

questions. Did the revolution fail? Why did she and others once commonly use “that ugly epithet,” *gusano*, to refer to those who left the island? She asked others throughout her visit, “What do you think makes some Cubans leave their country and others remain, faithful beyond expediency?” She listens to many answers and offers, “I suspect it has to do with a deep love of country and culture, an identity that depends on place for full expression.”

We conclude this issue with tributes by Susanne Jonas and June Nash to the late Helen Safa, a pioneering feminist and scholar of Latin America—indeed, a Renaissance woman.

The Latin American Debate: Dependent Capitalism, Superexploitation, and Revolution

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I

Latin America holds a conflictive place within the universal discourse constructed by capitalist modernity in economic and political terms. At the heart of this great tale, the region and its processes appear to be an excess that questions and denies that universality, which requires a way of thinking that comprehends the reasons for this negation.

II

Capitalist modernity—at different times and in the voices of diverse authors and trends—formed a narrative of powerful intellectual and political strength. It offered multiple civilizing promises of comprehensive humanization of development and prosperity for the people, of a state order founded in liberties that would reconcile individual and social interests, and of political and social equalities. From its inclusion in the universal history that constructs capital, the region that would later be called Latin America emerged as a necessary exclusion (thus its inclusion) that makes modernity viable. The imperial centers were abundant in their grand political revolutions, powerful industrial transformations, productive ebullience and progress, and everything related to humanity and well-being that is produced there. But this had its counterpart in colonialism: pillaging, plundering of riches, and the extermination of indigenous peoples, the montage of a colonial organization of subjugation and the forced dispossession of land that also required the destruction of numerous African peoples who were transported as slaves to plantations and mines of the region and subjugated to inhumane conditions that caused thousands of deaths.

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Marx (1973, 646) was not using a mere metaphor when he pointed out that capitalism comes into the world “dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt.” Capitalism was established in the new European society, where its novel form of organization was crystallized, but it was also present, with a gesture of unusual brutality, in the colonial world and, with all the more reason, in Latin America and the Caribbean, which played a central role in this history.

III

Relevant milestones in the mid-twentieth century indicate the undeniable cracks that pierce capitalist modernity: two world wars, severe economic crises, proletarian revolutions, the Holocaust, atomic explosions over Japanese territory, among others. For the dominant discourse, these excesses would be explained in different ways from outside of the logic of capital.¹

By the peak of that century, Latin America² already had a history of significant popular revolutions and uprisings. Add to these an irruption of revolutions without an established institutionality, the Cuban Revolution being one example. In the midst of a world divided by the Cold War, and situated only a few miles from the system’s imperialist center, the Cuban Revolution caused commotion and readjustments at the center and in the entire region. This genuine “assault of reality” revealed an obscene nucleus throughout the region’s history, with nearly permanent systemic and regional trends of ebullient rupture that would persist in diverse forms and degrees.

Nearly 150 years after the constitution of formally independent nations, regional history also presents serious difficulties for generating processes that would allow the unification of growth and well-being (Fajnzylber 1989). On the contrary, poverty, backwardness, and inequity were common terms used to describe the prevailing conditions for most of the population.

These political and economic processes raise the same reasonable question: why is it that in Latin America growth processes do not elevate well-being among most of the population and therefore encourage tendencies of rupture and revolution? The debates about the Latin American way of being, as well as the projects and practices that would be set into motion as a response, mark the second half of the twentieth century in regional terms.

IV

Along with its singular meaning, from a broad historical perspective the Cuban Revolution updated Latin America’s particularity as a region of systemic contradictions that question and fracture the dominant order. In this sense, it is related to at least two previous revolutions that were just as surprising: that of Saint-Domingue (now Haiti) of 1791–1805, which was the first in this part of the world to be organized by slaves and which also led to independence and the end of slavery. Then the Mexican Revolution of 1910–1914 opened the worldwide

revolutionary cycle of the twentieth century—which Hobsbawm (2012) calls the short century—that ended with the defeat of socialism in 1989.

