enormous popular hostility and ultimately made the dictatorship untenable. The coup of 1943 represented the failure of dictatorship to rule through brute force, which convinced the forces behind the scenes of the dictatorship of the need to adopt populist measures. Frondizi saw this as positive insofar as it represented the entry of the masses into Argentine political life, and negative in that Peronism, lacking a true left element, missed a historic opportunity to sweep away for good the old conservative landowning oligarchy. While not presented as a contribution to Marxist thought, nor employing any theoretical discussion of the Marxist method, *La Crisis Política* placed antagonistic social classes at the center of its analysis.<sup>238</sup>

Frondizi was living in Buenos Aires during the 1945 campaign, and he had long since begun to take seriously the politics of his country, but he was manifestly unsatisfied with the Democratic Union as an alternative to Peronism. In 1946, he taught courses on “the current state of the political problem” (*Estado actual del problema política*) at the Colegio Libre de Estudios Superiores. Colegio Libre was a step down financially from his full-time professorship at UNT, but it did not carry the same censorship as the quasi or outright fascists who controlled both the UNT and the local government in Tucumán. The more

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<sup>238</sup> Silvio Frondizi, *La Crisis Política Argentina: Ensayo de interpretación ideológica* (Buenos Aires, 1946).

liberal atmosphere provided him the space to gather intellectual collaborators who formed an incipient political movement, which they initially called the Acción Democrática Independiente (ADI), but would later adopt the name Grupo Praxis.<sup>239</sup> They published a periodical entitled *El Ciudadano* (The Citizen), and, rather than impotently opposing the Peronist avalanche through what they saw as an unprincipled alliance with liberalism, dedicated their intellectual energies to building a cadre organization around a concrete analysis of the social foundations of Peronism. Within this intellectual space Frondizi first took up a serious study of Marxism, which he had earlier called an “outstanding example of a simplistic thesis.”<sup>240</sup>

As he stepped into the fray of organized political Marxism, Frondizi was repelled by the politics of the Stalinist Communist Party of Argentina. The formal wartime alliance between the Soviet Union and the United States determined a particular mode of thought for Argentine Stalinism, which lasted through the war and entered a period of transition corresponding to the rise of the Cold War. Hyper-nationalist, even patriotic rhetoric found its way into the CPA’s speeches and pamphlets. Identifying “Nazi-fascism” as the supreme threat, the CPA sought alliances with any anti-fascist forces, a perspective summed up in the oft-repeated slogan “unity without exclusions.” The Communist line throughout this period was, in effect, an extreme form of Popular Frontism. In 1941, the Argentine Communist Party began aggressively pushing for the unity of all national democratic forces against a perceived domestic fascist movement. Argentine politics during the so-called “infamous

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<sup>239</sup> Frondizi, “Interpretación Materialista,” xxx.

<sup>240</sup> Frondizi, *Locke*, 19. Quoted in Tarcus, *Marxismo Olvidado*, 55.

decade” from 1930-1943 hardly exemplified democracy, but the Communists perceived a greater threat building up behind a growing popular hostility and resentment to the corruption and repression of the various successive presidencies supported by la Concordancia, the multi-party coalition that maintained power from 1932 to 1943. Codovilla claimed “only the creation of an ample democratic front” could keep the state out of the hands of the fascists.<sup>241</sup> This anti-fascist coalition materialized in response to the 1943 coup led by the United Officers’ Group (GOU) against Ramon Castillo, the last in the long line of Concordancia presidents. Parties opposed to military rule, regardless of their populist foundation, came together in the Democratic Union, a coalition composed of the Communists, the Socialist Party, the liberal Radical Civic Union, and the Democratic Progressive Party. With the backing of US ambassador Spruille Braden, and by extension Washington, the Democratic Union squared off not against the corruption of the conservative la Concordancia, but rather against the military coup that ousted Ramon Castillo.

The unity line dominated the party’s national conference in December of 1945, to which the Communists invited delegates from the other parties in the Democratic Union coalition. In his address to the conference, Codovilla, recently returned to Argentina, emphasized the line of the preceding years, in which the party had converted itself into the “passionate champions of unity...Unity among all of the parties and forces of democracy, unity of the Argentine nation, to detain the advances of reaction and fascism.”<sup>242</sup> Throughout

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<sup>241</sup> Victorio Codovilla, “La Unión es la Victoria,” *Discursos y Escritos de V. Codovilla* (Buenos Aires, 1941), 15-16.

<sup>242</sup> Victorio Codovilla, *Batir al Nazi-Peronismo, Para Abrir una Era de Libertad y Progreso* (Buenos Aires, 1946), 4.

the speech, Codovilla presented the Communists as great Argentine patriots, and he without exception referred to the party's role as the vanguard not just of the working class, but rather "the working class and the people (*el pueblo*)."<sup>243</sup> Delivered in the brief historical moment between the end of World War Two and the full onset of the Cold War, Codovilla's address to the Argentine Communist Party reflects a very different vision of the prospects for the postwar era. He celebrated the Soviet Union, the United States and England as heroes of worldwide democracy.<sup>244</sup> Against his perception of anti-Communist forces stirring in the United States, he invoked the legacy of the two greatest contributors to the victory: Stalin and Roosevelt.<sup>245</sup> He denounced Peron's anti-Yankee rhetoric for its inability to see the progressive forces within the United States.<sup>246</sup> All of this would appear astounding in just a few years, and indeed was essentially out of touch with concurrent developments in Soviet-US relations that already rendered such a collaborative view obsolete. Yet, it perfectly fit the program pushed by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union during the war to meet the temporary demands for its own security.<sup>247</sup>

All the theoretical assumptions of Stalinist nation-statism underlay the wartime positions of Argentine Communism. For Codovilla, nationalism not class struggle drove forward the earlier transitions from feudalism to capitalism, such as the French Revolution,

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<sup>243</sup> Codovilla, *Batir al Nazi-Peronismo*, 6,9.

<sup>244</sup> Codovilla, *Batir al Nazi-Peronismo*, 11.

<sup>245</sup> Codovilla, *Batir al Nazi-Peronismo*, 13.

<sup>246</sup> Codovilla, *Batir al Nazi-Peronismo*, 14.

<sup>247</sup> See, for example, Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On?: The American Communist Party during the Second World War* (Urbana, 1993).

as well as the Latin American independence movements. In fact, according to Codovilla, “all liberal and progressive movements throughout history have developed thanks to active solidarity of the people among themselves.”<sup>248</sup> Codovilla mentioned classes very little in his speech on national unity, but his conception of the basis of popular unity clearly reflected what would become the go-to strategy of Latin American Stalinists throughout the postwar era. Against Peronism, which had its support in the backward elements of the working class and the peasantry, the Democratic Union drew support from progressive workers, progressive industrialists and democratic Catholics. The largest problem with the movement was that it had not yet won over conservatives. Although he did not make it explicit, Codovilla essentially called for workers to follow the domestic bourgeoisie, here called “progressive industrialists” on the path to a bourgeois-democratic revolution which, based on the view of a cooperative relationship between the US and USSR, would evolve over time peacefully into socialism. Moreover, Codovilla clearly saw this struggle as an internal matter for Argentine national development. He said in no uncertain terms that the Argentine people, by which he meant a nation unified behind the leadership of industrial capital, must rely on its own force rather than any international support.<sup>249</sup> There is a striking similarity between the CPA’s variant of Marxism and the US consensus historiography and functionalist sociology undergirding modernization theory. Indeed, if Codovilla is taken as a representative of “orthodox” Marxism, then it is correct to say orthodox Marxism and modernization theory rest on similar teleological, nationalist and functionalist metanarratives.

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<sup>248</sup> Codovilla, *Batir al Nazi-Peronismo*, 7.

<sup>249</sup> Codovilla, *Batir al Nazi-Peronismo*, 15.



1946 marked a transitional year for the program of Argentine Stalinism. The primary reason for the shift was undoubtedly the changing outlook for Soviet international relations. In April of 1945 Jacques Duclos, a leading figure in the French Communist Party, published an open letter in the party's theoretical journal *Cahiers du Communisme* criticizing certain aspects of the wartime program of the Communist Party of the United States. Under the leadership of Earl Browder, the CPUSA throughout the war had pushed a program of patriotism and cooperation with the US government, rhetorically very similar to the Democratic Union era CPA program of "unity without exception." The Duclos letter, based on information that could have made it to the author only with the express consent of Moscow, signaled a change in tactic at the level of the CPSU, which already anticipated tension with their US allies as the war came to a close.<sup>250</sup> Like in other countries, including France, the implications of the Duclos letter worked their way into the Argentine Communist Party program slowly. A second likely reason for the shift is that the Democratic Union's *raison d'être* had collapsed with the landslide victory of Peron in June of 1946. No longer able to portray Peronism as a foreign fascist threat lacking a popular base in Argentine society, the Stalinists were forced to reevaluate their stance toward the new regime.

The new line found its first clear articulations in the party's eleventh congress in August of 1946. Unlike at the conference of December of 1945, which had included other members of the Democratic Union, party leaders addressed an audience composed exclusively of party members at the congress, and their speeches differed drastically in tone even if only moderately in content. Codovilla began his opening address with a brief sketch

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<sup>250</sup> Isserman, *Which Side*, 216-221. Full text of the Duclos letter in English can be found in *Political Affairs*, XXIV (July 1945), 656-672.

of the history of the CPA. Claiming to be original founding members of the Comintern, Codovilla presented a mythologized party history of uninterrupted class struggle, which stood in sharp contrast to his public presentation just eight months prior, in which he had portrayed progress historically not as the outcome of struggle but of unity of the people.<sup>251</sup> In addition, whereas Codovilla's and Ghioldi's speeches during the Democratic Union almost completely lacked any reference to the working class as the central force of progress, Codovilla's main speech to the congress identified workers as one of two contradictory social groups pressuring Peron and capable of shaping the outcome of Argentine politics.<sup>252</sup> Yet, despite the return to revolutionary rhetoric, the program Codovilla called for at the eleventh congress derived from the same nation-statist and interclass collaborationist premises as the earlier formulations. In order to "liquidate the economic and social backwardness that exist in our country, and in order to realize the agrarian, anti-imperialist revolution," argued Codovilla, it is important not to "fixate too much on the past in order to find motives for disunion between the workers and the popular masses, but rather focus the view on the present, where there exist abundant motives to push for union of all Argentines and inhabitants of this country who are lovers of progress, well-being and liberty."<sup>253</sup> Codovilla remained committed to a vision of a cross-class national democratic movement to liquidate the backwardness emanating from the feudal structure of Argentina's agrarian economy.

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<sup>251</sup> Victorio Codovilla, "Trayectoria Histórica del Partido Comunista," in *Resistirá la Argentina al Imperialismo Yanqui?* (Buenos Aires, 1948), 65-67.

<sup>252</sup> Victorio Codovilla, "Dónde Desembocará la Situación Política Argentina?" in *Resistirá la Argentina al Imperialismo Yanqui?* (Buenos Aires, 1948), 83.

<sup>253</sup> Codovilla, "Dónde Desembocará," 95.

The CPA became more denunciatory of the United States between 1945 and 1947 as relations soured between Washington and Moscow. The eleventh congress witnessed the first substantive change in the party's position toward the Soviet Union's wartime allies. When Ghioldi delivered a speech at Luna Park, almost exactly one year previously, a giant banner adorned with portraits of Stalin, Truman, Roosevelt and Churchill hung above the stage.<sup>254</sup> Similarly, Codovilla's speech at the party's conference in December of 1945 hailed Roosevelt and Stalin as the great heroes of the war, the international saviors of democracy, and the symbolic figures around which capitalist and socialist countries would build a peaceful, collaborative and democratic future. On the basis of the wartime alliance, the Communists invited US intervention into Argentina's domestic political affairs, and US economic interests in the Argentine economy were downplayed against the traditional English monopolies. Within one year, the Cold War had made its way into the consciousness of the leaders of the Argentine Communist Party. With the US and the Soviet Union coming into open contact over competing interests in the postwar European landscape, the threat of "Yankee imperialism" rapidly moved from non-existent in the immediate aftermath of the war to the primary threat by the eleventh congress, more dangerous even than Peronism. "To detain the advances of imperialism," Codovilla told the congress, "we are disposed to march together *with all* political and social sectors, as much from the Peronist camp as from the camp that sustained the Democratic Union."<sup>255</sup> By 1947, the Communists were as vehemently anti-Yankee as any other domestic political force. In a speech to the Central

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<sup>254</sup> Ghioldi, *La Patria*, 1.

<sup>255</sup> Codovilla, "Dónde Desembocará," 139, italics in original.

Committee in April 1947, Codovilla blamed the United States, not the Argentine Communists for the change in position. The war had opened space for a wave of democratic reform to sweep through Latin America, led by the newly political conscious masses. Interestingly, Codovilla in 1947 portrayed Peronism as a response to this democratic wave rather than the head of a Nazi-fascist threat to suppress it. Whereas Roosevelt's Good Neighbor had facilitated the entry of the masses into Latin American politics, Truman's return to dollar diplomacy sought to suppress it. US imperialists, backed by the Truman administration, had replaced Peronism as the central forcing propping up fascist elements within Argentina.<sup>256</sup>

Through the courses he taught at Colegio Libre Frondizi first developed his theory of global capitalist integration, which saw the light of day in mid-1946 in an article entitled "La evolución capitalista y el principio de soberanía" (The evolution of capitalism and the principle of sovereignty).<sup>257</sup> The truncated article, sent to the Overseas News Agency, came out as an independent pamphlet in Argentina near the end 1946, and almost immediately drew an attack from the CPA, in an article by Ghioldi published in "La Hora" in March of 1947. In his response to Ghioldi's criticism, his first public piece to include any serious discussion of Marxism, Frondizi drew out the political implications of his theory and the Stalinist critique. Still primarily concerned with understanding the social foundation of Peronism, Frondizi began with the current state of evolution of the capitalist system on a world scale. He divided the evolution of international capitalism into three phases. The first

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<sup>256</sup> Victorio Codovilla, *Resistir*.

<sup>257</sup> Silvio Frondizi, *La Integración Mundial, Última Etapa del Capitalismo* (Buenos Aires, 1954), 7.

phase, identified by Marx, was the competitive phase, which witnessed the consolidation of national economies. To this phase corresponded the program of bourgeois-democratic revolution. The second phase, identified by Lenin, emerged from the contradiction between social production and individual accumulation. Monopoly formed out of competition, which consolidated advanced capitalist states into imperial powers. On the international plane, inter-imperialist conflict among capitalist nation-states characterized the second phase. In the third phase, through which Frondizi saw his contemporary world passing since the end of the war, the capitalist part of the world was being integrated and organized under US leadership, and in its own interests.<sup>258</sup>

Ghioldi most sharply disagreed with the implications of Frondizi's ideas on the question of decolonization. Frondizi believed that, due to the entrance of the masses into politics worldwide, the old political form of colonialism, no longer tenable, would be replaced with economic coercion through manipulation of international markets. Thus, Frondizi had stumbled upon the exact formulation that had been raised, and quickly squashed at the Sixth Congress. Nearly twenty years later, Ghioldi had only become more intransigent in his hostility to this view, exacerbated by the changing security needs of the Soviet Union as the Cold War picked up momentum. Ghioldi insisted that the claim that the US would abandon overt political colonialism flew in the face of Washington's current efforts to colonize Greece and Turkey, a piece of hyperbole clearly linked to the deepening rift over the division of Europe among the former allies. Not only was this inconsistent- Frondizi had already predicted the US subsuming the entire global economy in its own interest at the

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<sup>258</sup> Frondizi, *La Integración Mundial*, 13-17.

moment when Ghioldi hailed Bretton Woods as the pinnacle of democracy under a banner of Roosevelt with the backing of Spraden and the Democratic Union- Frondizi showed quite clearly how it derived from an effort to undermine any revolutionary program in colonial and semi-colonial countries. “The integration of a global capitalist front” argued Frondizi, “irremediably calls for the formation of a global anticapitalist front and invalidates the argument of the necessity that our country complete the so-called ‘bourgeois-democratic revolution.’”<sup>259</sup> Frondizi’s theory of integration implied a community of interest between the national and imperialist bourgeoisie, and stood in stark contrast to the doctrinaire view of universal historical stages of discrete nation-states characteristic of Stalinist Marxism. More fully grasping the transnational nature of the ruling class bloc in the capitalist world-system, Frondizi overtly rejected any potential for a national solution to a transnational problem.

