

ANDRÉ GUNDER FRANK: A (NEO) MARXIST CRITIQUE OF BRAZILIAN DEVELOPMENTALISTS

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ABSTRACT: *Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, various currents of Brazilian social thought clashed in a struggle for cultural and political hegemony over how the process of development and industrialization should be carried out in a country like Brazil, which was still predominantly agricultural. Among these currents, ECLAC and liberalism played a decisive role. On the contrary, Marxist currents remained on the margins of this debate, especially after the 1964 coup d'état. This article seeks to revive the Marxist tradition and the critiques of the “developmentalists” in the analysis carried out by André Gunder Frank on the nature of incipient Brazilian capitalism and its dependent and peripheral nature, attributing the main reasons for these two characteristics to preferential relations with US capital and a lack of a social structural classes analysis.*

KEYWORDS: *dependence theory, André Gunder Frank, Celso Furtado, Latin-American peripheral capitalism*

INTRODUCTION

In 2003, back at the University of Brasília at the end of his life, the German heterodox Marxist economist André Gunder Frank emphasized how dependency theory had emerged there when, forty years earlier, he had been asked to give a series of seminars on the Brazilian crisis (Interview with T. dos Santos ... 2009). His foundational essay, *The Development of Underdevelopment*, was published in *Monthly Review* magazine a few years after the end of his first Brazilian experience, in 1966.

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This study aims to revive Gunder Frank's contribution to the understanding of the mechanisms of peripheral and dependent development in Latin America, particularly in Brazil. This contribution was marginalized for a long time in both international and Brazilian academia, with a focus on the classic debate between representatives of the nationalist current, including ECLAC (the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), ISEB (the Higher Institute of Brazilian Studies) and, in part, the School of Sociology at USP (São Paulo University), and the liberals, such as Roberto Campos, "natural" allies of the United States (Campos 1953; Bielschowsky 2000). The letters between Furtado and Campos are a good means of deepening the understanding of the content of this debate, which we will not be able to delve into here (Freire D'Aguiar ed. 2021). As for the "forgetting" of Gunder Frank on the Brazilian scene, it is enough to recall the words of Nildo Ouriques (2005), who highlighted how this operation was carried out mainly by CEBRAP (the Brazilian Center for Analysis and Planning), founded in 1969 and abundantly financed by the Ford Foundation since its inception. Here, individuals such as Fernando Henrique Cardoso and José Serra – connected with the dependency-associated stream of thought – successfully sought to marginalize dependency theorists, such as Gunder Frank and Ruy Mauro Marini (Moraes–Almeida 2021).

Gunder Frank was a convinced, heterodox Marxist, one of the fathers of dependency theory (Simon–Ruccio 1986), but above all an economist who sought to analyze, based on data produced by Brazilian and American public institutions, what he thought was the true exploitative nature of a relationship – that between Brazil and the United States – which would prove to be fundamental throughout the last century. Gunder Frank analyzed Brazilian capitalism from the point of view of a revolutionary who wanted to help complete the process of social and economic transformation in that country in an anti-capitalist direction. Gunder Frank never considered himself an orthodox Marxist, so much so that some scholars have defined him as an "accidental Marxist," whose analytical emphasis was more on issues concerning circulation than on the production of capital (Stephens 2016); another critical issue, from the point of view of Marxist orthodoxy, was that Gunder Frank considered the Latino-American accumulation as typically capitalist from its first stage, and not – as Marx stated – as a "noncapitalist" phase of the future, capitalist process of value accumulation (Gunder Frank 1978).

As he himself recalled, such positions induced many orthodox Marxists of the time to critique his analysis: from Giovanni Arrighi to Samir Amin, they accused Gunder Frank of looking at other underdeveloped areas of the planet through the eyes of Latin America, neglecting not only their structural and local characteristics, but also their historical ones (ibid).

This criticism centered on what Gunder Frank defined as the “secret of primitive accumulation.” Quoting a famous passage by Marx on the subject, he highlights that Marx himself defined the process of capital accumulation and the clear division between material producers and owners of the means of production as a “vicious circle.” A vicious circle in which it was impossible to establish a break between the pre-capitalist and typically capitalist processes of accumulation, as would result, according to Gunder Frank, from the decimation of indigenous populations in various parts of the world, including Latin America, and which would demonstrate the voracity of the capitalist mode of production since the 14th and 15th centuries. Thus, he concludes: “The question of when and how original pre-capitalist, primitive accumulation of capital became (the starting point of) the capitalist process of capital accumulation remains substantially open” (Gunder Frank 1978: 245).