If the slaves’ revolution of Haiti made evident the processes of negation that maintained and enabled the French Revolution’s universal mottos of liberty, equality, and fraternity,³ Mexico’s peasant revolution precedes the first triumphant worker-peasant revolution, which was that of the Soviets, the Bolsheviks, and Vladimir Lenin, and shows a tendency in the progression of those processes. Revolutions tended to implode within the capitalist periphery.

The West Indian colonies generally contributed to their respective empires with great flows of goods, such as sugar, coffee, and tobacco. Haiti was by far the richest colony, with plantations that were organized under the strict demands of capitalist rationalization (Grüner 2007, 84). And the slaves of the great plantations on the northern part of the island (those most subjected to that rationality) were the main actors in the unexpected black revolution (Feijóo 2010).

Faced with the French Revolution’s fractured universalism (“we are all equal”) while the center nevertheless accepted the benefits of exploiting slaves in the colonies, the Haitian Constitution of 1805 proclaimed that “all Haitian citizens are Black,” which beyond skin color contrasted sharply with the many that were not accounted for in the French Revolution’s claim to speak for “all” (Grüner 2009, 83). Therefore, as Žižek (2009, 121) emphasizes, “the point is not to study the Haitian Revolution as an extension of the European revolutionary spirit ... but rather to assert *the significance of the Haitian Revolution for Europe*. It is not only that one cannot understand Haiti without Europe—one cannot understand either *the scope or the limitations of the European emancipation process without Haiti*.”

Without causing a radical shift in the relationships of power between the ruling class and its subjects, the Mexican Revolution brought about a deep change in the ruling political regime. Those who were “nonexistent” in the eyes of the oligarchic powers⁴—the peasants, miners, agricultural and urban workers, and poor people in general—invaded the reigning order and established their place. True, their corporatist designation was subordinated to the command of pacts of loyalty based on the current political foundations of the viceroyalty of New Spain, as opposed to the ideals of the citizens and conditions of the rule of law under liberal representative democracy (Gonzalez Callejas 2011). However, we should not lose sight of the rupture in oligarchic relationships or of the achievements gained in community recognition, the restitution of territories and land rights, and of multiple social rights for extensive sectors of the population in the midst of new reconfigurations of power and control.

Indigenous peasants and agricultural workers from the haciendas protested and created rebel armies in response to the growing process of expropriation of community and peoples’ lands by landowners. They also reacted against the miserable conditions to which workers were condemned (in the mines, railways, and other services) to increase the benefits under the nineteenth-century exportation

model. Leading to the revolutions in Mexico and Haiti was the lack of moderation inherent in capitalist profit.

The pursuit of profit explains the precapitalist structures, as well as land dispossessions, in the great Mexican haciendas in the Porfiriato, and it was capitalist logic that organized the exploitation of slaves on the Haitian plantations. This fact allows us to understand that these revolutions—regardless of their social majorities (slaves in one case, peasants in the other) and the directions they took—were responding to the operations of capital, embodied in slave-owning exporters, mine owners, and landowners, all of whom were trapped in the logic of profit.

Despite being fed by capital, they are not anticapitalist revolutions. Both demanded land distribution and the establishment of small agricultural properties as a central objective. Yet, this is not to minimize the unthinkable event that both represent in history.

A century separates the revolutions in Haiti and Mexico, with half a century separating the latter from the Cuban Revolution. That second period represents 50 years of global maturity of worldwide capitalism, and of the maturation of regional and Cuban capitalism in particular. The commotion resulting from the 26th of July Movement's overthrow of a US-sponsored dictatorship on the biggest island in the Caribbean is followed by another, no less relevant event, when the Cuban Revolution proclaimed itself a socialist revolution in 1961. A project defining itself as anticapitalist took form and its power was consolidated in the region.

Fueled by the fervor and ebullience unleashed by the Cuban feat, Latin American political organizations arose in the 1970s that claimed to be revolutionary and set out to reissue or re-create the great deeds of Fidel and Che. Beyond mere willfulness and the utopianism that reigns in many of these processes, their multiplication and expansion were favored by prevailing political and economic conditions. The abysmal living conditions of most of the population continued as authoritarian governments multiplied and wealth remained in the hands of very few. At this point, Washington demanded reforms from governments in the region, such as land redistribution and a greater level of industrialization, while agreeing to the creation and preparation of counterinsurgent military squads capable of containing the pressure cooker.