Whereas Frondizi’s ideas developed in polemic with Argentine Stalinism, he had a much more symbiotic relationship with the Argentine Trotskyist movement. The history of Latin American Trotskyism proceeds through a labyrinth of often tiny sects. Following this history can be dizzying, and extracting something of theoretical value from either their publications or their internal discussions can be difficult because they have a propensity to focus an inordinate amount of their effort to factional and sectarian disputes. Historians tend to dismiss the idea of deriving any theoretical value from inter-sectarian polemic, which they usually write off as little more than interpersonal bickering.<sup>260</sup> Robert J. Alexander, a preeminent historian of both Stalinism and Trotskyism in Latin America, argued that

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<sup>259</sup> Frondizi, *La Integración Mundial*, 23.

<sup>260</sup> See Kevin Mattsen, *Intellectuals in Action*.

personalities were at least as important as issues in the persistent factionalism in the Argentine Trotskyist movement, and, in fact, he focused much more attention on the personal animosities than the underlying theoretical differences between the two main rival Trotskyist groups.<sup>261</sup>

The role of personal disputes in keeping Argentine Trotskyism divided and isolated in its nascent years is difficult to dispute, and was even recognized by the groups themselves. Under constant pressure to unify from the International Committee of the Fourth International, which in the 1940s was itself still a unified body, one of the Argentine parties sent a statement to the SWP in New York, the headquarters of the Fourth International, acknowledging the extremely personal and acrimonious nature of the polemic among the various Argentine groups claiming the heritage of the Fourth International. Undated and unsigned, the proposal for a unification and reorganization was probably written in 1940 as the outcome of the formation of the Liga Obrera Socialista (LOS), which brought together the group led by Pedro Milesi and that of Antonio Gallo, as indicated by a number of veiled or not-so-veiled criticisms of the polemical style of the Grupo Obrero Revolucionario (GOR) and its divisive leader Liborio Justo. The LOS explained the excessively personal attacks on rival parties as the outcome of an objective and subjective factor. The former, a series of defeats for the working class, superseded and conditions the latter, the political inexperience of their movement.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Robert J. Alexander, *Trotskyism in Latin America* (Stanford, 1973), 55.

<sup>262</sup> "Proyecto de Resolución Organizativa Sobre el Partido," undated, Socialist Workers' Party Records Hoover Institute (hereafter SWP), Box 23, Folder 7.

By 1941, the Fourth International was pushing the factions of Argentine Trotskyism to unify. The two main factions complained of the inability to do so while continuing to insist on fundamental differences, and in justifying their divisiveness they were forced to advance their thinking about the problem of “national liberation.” The GOR sent the SWP a letter complaining about the division in the movement in early 1941. In this, they attempted to spell out the programmatic differences between the group, led by Liborio Justo, and the newly formed LOS, headed by Milesi and Gallo, who had their own history of factional disputes. The GOR put forward a position that resembled that of the “democratic dictatorship” of the proletariat and the peasantry, the position advocated by the Bolsheviks up until Lenin’s *April Theses*, with the exception that the alliance behind the GOR’s formulation is that between the proletariat and those segments of the local bourgeoisie who would initiate a struggle against imperialism.<sup>263</sup> The Executive Committee of the SWP responded that it would be best to unify, as they did not think the issue warranted a continued split, and if the parties were unable to unify they would honor their request to acknowledge one of them as the sole Argentine affiliate of the Fourth International, but before doing so would want a better understanding of the two positions. The SWP encouraged the two groups to elaborate their positions in the form of a thesis that could give more concrete meaning to the dispute in order to develop “slogans that express the immediate interests and aspirations of the working class.”<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> Grupo Obrero Revolucionario to the Socialist Workers Party, undated [1941], SWP, Box 23, folder 8.

<sup>264</sup> SWP to GOR, April 15, 1941, SWP, Box 23, folder 8.



In response, both groups sent their theses on the question of national liberation to the Executive Committee of the Fourth International. The LOS denied in the case of Argentina the importance of an agrarian revolution to liquidate the remains of feudalism. The abstract call for “national independence” for semi-colonial countries, part of the theses of the founding congress of the Fourth International, when applied to the particularities of Argentina’s level of economic backwardness, which included a population composed of 43% proletariat, a highly concentrated industrial sector, and an agricultural sector that was, in its essence, capitalist, meant that the fight against imperialism would necessarily have to be waged directly by the proletariat, in opposition to the local bourgeoisie which was fundamentally linked to imperialism. For that reason, they denied that anti-imperialism should be the axis of local struggle, and even more so since the slogan of “national liberation” was rhetorically muddled by its overuse by virtually every sector of the Argentine left, including the rival Trotskyist GOR, the nationalist Apristas, and Stalinists.<sup>265</sup>

The GOR, in their thesis, defined national liberation as the principal political bourgeois-democratic task for the Argentine proletariat in its struggle for socialism. The content of national liberation consisted of nationalization of imperialist trusts, cancelling the external debt, and developing the domestic productive forces. This was to be achieved politically through the mobilization of the oppressed, anti-imperialist petty bourgeois elements under the leadership of the proletariat. In its initial message, therefore, the GOR put forth a populist program that both prescriptively (policy solutions offered) and

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<sup>265</sup> “Tesis de la Liga Obrera Socialista,” September, 1941, SWP, Box 23, folder 8.

programmatically (strategy for achieving power) looked quite a bit like other Latin American populist solutions such as the Chilean Popular Front and Peronism in Argentina.

Gallo, leader of the Liga Obrera Socialista advanced a perspective against national liberation in “La Burguesia Nacional y El Imperialismo,” a thesis presented at the party’s first national congress in 1941. To solve the puzzle of the relationship between the national bourgeoisie and imperialism, Gallo went back to the transition from feudalism to capitalism in the European metropolis. The early stages of capitalist primitive accumulation began in England in the sixteenth century with enclosures and expansion of markets at the hands of the commercial bourgeoisie. Spain fell behind in its capitalist development when the bourgeois revolution failed and the nation unified under the church, an institution of consumption, rather than the productive bourgeoisie. According to Gallo, North American colonization under the proto-bourgeoisie explains the subsequent trajectory of the north, and the colonization of South America by the clerical class explains Latin America stagnation. Argentina, unlike many other Latin American countries, realized a bourgeois revolution with its independence movement, and in Gallo’s time Argentina was already capitalist. He supported this claim through examining the Argentine population, which he claimed was over fifty percent “proletarian” in the sense of earning their living through wages in industrial employment.<sup>266</sup> Because a proletariat and capitalism, and thereby struggle between workers and capitalists, already existed in Argentina, “the proletarian strategy should be socialist revolution.”<sup>267</sup> Gallo saw the Radical and Conservative parties as, respectively, the rear and

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<sup>266</sup> Gallo, “La Burguesía Nacional y el Imperialismo,” pg. 3, 1941, SWP, Box 23, folder 8.

<sup>267</sup> Gallo, “La Burguesía,” 4.

advance guard of reaction. Radicalism, despite its nominally populist rhetoric, drew its support primarily from the urban petty bourgeoisie. The Socialist and Democratic parties, for their part, represented the “escape valve” for capitalism; reformism with authentic roots in the Argentine working class, combined with certain layers of the petty bourgeoisie. The advance guard of the working class, meaning the very same Liga Obrera Socialista, should theoretically combat the reformist parties, even if in certain moments they made the tactical decision to form a temporary alliance with a common enemy, expressed through the slogan “strike together but march separately.” His analysis drew extensively from the Trotskyist tradition in which he operated, and developed systematically earlier articulations and their application to Argentina. In contrast to the concurrent Stalinist call for “unity without exclusions” of all democratic forces, Gallo insisted that his party must combat all forms of patriotism, and distance itself from any responsibility for defending bourgeois democracy.<sup>268</sup>

By the late 1940s, Frondizi was seriously engaged in a work more comprehensive in scope than anything he had written before, and in both the research and redaction he drew heavily from the Argentine Trotskyist movement. The debates over national liberation discussed above lived on through the younger generation of comrades, many of whom regrouped in the tumultuous mid-1940s around the young Nahuel Moreno’s Grupo Obrero Marxista (GOM). Moreno had participated in both tendencies at different times, and as the leader of the small GOM, he pushed his group not only to familiarize itself with the debates over the question of national liberation, but to study industrial and agrarian censuses. In his efforts, he enlisted a brilliant young Marxist named Milcíades Peña to help with the research,

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<sup>268</sup> Gallo, “La Burguesía,” 7.

and the pair issued a series of pamphlets in 1948 firmly rejecting any “feudal” Latin American history. Frondizi had a partly collaborative, partly contentious relationship toward the Moreno Trotskyist sect. He drew heavily from their ideas and incorporated them into his own work. Peña even helped with the redaction of a crucial chapter of Frondizi’s opus. He contributed to their theoretical journal *Estrategia*, but he never joined the movement and was denounced by Peña in the late 1950s as a “petty-bourgeois” intellectual. However, there is no doubt that the exchange of ideas among Frondizi and Peña was a fruitful one, and both authors produced major works in the 1950s that must be included in any discussion of the origins and development of the concept of dependency in Latin America.

Less directly concerned with the feudal or capitalist nature of Latin American colonialism, Frondizi’s contribution to the dependency perspective rested on his close attention to twentieth century Argentine political developments in relation to overall processes within global capitalism. His theory of “global capitalist integration” (*integración capitalista mundial*), formed in the late 1940s in polemic with the Stalinists, provided the central organizing thread of his analysis. He argued that, whereas advanced capitalist nations made their bourgeois-democratic revolutions in a period of capitalist ascendancy, semi-colonial countries would have to do so in a period of extreme capitalist crisis, which could be interpreted as an argument that Latin America remained “pre-capitalist.”<sup>269</sup> The analysis undoubtedly contained elements of a “metropolis-satellite” model, as demonstrated for example in his discussion of how the spread of railroads under English capital turned Buenos Aires and, to a lesser extent, el Litoral into “privileged appendices of imperialism,

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<sup>269</sup> Frondizi, *Sistema*, 10.

intermediaries and minor co-participants in the exploitation and ‘colonization’ of the less favored regions.”<sup>270</sup> Moreover, the theory of global integration contained some overlap with Sweezy’s and Baran’s analysis of monopoly capitalism. Concentration of industry accounted for the U.S. rapid rise to unchallenged leader of the capitalist world.<sup>271</sup> Monopolization of the economy produced something like fascism domestically within the United States, a phenomenon most fully expressed in the direct merger between monopoly and government in the Eisenhower administration.<sup>272</sup> The massive disparity between Washington and other capitalist powers mitigated the conflictual nature of imperialism for a prolonged period, and the multilateral institutional regime established after World War Two reflected the U.S. government’s efforts to institutionalize its dominant position by facilitating the smooth functioning of globally integrated capitalism.<sup>273</sup> This regime enabled Washington to “manipulate for its own benefit the terms of trade with Latin American countries, because of technical superiority and dominion of the global market.” This latter sentence reveals Frondizi unique, independent arrival at the well-known structuralist observation that deteriorating terms of trade on world markets constituted the central mechanism through which U.S.-based monopoly capital exploited the periphery.

In Frondizi’s work, the concept of “dependence” referred not to the exploitative structure of the world market, per se, but rather to the behavior of domestic ruling classes in

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<sup>270</sup> Frondizi, *Sistema*, 95.

<sup>271</sup> Frondizi, *Sistema*, 21-6.

<sup>272</sup> Frondizi, *Sistema*, 26-36.

<sup>273</sup> Frondizi, *Sistema*, 49-40.

relation to that structure.<sup>274</sup> For Frondizi, Stalinism obfuscated a long tradition in Marxist thought viewing the problem of revolution in colonial and semi-colonial countries as essentially one of the bourgeois inability to assume leadership of the “bourgeois-democratic” revolution.<sup>275</sup> Relegation to the periphery of the global economy did not preclude Argentine industrialization, but rather that industrialization took place under the auspices of foreign and domestic capital reinforcing the primary export sector of the economy, linking the interests of Argentine capitalist landowners, urban merchants, and industrialists into the integrating global economy. The transition from Britain to the U.S. as the dominant source of foreign capital entailed a shift in the imperatives of imperialism. The high level of concentration of U.S. capital necessitated the export of heavy industry and decreasing the production costs of raw materials flowing into the metropolitan center. These increasing opportunities for industrialization within the new globally integrated economic regime created greater tensions among the various sectors of Argentine capital, as the landowning class with its political authority in the countryside dependent upon rural labor had reason to resent to the growing urban industry.<sup>276</sup> Peronism arose as the mediating factor of these various capitalist fractions, and represented the ultimate expression of a local class alliance intent on preserving the status quo even at the cost of remaining subordinated to the global capitalist metropolis.

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<sup>274</sup> Frondizi, *Sistema*, 90.

<sup>275</sup> Frondizi, *Revolución*, 13-29 traces the evolution of the theory of Permanent Revolution from Marx and Engels through Lenin and Trotsky, with the conclusion that the revolution in backward countries must be socialist, and the socialist revolution in the colonial world must push forward the proletarian movement in the developed world.

<sup>276</sup> Frondizi, *Sistema*, 109.