Similarly, according to Gunder Frank, there are still areas of the planet (Africa in particular) where villages outside capitalist production provide cheap labor for the capitalist markets of large urban centers, revealing how forms of pre-capitalist primitive accumulation continue to interact with forms of mature capitalism.

The conclusion is that not only is it impossible to break the vicious circle of which Marx himself was aware, but that the interpenetration of pre-capitalist and capitalist modes of production has been constant throughout history and continues today. Gunder Frank’s interpretation of the processes of development in Latin America starts from these “heterodox” assumptions of Marx’s thinking about the process of the original accumulation of capital, which evidently attracted strong criticism from the orthodox Marxists of the time.

Just to give one example, Samir Amin, considered the most influential thinker of Marxist orthodoxy in relation to processes of development and underdevelopment (the school of Global Historical Materialism), emphasizes how the theory of Latin American dependency (whose leading exponents were Marini, Gunder Frank, and dos Santos) seeks to break with the interpretation of the development processes of that subcontinent given by local communist parties. These parties interpreted the Latin American mode of production as feudal, whereas theorists of dependency argued that, since the beginning of colonization, these territories had been incorporated into global capitalism (Kvangraven 2017).

Starting from a theoretical and economic analysis based on the mechanisms of commercial and financial exchange – and their deterioration – between Brazil and the United States, Gunder Frank challenged – here sustained by only a few colleagues, such as Marini (2022) – the orthodox Marxists as well as the “reformers” of ECLAC, in particular Celso Furtado, concerning the field of the “development of underdevelopment.”

At the same time, Gunder Frank got into a dispute with Wallerstein that would culminate about thirty years after the formulation of his theory of dependency: according to Gunder Frank, the theory of the Modern World System, whose characteristics only came to full maturity in the 16th century (Yeniçirak 2017), had to be reviewed, as stated in a book written with Barry Gills, where the authors reframed the chronology applicable to the birth of the World-System, dating it to 5,000 years ago, not 500 years ago (Gunder Frank – Gills 1996).

An important reference point for the formulation of the theory of the development of underdevelopment in Latin America was Paul Baran (1957). According to Baran, the expansion of capitalism into the (now peripheral) colonial territories of the system was destined to develop in a “regressive” and not “progressive” way, as Marx had thought. For this reason, Gunder Frank’s thesis of the “development of underdevelopment” could be applied to Latin America, and especially Brazil, in contrast to the Brazilian nationalist and diversified “reformist” tradition (Fiori 2012).

After this brief introduction, the next section looks at the political and economic context that Gunder Frank encountered when he first came into direct contact with Brazil, and then presents the essential foundations of the concept of development that he articulated. Next, the article presents the debate around development and its policies in Brazil, culminating in his criticism of these conceptions and choices. Conclusions are then presented.

A DIFFICULT ENCOUNTER: GUNDER FRANK, LATIN AMERICA AND BRAZIL

Gunder Frank defended his doctoral thesis in 1957 at the University of Chicago on the economy of Ukraine (Gunder Frank 1958). As one of his colleagues and friends recalls, he graduated from the “serpents’ den” of the Chicago Boys, a group of liberal intellectuals who had a considerable influence on the world’s social sciences, supporting US administrations that, among other initiatives, fomented Pinochet’s *coup d’état* in Chile in 1973 (Dos Santos 2005; Matamala 2021). The members of this group adhered to the doctrine of Milton Friedman (1962), seeking to respond to the influence that, since 1948, an organization such as ECLAC had exerted on several Latin American countries (Colistete 2001). An influence that, after the first executive secretary – Mexican Gustavo Martínez Cabañas – left his post in 1950, was assumed by Argentinian Raúl Prebisch (who held it until 1963) and grew exponentially throughout the region in the following years. These positions were not new, since the “Americanization” of Brazil began in the 1920s and intensified in the 1930s (Moura 1984).