V

Experiencing the antithesis of the Cuban experience would bring to light the region's impulse toward rupture during this period. In Chile in 1970, leftist candidate Salvador Allende triumphed after four previous defeats. This occurred after a few disputed presidential elections, when the parties representing the dominant sectors were divided, making it possible for an alliance of the declaredly Marxist Communist and the Socialist parties to predominate. With 33 percent of the votes, Allende was proclaimed President of the Chilean Republic, thus opening the door to a revolutionary process that profoundly affected society and, as an exceptional process, surprised insiders and outsiders alike. What followed was unique in history

and established some of the Gordian knots of that experience. The combination of a popular government enclave embedded within the state apparatus and an intention to transform society without abandoning the prevailing institutionality became a formula known as the "Chilean path to socialism."

Dozens of important factories passed into state hands and remained under the management of the workers. The great copper deposits, once in the hands of important US firms and known as "the Chilean salary," were nationalized. In the factories, country estates, schools, and towns, peasants, urban workers, students, and townspeople began discussions and took greater responsibility for the country's productive and political life. Within a few months, the country and society became mobilized, constantly organizing and reorganizing, and the level of politicization grew. Society became increasingly polarized politically.

Allende and his allies gained strength in the Congress with triumphs in parliamentary elections, thus opening institutional routes to economic transformations, such as the nationalization of copper, state-controlled businesses, and land redistribution. Meanwhile, the political forces of capital obstructed change by entrenching themselves in the institutions of the state apparatus they still controlled, such as the judicial branch and some quarters of the legislative branch, while business sectors unhinged the economy by generating shortages and a black market. They mobilized their social sectors in streets demonstrations, such as the *cacerolazos* (pots and pans protests), and organized paramilitary forces. At the same time, they maneuvered within the Armed Forces and Carabiniers to disrupt the institutional order, fearing that the popular sectors would continue to gain strength in a setting in which they caused tension while respecting the law.

After a few failed coup attempts, the "Chilean path to socialism" was violently shut down in September 1973, after a military coup supported by most of the high command of the Armed Forces and Carabiniers. Thus began a long and bloody counterrevolutionary process. The military coup highlighted the enormous tactical flexibility of the dominant groups in maintaining their power. If respect for the law and their institutionality were not sufficient instruments for confronting the popular offensive, then the problem had to be resolved in the arena of concentrated violence, thus violating their own armed apparatuses of the state, the law, and the Constitution. The bombing at La Moneda Palace by Air Force warplanes, and the death of President Allende while defending the Constitution in a building surrounded by coup leaders' troops, are vivid images of the contradictions marking that process.

VI

After successive military coups in the southern part of the continent, the wave of insurgency that traversed the region arrived to Central America, taking form in the triumph of the Sandinista Revolution of 1979 and in intense civil wars in El Salvador and Guatemala in the 1980s. These processes culminated in electoral and/or military defeats, accompanied by serious processes of political decomposition.

This closed the cycle initiated with the Cuban Revolution. The counterrevolutionary period took full form with the 1964 military coup in Brazil. By the 1970s, almost all of the countries in the South American region of Latin America came under the rule of military dictatorships—a trend that traveled north into a large part of Central America in the 1980s.

The new dictatorships were not merely a reactive response to popular offensives. For the most part, they imposed new projects of economic and political reorganization in the region or cleared the way for civil governments to undertake that task. During the 1970s and 1980s, the region was inserted into the world market in the form of specialized exports and neoliberal economic policies. The common denominator in this intense process of productive restructuring was an aggressive policy against the working classes, with salaries and social benefits plummeting. Strengthening of the monopolistic sector of local capital and the sector more closely associated with foreign capital occurred. This process was fueled by the privatization of important state businesses, the narrowing of trade relations, and openings to the world market. Increased competitiveness in foreign markets was closely bound to deteriorating living conditions for salaried employees and to the intensification of exploitation. Not surprisingly, the region's export capacity grew during the last decades of the twentieth century, while salaries plummeted. The economy turned its back on most of the working population, and after a brief period of industrializing in the region, the working population was partly incorporated into the internal market.