Typically considered the originator of the thesis of Latin American colonial capitalism, Sergio Bagú in reality developed his thoughts at the same historical moment in which Frondizi had an early version of *La Realidad Argentina* in draft form, and Peña and Moreno had already formalized early Argentine Trotskyist debates over “national liberation” into a series of pamphlets resoundingly rejecting the notion of an Argentine feudal history.<sup>277</sup> A combination of archival research from the colonial era and an impressive synthesis of relevant English, Spanish and Portuguese language historical literature, Bagú’s intervention built on narrower regional empirical economic histories of various Latin American countries from the 1920s and 1930s, and stands as a testament to the cumulative nature of historical scholarship. The fact that Bagú’s book has fared better than Frondizi’s or Peña’s work in historical memory can perhaps be attributed to its more academic and less overtly polemical nature, but a contemporary political perspective is nonetheless discernible in the text. In a thinly-veiled defense of socialism, the book begins with a survey of the social, political and economic structures of pre-colonial South and Central American civilizations. Harkening back to Mariátegui’s admiration for pre-colonial Peruvian civilization, Bagú portrayed ancient Aztec civilization as a centrally planned economy built atop a foundation in

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<sup>277</sup> A correspondence between Frondizi and his brother Risieri in 1949 reveals the concurrency of Frondizi’s thoughts and those of Bagú. In a letter from Silvio to Risieri dated April 7, 1949, Silvio claimed his book was “practically finished,” and in a letter dated August 4, 1949 he attached a draft of the book, describing it as “of a frankly Marxist content, although in polemic with the Stalinists.” In a letter dated November 19, 1949, Risieri, having received the draft of his brother’s work, responded that a “Marxist friend who perhaps you know- Sergio Bagú- has just published for his own part... a book of economic history.” All letters from the CeDInCI, Fondo Frondizi. Peña’s and Moreno’s pamphlets were completed in 1948. Describing their collaborative process in their co-edited magazine, *Estrategia*, in the late 1950s, Peña claimed that the pair were quite surprised to find that Bagú had arrived at the same conclusions in 1949.

communal agriculture and virtually free of unemployment or hunger. Far from “backward,” the Aztecs represented the high point of Latin American civilization, and indeed stood superior to any modern society in its lack of scarcity.<sup>278</sup>

Analytically, *Economía de la Sociedad Colonial* contains many of the insights of dependency scholarship, and empirically it laid the foundation for later works, but its exclusive focus on the colonial era sets it apart. For Bagú, the history of the development of the colonial political economic structure cannot be told independently from that of the political economic evolution of the Spanish and Portuguese metropolises, in turn only comprehensible in relation to “Occidental Europe.” Apparently unfamiliar with Maurice Dobb’s concurrent work, Bagú draws on some of the same literature as Dobb, but ultimately his analysis of why Spain and Portugal became raw material exporters to English capitalism rather than manufacturing centers lacks Dobb’s close, consistent attention to the contingencies of class conflict in the historical process. The Reconquista effectively inverted Iberian feudalism relative to the rest of Europe. Resistance weakened the control of feudal lords in the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries, then later belatedly strengthened them at the hands of a crown indebted for support.<sup>279</sup> The final re-conquest took place against the dissolution of feudalism in occidental Europe, which Bagú portrayed as essentially an evolutionary, objective process of the growth of market economy. Like Dobb, Bagú located early merchant capital in the Hanseatic League and Italian cities, but unlike Dobb he did not explicitly question the theoretical link between trade and accumulation, although the implicit

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<sup>278</sup> Bagú, *Economía*, 13-18.

<sup>279</sup> Bagú, *Economía*, 31-4.



assumption clearly emerged that exchange, in and of itself a value-producing activity, produced the profits that allowed a continuous merchant accumulation to slowly facilitate the spread of markets and the corollary erosion of local autonomy on which feudal production depends.<sup>280</sup>

Yet, in Bagú's work we see the limits of comparing the "transition debate" to dependency as a conceptual framework for understanding the unique trajectory of capitalist development in what is now the global south. Much of the Sweezy/Dobb debate hinged on competing interpretations of the spread of markets as an objective historical force in the disintegration of the feudal social order. For Sweezy, expansion of markets incentivized production for export, eroding the localized political authority central to the feudal order. For Dobb, money economy and markets themselves could not possibly have that effect without the prior transition to a class of free laborers selling their labor power on the market, which itself must be explained as the contingent outcome of class struggles in the feudal countryside in various parts of Europe. As Bagú showed, the discussion simply does not pertain to the formation or motives of the Latin American colonial ruling class. The latter came into the world already linked to the growing sphere of circulation, and the presence of a ruling class consistently looking to maximize gains on exports to some degree accounts for the formation of the subsequent economic structure. Yet, while the market was important, so were labor systems, and Bagú's history bears little resemblance to the formalistic "metropolis-satellite" model often associated with dependency theory. Thus, for example, where mobilization of colonial labor did not lend itself to concentration, self-sufficiency and

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<sup>280</sup> Bagú, *Economía*, 39-43. For discussion of Dobb's view, see above.

repressive exploitation of labor characteristic of feudal modes of production, such as mining economies in Peru and Mexico, towns developed to supply wage workers with their material goods. In the Brazilian economy, based on large, isolated sugar plantations with slavery or slave-like labor conditions, production was as much tied to the international market, but no towns were erected and plantation owners exerted monopoly control over both sugar exports and imports of supplies for the largely self-sufficient estate.<sup>281</sup> Here, in the work of Bagú, we see attention to the variation in agriculture labor systems that would preoccupy dependency and modes of production theorists in the early 1970s.

### **Taking on the Myth of Feudalism**

Frank's tool set for interpreting these multi-faceted, long-running, complex debates over Latin American history and development policies did not include Marxist analytic categories, nor much knowledge in the intricacies of inter-party 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.<sup>282</sup> 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, who he viewed as

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<sup>281</sup> Bagú, *Economía*, 67-8.

<sup>282</sup> PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy, November 4, 1963.

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.

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. Over the next couple 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.<sup>283</sup> This interpretation of primitive accumulation was not uncontroversial. In the late 1940s Sweezy had invoked primitive accumulation in his polemic with Dobb.<sup>284</sup> 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.<sup>285</sup> Sweezy pushed Frank to engage this theoretical tradition by reading Volume I of *Capital*, and Rosa

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<sup>283</sup> PMS, Box 5, Sweezy to Frank, January 7, 1964.

<sup>284</sup> Paul M. Sweezy and Maurice Dobb, "The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism," *Science and Society* (1950), 134-167.

<sup>285</sup> Robert Brenner, "The Origins of Capitalist Development: A Critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism," *New Left Review* I/104 (July-August 1977).

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 engaged non-academic, or at least only partially academic, Latin American Marxism in the period immediately preceding his theoretical discovery, which raises some crucial issues for understanding the reception of dependency theory in the United States. It is possible to tell the story of Frank's world-systemic turn almost wholly without Prebischian structuralism acting as a spur or stimulant in any way. In fact, structuralism had been circulating in North American academic thought for some time, and neither Frank nor anyone other development economist (possibly excepting Paul Baran) leveraged those insights into a break with the discrete comparative method that dominated the academic discipline. Frank's major intellectual break emerged out of the cognitive dissonance he experienced through close engagement with the programmatic implications of the *Marxist* version of analytical nation-statism. Frank pitted his ideas against proponents of Latin American feudalism, the party-liners who heckled him in 1963, who for their part simply applied the Stalinist version of historical materialism to their interpretation of Latin American history. The latter suffered not simply from a "dogmatic" application of the historical stages sketched by Marx, but also by the reified *nation-state* as the domain in which that historical progression unfolded, in relative isolation from processes adhering at the level of capitalism as a world-system. Before opting out of the life of the North American academic, Frank was too close to development economics to launch a critique that went to the heart of its basic assumptions. His first serious engagement with Latin American anti-Stalinist Marxist thought generated new insights and comparisons.

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.<sup>286</sup> Frank's ideas on underdevelopment had been germinating in Brasilia, 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 Brasilia, 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.<sup>287</sup> 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 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.<sup>288</sup>

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

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<sup>286</sup> PMS, Box 5, Frank to Huberman and Sweezy, August 15, 1963.

<sup>287</sup> PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy undated letter most likely written in September of 1963.

<sup>288</sup> PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy, October 28, 1963.

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.<sup>289</sup> 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.”<sup>290</sup> 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.”<sup>291</sup> Frank responded somewhat

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<sup>289</sup> 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, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 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.

<sup>290</sup> PMS, Box 20, Rackliffe to Sweezy, September 13, 1965.

<sup>291</sup> PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy and Huberman, August 15, 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.

differently to Sweezy's substantive critiques of Frank's ambiguous relationship 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 *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."<sup>292</sup> 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.<sup>293</sup>

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 EDCC, the development studies journal so influential at the start of Frank's 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.

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<sup>292</sup> PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy, January 15, 1964 [misdated 1963].

<sup>293</sup> PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy, March 9, 1964.

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, then to Santiago in 1965 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 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. 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 from CEPAL, and he took a \$150 advance from Sweezy based on their informal contract to turn the Brazilian feudalism piece into a short book.<sup>294</sup> Also, probably largely thanks to behind-the-scenes

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<sup>294</sup> PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy, May 30, 1964.



support from Sweezy, Frank applied to and received a \$5000 grant from the Rabinowitz Foundation.<sup>295</sup> Harry Magdoff, a *Monthly Review* affiliate who would soon become the co-editor 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.<sup>296</sup> 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 mechanistically apply them supposedly and come out with crap."<sup>297</sup> 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

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<sup>295</sup> AGF, Box 1, Frank to Rabinowitz Foundation, November 17, 1964

<sup>296</sup> PMS, Box 5, Frank to Hamza Alavi, June 24, 1964.

<sup>297</sup> PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy, November 23, 1964. Incidentally, this is the chapter of Frondizi's book that Peña helped write.

an essay entitled “Who is the Immediate Enemy?”, and it has since been interpreted a major thesis underlying “orthodox” dependency theory.<sup>298</sup>

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 to Marxist ideas to contemporary problems 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 Peña, helped with the redaction of parts of the book.<sup>299</sup> He also drew parallels to similar debates in Russia and Eastern Europe in the years leading up to the Revolution.<sup>300</sup> In short, the political crisis in Argentina in the late 1940s represented a particular example of a generally recurring problem for later-

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<sup>298</sup> Frank, *CU*, xvi; André Gunder Frank, “Who is the Immediate Enemy?” *Dependency and Underdevelopment* (London, 1972). 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; 116-117.

<sup>299</sup> 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. The book, entitled *Historia del Pueblo Argentino, 1500-1955* (Buenos Aires, 2012), stands in my opinion as an expression of how a concept of dependency can be useful when applied less formulaically.

<sup>300</sup> 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: Haymarket Books, 2009), 1-58.

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 volume to be put out by Monthly Review Press.<sup>301</sup> 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

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<sup>301</sup> Quotations, discussion of Chilean politics, and proposal and outline of Chilean history from PMS, Box 5, Frank to Sweezy, August 18, 1964. Sweezy responds favorably in a letter dated August 26, 1964.

become a major critique of Frank's work in the 1970, and Sweezy gave a tacit approval of this position.

At this point, all 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 explained 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, produced for trade and existed primarily to supply export oriented Chilean urban metropolises with their necessary food and raw materials.<sup>302</sup>

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*.

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<sup>302</sup>Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment*, 37.

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.<sup>303</sup> 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 chain of metropolises and satellites” can be traced all the way down to the level of the most rural peasant.<sup>304</sup> 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

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303Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment*, 50.

304Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment*, 146-7.

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 toward 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 reference 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 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.

**Chapter Five**  
**Neo-Marxism Embedded:**  
**Academics, Social Movements, and Reaction in the U.S. and Chile, 1966-1973**

As the student movement in the United States radicalized, passing into the “days of rage,” its decentralized structure and campus base facilitated the permeation of an academic Marxist theory of imperialism tracing its roots to *MR*’s interpretation of the Cuban Revolution. This discourse of neo-imperialism combined the “corporate liberal” interpretation of the reformist agenda responsible for pacifying the U.S. worker with the definition of “monopoly capitalism” as a mega-metropolis dominating the non-socialist world through relations of “neocolonialism” and “dependency.” Student radicals, hyped up by the macho, savior image of Castro conveyed by the likes of Mills and Huberman and Sweezy, had already proclaimed a “new insurgency” in the early 1960s. As the social crisis deepened, the adventurism implicit in this image would become increasingly manifest, especially on university campuses. Dependency theory seeped into North American academic radical consciousness concurrently with the sharp escalation of student radicalism over the war in Vietnam. As student radicals increasingly turned from Castro and Che to Mao and Ho Chi Minh as symbolic heroes of the anti-imperialist struggle, academics seized on dependency theory to imbue Marxisant anti-imperialist thought with scholarly legitimacy.

Concurrently, ideas of neocolonialism and dependency framed anti-American discourse in the social struggles gaining momentum in South America. Like in the United States, dependency theory in Latin America shouldered a dual load, operating simultaneously as academic theory of underdevelopment and public rhetoric purporting to offer a revolutionary path out of the morass. Unlike in the United States, conventions of Latin

American scholarship, informed by the infusion of the Althusserian concept of knowledge production as an arena of social struggle, saw this dual role in a less problematic light. Scholars of dependency theory established an overtly partisan interdisciplinary research center under the auspices of the University of Chile's economics department, from which they mounted a campaign to apply concepts of dependency theory to explore various aspects of Chilean national life, and to galvanize the country's rural and urban proletariat around a socialist program. Scholars of dependency, including Ruy Mauro Marini, Vania Bambirra, and Theotonio dos Santos, played leading roles in the Movimiento Izquierda Revolucionaria (Revolutionary Left Movement, or MIR), which mobilized among the Chilean proletariat to push the Allende administration to nationalize industry.

Neo-imperialist thought operated in different national contexts as either or both anti-imperialist rhetoric and academic theory of underdevelopment. Each of these contexts constituted its own discursive fields, with conventions and literary practices relating to different, often implicit goals. As rhetoric in the field of growing social struggles in North and South America, it sought to leverage analogies drawn from world-systemic processes to clarify the axes of struggle and provide a program and direction for liberation of all oppressed groups everywhere. As academic theory, it was judged by the standards and practices of problem-solving theory, including the appearance of objectivity and value-neutral scholarship, and the criterion of falsifiability. It fell short along both dimensions, solidifying a program of social struggle in the US that elicited a sharp response from what would become the New Right, while posing an academic theory that elicited an equally sharp backlash that helped neoliberalism move from the margin to the center in US academic and policy-making discourse of Third World development. The dynamics of the multivalent



social forces spinning around the axis of neo-imperialist discourse can best be grasped by viewing the rhetoric, social science, and political practice of revolution and reaction in the U.S. and Chile from the late 1960s to 1973.

### **Third World Marxism in US Campus Radicalism**

The Sino-Soviet, the Cuban Revolution, and the first articulations of dependency theory marked the solidification around “neo-colonialism” as the central concept for identifying sources of instability within the capitalist world-system. The premise of neo-colonialism was expressed succinctly in an editorial in the December 1963 issue of *Monthly Review*: “As long as it remains enmeshed in the capitalist world market, an underdeveloped country is *ipso facto* a subject of imperialist exploitation (manipulated prices for its exports and monopoly prices for its imports).”<sup>305</sup> Neo-Marxists posited markets as an *ipso facto* mechanism of exploitation. Previously, Smithian/Ricardian theory saw them as a mechanism for extending and deepening the division of labor, and initiating the virtuous cycle of capitalist development.<sup>306</sup> Most pre-Stalinist Marxist theoreticians saw markets as the regulating mechanism for the already-established capitalist mode of production, unfolding and extending as class conflict in pre-capitalist modes forced workers to sell their labor power for wages. For classical Marxist theorists of imperialism, including Lenin and Hilferding, markets did not penetrate and transform pre-capitalist societies, but rather served

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<sup>305</sup> Paul Sweezy and Leo Huberman, “Imperialism and National Independence” 15/8 (Dec., 1963) 418-431 at 422.

<sup>306</sup> For an excellent critique of the Ricardian theory of comparative advantage, see: Samir Amin, *Accumulation on a World Scale: A Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment*, (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1974).

as an *indicator* of underlying social transformations that had already occurred, as the outcome of social struggles, which created the mutual dependence between wage laborers and capital on which all processes of capitalism ultimately depend.<sup>307</sup> Popular Front Marxists, Stalinism as a theory of imperialism, wondered if markets had already become obsolete, transplanted by a corporatist economic structure that dampened, if not outright eliminated, competition (thus supplanting the law of value as the regulating mechanism). With the neo-imperialist formulation, the relation of states and, ultimately, sub-state actors would no longer be taken as a given. It would not be assumed that markets would do the work of infusing precapitalist societies with the material and cultural benefits of capitalism, nor that social groups dependent on the world market for significant portions of the material subsistence need necessarily have undergone the same historical trajectories as Western capitalism, nor even that the law of value, riddled with contradictions, had exhausted its historic mission in the world economy.