Gunder Frank arrived in Brazil in 1963 at the invitation of Darcy Ribeiro, the rector of the newly created University of Brasília. Ribeiro was already a famous anthropologist who had just published a foundational work on social classes in Brazil, with an emphasis on the exploitation of indigenous people (Ribeiro 1962). Gunder Frank was asked to deliver a series of seminars on sociological theories, in particular on “structural functionalism,” the prevailing current at the University of Chicago, from which he had already distanced himself (Kay 2021).

He published significant studies on Latin America before his arrival in Brazil, namely on Nicaragua (Gunder Frank 1955), Cuba (*ibid.* 1961), and Mexico, on the agrarian and bourgeois revolution (*ibid.* 1962); then, he began to address development issues in Brazil (*ibid.* 1963a; Dos Santos 2005).

Between the 1950s and the 1960s, there were three major centers of thought in Brazil about national development: the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Higher Institute of Brazilian Studies (ISEB), and the School of Sociology at the University of São Paulo (USP), as well as the liberal school of Roberto Campos. The most influential of these three was ECLAC, not least because of its sub-continental nature, but also due to its problematic genesis, involving the opposition of the USA. And it was with ECLAC that Gunder Frank interacted most intensively.

For around twenty years, ECLAC played a hegemonic role in the debate on Latin American development, with its famous thesis of industrialization through import substitution, without, however, excluding the possibility of foreign capital intervening to help the region abandon its peripheral status, to better integrate it into the world capitalist system (Colistete 1992).

The ISEB defended the theory of “dualism” in Brazilian society and economy. According to this perspective, in Latin American countries, an industrialized bourgeoisie would oppose the feudal and mercantile elites, with transformative and progressive potential. The ISEB was officially created by the Brazilian government in 1955 (but was derived from an institute set up in 1952), based in Rio de Janeiro, and led by Hélio Jaguaribe. The Institute defended, despite the great heterogeneity of its main components, the nationalism and interclassism practiced by Getúlio Vargas between capitalists and workers to pursue a modern form of national development (Bresser-Pereira 2010).

The third center was the USP’s School of Sociology, led by Florestan Fernandes from 1954, which channeled sociological studies into exploring issues of development and underdevelopment in Brazil, including racial issues (Valença et al. 2021). Defined as a “critical conscience of developmentalism” (Castelo 2011: 296), the positions of Fernandes were not far from Celso Furtado’s ideas. In the first phase of his scholarly production, he emphasized the importance of

factors exogenous to Brazilian capitalism and its underdevelopment, concluding that the structuring element of Brazilian dependence should be sought in the attempt to expand international capitalism to the peripheries of the system (Fernandes 1968).

Gunder Frank – as will be seen below – approached this debate in an extremely critical way, not only to unmask what he thought were the real intentions of the philo-Americanists *à la* Roberto Campos, but also to try to “awaken” the nationalist reformers by proposing a neo-Marxist, dependentist and liberating, or revolutionary, vision of Brazilian development. In his opinion, this revolution was necessary due to the importance of the unbalanced relations between the United States (or, in general, between international capital) and Brazil regarding the socio-economic development of this principal Latin American country. Gunder-Frank’s revolutionary approach to Brazilian development should be interpreted in this light: without resolving issues related to relations with the US, even the structural elements of the Brazilian economy would have continued to fuel its underdevelopment, thereby creating an unstoppable vicious circle.

BRIEF NOTES ON THE CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE WORK OF GUNDER FRANK

The meaning of Gunder Frank’s revolutionary theory was articulated in the preface to a collection of his texts, published in 1969 and using the Cuban Revolution of 1959 as an example (Gunder Frank 1969).

His first point focused on the comparison between Latin American countries and the experience of colonial underdevelopment; hence, their dependence on foreign capital, basically from the United States. On this basis, he thought that the development of underdevelopment would continue, both in practice and in theory, without the possibility of affirming a “progressive” capitalism, as ECLAC and, even more so, the ISEB thought. In fact, in the part of his writing that he himself called “The Emperor’s Dresses,” the author sought to unveil the imposture of the ideology of the dominant social sciences – which he knew well through his doctorate – by defining them as “pseudo-sciences.” These two elements – colonial underdevelopment and dominant ideology – had led to American imperialism spreading and taking control of the economic, political, and cultural mechanisms of the various Latin American countries, including Brazil. From this perspective, he criticized significant aspects of what he termed “bourgeois” or reformist theories. Among them he included those of ECLAC and Celso Furtado, locating “imperialism” as the main heuristic concept; as well as that of Manning Nash, the Chicago anthropologist concerned with the

spread of modernization in societies judged to be still underdeveloped (Nash 1979); and finally, the theory of comparative advantages or dualism that was greatly influencing ECLAC's and ISEB's thinking (De Oliveira, F. 2015).