VII

When the foundations of the new economic organization were in place, with its corresponding disciplining of the working population, and once the core economies had dealt with the most intense phases of the crisis, it became possible to retire the military regimes and the authoritarian civilians as part of a region-wide agenda. This was fueled by US think tanks under the theme of transition to democracy (Huntington 2000). Political leaders were granted new levels of legitimacy within a framework fully compatible with the prevailing neoliberalism. "Obese" states—those packed with public businesses that granted social benefits and sustained broad class alliances—were replaced by "efficient" states that concentrated on safeguarding the local and transnational interests of big capital in the region. The figure of the citizen, who received fair pay for efforts and capacities from the market, replaced the subject who waited for gifts and state benefits. Authorities would be elected by the votes of political adults, now enjoying access to a public life, thus leaving behind the presence of masses manipulated by tropical strongmen and leaders.

Just over two decades after the transition to democracy began in the region and the consequent "democratic consolidation" called for by this theoretical agenda, the results have fallen short of the expectations of the dominant and popular sectors alike. Apart from a few cases, democracy for the former has brought about serious deceptions because of the emergence of leaders elected by the masses, such as

Hugo Chávez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia. This was also due to the increase in social disturbances (or downright chaos in some cases, such as Mexico and Guatemala), and even to the emergence of social movements in societies that were orderly not so long before, as occurred in Chile in 2011, with thousands of high school and university students disturbing social peace.

From the perspective of the dominant sectors, however, the pros outweigh the cons. The great regional capitalist transformation that accompanied globalization has given the region an almost unequaled dynamism, as well as a growing presence in global politics. Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico form part of the G-20, and the importance of their exports, purchases, and investments, particularly in the case of Brazil, represents revitalizing factors in the regional and world economies.

From the perspective of the popular sectors, the transition to democracy has not achieved its promise. Aside from Bolivia, Venezuela, and Ecuador, despite voting for and electing officials who promised change, they have experienced an inability to modify ruling neoliberal guidelines alongside deteriorating living conditions. No mechanism exists for them to demand accountability from elected administrations, much less to revoke their terms in office. Electoral fraud is compounded by job insecurity, a lack of employment, at times an even greater military presence in the streets and on highways, as well as higher levels of insecurity. Some sectors increasingly believe and state in diverse ways that this form of democracy offers little as a mechanism for broadening the capacity of many to determine the direction of their community life. In the words of Mexican film director Alfonso Cuarón, "the tyranny happening now is taking new disguises—the tyranny of the twenty-first century is called 'democracy'" (quoted in Žižek 2009b, 24).

For many who represent quite divergent positions, enthusiasm for the prevailing democracy has been waning. So, "think tanks" representing a wide array of political perspectives have assumed the task of shoring it up. The common denominator in debates in the region is the "quality" of democracy. Within these discursive labyrinths, critical thinking has been lost, trapped within the prevailing logic of *liberal* democratization without questioning its foundations and limitations.

VIII

Latin America has produced many surprises despite the violent and massive counterinsurgency policies of military and civilian governments, the orthodox application of neoliberal policies that tore the social fabric, intimidated labor, and promoted individualism, and the strident discourse on democratization and the multiple elections. Over a brief period, the political scene in Latin America has reconstructed once destroyed social movements, with an ongoing capacity to resist and generate projects, including the formation of new political parties that later form governments. In diverse corners, towns, and cities of the region, collective responses are emerging to the projects of the dominant sectors and of the so-called popular governments.

Beginning in the 1990s, the “old mole” of history reemerged in the region in the form of diverse organizational structures at different moments in time. Miners, peasants, indigenous peoples, students, workers, the urban poor, the underemployed, and the unemployed are the main agents in this new phase. They have adopted various forms of struggle and confront the powers that be at various levels. The most relevant crystallization of this diversified process is the creation and first years of mobilization of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) in Mexico, and the irruption of a significant indigenous movement, the Landless Workers’ Movement (MST) in Brazil. Other similar occurrences include the massive popular uprising that ousted Fernando de la Rúa’s government in Argentina, indigenous mobilizations in Bolivia and Ecuador that rose up in defense of water and land rights and that overthrew various neoliberal governments, the popular resistance in Venezuela and Honduras in response to counterinsurgent coups, the Oaxaca Commune that emerged in Mexico in 2006–2007 initially as a mass popular response to the repression of the teachers’ movement, the popular governments that took office in Bolivia and Venezuela, and the massive and long-lasting student protests in Chile for free, quality public education.