Latin America continued to play an important symbolic role, as the most proximate and familiar site of anti-imperialist guerrilla warfare. *Monthly Review's* early predictions proved prescient, and approaching mid-decade virtually everyone agreed that Castro headed a "socialist" regime of some sort. Academic New Leftists seamlessly wove together the emerging strands of dependency theory and neocolonialism in their interpretation of the significance of Latin American struggles against neo-imperialism. The fall 1964 issue of *Studies on the Left*, devoted entirely to Latin American struggles, illustrates the extent to

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<sup>307</sup> See Lenin, "On the So-Called Market Question," *Lenin Collected Works* Vol. 1 (Moscow: Progress Publishers) 75-128. For a discussion of the similarities between Lenin's and Hilferding's views, see: Richard B. Day, *The "Crisis" and the "Crash": Soviet Studies of the West, 1917-1939*, (London: NLB, 1981), 2-33.

which Latin American dependency theory, and Frank's work specifically, had already made its way into the analyses of the leading theoretical organ of the New Left. James O'Connor and Timothy Harding, who would both make successful academic careers in the 1970s as experts in Latin America and theorists of imperialism, took the lead. In two articles, one surveying political developments across the region and one offering a historical analysis of "The Foundations of Cuban Socialism," O'Connor demonstrated how the resurgence of pre-Stalinist conceptions of class structures and alliances intermingled with the circulationist concepts of dependency theory in the rhetoric of neocolonialism in the US. In both articles, O'Connor identified "the failure of the continent's national bourgeoisie" and "the ascendancy of United States neocolonialism" as the dual determining factors necessary to comprehend the logic and trajectory of political movements.<sup>308</sup> In an indication he closely followed Latin American intellectual trends, he already employed categories of dependency theory to link neocolonialism to the specific national class structure of various countries, two full years before English-language versions of the major works of dependency theory began circulating in North American social science. Imperialism operated through "extensions of the metropolitan economy" and "integration of satellite economies," through which it created a situation of "dependence" the end goal of which was the extraction of "surplus."<sup>309</sup> Countries in the region could be classified according to their subjugation within this neocolonial/dependent structure, and these classifications could in turn explain the likelihood

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<sup>308</sup> James O'Connor, "Stalemate in Latin America," *Studies* 4/4 (Fall, 1964), 3-26 at 3.

<sup>309</sup> O'Connor, "Stalemate," 4.

of a class formation conducive to producing a class willing to lead the way in economic and land reform.<sup>310</sup>

From 1965 to 1966, Baran's and Sweezy's 'opus' finally saw the light of day, first in chapter extracts in *Monthly Review* then in full in 1966. The product of at least fifteen years of intellectual collaboration, the opus came out under the Monthly Review Press in 1966 under the title *Monopoly Capital*, and appeared on the scene at a propitious moment. *Monopoly Capital* wove together all the strands of 1950s radical thought into coherent, up-to-date defense of Marxist political economy, as understood by the authors. It simultaneously rationalized Third World nationalism, the Civil Rights movement, and campus radicalism as the legitimate inheritors of the revolutionary Marxist vanguard. As in *Political Economy of Growth*, the effort rested on the theoretical move of discarding the Marxist theory of surplus-value in favor of Baran's theory of surplus, which the authors now clearly defined as "the difference between what a society produces and the cost of producing it."<sup>311</sup> All societies throughout human history have produced surplus, and looking at their "modes of utilization of surplus" offers the best way to tie together a society's economic foundation and its "political, cultural and ideological superstructure."<sup>312</sup> Whatever its independent theoretical value, by its formulation in *Monopoly Capital* it is clear that "surplus" departed significantly from Marx's concept of "surplus-value," on which the entirety of *Capital* hinged. To put it simply, Baran and Sweezy measured surplus in terms of prices and quantities of material

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<sup>310</sup> O'Connor, "Stalemate," 10-11.

<sup>311</sup> Paul A. Baran and Paul S. Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital: An Essay on the American Economic and Social Order*, (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1966), 10.

<sup>312</sup> Baran and Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital*, 8.

goods produced, while Marx measured surplus-value in terms of quantities of labor. The “transformation” problem—whereby “value” in terms of labor is transformed into prices and costs of production—has always proved a theoretical sticking point for Marxist political economists. Baran and Sweezy simply theorized it out of existence by erecting their political economy of neo-imperialism on the conceptual foundation with more direct, immediately observable empirical referents.

Beginning with a model constructed around corporate monopoly as the central unit of the American economy, Baran and Sweezy engaged economic literature on market structure to develop a prolonged argument that capitalism in its monopoly phase continued to organize production in the interests of private owners, and thus institutionalized rather than superseded the capitalist function. They rejected all notions that modern corporations, under the control of socially responsible technocrats, made productive decisions based on broad social interests as opposed to profit of controlling interests. Against anti-trust laws, oligopolies set prices through “tacit collusion” following the lead of a price setter. Where tacit collusion under price leadership breaks down, the state steps in to set prices in an optimal range. Rejecting theories of state capitalism, Baran and Sweezy insisted that the state intervenes *on behalf* of corporate interests, not autonomously in the interests of a plurality of social forces. They employed this analysis of monopoly market structure to lay the basis for their central claim, that monopoly capitalism continued to spur innovation through structural pressures on corporations to reduce production costs, which in turn generated a constant increase in surplus (quantity of goods greater than the sum total required for all aspects of reproduction) which must be either consumed, invested, or wasted. All irrationalities they had witnessed, or read about, they ultimately attributed to this central, structural contradiction between the

ever-expanding surplus and the relatively more limited means of disposing of it. In its monopoly phase, a corporate capital-bourgeois state fusion could regulate output by operating below full capacity and maintain demand by manipulating middle-class consumer sensibilities. Thus, monopoly capital would be mired in prolonged stagnation rather than periodic crisis.

Following on the wake of the publication of *Monopoly Capital*, Sweezy and Harry Magdoff were invited as keynote speakers at the first major regional REP conference. The New York SDS organized the conference, which was held in McCosh Hall at Princeton University February 17-19, 1967. According to the diligent, descriptive reporting of CIA spy Alice Widener, the conference kicked off Friday night with a panel discussing the “Port Authority Statement.” Authors David Gilbert, Robert Gottlieb, and Gerry Tenney were affiliated with the so-called “praxis axis,” or the group within the increasingly factionalized student movement pushing for more theoretical engagement with Marxism to develop a clearer, centralized program for the unwieldy movement. Gilbert, Gottlieb and Tenney hosted the panel, and received comments from Columbia University economist Alexander Ehrlich, whose most famous book identified intellectual antecedents to development economics in the Soviet Industrialization debates. The CIA informant interpreted Magdoff’s and Sweezy’s prominent role in the conference as evidence that SDS was serving as a communist front organization. Widener objected most heartily to speakers who characterized the United States as the “monster,” defined as “American corporate capitalism.”<sup>313</sup> She also took umbrage with regular use of the term “corporate liberalism,” which she interpreted (not completely

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<sup>313</sup> CIA, “Berkeley at Princeton,” 4.

inaccurately) as “American businessmen’s support of measures that improve our economic and social system.”<sup>314</sup> *Monopoly Capital* stood at the theoretical center of these offenses, and Sweezy’s “tortured Marxist dialectic” was the source of “miscalling of simple truth” at the heart of the “ritualistic intellectual process throughout the SDS-REP conference.”<sup>315</sup>

There is some truth to the CIA’s interpretation, as the REP represented a moment in which factions of New Left campus radicalism began to cohere around ideas rooted in Popular Front Stalinism as it had evolved throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Magdoff, who joined *Monthly Review’s* two-person editorial board following Leo Huberman’s death in 1968, had professional and personal ties to the left-wing law firm of Rabinowitz and Boudin. Founded by partners Victor Rabinowitz and Leonard Boudin, Rabinowitz and Boudin was an essentially pro-Stalinist firm dedicated to defending civil liberties of Communists and radicals. Leonard Boudin was the nephew of pre-Soviet-era Socialist Party theoretician Louis Boudin, whose strident criticism of the nationalistic turn in the Second International and his 1916 book *War and Socialism* marked among the first U.S.-based original contributions to the Marxist theory of imperialism. Representing the left in the Socialist Party, Louis Boudin sympathized with the Bolsheviks and supported the formation of the Communist Party, though he would become inactive beyond teaching at New York workers’ school in the 1920s. Victor Rabinowitz, a CP member for most of his life, began his legal career at the elder Boudin’s firm in the 1930s. In addition to his legal work, Rabinowitz created a foundation to fund left-wing projects. Magdoff served on the board of the Rabinowitz

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<sup>314</sup> CIA, “Berkeley at Princeton,” 4.

<sup>315</sup> CIA, “Berkeley at Princeton,” 5.

foundation in the late 1950s and 1960s until he joined the staff of *Monthly Review*, in which capacity he secured research grants for many projects that would be published by Monthly Review Press, including Frank's *Capitalism and Underdevelopment*. Among other things, Magdoff's work for the Rabinowitz Foundation secured deep ties to New York intellectual Stalinism, and facilitated personal connections with the radicalizing segments of SDS through, for example, Leonard Boudin's daughter Kathy Boudin, who became a founder of the Weather Underground.

Best known intellectually for his *New Imperialism*, Magdoff contributed to more overtly packing discussions of Third World liberation within the frame of the classical Marxist theory of imperialism. Trained as a mathematician, and employed for a period as the statistician for the Works Progress Administration, he had the methodological savvy necessary to validate his claims of American empire with extensive concrete empirical referents, precisely the task Baran and Sweezy had *avoided* in formulating the abstractions behind their opus. He was deeply embedded in the New York Jewish intellectual left, and held temporary teaching positions intermittently throughout the 1960s at Columbia and the New School. His breakout as a publicly known left-wing scholar/journalist came with a 1965 article published in *Monthly Review*, and a review of *Monopoly Capital* published in the journal *Economic Development and Culture Change* still under the editorship of Frank's old advisor Bert Hoselitz.

From the mid-to-late 1960s the Neo-Marxist theory of imperialism, rooted ultimately in the belief that anti-American nationalist movements provided the only hope for world revolution, would exert increasing influence over the line of campus radicalism. Speaking at the Princeton REP conference headlined by Sweezy and Magdoff, SDS president Gregory



Calvert vented his skepticism over the prospects for locating a viable “agent of social transformation” in the US white working class. The implications were dire. Absent such a movement, spoke Calvert, “individuals with revolutionary hopes and perspectives must orient themselves toward Third-World revolutions and develop those methods of activity which will maximize the impact of peasant-based revolutions on the structure of the American imperialist monster.”<sup>316</sup> The “Port Authority Statement,” first delivered at the same conference, reflected the strong influence *Monthly Review* and *Studies on the Left* exerted on the praxis axis formulations of monopoly capitalism, corporate liberalism, and imperialism, which the authors presented as a set of interrelated structural elements determining more superstructural social features such as alienation and the forms of social control. While authors such as Herbert Marcuse and David Riesman, typically cited as foundational in New Left thought, did make their way into the analysis, in general the authors sought to incorporate their insights into a “schematic model” grounded in the first instance on the structural logic of capitalism.<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> Gregory Calvert, “White America: Radical Consciousness and Social Change,” reprinted in Massimo Teodori ed., *The New Left: A Documentary History*, (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), 412-418 at 413.

<sup>317</sup> Description of the meeting drawn from “Berkeley at Princeton A Report by Alice Widener on the First Major Regional Radical Education Project Conference held by Students for a Democratic Society at McCosh Hall, Princeton University, February 17, 18 and 19, 1967,” published on the CIA Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room (<https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp69b00369r000200140104-4>). For the paper, see: David Glibert et al., “Toward a Theory of Social Change: The ‘Port Authority Statement,’” 1967 (<https://archive.org/details/PortAuthorityStatement>). For Ehrlich, see: Alexander Erlich, *The Soviet Industrialization Debate, 1924-1928*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960).

The growing influence of the *Monthly Review* perspective came to a head at the last conference of the SDS, in June of 1969. The group with the strongest ties to the New York intellectual currents who had their formative years in Popular Front Marxism showed up to the convention with a controversial position paper to which historians have largely attributed the breakup of the 1960s student radical movement.<sup>318</sup> Though historians have (fairly) criticized the paper, “You Don’t Need a Weatherman to Know Which Way the Wind Blows,” as a largely incoherent and rambling document, they have devoted insufficient attention to its intellectual pedigree, especially considering the perhaps exaggerated role they have attributed to it as the harbinger of discord in “the movement.” The faction that would soon form an independent organization called Weatherman (later Weather Underground) drafted the document discursively in opposition primarily to the “labor metaphysic” program proffered by Progressive Labor. To the extent that the document offered a program, it derived from the theory that contemporary social struggles would revolve around the axis of national liberation from imperialist oppression.<sup>319</sup>

On the question of the revolutionary agent, “Weatherman” thus represented the *culmination* more than the *negation* of the social theory that had guided SDS since Port Huron. Informed by the heavy influence of Mills and Williams, and the steady if more marginal dialogue with *MR*, the leading intellectual cadre of the student movement had long been receptive to critiques of US culpability in the Cold War- at least as equal partner if not

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<sup>318</sup> See especially: Giltin, *Sixties*, 384-91.

<sup>319</sup> Karen Ashley et al., “You Don’t Need a Weatherman to Know Which Way the Wind Blows,” in Jacobs ed., *Weatherman*, 51-90 at 51 [originally published in *New Left Notes*, June 18, 1969].

aggressor- while more skeptical of the value of the Marxist analysis of the working class as the agent of revolutionary change. The monopoly capitalism and corporate liberalism theses worked in public discourse to a single end; they explained the reactionary nature of the U.S. working class in terms of the political economy of capitalist accumulation on a global scale and a class analysis of the redistributive policies of the New Deal state. By the 1969 conference, the Weatherman faction had thoroughly assimilated these theoretical postulates, and drawn out their logical conclusions for the best way for students to fight capitalism from within, without the help of a progressive working class. They explicitly employed concepts of corporate liberalism, and the monopoly capitalism theory of crisis as “gradual deterioration” rather than cyclical disruptions. In an article written by future Weatherman Jim Mellon and published in *New Left Notes* in preparation for the 1969 convention, whole passages came directly from *Monopoly Capital*. The final section, entitled “Crisis of Capitalism,” was, in fact, simply a brief synopsis of Baran and Sweezy’s book, which posited a capitalist system no longer driven by price competition, mired in permanent stagnation due to insufficient outlets for growing surplus, and a resulting authoritarian government run by a wasteful military-industrial complex.<sup>320</sup> In the abstract, the Weathermen argued the overwhelming majority of the U.S. had become working class, and thus had an “objective” interest in socializing the means of production.<sup>321</sup> Subjectively, however, the American working class had been led into “false consciousness” because of its privileged position

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<sup>320</sup> Corporate liberalism: Jim Mellon, “More on Youth Movement,” in Jacobs ed., *Weatherman*, 39-49 at 41. Monocap theory of crisis: Mellon, “Youth Movement,” 47-9.

<sup>321</sup> Mellon, “Youth Movement,” 40.

internationally. It was up to the student movement to agitate the monster from within, making it more difficult for Washington to prosecute imperialist wars, and thus debilitating its method for alleviating its own internal contradictions.<sup>322</sup> It would be difficult to overstate the extent to which this represented a wholesale adoption of every aspect of the theory propagated by the *MR* school since their intervention into public discourse surrounding the Cuban Revolution.