Gunder Frank's analysis is both politically oriented and rigorous from a socio-economic point of view; hence, his attention to the political Brazilian crisis as well as to the debate within the social sciences was constantly intertwined. As a matter of fact, the basis of Brazilian underdevelopment had to be sought in the work of the Brazil-United States Joint Commission (CMBEU) and in the contrasts – according to him, more apparent than structural – between this body and the CEPAL-BNDE group (National Bank for Economic Development); on the other hand, Gunder Frank sought to criticize the real intentions of North American social science, challenging some of its pillars, such as ethnocentric modernization theory, with the diffusion of Western cultural habits to developing nations (Hoselitz 1953), or the stages of economic growth (Rostow 1960).

Contrary to such approaches, Gunder Frank emphasized that it was the very structure of the social system that had to be changed. Consequently, this structure could not follow the stages of the theoretical, never empirically demonstrated development indicated by Rostow; thus, the dependent structures of underdeveloped countries would remain the same if their relationship with metropolitan countries intensified (the development of underdevelopment).

Finally, in the essay, Gunder Frank concluded that Rostow's idea was based on a “zero” reality of underdeveloped societies: a reality that never existed. Translated, this meant that African, Latin American, and Asian societies never had any kind of history prior to the arrival of the colonial European powers. This “zero” reality was defined by Gunder Frank (1967) as the “underdevelopment of sociology,” who, through this rebuttal, restored historicity and dignity to local societies.

These were the main political, theoretical, and empirical bases with which Gunder Frank approached the Brazilian question during his stay at the University of Brasília in 1963–64, thereby challenging much of Brazilian reformist thinking.

THE POLITICAL DEBATE ON DEVELOPMENT IN BRAZIL (1950–1964)

The 1950s opened in Brazil with important news: Getúlio Vargas, the former coup president of 1930 and mastermind of the “Estado Novo” (i.e., the dictatorship), retook office by election in 1951 (De Oliveira, D. 2017; Magalhães 2022).

By the end of his first presidential term, Vargas had already achieved significant results in terms of his modernization policy, with the help of Washington. Around 1940, with Brazil committed to an industrialization project that was largely focused on the steel industry, not excluding German support, Washington gave in to pressure from Vargas and Ambassador Carlos Martins, agreeing to finance this venture with a 20-million-dollar loan from the Export-Import Bank (De Oliveira, C. 2015).

The first democratically elected government after the end of the dictatorship, led by Dutra, was completely aligned with the United States, with a break in diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in foreign policy (Munhoz 2003). In economic policy, the Dutra government marked the first confrontation between liberal and developmentalist and planning ideas. The former were represented by Eugénio Gudin, the latter by Roberto Simonsen. The dispute concluded in favor of the first tendency, whose proponents were more inclined to accept Washington's help. Especially in the first phase of Dutra's presidency, the role of the state was reduced, and the capital market liberalized. It was only at the end of his term that the developmentalist tendency regained ground, laying the foundations for the next term, which would once again be led by Getúlio Vargas and his developmentalist and nationalist ideas (Reigoto 2017).

Expressing a developmentalist ideology, Vargas intended to accelerate the process of industrialization with the help of American capital, but with him dictating national priorities (Gumiero 2013), as was clear in Vargas' *Message to the Congress* in 1951; this perspective was not very pleasing to Washington, whose government was used to Dutra's total alignment (Bastos 2011).