IX

The triumph of the Cuban Revolution brought a series of old and new problems to the debate,⁵ among them, the issue of the revolutionary ruptures in nation-states inscribed within a worldwide capitalist system. How was this situation possible? How can one explain that these revolutions were constructed in the periphery of the system? Could a revolution survive when limited to the borders of nation-states? Was it possible to construct socialism within those borders?

When faced with the first problem, one must note that capital suffers a constituent contradiction: it demands a planetary space as territory for its operations. Nonetheless, its reproduction also requires a national space as one of the bases for the inter-capital competition that characterizes capitalism. This contradiction is the basis of the debates about the possibilities for the survival of revolutions and the construction of socialism. The historical experience appears to confirm that national borders are too narrow, not only for a revolution’s survival, but also for building socialism.

Lenin worried about offering answers to the problems of the present-day proletarian revolution and to the question of why the proletariat would have a privileged seat in the capitalist system’s periphery, as opposed to its center, as was deduced from the classic writings on Marxism. In that sense, the Leninist concern first had a specific theoretical and political objective: to make sense of the idea of the revolution in peripheral czarist Russia. Lenin’s work draws our attention to the fact that developments in the peripheral zones were influenced by the beginning of capitalism’s imperialist phase during the final decades of the nineteenth century. This phase was characterized by the aggressive dispute between diverse national capitals and their embodiments in the states and financial capital as the greatest

and most defined articulation of the world under the logic of capital. Capitalism’s imperialist phase also involved the pillaging of the peripheral regions and increased brutality (particularly in these regions), which would prevail over capitalism’s civilizing dimensions.

Lenin indicated that the imperialist chain would tend to break at the weak links, which were to be found in the system’s periphery. This is where the system’s contradictions, which are interwoven and fused with the local contradictions of capital, would be concentrated. Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century was such a case, as this was also true for the other territorial spaces of the system wherein revolution would continue into the twentieth century.⁶

Faced with the delayed and unfinished development of bourgeois democracy in the periphery, Lenin believed the democratic revolution was a matter of the socialist revolution under proletarian command. The background to Lenin’s proposal was an assumption that remains relevant to the explanation that follows in this essay: in the peripheral world, the bourgeoisie is not in a position to carry out the tasks of democratization. This is not because it lacks the maturity to do so, but flows instead from the dynamics of the reproduction of capital and because its subordination to imperialist capital does not allow it.

The Cuban Revolution updated the old Leninist theories while highlighting the current dynamics of revolution in an imperialist phase: the condition of the weakest link of the periphery, the need to incorporate democratic-bourgeois reforms as part of the socialist revolution, along with the problems of the revolution’s survival and the limitations of socialist construction when reduced to nation-states. However, the Leninist proposal does not offer an answer to the particularities of how capital is reproduced in the peripheral regions and to the processes by which the contradictions of the capitalist system become synthesized and condensed.

X

The debate about the Cuban Revolution’s viability brought to the region, without much mediation, old questions about the character of the Latin American socioeconomic formation and its dynamics. Leftist political forces, organic intellectuals, and progressive professors were some of the main actors in the debate on the issue, which is now referred to as the Cuban process. What were the particularities of that social formation that fueled revolutions on the continent and throughout the Caribbean islands? It was not just any revolution, but rather one that declared itself to be socialist and demanded that the strategists and social evolutionists set their clocks forward, or change them altogether.