Weatherman's program, so misguided in retrospect, flowed logically from their theory, which in broad contours reflected that of SDS more generally. Locating the central axis of bourgeois/proletarian antagonism at the level of the struggle among nation-states, movement intellectuals appropriated concepts of international relations to cognize more local forms of oppression. The concepts of "colony" and "caste" pervaded discussions of racial and sexual (not yet gender) axes of repression. Much of neo-imperialist theory rested on the notion that the capitalist system depended, objectively, on the super-exploitation of colonized workers. Different thinkers in different parts of the world varied widely in their description of the mechanisms of super-exploitation, and in their explanations of the precise contradictions that objectively compelled capitalism to extract super-profits from colonized peoples. Yet, in general, all rested on the same assumption, tracing ultimately to Luxemburg, that the system depended "objectively" on such exploitation, without which it would be unable to resolve its central contradiction between the growing ability to produce and relatively more limited ability to consume. Weatherman and the Revolutionary Youth Movement internalized the political economic assumption that capitalism could only

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<sup>322</sup> Ashley, "Weatherman," 52.

overcome its “basic contradiction” through super-exploitation, which they extended to super-exploitation of women and people of color domestically.<sup>323</sup> According to this logic, black people face conditions that are not those of being part of a class, but rather are those of being a “colony.”<sup>324</sup> Consciousness of this super-exploitation would arise as “self-determination,” meaning super-exploited groups would mobilize and wage their struggles against imperialism separately under the mobilizing rhetoric of nationalism, not proletarian transnationalism.<sup>325</sup> White revolutionaries should allow all nationalist movements to unfold, while supporting them through adventurist agitation to impede the monster’s ability to repress and re-assimilate super-exploited colonial subjects.

### **Dependency Theory in the Chilean Road to Socialism**

Concurrent with the radicalization in the United States around a program to disrupt and destroy the monster, dependency theorists reconvened in Santiago, Chile and tried to embed their theory of global capitalism into the country’s rapidly developing socialist and anti-imperialist politics. Following the 1964 military coup, many Brazilian intellectuals received asylum in Mexico, making Mexico City- in particular the School of Economics of the Autonomous National University of Mexico (UNAM) and the Center of International

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<sup>323</sup> Mellon, “Youth Movement,” 47: “The basic contribution of capitalism- that between the price of labor and its productivity- manifested itself at the level of the whole economy as a total production of goods produced by labor greater than the demand for the goods based on the wages paid to labor.”

<sup>324</sup> Andrew Kopkind, “The Real SDS Stands Up,” in Harold Jacobs ed., *Weatherman*, (Rampart Press, 1970), 15-28.

<sup>325</sup> Kopkind, “SDS,” 22-3.

Studies of the College of Mexico (CEI)- a temporary locus for the continuing development of what was already being called dependency theory. Ruy Mauro Marini narrowly escaped Brazil by clandestinely seeking asylum from the Mexican embassy in Brasilia in the middle of the night, hours after being liberated from his arrest by a declaration of *habeas corpus* of the Supreme Federal Tribunal. In Mexico City, he reunited with Frank, then a visiting professor at UNAM, who introduced him into intellectual circles and helped him secure a position at the CEI. Marini's clout grew at CEI as he published a string of articles analyzing, according to the categories of dependency, the political circumstances in Brazil leading up the coup. In addition, he produced one important theoretical piece that contributed to growing debates within the dependency camp, that would be translated into English and published in *MR*.<sup>326</sup>

Marini's first efforts in exile sought to sum up the lessons of the Brazilian coup. As in the case of the Argentine anti-Stalinist left, the concept of dependency provided Marini with a tool for framing his analysis of the social roots of Brazilian political formations. Although certainly containing many of the elements of the dependency approach, Marini's main contributions to understanding the Brazilian path to military dictatorship resembled nothing of dependency theory as a positivist model. His dissatisfaction with the prevailing consensus, which saw the coup as a successful effort by the US to exert control over Brazilian politics, inspired Marini to sketch a Marxist interpretation of twentieth century Brazilian politics, as he understood it. "In a world characterized by interdependence," he wrote in 1965, "nobody

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<sup>326</sup> Ruy Mauro Marini, "Memoria," Archive of Ruy Mauro Marini, Spanish translation by Claudio Colombini (hereafter Marini, "Memoria").

denies the influence of international factors on internal questions, above all as it pertains to the so-called ‘dominant’ or ‘metropolitan’ economies and an underdeveloped country. But, in what manner is this influence exercised? What weight does it have compared to specific internal factors of the society on which it acts?”<sup>327</sup>

Marini unveiled his analysis of the social roots of the Brazilian dictatorship through a series of articles published in 1965 and 1966. Primarily published in Spanish in Latin American journals and political periodicals, except one English-language piece published in *Monthly Review*, the five articles rely on the same narrative structure, differing only slightly in their focus.<sup>328</sup> In coming to terms with his country’s tragedy, as he saw it, Marini relied on, advanced, and gave substantive content to some of the central concepts of *dependentismo*. The narrative arc of his history focused closely on the inter- and intra-class coalitions behind successive Brazilian political formations, and the root causes of the social antagonisms that led those moments of stability to break down. Catalyzed by the emergence of a nascent industrial bourgeoisie in the early decades of the twentieth century, hegemonic blocs arose and fell out of the complicated efforts to formulate policies conducive both to the goals of the industrialists and those of the traditional landowning oligarchy, the latter of which found its

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<sup>327</sup> Ruy Mauro Marini, “Contradicciones y conflictos en el Brasil contemporáneo,” *Foro Internacional*, v. 5, n. 4, abril-junio de 1965, 511-546 (El Colegio de Mexico: Mexico City).

<sup>328</sup> In addition to the above cited article, the collection includes: Ruy Mauro Marini, “Brazilian Interdependence and Imperialist Integration,” *Monthly Review* 17/7 (New York: Dec, 1965); Ruy Mauro Marini, “el eje militar brasil-argentino y el subimperialismo,” *Arauco* no. 71 (Dec., 1965); Ruy Mauro Marini, “La dialéctica del desarrollo capitalista en Brasil,” *Cuadernos Americanos*, Año XXV, Vol. CXLVI, No. 3, México, mayo-junio de 1966. The following discussion is a synthesis of these various works. Unless specifically cited, the main contours of the analysis can be found in any one of them, which in fact from the perspective of advancing the theory of dependency are virtually interchangeable, and largely repeat rather than build on one another.

main economic base in the export of agriculture, particularly coffee. For Marini, 'external factors,' such as the price of coffee on the world market, influenced and shaped, but did not determine in any rigid sense, the motives of Brazilian ruling elites. Prices on international markets for agricultural exports and for the imported heavy equipment required for industrialization mitigated the relative strength of agriculture and industry in the ruling coalition, shaped tariff policy and created specific balance of payments and foreign exchange pressures. The latter, foreign exchange pressures, were resolved in part through "Instruction 113," opening the country to foreign investment, under which circumstance foreign capital played an important role in the domestic conflicts, as neither an external factor nor a wholly internal one.

While external pressures run consistently through Marini's analysis, internal class structure and conflict constitute the core analytical thread. The structure of landownership played a big part in the analysis. Industrialists willingly passed on a part of the benefits of increased productivity to the countryside, in the form of low prices, to maintain political stability, and because of the dependence of the entire economy on the foreign exchange brought in from agricultural exports. However, due to the highly-concentrated form of landownership, this tenuous arrangement suffered under the weight of its own contradictions. The uneven distribution of the benefits of increased productivity in the countryside set definite limits to the expansion of the domestic market for manufactures, while simultaneously increasing the flow of impoverished agricultural workers into the city, swelling the "reserve army" and pressing down on wages. Ultimately, the militarization of rural and urban workers forced the hand of the bourgeoisie, and constituted the biggest factor in the arrangement that gave heavy support for foreign capital. Reflecting, perhaps, the



outlook shaped from his social vantage point as a lifelong academic, Marini gave pride of place to the student movement as the locomotive force for Brazilian radical politics. Particularly in the period following the coup, he placed his confidence in students as the social group most likely to galvanize a democratic movement. Leading by example, taking their struggle to the streets, students would attract workers and broader democratic forces in a social movement capable of breaking the back of military rule.<sup>329</sup>

Marini's analysis relied heavily on the concept of "integration" of international capital. His concept resembled Silvio Frondizi's "global capitalist integration." Although Marini never cited nor discussed Frondizi, given the latter's heavy influence on Frank and Marini's participation in Frank's seminar on the myths and realities of underdevelopment in Brasilia, it is fair to say that Frondizi influenced Marini's thought at least indirectly. In the work of both authors, "integration" connoted forging transnational links among various national capitalist classes. In Marini's narrative, it was not a foregone conclusion that the Brazilian bourgeoisie would align itself with North American capital, and much of the country's political oscillations can be explained by exploring other options, including repeated attempts to pursue a more nationally autonomous development strategy in alliance at various moments either with the large-landowners or with labor in a "Popular Front." While the first option- a bourgeois/latifundista alliance- continually butted up against the contradictions of the unequal structure of landownership, the prospect of coalition with workers posed a threat to profit margins through wage increases and, ultimately, a potential challenge to capitalist property relations. Through trial and error, Brazilian industrial capital

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<sup>329</sup> Ruy Mauro Marini, "Los estudiantes y la vida política en Brasil," *El Día*, Testimonios y Documentos, México, 2 agosto 1968.

came to accept the alliance with North American capital, which entailed opening its country to finance capital and foreign direct investment. Marini understood that suggesting this level of cooperation and coordination among various national capitalists ran the risk of departing too far from the classical Marxist theories of imperialism, which, especially in Lenin, insisted that interimperialist competition would preclude any such supranational organization of the capitalist system. But, again like Frondizi, he viewed integration flowing from the extreme concentration of North American capital. In the element of his analysis most heavily influenced by the Monthly Review School, Marini believed that this concentration changed the imperatives of capitalism, impelling the export of department I capital goods rather than opening foreign markets for consumer goods.<sup>330</sup>

Andre Gunder Frank bounced around the Western Hemisphere for a few years while waiting for his book to come out. He alternated between temporary teaching appointments- in Mexico and at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver- and retrenchment in Chile where Marta Fuentes had people. After having secured a research position with the International Labor Organization, to study rural labor in Chile, Frank made his way back to Santiago. Arriving amidst mounting tension in Chilean politics, Frank was detained for several hours at the airport, and was only released when then-Senator Salvador Allende, longtime figurehead for the coalition of left parties, personally showed up to the airport to have him released.<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> This comes out most clearly, perhaps not coincidentally, in his only English-language piece published in *Monthly Review*. See especially Marini, “Brazilian Interdependence,” 10-12. Though Ernest Mandel critiqued the dependency perspective, his analysis of international concentration and centralization of capital echoed Frondizi’s and Marini’s concepts of “integration.” See: Ernest Mandel, *Late Capitalism*, (London: NLB, 1972), 310-342.

<sup>331</sup> International Labor Organization, “In re Frank (Nos. 1 and 2) Judgement No. 154,” File 54, AGF.

In Frank's absence, his former colleagues, with whom he had initiated the dependency theory line out of seminars in Brazil, had flocked to Santiago to work at Latin America's new locus of critical thought: the *Centro de Estudios Socioeconomicos* (Center for Socio-Economic Studies). Founded in 1964 under the auspices of the Faculty of Economics at the University of Chile, Santiago, the center quickly attracted leading intellectuals from throughout South America, and at various times seminars, conferences and symposiums drew radical intellectuals from the United States and Europe, including Italian Lelio Basso, the French Marxist economist Charles Bettelheim, and the American radical journalist, our old friend Paul Marlo Sweezy. The first director, the Chilean sociologist Eduardo Hamuy, did not like the clunky sounding acronym CESEC, and decided instead to brand the research center CESO, a play on the Spanish *seso* meaning brain. "We are the thinking part of the faculty," said Hamuy. "We are the 'brain' of the faculty."<sup>332</sup> Reflecting on the center's significance more than twenty years after its destruction at the hands of the Augusto Pinochet's military regime, Marini recalled: "CESO was, in its moment, one of the principal intellectual centers of Latin America. The majority of Latin American, European, and United States intellectualism, primarily of the left, passed through there, by means of participation in talks, conferences, roundtables and seminars."<sup>333</sup> As we will see, Marini's assessment was

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<sup>332</sup> Quoted in Juan Cristóbal Cárdenas Castro, "¡Ojo con el CESO! Hacia una reconstrucción de la historia del Centro de Estudios Socioeconómicos de la Universidad de Chile, 1965-1973," 2 [accessed 7/23/17 at: <https://www.scribd.com/document/214862808/2013-Juan-Cristobal-Cardenas-Ojo-con-el-CESO-Hacia-una-reconstruccion-de-la-historia-del-Centro-de-Estudios-Socioeconomicos-de-la-Universidad-de>].

<sup>333</sup> For founding of CESO, see: Eduardo Hamuy, "Temas de Nuestra Tiempo," *Cuadernos del Centro de Estudios Socioeconómicos* Vol. 1 (1966).

fair and accurate, and CESO faculty deserve recognition as pioneers in many ideas that trickled into North American, English-language scholarship in the form of “world-system analysis” in the 1970s through the work of Samir Amin, Immanuel Wallerstein, Giovanni Arrighi, and Andre Gunder Frank.

With dependency theory as an overarching theoretical framework, CESO promoted engaged scholarship in which academics would elevate national consciousness, and the *pueblo* would expand the perspective and inform the directions of academic research. In the first years after its formation, CESO faculty reported the progress of their seminars and research clusters, which were published and circulated to the rest of the faculty, first in a very informal Bulletin (*Boletín*), then in the *Cuadernos del CESO* (Notebooks of CESO), which ran for several years and combined finished research with outlines and updates.<sup>334</sup> In addition to synthesizing and updating faculty on progress, the Bulletins and Notebooks editorialized on the ideology behind the research agenda, in what can be considered attempts to solidify the faculty around an epistemology of science that emphasized socially engaged scholarship. Hamuy, the first Director of CESO, argued that social science must learn to deal with actual social problems by directly engaging *el pueblo* “in a give and take in which academics and scientists learn from the people, while simultaneously bringing them the scientific method, elevating the level of consciousness, learning the problems, etc.”<sup>335</sup> Such a social science, for

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<sup>334</sup> The entire collection of *Boletines* and *Cuadernos* are available at the Chilean National Library, as are several documents relating to specific seminars of CESO. All ensuing citations of *Boletines* or *Cuadernos del CESO* were accessed at the Chilean National Library in August, 2015, unless otherwise specified.

<sup>335</sup> *Boletín* 2/2 (Nov-Dec, 1967), vii.

Hamuy, “cannot be value-neutral, since the very social problems it must address, social change, economic development, transformation of the structures of power, are by their nature political.”<sup>336</sup>

Broadly speaking, the division of labor in the early years of CESO can be divided into two categories. In the first category were seminars and theoretical research projects devoted to synthesizing the literature on dependency theory, honing the analytic categories, and generating ways to measure and strengthen its postulates, and generalize from the disparate experiences of various Latin American countries. This group included most of the Brazilian exiles, including Theotonio dos Santos and Vania Bambirra initially and, later, Marini and Frank.

In the context of international developments, the CESO cluster devoted to clarifying precisely how dependency theory intervened in the theoretical field of political economy contributed important insights to the implications of multinational corporations as the “cell” of global capitalism. Dos Santos considered the principle and subsidiary contradictions of imperialism in its new “integrated monopoly” phase, and how those related to the contradictions of its earlier “industrial-liberal” and “finance capital” phases.<sup>337</sup> As in the earlier phase, neo-imperialism in dos Santos’s analysis continued to move according to the principle dialectic of capitalism, the class struggle manifested in the final instance out of the contradiction between the increasing socialization of the means of production, on the one hand, the centralization and concentration of private accumulation of surplus-value on the

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<sup>336</sup> *Boletín* 2/2 (Nov-Dec, 1967), xi.