In order to better control Latin American economies, Washington considered promoting joint commissions. The philosophy behind this decision was implemented in the first months of the Truman administration, in 1945, and finalized by the same president in 1949 with the *Point Four Program*, based on the policy of *containment* (Tyler 2021). The aim was to block communist advances in Latin America through a program of international technical cooperation and to sensitize the governments of the subcontinent to support the United States in the Korean War, which began in 1950. There was no shortage of criticism of this program, which seemed to bring more threats than benefits to the potential developing countries that were targeted (Olden–Phillips 1952). The program intended to involve local private initiative, providing for the reform of commercial codes and laws to encourage the transfer of capital and profits to the United States by lowering import duties on American products. This was how the industrialization process of several countries in this subcontinent was to be carried out, with clear gains for American capital (Candido Stutz Gomes 2022). The foundations of the CMBEU were laid in the last months of the Dutra

government, with the signing of a *General Technical Cooperation Agreement* (1950), followed by a subsidiary agreement. Thus, Vargas found that much of the work had already been done. The CMBEU began work in 1951, a year before Finance Minister Horácio Lafer defined the *National Economic Re-equipment Plan*, which set out the structural guidelines for completing Brazil's transition from an agro-export economy to an industrialized one with a significant domestic market (Vieira 2022).

Throughout the Second World War, Vargas sought to exploit the international situation to take advantage of the relationship with the United States. Aware that endogenous capital was insufficient to complete the industrialization he wanted, he put 14 priority projects on the negotiating table with Washington in return for Brazil's commitment to helping the US war effort in Korea. This time, Washington's response was only partially satisfactory: only projects that were a priority for the United States were to receive American funding, as was the case with the manganese mine in Mato Grosso (Candido Stutz Gomes 2022).

Apart from the concrete results that Vargas achieved, it is important to note that two visions of Brazilian development clashed throughout his last presidential term: on the one hand, that promoted by the CMBEU, and on the other, by the study group formed by ECLAC and the BNDE, created in 1952 to meet the financing needs of the country's new wave of industrialization.

The Brazilian delegation to the CMBEU was led by Ari Frederico Torres and included the influential ambassador Roberto Campos, who drafted the final report, while the ECLAC-BNDE Joint Group was headed by Celso Furtado, a leading exponent of the very ECLAC whose founding the United States had tried to block.

Both groups were influenced by prominent authors from the "center" of the system: the CMBEU by Albert Hirschman, and the Mixed Group by Ragnar Nurkse (Gumiero 2013). Hirschman was the theorist of *unbalanced growth*. In his opinion, an underdeveloped economy that wanted to ensure a step forward towards development had to "maintain tensions, disproportions, and disequilibria" (Hirschman 1958: 66). Thus, the original path for *latecomers* in industrialization was supposed to be disequilibrium, which was later believed to have the capacity to expand its beneficial influence on other areas of the region (Bianchi 2004). Roberto Campos was inspired by Hirschman's conception, adhering to the idea of development "by germination," in which the state should only intervene in a second phase to correct the tendency towards industrial concentration in a single region (Campos 1963).

On the other hand, Furtado had a fruitful discussion with Nurkse about the type of development and the role of the state through the Getúlio Vargas Foundation and the *Revista de Economia Brasileira*. In 1957, Nurkse's book on

capital formation in underdeveloped countries was published in Brazil (Nurkse 1957). According to this author, the problem lay in the scarcity of private capital and the very modest savings of the working classes. The process of development had to be balanced; it would involve the accumulation of savings, the creation of new capital, and investment in modern, productive sectors. Celso Furtado was very close to these ideas. In 1963, in his book on development and underdevelopment (Furtado 1963a), he theorized the balanced development of industry in underdeveloped countries through planning action by the state.

The above-mentioned positions were reflected in the conclusions of the two commissions: the CMBEU advised eliminating bottlenecks by removing obstacles to agricultural, mining, and forestry production through loans to private capital, both foreign and domestic. The process would be seen as the state concentrating on strategic sectors such as energy, transportation, and ports (Brasil 2008). The Mixed Group emphasized the need for technological innovation and foreign capital to make up for the shortage of local capital. Workers should be transferred from the unproductive primary sector to the secondary sector to increase their wages and thereby create an internal market that could be an important element of industrial production, thereby strengthening it.

As has already been pointed out, the two reports present a similar diagnosis: it was necessary to move forward with a rapid industrialization process. However, they differed in method (Gumiero 2013). On the one hand, the CMBEU privileged the union of foreign with endogenous capital; on the other hand, the Mixed Group tended to favor more balanced development, with foreign capital complementing domestic capital. Furtado, for example, was not ideologically opposed to foreign trade, “as long as it was done with reciprocity” (Sarmiento 2008: 82). The important thing was to replace imports of capital goods and, to avoid inflationary processes, limit imports of consumer goods. The state had to be at the center of this balanced development process.