Even before the Cuban Revolution, the debate about the character of Latin America had become polarized between two proposals. The first, which was particularly supported by theorists of the Communist parties, maintained that Latin America—although very advanced in the twentieth century—was still a region in which feudal, or rather precapitalist, organization prevailed. They centered their

problems in the internal processes of Latin American societies, thus assuming that the problems of underdevelopment were *mainly external*, and, in particular, due to unequal trade relationships. Thus, the assumption was that with industrialization the problem of backwardness would tend to be resolved since the root of the problem would be worked out: the dependence on primary goods in exports, which were experiencing lower prices internationally, and on imports of industrial goods that were becoming more expensive.

For this reason, it is not a coincidence that ECLA did not develop categories that would allow for an analysis of the structures of regional societies and economies.⁸ And it is also not by chance that in this theoretical void no formulations emerged that questioned the Latin American bourgeoisie politically. On the contrary, in spite of their radicalism when confronted with these theories of international trade, ECLA's central proposal for resolving the problems of the region, namely industrialization, actually strengthened the economic and political project of the ascendant industrial bourgeoisie.

Early on, once the industrialization process was set in motion, it became clear that the diagnosis and remedy formulated by Prebisch and ECLA were incorrect. The new process did not resolve old problems of dependence and underdevelopment, and even added new dimensions to the problems. For example, the difficulty of producing intermediate products — particularly capital goods, equipment, and new technological knowledge in the region — was addressed by acquiring them from core countries or from the subsidiaries of large foreign businesses that produced the industrial goods installed in the region. This increased the region's subordination to the imperialist centers. In the social arena, the situation did not improve. Massive poverty spread throughout urban areas, which formed large zones of misery around big cities where migrants from the countryside flocked in search of industrial employment. In reality, faced with the regional industrial sector's early monopolization and due to the acquisition of labor-saving equipment, industrial employment did not expand to meet the supply of available workers. This generated new social and political problems with a growing underemployed and unemployed urban population that demanded basic services and access to the goods offered by the cities.

The presence of the revolution in Cuba and the failures of industrialization in relation to the problems of development and well-being strengthened concerns emerging from a new Marxism. What, then, was the nature of Latin American capitalism?

XIII

One of the central tasks of the new Latin American Marxism that emerged after the revolutionary process in Cuba was to account for the characteristics of the reproduction of capital at the local level within the context of the world economy. This had to do with explaining why "the development of underdevelopment" (Frank 1970, 190) resulted from projects and policies (including industrialization

itself) that were applied to the region precisely to overcome backwardness and underdevelopment.

Among the noteworthy efforts of scholars such as André Gunder Frank, Theotonio Dos Santos, and Vânia Bambirra, the most complete formulation came from Ruy Mauro Marini in 1972 at the Center for Socioeconomic Studies (CESO) of the School of Economy at the University of Chile. Marini (1973) presented the work, which was published in the following year under the title *Dialéctica de la dependencia* (*The Dialectics of Dependence*). He established that the particularity of dependent capitalism is that the reproduction of capital is sustained by what Marini called superexploitation, a structural process in which capitalists appropriate more of the value produced by the labor of the local workforce by paying wages below subsistence levels and by extending and intensifying the workday. The additional value extracted from labor in the local economy is then transferred to (appropriated by) capitalists in both the core and local economies.

Marini's formulation thus resolved the link between the external and the internal. Responsibility for underdevelopment and dependence does not reside solely in international trade, foreign capital, or imperialism (although each is clearly involved), but rather primarily in the local dominant classes, which (although under conditions of subordination) provided the capital and power needed for the system's reproduction through superexploitation.

Supporting this is the formation of primarily export-oriented economies (apart from brief moments, such as the industrialization phase, when the focus was on domestic markets). This allows for the creation of a productive structure that is disconnected from the necessities of the working population, which is marginalized from the market. In this form of capitalism, workers play a central role as producers, but not as consumers (except to some extent in non-dynamic sectors of dependent capitalism).

Within the Latin American social sciences, few books attracted as much attention as *Dialéctica de la dependencia*. Only previous texts by André Gunder Frank had a similar impact. Since Marini's formulations offer no concessions, critiques of his book soon followed. His analysis maintains that *capitalism is the problem* since it generates dependence and underdevelopment. For this reason, there is no solution to dependence within the context of capitalism. Thus, the central dilemma became: dependence or revolution?