<sup>337</sup> Dos Santos, “Imperialismo Contemporáneo,” 14.

other. However, the multinational corporation constituted the new “cell” of imperialism in its integrated monopoly phase, around which capitalism reorganized itself as a world-system giving rise to distinct subsidiary contradictions as “mediated” forms of the primary contradiction of capitalism. Above all, dos Santos saw a tension between the interests of the multinational corporate bourgeoisie, increasingly articulated on a productive terrain without respect to national boundaries, and the absence of a supranational state to perform the functions necessary for accumulation at the transnational level.<sup>338</sup> Bamberra, writing from the perspective of the dependent countries, echoed dos Santos’s identification of the importance of multinationals. She categorized Latin American states into Type A and Type B dependencies, determined by which economic sector attracted the bulk of foreign direct investment from multinationals in the global integrated monopoly (*integración monopólica mundial*) phase of capitalism. Where the classic primary-export structure of dependency created an urban middle class attached to the service sector surrounding the extraction economy, class antagonism required dependent industrialization to continue to realize super-profits. Multinationals could easily monopolize domestic markets by employing unavailable local technology to produce consumer goods, with the added benefit of allowing them to productively employ equipment made obsolete in the metropolis by the increasingly rapid turnover time for fixed capital caused by the pace of technological advancement.<sup>339</sup> This was an important and fruitful theoretical line that sought with the utmost theoretical rigor to formulate precisely how complex Marxist problems such as the rising organic composition of

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<sup>338</sup> Dos Santos, “Imperialismo Contemporáneo,” 22-4.

<sup>339</sup> On obsolete equipment, Bamberra, “Integración Monopólica,” 60. With this analysis, Bamberra anticipated a major theme of Ernest Mandel’s *Late Capitalism*.

capital played out on the a transnational terrain of unequal and combined social, political and economic development.

A division of labor operated between these two pieces. Taken independently, they could be accused of “one-sided” analyses. Dos Santos, investigating the contradiction between the multinationals’ need for order and the anarchy of international relations, appeared to offer an “external” explanation in which processes occurring above their heads determined the economic fate of Latin American actors. Bamberger, on the other hand, categorized Latin American states according to their types of links to the export economy. Missing was the connection between these two, or, specifically, why and how the incentives of multinationals and the incentives of local aspiring entrepreneurs get “articulated” in the specific types outlined by Bamberger. This aspect would be taken up more fully in “modes of production” analysis later in the decade, but likely it was on the CESO agenda and would have been pursued within the highly productive intellectual formation there had history not intervened. More damning, perhaps, Bamberger here indicated a problem that would plague the modes of production literature. There is a good deal of variance *within* her “Type A” and “Type B” categories of dependency. At one end of the spectrum, states even seem to be operating outside of the confines of “dependency” in any meaningful sense, generating dynamic and more-or-less autonomous industrial sectors that could be perceived in their “take-off” in the Rostowian sense. At worst, this would seem to nullify the case for dependency as a “block” to robust capitalist development. At best, it suggested an analytical looseness to the category, which seemed to yield an infinite regress of typologies, rendering the theory incapable of explaining much of anything at all.

The CESO faculty formed around the “ideology and culture” cluster formed a second broad category of research, which set out, concretely, to understand the education system as an institution either reinforcing or subverting dependent situations. This cluster, composed of Marta Harnecker, Tomás Vasconi, Marco Garcia de Almeida, Fanny Contreras, Raquel Salinas, Antonio Sánchez and José Bengoa, operated within a research paradigm heavily influenced by Althusserian concepts of social formations as the combination or “articulation” of multiple modes of production, and of *theoretical practice* as the epistemology of science. The French Marxist philosopher’s influence on Chilean academia ironically owes something to the international institutional infrastructure propagating Washington’s development program, and the historically contingent fact that John F. Kennedy’s turn to Latin America, the Alliance for Progress, happened to coincide with the prominence of the human capital line in development economics. The latter, representing a certain logical stage in working out the implications of Parsonian pattern variables, suggested that education to help foster a culture of entrepreneurship mattered at least as much as capital investment for underdeveloped countries. In September 1960 the World Bank created the International Development Association, a division that would channel funds, largely contributions from the Ford Foundation, into low interest “soft loans” for education planning, under the expectation that the economic benefits of funding education requires more time to bear fruit than direct capital investment.<sup>340</sup> These developments led to the creation in 1963 of the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Housed in Paris, the

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<sup>340</sup> Guy Benveniste, “Creation of the International Institute for Educational Planning,” *Educational Planning* 16/3 (2007), 1-9 at 2-3.



IIEP initially showed special interest in Latin America, reflecting the predominance of the Alliance for Progress.

This institutional background explains an influx of Latin American scholars, focused on issues of education and pedagogy, in Paris at the height of Althusser's influence, including future CESO faculty Harnecker and Vasconi. Many of these burgeoning scholars, like their New Left North American counterparts, had been radicalized by the Cuban Revolution immediately prior to travelling to Paris under the auspices of Alliance for Progress, Ford Foundation, and USAID grants. In Chilean philosopher Marta Harnecker's firsthand account, the critiques of Marxism she encountered in her visit to Cuba in 1960 motivated her for the first time to engage those ideas. She thus arrived in Paris in 1963, on a UNESCO grant, "with the goal of studying [Marxist] thought in [her] free time."<sup>341</sup> With this intention, she naturally gravitated to Althusser, then a professor at the *École normale supérieure* engaged in his close reading of the complete works of Marx's *Capital* that would result in 1965 in the publication of his influential book *Reading Capital*. Harnecker developed close intellectual and personal ties with Althusser, and through the former the ideas of the latter circulated in the seminars of Latin American scholars studying their region's education system.

Louis Althusser represented a partial and incomplete effort to break free from Stalinist orthodoxy at a point in its international chain of operation that has lain largely offstage up to this point in our story. He was manifestly the product of the same social forces that produced Baran and Sweezy in the United States, changing what needs to be changed to

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<sup>341</sup> Marta Harnecker, *Los Conceptos Elementales del Materialismo Histórico*, (Santiago, Chile: Terranova, 1985[1969]), 16.

match the different political and social contexts of France and the United States. Both Althusser in France and Baran and Sweezy in the United States were academics who undertook an intensive interrogation of *Capital* from the perspective of the concerns of their respective academic disciplines; economics in the case of Baran and Sweezy and philosophy for Althusser. For both, this reading took place against the backdrop of their changing political allegiances, primarily eroding sympathy for Stalinism following Krushchev's 1957 speech and, more importantly, positive sympathy with the positions of the CPC in the Sino-Soviet split. Where Baran and Sweezy hoped to preserve and update the Marxist theory of imperialism by applying the concepts of *Capital* to analyze the changing structures of world capitalism, Althusser saw himself embarking on a project within Marxism that no other thinker had yet attempted. He would systematically *construct* Marxist philosophy from a close reading of Marx's opus, which would recreate the never-explicitly-posed *questions* for which *Capital* provided answers.<sup>342</sup>

Althusser's influence entered discourses of dependency and, later, Third World Marxism and world-systems theory, primarily through his concepts of *social formation* and of *theoretical practice* as the materialist epistemological basis for defending science as objective knowledge creation without ceding ideology as a terrain of class struggle. For Althusser, Krushchevism represented simultaneously an opportunity and a threat. By relaxing the most repressive strictures of the Stalinist cult of personality, it presented the opportunity for a theoretically rigorous fight against dogmatic definitions of dialectical and historical

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<sup>342</sup> For Althusser's explanation of his project see: Louis Althusser, "From *Capital* to Marx's Philosophy," in Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, *Reading Capital*, (London and New York: Verso, 2009), 11-75.

materialism to be waged *from within* the Communist movement. But, revealing his sympathy with the CPC, Althusser saw the concrete political program motivating de-Stalinization as an essentially right-wing, reformist tendency in international socialism, which would ultimately pave the way for the restoration of capitalism.<sup>343</sup> In this context, restoring Marxism as a science was the over-riding goal of the Althusserian project. Epistemologically, Althusser defended the scientific nature of the philosophy of dialectical materialism by distinguishing the *real object* from the *object of knowledge*, positing science as the *appropriation* of the latter by the former through *concrete theoretical practice*. For Althusser, if not for his many critics, this eliminated the sticky problem of materialist epistemology which posed thought as the direct, and real, reflection of the object itself, without succumbing to philosophical idealism by retaining a materialist basis for the object of knowledge resting on the theoretical practice of concretely situated social and historical agents.

If theoretical practice provided the conceptual move on which Althusser sought to re-establish dialectical materialism on scientific *terra firma*, the concept of “social formation” did the same for historical materialism, which for Althusser represented the one true science of history. Here the enemy was unmistakably Stalinist dogmatism, which had posited a simple and mechanical historical progression through modes of production from savagery to Communism. For Althusser and his students, *Capital* provided both an exhaustive treatment of the inner-workings of the capitalist mode of production, and clues to understanding how the capitalist mode *articulated* with other modes to form a spectrum of possible concrete

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<sup>343</sup> This is, at least, the interpretation advanced by Althusser’s intellectual biographer, and coincides with my own admittedly limited reading of Althusser. See: Elliott, *Althusser*. For an alternative perspective, interpreting Althusser’s project as Stalinism *tout court*, see: E.P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory*, (London: Merlin Press, 1978).

social formations. Althusser and his adherents believed analysis of concrete social formations could inoculate Marxism from the most egregious forms of vulgar economic determinism. Taking up themes begun by earlier “Western Marxists” Korsch, Lukács, and Gramsci, Althusser believed he could reinstate the superstructure as a distinct dimension for analyzing a social totality. “History” in Althusser’s words, “‘asserts itself’ through the multiform world of the superstructures, from local tradition to international circumstance.”<sup>344</sup> A social formation, even if determined by economics in the last instance, was *overdetermined* by the “accumulation of effective determinations” of multiple, relatively autonomous structures. In Althusserian vocabulary, the term “articulation,” meaning “combination,” thus referred both to the complex interaction of the relatively autonomous economic, political, ideological and theoretical practices of the superstructure, and the combination of multiples modes of production, characterized by distinct forces and social relations of production, within a single concrete social formation.<sup>345</sup>

Marta Harnecker formed the crucial link between Althusser and the Latin American developmentalists-cum-Marxists in Paris. Prior to visiting Cuba in 1960, Chilean Harnecker described herself as a “militant Catholic” whose only encounters with the Marxist tradition were Georges Politzer, whose work she found excessively schematic, and Charles Bettelheim’s *Models of Economic Growth and Development (Modèles de croissance et développement économique)*. By the time she returned to Chile in 1968, she had already translated segments of Althusser’s work to Spanish in her 1967 *La revolución teórica de*

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<sup>344</sup> Althusser, *Reading Capital*, 112.

<sup>345</sup> Elliott, *Althusser*, 132-152.

*Marx*, and she came back to her country with the intention of spreading the Althusserian project. Expecting to do so outside the academy, she was surprised to find that university reform under the Frei administration had opened prospects for researching and teaching from an overtly Marxist standpoint in the sociology department at the University of Chile.<sup>346</sup> She quickly affiliated herself with CESO, and established a reputation as an expert in Marxist philosophy.

Under the influence of Harnecker and Tomás Vasconi, CESO faculty shaded neo-imperialist concepts with Althusserian hues through their investigations into the Latin American education system in relation to the ideological structures of dependency. Vasconi, one of the most prolific contributors to the CESO project, brought with him when he joined the CESO faculty in 1967 a semi-completed study begun jointly under *Instituto Latinoamericano de Planificación Económica y Social* (ILPES), a research institute founded under CEPAL, and UNESCO's IIEP. This coincided with the cresting of the wave of modernization theory in the United States, and initial contributors to the UNESCO project couched their studies in the categories of development economics and modernization theory, either considering education in directly economic terms, as a “factor of production” assessable per its explanatory weight in regression models, or qualitatively as an ideal-type “pattern variable” on a Parsonian spectrum of development. ILPES employed Vasconi to write a critical synthesis of this literature. The product, completed at CESO and published in its *Cuadernos* in September of 1967, marked one of the Center's first significant original

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<sup>346</sup> All biographical information in this paragraph drawn from interview with Marta Harnecker by Spanish periodical *Argumentos*, 1978, reproduced in Harnecker, *conceptos*, 15-29.

contributions to dependency theory, which, with its application of the Althusserian conception of social formations, anticipated the direction dependency research would take in the early 1970s as it transitioned first to “modes of production” debates then, ultimately, modern world-systems theory.

Titled “Educación y cambio social” (Education and social change), Vasconi’s study exemplifies how little CESO’s research agenda fit within the mold of later English-language, North American scholarly debates over dependency theory. For Vasconi, both major camps in the sociology of education, exemplified respectively by John Dewey and Emile Durkheim, suffered from a failure to ground the study of education in specific social formations, resulting in a high level of abstraction. Rather than studying “education in general,” Vasconi proposed studying the “education system” as one among many structures of a concrete social formation. As such, Vasconi saw an education system as an instrument of society rather than class rule, but one that reinforces the social hierarchies of the social formation by distributing and classifying subjects into their social role through a selection criterion based on preexisting social grouping, and imposing organizational forms specific to the mode of production. Taking on the Parsonian structural functionalist analysis, in which education formed one variable on which to classify societies from primitive to civilized, Vasconi argued “backwardness” could not help understand Latin America’s specific education system, but dependency with respect to metropolitan countries could.<sup>347</sup> In colonial Latin America, the priesthood established the education system. Like Bagú, Vasconi saw Spanish

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<sup>347</sup> Tomás Amadeo Vasconi, “Educación y Cambio Social,” *Cuadernos del Centro de Estudios Socioeconomicos* no. 8 (1967), 33.

and Portuguese colonizers as remnants of a precapitalist European social formation that had already fallen into a peripheral status relative to the capitalist European core. The education system thus took root and grew according to a logic of social distribution that compelled educated elites to reinforce semi-feudal patterns of landownership, characterized by large estates employ peasant or semi-free labor. For Vasconi, this caused Latin America's "Europeanized" educated classes to "suffer a form of 'optical illusion' for which they cannot see the problems of their own country."<sup>348</sup>

Popular Unity (UP, for Spanish acronym *Unidad Popular*), the coalition of left-wing political parties that successfully put Allende in power in 1970, cohered in the 1960s around the "enormous politico-social energy" unleashed by identifying "dependent capitalism" as the common enemy.<sup>349</sup> Despite the consternation the U.S. State Department felt over the prospect of a democratically-elected "Marxist" in the Western Hemisphere, Salvador Allende was much less a Marxist theoretician than an ardent anti-imperialist and Chilean and pan-Latin American nationalist.<sup>350</sup> A man of great confidence comfortable in the upper-echelons of Chilean society, Allende developed resentment toward the United States following the

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<sup>348</sup> Vasconi, 44-46.

<sup>349</sup> Franck Gaudichaud, *Poder popular y cordones industriales: Testimonios sobre el movimiento popular urbano, 1970-1973*, (Santiago de Chile: LOM Ediciones, 2004), 18-19. Peter Winn, *Weavers of Revolution: The Yarrur Workers and Chile's Road to Socialism*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1986), 63 also attributes UP to "the failure of Chile's dependent capitalism to resolve the country's basic problems," and the inability of Allende's predecessors to cure the chronic ills, which allowed UP "license to conclude they were systemic, to blame them on Chile's dependent capitalism, and to maintain that democratic socialism was the only solution."

<sup>350</sup> Jonathan Haslam, *The Nixon Administration and the Death of Allende's Chile: A Case of Assisted Suicide*, (London and New York: Verso, 2005), 4-5.