In practical terms, the CMBEU did not achieve the expected results, at least on the American side: in fact, in 1953, after Eisenhower’s election, the CMBEU was abolished. Eisenhower favored private initiative, so a public commitment to improving the economies of Latin American countries, starting with Brazil, was out of the question (Lopes 2009). On the Brazilian side, the dispute was provisionally won by ECLAC’s developmentalists. This meant the nationalization of the oil reserves and the founding of Petrobras, the amendment of the law on the remittance of profits in 1952, and other typically Keynesian and nationalist political measures or projects that the new American administration could not accept (D’Araújo 1982). This ushered in a new era of tensions between the two countries and between the developmentalists and planners and the more reactionary Brazilian capital linked to American private investment, which

culminated symbolically with the suicide of Getúlio Vargas (Cony 2004) and then with the 1964 *coup d'état*.

The period leading up to the Quadros presidency (which ended with his resignation in 1961, seven months after taking office) and especially João Goulart's (the last democratic one) was characterized by developmentalist ideas and programs, with ECLAC playing a decisive role in Juscelino Kubitschek's government between 1956 and 1961. Meanwhile, Roberto Campos played a key role, promoting the diminution of the state's role in the economy (Campos 1967).

Kubitschek's greatest efforts were directed towards financing the *Plano de Metas*, an ambitious program of public investment and the infrastructural modernization of Brazil, which had five fundamental axes: energy, transport, industry, education, and food (Malan 1995).

To ensure regional rebalancing, an increasingly developed and industrialized south and a still backward northeast, *Law No. 3692* of 1959 created SUDENE, a superintendency that answered directly to the Presidency of the Republic. SUDENE was headed by Celso Furtado (Furtado 1959). However, from its foundation, it faced considerable problems, including opposition movements that Furtado himself considered radical and therefore dangerous, such as the Peasant Leagues (Colombo 2020).

The greatest difficulties and social and political tensions arose with the Goulart government, in which Gunder Frank's intellectual activity took place. Without seeking to go into the reasons that led to a drastic solution to the Brazilian crisis in 1964, some of the central elements that led to this turning point were the following: a critical point in Brazil's industrialization process, with widespread and even generalized social conflict; irreconcilable tension between the agro-export model of the large landowners and the industrialist developmentalism of the Goulart government, and finally, the breakdown of the "populist pact" due to the concentration of income and consequent popular demonstrations by trade unions and other social movements (Delgado 2009).

GUNDER FRANK'S CRITICISMS OF BRAZILIAN "DEVELOPMENTALIST" THEORIES AND PRACTICES

In the climate of the 1964 military coup, Gunder Frank took a clear stance on the current political situation. In fact, in addition to his general theoretical writings, he wrote two other types of texts about Brazil in the 1960s: on the one hand, these were "occasional" writings (in other words, more linked to the political

contingency and, so to speak, tactical elements of the Brazilian scenario); on the other hand, he criticized the theoretical and planning elaborations of ECLAC – in particular, but not only, Celso Furtado – unmasking the mechanisms of exchange between Brazil and the United States, defined as “imperialist.”

Gunder Frank’s position on political contingency is expressed in two articles, one from April 1964 and the other from 1965, both written when the military was already in power. In them, he mainly criticized the “liberals” who had benefited from the 1964 military coup, as well as the uncertainties of the Goulart government, which supported the pretensions of the country’s most conservative currents, without opting for truly reformist solutions.

In the first case, the economist sought to analyze the political reasons for the coup (Gunder Frank 1964a). According to Gunder Frank, the greater strength Goulart acquired after the plebiscite that secured his victory, thereby leading to the abandonment of the parliamentary system approved in 1961 (Almeida 1995), was not put to good use. He analyzed the results of a plan that included land reform, economic growth of 7%, and a reduction in inflation.

The reality, however, was different: the land reform proposals never materialized, inflation reached 85%, and the Goulart government limited itself to extemporaneous and ineffective measures. Goulart, according to Gunder Frank, fell not because of his advanced reform program, but because he failed to carry out these more radical programs, continuing to “wink” at the most reactionary part of the country. Today, studies based on declassified documents have managed to clarify how influential figures, such as General O’Meara, head of SOUTHCOM, expressed their congratulations on what was judged to be the best political event in recent Latin American history, the 1964 military coup (Pereira 2016).