Underdevelopment does not result from a lack of capitalist maturity. On the contrary, it is a genuine consequence of the unfolding of capitalism in dependent conditions. Backwardness is not the expression of stagnant economies or those that do not grow, but rather an inevitable product of capitalist growth and expansion.

The entire process of the reproduction of capital is reorganized and presents particular traits by sustaining itself on superexploitation. Such traits include wage-earning populations whose earnings fall below what is needed for normal reproduction — which favors malnutrition, premature depredation, illnesses, hunger,

and poverty—and prolonged workdays spurred by the voracity of capital. This reorganization also brings about the typical conditions associated with insufficient wages: weak participation of workers in the internal market and persistent export patterns that reveal a breakdown in the capital cycle between local production and profit realization primarily in foreign markets.

In this situation, we find economies where the productivist incentive that generally characterizes capitalism is reduced because capitalists are maintained by appropriating part of the workers' consumption funds. Weak accumulation processes come into play, with decapitalization spurred by the transfer of value outside the local economy. There is little competition between local capitals due to early monopolization processes, which are accelerated by the enormous weight of foreign capital that is drawn to the extraordinarily elevated profits and surplus obtained through superexploitation. Of course, all this exacerbates social inequality: great wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few, while deep misery and poverty prevail in most of the population.

XIV

When Marini's formulation revealed that the dynamics of dependent capitalism themselves generate backwardness and underdevelopment, he also offered a basis for explaining the region's impulses toward rupture, which make it the weak link in the imperialist chain. Superexploitation is the contradictory local social relationship that internalizes systemic contradictions. Since the publication of *Dialéctica de la dependencia*, dependence (underdevelopment) and the actuality of revolution are expressions of a unified reality, or flipsides of the same coin. Dependence is the economic side and revolution is the political side, in the particular manner of the region. The responsibilities of the local ruling class in the process of underdevelopment and dependence helped in turn to identify the dimensions of the social and political conflict to be confronted.

XV

Following the publication of *Dialéctica de la dependencia*, a new theoretical and political reorganization took place. First, to identify oneself as pro-dependence began to signify a much more complex matter than it had before. Many authors had to clarify their positions so as to define themselves, with the most significant case being Fernando Enrique Cardoso, who with José Serra, wrote the true manifesto against *Dialéctica* (Cardoso 1978). Marini (1978) responded in an essay on neodevelopmentalism.

Neodevelopmentists (with whom Cardoso eventually identified), plus new pro-ECLA currents, Trotskyists, Maoists, a broad variety of reformists, and other political forces that appeared on this new horizon, felt the blow and reacted. Beyond its political dimension, the challenge also implied the elaboration of a theoretical

proposal suitable to the debate as framed by Marini's *Dialéctica*. Faced with the difficulties inherent this task, critics generally tended either to use a formalist tone ("*Dialéctica de la dependencia* distorts Marxism and its method," "it is a circulationist analysis," among others) or, as was most often the case, to focus on partial critiques of some topic, at times even using isolated paragraphs or sentences to reject the entire formulation.

The Cuban Revolution forced a revision of theory on the part of Communist parties, which become increasingly open to the hypotheses of the Marxist school of dependency theory. A good example is *El desarrollo del capitalismo en América Latina* ("The Development of Capitalism in Latin America"), a book by Ecuadorian communist intellectual Agustín Cueva (1977), who shifted from a steadfastly anti-dependence stance. In it, feudalism is regarded as significant in the region only until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Cueva points out that in the strictest sense, the transition from feudalism to capitalism in Latin America did not take place in the twentieth century, because "this process, in the most general terms, had already taken place in the oligarchical phase" (ibid., 148). He had no qualms about talking about "superexploitation," the central category of Marini's proposal, or about the "oligarchical-dependent" means of accumulation.

XVI

Due to their pertinence to the social sciences in general, we note two epistemological contributions of *Dialéctica de la dependencia*:

1. *It uses a holistic perspective* to account for the characteristics of capital reproduction in a dependent economy. Since it is integrally connected to the movements and processes of the capitalist world economy, Marini had to break with a focus on partial aspects, in this case within the economy. Instead, he analyzed the *whole* process of reproduction, which integrates circulation and production in the local and international spheres. Marini looked for an explanation of the whole, the underlying *active unity* in the fragments presented by the phenomenal (Osorio 2012).