CIA's 1954 invasion of Guatemala. Then Vice-President of the Senate, Allende spoke out against the Organization of American States meeting in Caracas, helped organize an anti-U.S. "Friends of Guatemala Committee," and led a march to protest the invasion in June of 1954.<sup>351</sup> While he never made any significant contributions to Marxist theory, Allende did have socialist, and specifically pro-USSR political sensibilities.<sup>352</sup> The parties within the UP coalition collectively had extensive ties to academics working within the dependency theory paradigm. Allende personally intervened to bring Marini to Chile from his exile in Mexico, and he showed up at the airport in Santiago to have Andre Gunder Frank released when he was detained by security upon his arrival from Canada in 1968, the year he began working at CESO.

While international academics debated the internal consistency and empirical value of the postulates of dependency theory, rhetorically it was a socially contested term that could mean different things to different political actors pushing for very different social goals. A central rift divided the social coalition around Allende, which historians have categorized as a "gradualist pole" and a "rupturist pole."<sup>353</sup> Both poles, representing divergent and even mutually exclusive goals, paradoxically based their programs on ideas deeply rooted in dependency theory, as they understood it. The gradualist program emanated directly from the center of the PS and PC, the two dominant parties in the UP, and academically it was

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<sup>351</sup> Mark T. Hove, "The Arbenz Factor: Allende, US-Chilean Relations, and the 1954 U.S. Intervention in Guatemala," *Diplomatic History*, 31/4 (Sep. 2007), 623-663.

<sup>352</sup> Haslam, *Nixon*, quotes Allende's friend Osvaldo Carlos Puccio Huidobro recalling in 1985 Allende saying Soviet Union was "first socialist state in the world," and anyone who didn't support it was "not a real Marxist" (pg. 9).

<sup>353</sup> Gaudichaud, *Poder*, 16.



represented by Pedro Vuskovic, who had close ties to CESO. Vuskovic was a brilliant economist politically housed in the PS, who routinely employed the concept of Chilean dependency as he took the lead in formulating both the economic platform of UP in the years leading up to Allende's election, and the real program carried out by the administration in its first two years. Vuskovic's strengths as an economist lay in his fine-tuned attention to detail and his remarkable capacity to hold a comprehensive view of the Chilean economy in his mind. Through painstaking systematic analysis of each sector of the economy, he established the interrelated unity of the different sectors and the fundamental link between this holistic view of the economic structure, unequal distribution of incomes, and the legacy of persistent barriers to the development of a robust internal market.<sup>354</sup> In his meticulous empirical analysis, he asserted categorically that "the better part of the product generated in some sectors remains unavailable either for consumption or reinvestment within the economy, but rather is transferred as profit to foreign capital."<sup>355</sup>

As a technocrat in the Allende government, Vuskovic struggled to translate his economic knowledge into a development program that would appease all elements of the UP coalition. His "Basic Program" was at least as much political as grounded in sound theories of development economics. Allende's predecessors, pro-U.S. businessman Jorge Alessandri (1958-1964) and centrist Christian Democrat Eduardo Frei (1964-1970), had been unable to resolve the competing social objectives of land reform and improved living standards for

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<sup>354</sup> This analysis is especially apparent in the comprehensive economic platform he wrote for Allende's unsuccessful 1964 presidential run. See: Pedro Vuskovic, "Las bases técnicas del Plan de Acción del Gobierno Popular," in *Pedro Vuskovic Bravo: Obras Escogidas Sobre Chile (1964-1992)* (Santiago, Chile: Colección Chile en el Siglo Veinte, 1993), 23-166.

<sup>355</sup> Vuskovic, *Obras Escogidas*, 110.

urban workers without confronting the land-owning oligarchy and foreign capital. Allende and Vuskovic knew that they must deliver real material gains to urban and rural laborers to maintain a strong social foundation against an inevitable backlash from the traditional elites engendered by such redistributive measures. But, they also inherited an economy with 35 percent inflation and \$2 billion in public external debt threatening a foreign exchange crisis.<sup>356</sup> Intent on ending Chilean “dependence” on foreign capital, and lacking any alternative sources to finance his development program, Vuskovic was hamstrung by an irresolvable contradiction. The productivity increases that could have resolved the contradictory impulses either would have required a tremendous sacrifice by the Chilean working class to industrialize without increased consumption, or would have required a massive amount of foreign exchange to import higher productive technology from elsewhere in the global capitalist economy. Neither of those options were politically tenable. In short, Vuskovic faced much the same problem as the Soviet Union in the 1920s, and for his technocratic industrialization in one country to have succeeded he would have had to adopt the same methods as Stalinism, including prolonged artificial limitations on investment in consumption goods.

The problems were certainly not strictly economic, and in fact Vuskovic faced political opposition from social groups who drew more radical conclusions from dependency theory. Competing interpretations of the *implications* of the theory traced to the academic level, where theoreticians consciously committed to socially engaged scholarship earnestly debated the social function of academics, the role of the university, and the potentialities and

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<sup>356</sup> Haslam, *Nixon*, 98.

limits of the “Chilean road to socialism” (*vía chilena*). While a segment of CESO faculty lined up whole-heartedly behind the development program of Pedro Vuskovic, another segment moved closer to the coalition gaining strength to the left of Allende to articulate something very close to the theory of permanent revolution as it had surfaced in European Social Democracy in the first decades of the twentieth century. Frank, Marini, dos Santos, Bambirra, and Vasconi collaborated with the MIR. As academics and respected intellectuals, their opinions carried weight in the MIR, with its heavy rank-and-file student representation. Marini served on the central committee, and in general the MIR came under the heavy influence of the radical interpretation of the implications of dependency theory. In the words of the Martín Hernández, a MIR student militant, “[the] fundamental political character of the Marxist theory of dependency is to define the character of the Latin American revolution as socialist, and, therefore to criticize the disaggregation (*desvinculación*, literally, de-linking) of the anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist struggles, and to criticize harshly the utopian view that the Latin American bourgeoisie can lead.”<sup>357</sup>

Chile held a special place in the US foreign policy of Latin American developmentalism. The nation had the image of an “exceptional” Latin American country, lacking the record of politicized military that characterized other Latin American countries. Encouraged by this tenure of political stability, continuity and constitutional protection of property, US capital invested heavily in the Argentine economy. The country held a virtual monopoly over the world copper market, the overwhelming majority of which was produced

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<sup>357</sup> Quoted in Pedro Alfonso Valdés Navarro, “Elementos Teóricos en la Formación y Desarrollo del MIR Durante el Periodo del 1965-1970,” 171.

by the US firms Kennecott Copper Company and Anaconda Copper Company. But the legacy of stability was disrupted when outrage over the Eisenhower administration's tampering in Guatemalan internal affairs rippled through Chilean political consciousness.<sup>358</sup> This coincided with and exacerbated the social upheavals surrounding the end of the political coalition under the hegemony of the center-right Radical Party that had dominated Chilean politics since 1932, and insinuated a strong anti-imperialist current into the gathering momentum on the left end of the Chilean political spectrum.<sup>359</sup> Kennedy understood US investor's domination of Chilean copper would hamper efforts to restore Uncle Sam's tarnished image in the region and, ultimately, prove a liability in the global struggle against Communism. Though ardently anti-Communist, he formulated his approach to Latin America at least nominally willing to accept compensated expropriation.<sup>360</sup> Both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations saw Chile as one of the primary arenas for executing the development program through the agency of the Alliance for Progress, and between the years 1962 and 1970 the program channeled \$1.2 billion in "aid," nominally to support Chilean economic development but in large measure to shape the political landscape by keeping the growing far-left coalition out of power.<sup>361</sup> Through the growing tumult of the

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<sup>358</sup> Hove, "Arbenz Factor," 623-663.

<sup>359</sup> Winn, *Weavers*, 59-60.

<sup>360</sup> Stephen G. Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America*, (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 18.

<sup>361</sup> Peter Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability*, (New York and London: The New Press, 2003), 5; Jonathan Haslam, *The Nixon Administration and the Death of Allende's Chile: A Case of Assisted Suicide*, (London and New York: Verso, 2005), 12.

1960s, splintering on social opposition to the war in Vietnam, the modernization-theory-inspired Latin American foreign policy desperately needed a win in Chile.

The Nixon administration's response to Allende's election to power stands out as one of the most shameful episodes in the long, abundantly blemished history of US foreign policy. Nixon and his National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger opposed Allende from the outset. They met with business interests invested in Chilean infrastructure and copper, and pushed, against the advice of ambassador Korry and much of the CIA, for a military coup before Allende could take power. Once Allende had assumed power, in collaboration with the CIA and private business, Nixon and Kissinger pursued an all-out strategy to undermine the country economically and channel massive funds to far-right, openly fascist groups to destabilize the country politically.

Given the role of the Chilean episode in buttressing the positivist claims against dependency theory, it is something of a historical irony that the success of the measures taken to disrupt Chile's economy under Allende, with hindsight, vindicate many of the *dependentista's* central claims. Kissinger outlined a program to the National Security Council that included dumping copper to reduce the price on international markets, thus undercutting Allende's main revenue source to carry out his social and economic reforms.<sup>362</sup> Nixon and Kissinger coordinated a multi-pronged effort through Washington's influence over the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, and the US Export-Import Bank and International Development Agency to institute an "invisible blockade" that would seize

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<sup>362</sup> National Security Decision Memorandum 93, "Policy Towards Chile," November 9, 1970, reprinted in Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, 128-131. Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, 5; Haslam, *Nixon Administration*, 12.

Chilean commercial credit and cut off the government's ability to finance producer goods necessary to achieve their modernization program.<sup>363</sup> *Dependentistas* argued that the extensive penetration of foreign capital rendered peripheral national economies vulnerable to price fluctuations on the world market, and structured their economy such that it required a constant supplies of foreign credit. At the same moment that dependency theorists were taking a beating by positivist, "value-neutral" North American scholars, the executive branch of the US government, the CIA, and leading US monopoly capitalists colluded to undermine the Allende regime by strangling the Chilean economy at precisely the strategic chokepoints identified by dependency theorists.

### **The Neo-Marxist Epistemological Struggle and the Age of Fracture**

While Nixon and Kissinger laid the groundwork for Pinochet's coup and the first experiment in neoliberalism, North American Neo-Marxist and positivist academics waged a struggle over epistemology that would end in the same result. Scholars influenced by the Neo-Marxist theory of imperialism understood the contradictions of their position in the university system that rationalized US foreign policy. Kathleen Gough, a British-born anthropologist who worked in the United States then Canada, had close ties to dependency theory and *Monthly Review*. Gough helped Frank secure a position at Simon Fraser University in Canada for the 1967-1968 academic year, where a handful of radical professors

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<sup>363</sup> Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, 83-7. For a partial defense of the actions of the World Bank, see: Claudia Kedar, "The World Bank-United States-Latin America Triangle: The Negotiations with Socialist Chile, 1970-1973," *International History Review* 39/4 (Aug., 2017), 667-690.

affiliated with the Johnson-Forest tendency had gathered. In correspondence with Magdoff, Gough indicated the spectrum of views among her radical colleagues about the potential for being a revolutionary from within the university. One colleague believed the university was hopelessly reactionary and should be destroyed, another believed it was “totally irrelevant to the struggle (by which he always [meant] armed struggle) and should be used only as a source of bread and money for third world revolutions.” Gough, for her part, believed they could serve a progressive purpose, by providing a space to analyze society and radicalize the youth.<sup>364</sup>

Gough raised the prospect for an anti-imperialist anthropology in a panel at a professional convention in March of 1967, triggering a debate that drew in contributions from anthropologists throughout the world. For Gough, working in a discipline born of “Western imperialism” posed a moral dilemma for anthropologists. In its early years, anthropology played the role of liberal “social work and community development effort for non-white peoples,” seeking to ameliorate conditions that had “actually been imposed by their western conquerors in the first place.” With decolonization, the moral dilemma had amplified for anthropologists working in counterrevolutionary countries like the US. As Gough posed the question, “[what] does an anthropologist do who is dependent on a counterrevolutionary government in an increasingly revolutionary world?” The classical ethnographic method of cultural anthropology could hardly be pursued without addressing the colonizer/colonized nature of that relation. Yet, without that method, anthropology simply dissolves into other social sciences. Gough resolved this dilemma by proposing that

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<sup>364</sup> Kathleen Gough to Harry Magdoff, January 16, [1970], HM Box 8.

anthropologists apply all their knowledge of social change and institutions in smaller systems to the study of the global system in alignment with the third world revolutionary forces acting in opposition to that system. This means turning attention to the study of imperialism, which only a small handful of scholars such as Immanuel Wallerstein, Eric Wolf, and Peter Worsley had done. She also pointed to the Marxist literature on imperialism, citing such major works as Lenin and Luxemburg, alongside recent works by Baran (1957), Baran and Sweezy (1966), and Frank (1967). She lamented that this literature tends to be read casually and summarily sloughed off by Western scholars. While heartened that “publications of Monthly Review Press, International Publishers, Studies on the Left, and other left-wing journals have become a kind of underground literature for many graduate students and younger faculty in the social sciences,” she was more discouraged by the lack of dialogue between these works and the mainstream of the profession.

*Monthly Review* stood even more directly at the center of a similar debate over what we know and what types of knowledge are worthy of pursuit in the discipline of economics. When students at the New School fought to bring Harry Magdoff on in a semi-permanent capacity to teach courses on the economics of imperialism, the economics faculty sharply denounced imperialism as nothing more than ideology. A department memo called the campaign an attempt to “convert the Economics Department to a propaganda agency of the ‘anti-imperialists,’” which they saw as “inconsistent with the goals of a university whose fundamental concern is the search for truth.”<sup>365</sup> Magdoff’s course explored questions

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<sup>365</sup> “The Student Movement and the Future of Education at the New School,” HMP Box 7.



wrapped up with the “development of capitalism as a world economic system” through theoretical readings in the history of economic thought and consideration of historical and contemporary evidence. Theoretical readings treating “international economic activity” included Adam Smith, David Ricardo, John Stuart Mill, Marx, Schumpeter, Hobson and Lenin.<sup>366</sup> How the proposed course was more tendentious than any other course in the history of economic thought is unclear. The more Magdoff and Sweezy established a reputation as experts on the economics of empire among student radicals, the more sharply they were hedged out of the profession.

Eventually, a caucus of radical economists close to Sweezy and Magdoff did develop, first into a loose agglomeration then into an institutionalized Union for Radical Political Economics (URPE) with its own organ, the *Review of Radical Political Economics*. The *RRPE* ran a talk delivered by Sweezy in their second issue as a sort of a mission statement. Sweezy argued that the avenues of what Thomas Kuhn called “normal science”—that is, a division of labor systematically testing and reformulating hypotheses within a theoretical “paradigm”—had been cut off for Marxist economists, at least those situated within the United States. Explicitly invoking Frank’s “development of underdevelopment” imagery, Sweezy argued it fell to the lot of the third world to push forward Marxist economic theory, which they were doing with great aplomb. In the same issue, Herbert Gintis spelled out the strategy for the radical economist, in an article titled “New Working Class and Revolutionary Youth: A Synthesis and a Program for the Future.” The title alone indicates Gintis’s affiliation with the radicalizing wing of the student radical movement that had grown of the

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<sup>366</sup> “Course Outline,” HMP Box 7.