A year later, he wrote a second text on the Brazilian political situation, this time seeking to clarify the nature of the military regime in power (Gunder Frank 1965). While the governments in Brazil and Washington were celebrating the first anniversary of the coup, Gunder Frank agreed with the statement by Niceu Cruz César, General Director of the National Department of Employment and Wages of the Ministry of Labor, who, in the newspaper *O Globo*, had pointed out that the widespread industrial crisis was leading to 1,000 new unemployed people a day in the state of São Paulo alone. Inflation was not under control either, according to the International Monetary Fund’s forecasts: while under Goulart it had averaged 30%, under the military government it rose to 42%, with a 3% decline in the country’s production. Finally, Gunder Frank criticized the former Brazilian ambassador to the United States, Roberto Campos. The author cited the example of the acquisition of Brazilian ownership of the American and Foreign Power Company, initially negotiated for 70 million dollars (a figure

already considered very high), but ultimately acquired for 135 million dollars, which Gunder Frank considered a gift from Brazil to American capital.

It was precisely this last argument regarding an unbalanced economic relationship between Brazilian and American capital, together with the criticism of the reformist developmentalists, who were accused of not correctly understanding the process of imperialist expansion underway in Latin America, that formed the core of Gunder Frank's reflections during this complicated political phase in Brazil.

The demonstration of Gunder Frank's "imperialist" thesis centered on Brazil's disadvantages in terms of the flow of capital with the United States. Gunder Frank (1963a) overturned the American idea of "aid," presenting very precise empirical data: above all, between investments and loans, from 1947 to 1960, the United States spent 1814 million dollars in Brazil; however, 2459 million dollars returned to the United States in the form of profits and payment of interest, to which another 1022 million dollars in services had to be added. According to other data, even with other Latin American countries, the type of commercial and financial exchange was the same, i.e., it conferred clear advantages on the United States. But the drain of financial value from Brazil to the United States was even greater: Brazilian private capital used US and Swiss banks to borrow, which further aggravated Brazil's balance of payments. In addition, American aid was conditional on Brazil acquiring American goods, so this relationship, which Gunder Frank defined as "imperialist," would have slowed down Brazilian development, concentrating capital in São Paulo to the detriment of other regions, especially the Northeast. The Alliance for Progress alone, created during the Kennedy administration, allocated \$13 million to the Northeast (which at the time had 25 million inhabitants) and \$71 million to the now-defunct state of Guanabara (with only 4 million inhabitants).

The process of concentration in large industrial centers represented the most visible form of American interests in Brazil. As Celso Furtado noted – and with which, this time, Gunder Frank agreed – Brazil's greatest development took place when ties with the United States were loosened during the 1930s during the Great Depression and, in part, during the Second World War. According to Gunder Frank, this type of development was the best example of how American imperialism operated, provoking a progressive deterioration in the terms of exchange between Brazilian and American products (following the fall in the price of coffee) (Gunder Frank 1964b). This meant that close ties with the United States not only fueled dependency but also made the Latin American subcontinent even more peripheral.

Based on the above data, Gunder Frank focused much more on the "reformers" of ECLAC than on the "liberals," with whom he felt it was impossible to

talk. As explained above, his theoretical and political assumptions were of a revolutionary nature, and he considered positions that sought a “third way” between capitalism and revolution to be wrong (Gunder Frank 1969).

In 1963, Celso Furtado published an important text in which he asked what kind of revolution was needed in Brazil, with the social costs of development as an essential reference (Furtado 1963b). Gunder Frank (1963b) defined Furtado’s idea as a “pre-revolution,” and not a revolutionary attempt in the full sense. Making explicit reference to Furtado’s article in the journal *Foreign Affairs*, he criticized his Brazilian colleague for *a priori* ruling out a Marxist-Leninist solution to the ongoing crisis. Furtado advocated “gradualism” and an “open society,” which were incompatible with the only solution that, in Gunder Frank’s view, would bring significant transformations to the Brazilian masses. Furtado’s “evolutionism” should therefore be rejected.