Radical Education Project. The article dug out the implications of *Monopoly Capital* for radical scholars, and shows the continuing legacy of the ideas formulated by Mills, Sweezy and Baran in the 1950s. Youth have power only in relation to the universities, the latter of which serve the purpose of turning out functional and socially integrated white-collar workers. Technologies of capitalism ensured this new white-collar working class would enjoy “objective material security,” and thus not become a destabilizing force due to any objective structural contradictions of capitalism. Nonetheless, as workers the “objective” interests of this group are opposed to the system, a fact which is obscured by capital’s control of the cultural apparatus. The task of the youth and the radical scholar is to disrupt the cultural reproduction of functional workers that takes place in educational institutions, and thus disrupt the social equilibrium rendering imperialist society less functional and opening space for third world revolutionaries.<sup>367</sup>

URPE and Gough’s radical challenge to anthropology represent only a small cross section of the “radical political economic” currents that entered the academy in the late 1960s and early 1970s, all of which leveraged their graduate student experiences of 1960s campus radicalism to try to insinuate forms of Marxist scholarship into respectable academic discourse. Historians around *Studies* and influenced by Williams started the Socialist Scholars Conference in 1964. The SSC hosted three thousand participants at its peak in 1967,

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<sup>367</sup> Paul M. Sweezy, “Toward a Critique of Economics,” *Review of Radical Political Economics* 2/1 (April 1970), 1-8; Herbert Gintis, “New Working Class and Revolutionary Youth: A Theoretical Synthesis and a Program for the Future,” *Review of Radical Political Economics* 2/2 (July 1970), 43-73.

and was defunct three years later.<sup>368</sup> In addition to the Radical Education Project, discussed above, SDS spawned a number of other academic-adjacent organizational offshoots, including the New University Conference, Teachers for a Democratic Society, the Movement for a Democratic Society, and Radicals in the Profession.<sup>369</sup> When scholars affiliated with these various movements secured academic positions, they formed caucuses and professional organizations in opposition to the main currents in their disciplines. Such radical organizations arose in virtually every social science and humanities discipline, and established corresponding peer-reviewed academic journals to try to establish a foothold for legitimate Marxist scholarship within the academy. In addition to URPE, the Radical Caucus in English published *Radical Teacher*, the Caucus for a New Political Science published *Politics and Society*, the Union of Marxist Social Scientists published *Insurgent Sociologist*. In Latin American Studies, dependency theory had become so pervasive in the established professional association—the Latin American Studies Association—that radical scholars did not need to caucus independently to organize support for *Latin American Perspectives*. Firmly, if marginally, entrenched in their disciplines by the early 1970s, these various radical scholars adopted the methods, conventions and idioms of their fields to defend Marxism as a mode of scientific analysis. Though they wrote on a broad range of topics, their widest influence was felt in their analysis of the nature of the state and imperialism under modern corporate capitalism.

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<sup>368</sup> Paul A. Attewell, *Radical Political Economy Since the Sixties: A Sociology of Knowledge Analysis*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1984), 8.

<sup>369</sup> Attewell, *Political Economy*, 9.

Despite the partially successful efforts to turn the university into a site of anti-imperialist struggle, ultimately what Baran called “practical intelligence” carried the day. Karl Popper’s defense of the criterion of falsifiability was, from the beginning, a preeminently ideological project wrapped up with a restoration of unfettered markets. Friedrich von Hayek- who somewhat against his will would come to symbolize the restoration of unfettered class power in the United States- built part of his argument around Popper’s empiricist *Logik der Forschung*.<sup>370</sup> Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, an ardently pro-capitalist intellectual network mounted a full-scale propaganda campaign in favor of market fundamentalism while simultaneously disingenuously claiming to value scholarly objectivity. Milton Friedman would draw the most radical and far-reaching conclusions from Hayek’s argument in 1944 that any planning would lead with an inexorable path-dependence down the totalitarian road. Surpassing Hayek’s much more tempered claims, Friedman painted unfettered markets as the way to secure complete political liberty for the individual, while simultaneously leading the technical turn in the profession meant to present economics as the “neutral” scholarly pursuit of efficient allocation of resources.

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<sup>370</sup> Angus Burgin, *The Great Persuasion: Reinventing Free Markets since the Depression*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 50. Paul M. Sweezy, “Toward a Critique of Economics,” 2/1 (April 1970), 1-8.

## *Conclusion*

In his review of Mills's *Power Elite*, Sweezy offered his own criticism of what Mills in *Sociological Imagination* would call "abstracted empiricism." "There is a sort of contrived bloodlessness about American academic social science today," wrote Sweezy. "Its practitioners are much better trained than they used to be, but the consequence is not only technical competence. No less striking is the way they all fit into a few neat molds, like the models of an automobile coming off the factory assembly lines. They all talk alike, deal in the same brand of trivialities, and take each other enormously seriously."<sup>371</sup> Throughout the 1950s, *Monthly Review* played a central and important role in combatting this narrow empiricism and methodological fetishism as it became institutionalized in academic social sciences. As a Stanford economist, Baran was one of the few holdouts at the upper echelons of the economics profession. In a department that included Kenneth Arrow, who helped lead the movement to formal mathematical modeling with his "impossibility theorem," Baran boldly bucked the trend by writing *Political Economy of Growth*, a book which did not contain a single equation or probability matrix. Mills played the same role in his own profession. The empirical research he did at Paul Lazarsfeld's Bureau of Applied Social Research buttressed more than determined the central claims that went into *New Men of Power* and *White Collar*. Mills went to great lengths to make his books increasingly accessible to a broad audience of lay readers, which contributed to his image as a "maverick" within his increasingly opaque and professionalized discipline.

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<sup>371</sup> Paul Sweezy, "Power Elite or Ruling Class?" *Monthly Review* 8/5 (Sep. 1956), at 138.

But, in the long run, Neo-Marxism did become professionalized, expressed almost exclusively in disciplinary scholarly journals that adopted the methods, idioms, and conventions of the institutions in which they were embedded. *Monthly Review* editors continued to be admired as originators of many of the theoretical questions pursued with academic rigor by academic Marxists in the closing decades of the twentieth century. Marxist scholars pursued the implications of monopoly capitalism for the labor market, crisis theory, and imperialism and dependency theory well into the 1970s, with reverberations of the debates carrying over into the 1980s. With a theoretical scaffolding in place, scholars were able to dissect analytical components and, applying disciplinary methods, subject them to unprecedented levels of empirical scrutiny. The result has been a more sophisticated understanding of how to operationalize certain Marxist concepts, and a more robust defense of the Marxist political economic system articulated according to the standards and criteria of its opponents.

But this methodological rigor came with a cost. As they moved fully into academic disciplines, radical scholars largely accepted the epistemology of science advanced and defended by neoliberalism. As scholars, they were interested in paradigm building, set discursively against non-Marxist paradigms that dominated in their fields. They tried to establish a viable position for Marxist research within the academy by arguing that Marxism better explained social and economic phenomena than other paradigms, by defending the moral positions of Marxism as a useful determinant for the types of research questions worthy of scholarly pursuit, and by applying their academic theories and methods to analyses

of contemporary social issues.<sup>372</sup> At least the radical political economists grounded in economics and sociology, pursuing these scholarly professional objectives meant implicitly accepting a separation between their scholarship and their public propagandistic revolutionary activities. Perhaps they could still be revolutionaries in their (diminishing) free time, but as scholars they were engaged in very much the same type of hypothesis testing as their opponents, with the programmatic implications of debates becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish.

Dependency theory offers a prime example. As articulated by Andre Gunder Frank, and pursued in more depth by the Latin American Marxist economists and sociologists at CESO, dependency theory pursued broad questions of the nature of the capitalist world-system as it passed through a historically specific conjuncture. The theory had intellectual antecedents in discursive fields outside the academy. The major influences behind Frank's intellectual breakthrough were decidedly *not* the academic economists at CEPAL, but rather non-academic Marxists theorizing their role within national revolutionary movements. However hypothetical their visions of leadership may have been, their intellectual production was not "academic" in the sense often ascribed to that term. It was, rather, quintessentially strategic. Their exploration of the truth content of categories of historical classification could not be separated from their assessment of the value of those categories for orienting themselves strategically within contemporary political struggles. When Argentine Trotskyists in the 1940s questioned the value of the category "feudalism," abstracted from European history, to understanding their own continent's history, they did so to gain a better

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<sup>372</sup> This analysis is heavily influenced by Attewell, *Political Economy*, 6-39, esp. 18-19.

understanding of the types of alliances that would form in the struggle against imperialism, and how best to position rural and urban workers at the head of the nationalist movement. Yet, the debates engendered in North American thought around dependency were far removed from the strategic logic of working class hegemony in anti-imperialist struggle. When North American radical economists took up the question of dependency in the 1970s, they tested empirical claims deemed central to the dependency approach against comparative data gathered by the UN. Albert Szymanski published an article in the *Review of Radical Political Economy* showing net capital flowed from the US to underdeveloped states, not vice versa as implied in the conception of “surplus” extraction espoused by Baran and then elaborated by Frank. Bill Warren took this a step further, by demonstrating empirically that capital influx into the Third World developed rather than underdeveloped the Third World. In both cases, the implication was that central hypotheses of dependency theory had been “falsified” and the theory could thus be “rejected.” Sympathizers with dependency theory debated the methods, and the value of the statistical analysis. Perhaps the scholars engaged in these debates remained committed revolutionary Marxists, but if so that posture had nothing to do with their scholarship. The latter studied social processes as if they were completely objective, and they envisioned their role as scholars to be mentally modeling those objective processes as accurately as possible.

It is tempting to lay this academic Marxism on the New Left student radicals who became radical academics at the end of the 1960s. Student radicals tended to become more, not less, complicit in the system as they settled into comfortable academic careers. In 1965, Hal Draper predicted in ten years student radicals would be “rising in the world and in income, living in the suburbs from Terra Linda to Atherton, raising two or three babies,



voting Democratic, and wondering what on earth they were doing in Sproul Hall.”<sup>373</sup> One does not need to do a deep social history of US academia in the closing decades of the twentieth century to suspect Draper’s prediction was prescient. 1960s student radicals entered the academy in its heyday, when tenure-track opportunities for professors in the humanities and social sciences abounded.

But, looking back at the longer history, the turn to academic Marxism began in the 1930s, and is the ultimate line of continuity linking the Popular Front to the New Left, and the subsequent migration of US Marxism into academia. Baran and Sweezy were already well-entrenched in the academic discipline of economics in the 1930s. They turned to Marxism as a set of interrelated economic concepts at a moment in which Marxist orthodoxy, as propagated by the Soviet Union and Soviet-affiliated Communist Parties, was leveraging *Capital* to develop a set of tools to put in the hands of technocratic development experts. Simultaneously, Western liberal economists operating in the intellectual traditions of American pragmatism and Progressivism were willing to borrow ideas from the Soviet experience and apply them to regulate the American economy through the rapidly expanding agencies of the US federal state. This dual process, the convergence of Marxism and statist liberalism, created the academic space for Baran and Sweezy to thrive as overtly Marxist economists in the economics profession. They moved toward Marxism as fellow travelers of the CP sympathetic to the Soviet industrialization methods. Prior to the war, they held this posture within the academy, pursuing knowledge oriented toward the technocratic policy apparatus. Only with the onset of the Cold War, and the rift in the left-liberal social and

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<sup>373</sup> Hal Draper, *Berkeley: The New Student Revolt*, (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1965), 169. Quoted in Attewell, *Political Economy*, 13.

intellectual space created in the 1930s, did the logic of this position come to seem paradoxical. In this climate, Sweezy founded *Monthly Review*. Though he billed it as an “independent socialist journal,” *Monthly Review* was always situated primarily in an academic or academic-adjacent discursive field. The political economic analysis they honed throughout the 1950s continued to be essentially technocratic in nature. Initially they envisioned making their ideas operational through a progressive political coalition, formed of alliance or class compromise between a reformist bourgeoisie and the leading sectors of the working class. As the decade wore on, this position became obviously untenable.

The intellectual bloc that would pass on to the New Left the concepts of monopoly capitalism, corporate liberalism, imperialism and the “permanent war economy” spent the 1950s arguing with academic trends in the respective disciplines. Historians have thoroughly explored the rise and fall of modernization theory as an academic paradigm and as a mode of foreign policy. There is a broad consensus that modernization theory abstracted its model of “modernity” from a favorable impression of mid-twentieth-century US society. Politically, modernization theorists were New Dealers. Academically, they were structural functionalists, consensus historians, pluralist political scientists, or fiscal Keynesian economists. Many historians have noted modernization theory offered a teleological metanarrative of progress. But this is only partially true. Exemplified by Rostow, modernization theorists did posit history as a series of sequential stages, terminating in US republican capitalism. Yet their metahistorical social theory stressed functional integration and social equilibrium, and thus lacked a consistent endogenous theory of social change. Setting themselves against these academic expressions of modernization theory, the *Monthly Review* school and a small handful of like-minded liberal or radical intellectuals developed their Neo-Marxist theory as

a counterposing holistic narrative. Identifying similar features of mid-twentieth century social life as modernization theorists, they tried to conceive of them in a holistic theoretical framework that retained concepts of antagonism, mal-integration, and hierarchical power structures.

It is thus important to note that the rise and fall of the modernization “paradigm” played itself out on multiple fields of discourse and social action. On one field, academics argued with other academics about the assumptions and value-orientations implied in the mental models they constructed. As the structural functionalist sociology and consensus historiography became internalized at the level of modernization theory’s baseline assumptions, academics and policy-makers working within the common sense could subdivide research tasks in a process Thomas Kuhn labeled “normal science,” or practical, policy-oriented empirical research. While the paradigm held firm, a fundamentally value-laden, political project could be defended with recourse to a defense of the principles of value-neutrality and scholarly objectivity as cornerstones of the scientific process. 1950s proto-Neo-Marxists had to wage the academic part of their debate against these claims. C. Wright Mills and Paul Baran took the lead in this effort. Each tried independently to formulate a concrete critique that portrayed contemporary US social science as part of the symbolic system masking economic and social inequalities. By falling short of “pure Reason” or the “sociological imagination,” social science implicitly helped reproduce the equilibriums they theorized by reproducing a mass false consciousness. Unlike the most extreme post-modernists, Baran and Mills *did not* reject objective or objectively knowable truth. Rather, they tried to question prevailing social scientific convictions while simultaneously insisting objective truth could be pursued if the influence of wealth and

power on knowledge creation were stripped away. The student radicals and, later, academic radicals informed by these ideas would continue to chip away at the same problem, but with little ability to resolve the tension.

Neo-Marxist theory proved more consequential when it fused with the spontaneous social unrest that burst asunder any notions of capitalist equilibrium in the 1960s. Historians of the New Left give Mills pride of place in the pantheon of precursors to the New Left. However true it may be that students were reading Mills, he can hardly be considered responsible for the mass protests that cut through American society in the 1960s. Mills was no agitator. Rather, social opposition emerged out of resistance to the inequalities built into the structure of American capitalism. It was the type of more-or-less spontaneous antagonism Mills, Sweezy, and Baran denied monopoly capitalism would produce. Black people, those who least enjoyed the benefits of the “affluent society” mobilized first to oppose the unjust system. Disequilibrium is disequilibrium, and the presence of opposition radiated outward into broader layers. Young, idealistic, and sensitive to the injustice of the system, students moved into the oppositional camp. When they did so, they encountered the radical ideologies coming from the 1950s, which had placed a heavy emphasis on foreign policy. The “Third World” came to symbolize everything exploitative and unjust about American capitalism. “Aid” “development” and “modernization” appeared so many euphemisms for colonial control, and if the US government masked exploitative foreign relations behind such Aesopian language, why should they not be assumed to do the same domestically. “Colonialism” came to serve as a metaphor for all forms of social inequality, the central dynamic of which was ideological manipulation to buy into the ethos of modernity. This intellectual orientation, and the multivalent social subjectivities it engendered, did more to

challenge modernization theory than dependency theory, and it is the most enduring legacy of the epistemological debates spurred by Neo-Marxists.

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