Gunder Frank polemicized not only with Furtado, but also with several other influential Brazilian thinkers. Drawing inspiration from Rosa Luxemburg, he sought to disprove one of the myths present in Brazilian sociology at the time: that of the dualist society to which the ISEB referred. Jacques Lambert (1963) had postulated the existence of two Brazils, one advanced and modern, the other agrarian and feudal. Fernandes – whom Gunder Frank defined as “the most famous progressive Brazilian sociologist” (Gunder Frank 1964c: 267), also agreed with this position, not seeing that Brazilian society was dualistic, but not dialectical.

Through this idea of a dialectical society, which expressed all the contradictions of capitalism, Gunder Frank denounced the colonial relationship between Brazil and the United States through foreign investment, coming up with another radical critique, this time of ECLAC. Accepting the theory of dualism and feudal residues, ECLAC did not develop a class analysis of Brazilian society, and therefore did not perceive the role of the national bourgeoisie. In line with Che Guevara’s ideas, he concluded that it was necessary to overcome the limits of the Latin American bourgeoisie, since it was only a “Lumpen-bourgeoisie,” that is, “a trading bourgeoisie without any creative capacity” (Gunder Frank 1971: 405). A parasitic social class, which had bought very important assets from a state on the verge of collapse “at ridiculous prices” (*ibid* p. 89), and that was completely dependent on privileges from the public sector and dependent on and allied with foreign capital. His conclusion was that the emergence of a truly nationalist bourgeoisie during the neo-imperialist phase of the 1960s and 1970s was impossible. And this was, according to the German economist, one of the greatest limits in the analysis of ECLAC and Furtado.

Probably the person who best summed up the difference between ECLAC’s position and that of Gunder Frank, as well as other thinkers such as Paul Baran

and Paul Sweezy, from the *Monthly Review* group, was Theotônio dos Santos. In an interview, he said: “André Gunder Frank was very important, because he brought us very direct international experience (...)” And recalling the seminars that Gunder Frank gave in 1963 at the University of Brasília, he said: “The seminar we discussed was precisely a critique of structural-functionalism, which was the basic thinking of the theory of developmentalism. ECLAC was not critical enough in this regard,” concluding: “We have entered a very advanced critical point” (Interview with T. dos Santos... 2009). A critical point that was marginalized in the debate on development and class structure in Brazil, and which has only been partly rediscovered today (ibid).

CONCLUSIONS

The conceptual apparatus proposed by Gunder Frank to explain the Brazilian crisis helped the Latin American social sciences conduct an in-depth analysis of the structural roots of Brazilian society, thereby forming a new school of thought, whose main epigones were Marini, dos Santos, and, to some extent, Vânia Bambirra. If, on the one hand, his economic analysis of the relationship between Brazil and the United States laid bare the true nature of American “aid,” on the other hand, some of his more political and contingent considerations reveal a still partial point of view and some gaps in the tactical and even social situation of Brazil before the 1964 coup. The fact that Gunder Frank proposed models such as the Soviet or Cuban as central references for the Brazilian revolution shows a certain degree of utopianism and, therefore, unrealism. The consideration of a bourgeoisie completely at the service of capital and American interests, for example, represents a very partial view of a social class that was emerging as the most numerically and economically significant group in Brazil, and with diverse political tendencies. Part of this bourgeoisie and its intellectuals were among the main opponents of the military regime, while other members of this middle class openly and unreservedly supported the dictatorship.

However, his Marxist background helped him to understand the mechanisms that had already manifested their full violence in Argentina with the deposition of Perón in 1955, and that would be even worse in 1973 in Chile with Pinochet.

Except for the limits described here, his contribution remains fundamental to understanding the structural dynamics of Brazilian capitalism, which, to this day, presents problems very similar to those discussed by the CMBEU and CEPAL at the beginning of the 1950s: regional disparities, industrial concentration, the role of the state in the economy, financial capitalism which

is still dominant and comes from the US (although today it is more globalized), and a bourgeoisie which is partly parasitic and “buying” and which has done little to help national development. And above all, a model of dependent and exporting capitalism, sometimes not very sustainable from an environmental point of view, which has not yet definitively freed itself from the cage of the imperialisms that have dominated until now. A scenario that Gunder Frank, with his always well-founded economic analyses, helped us to understand.

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