2. *It represents the unity between the economic and political spheres.* Since the disciplines in academia are fragmented, *Dialéctica de la dependencia* is an analysis that pertains to the economy. However, it is also a political analysis. Its formulation of the characteristics of the reproduction of capital in dependent capitalism, sustained by superexploitation, immediately reveals the conditions that determine the possible modes for the creation of community life and the relationships between different social classes that, at the core of that reproduction, take shape by means of contradictions and conflicts.

This holistic perspective, which emphasizes the unity of the economy and politics, makes clear that the tensions leading to rupture and the revolutionary processes present in the region cannot be explained by isolated or fragmented processes and social formations. Rather, such an analysis requires us to examine

the tendencies occurring throughout the region, which took form in particular social times and spaces.

XVII

Why have debates about the character of Latin America been set aside, if not completely erased from current discussions? Diagnoses by international or academic organizations, whether of the entire region or the subregions of specific economies, flow from implicit assumptions about the regional character. These assumptions are present in the categories used or remain hidden in the background and must be unveiled.

Assumptions concerning the Latin American region are inscribed in stages leading to development. They are present, with more or less force, when one speaks of "economies *in* development," "patterns *of* development," "backward economies," "*developing* economies," "immature economies," etc. In each case, the image is one of moving toward the goal of development (becoming developed). To do this, one must remove obstacles, promote forces, and/or resume correct routes. Also operative is the idea of a lack of maturity. Maturation is possible with a few readjustments and changes that would allow greater acceleration.

These formulations and their assumptions have gained tremendous force in international organizations and in academia. They are not even debated in academia, where such debate would be both appropriate and pertinent. Debate is absent because the issue was suppressed instead of being resolved; the previously unstated and implicit ideas were assumed to be the relevant ones. If a critical observation is formulated, one is immediately shown an example of spectacular growth in Southeast Asia during recent decades to settle the discussion. However, if development and underdevelopment are opposite sides of the coin, one should inquire about the degree of dependence and backwardness generated in some other regions of the world that made South Korea's current prosperity possible. From the 1950s onward, the United States and Japan provided crucial support for South Korea's economy in the form of large loans and aid during the tense Cold War years. Such financial contributions meant greater dependence and backwardness in other economies and regions. These resources came from capitalist profits appropriated from other regions, not from the pockets of US or Japanese taxpayers, or from the profits of local or transnational businesses.⁹ It is also true that beyond such "help," the current achievements were made possible by a strong state and the political discipline imposed upon the entire society, including businesspeople.

Assumptions about universal stages of development are also present in the undying faith some exhibit in technological and scientific innovation. For them, resolving the problem of Latin American underdevelopment lies in investing a larger portion of GDP in science and technology. Thus, *what was originally a source of the problem becomes its solution*. If the solution is so readily available to the region's

political class and businesspeople, why have steps in that direction not been taken? It could not be because they are uneducated (even if some of them indeed are).

Why, after two centuries of independence, have the dominant sectors not resolved something that appears to be so simple? Perhaps it is not a lack of will, but rather structural processes that make such economic and political efforts ineffective, since those technological and scientific advances can now be acquired on the world market or form part of the investment packages of foreign capital in the region. Generating the conditions to create centers for technological and scientific innovation requires significant amounts of capital that must be deducted from immediate accumulation, profit, and luxury consumption. Also needed is a strong state capable of coalescing the forces motivated to do so and discipline on the level of South Korea. In Latin America, where are the willing and disciplined businesspeople needed for that effort? Where is the political class? Why even undertake this effort if technological and scientific innovation can be acquired abroad while relying on superexploitation to generate profits?

The scientific and technological development the region needs to overcome dependence is not a budgetary matter. Instead, it is a political issue involving the creation of a new state, new social relationships, and the emergence of new subjects capable of the task. The logic of dominant capital in the dependent world impedes such developments. Despite this, there are those who claim that it is possible to become a "knowledge society." Any isolated example of innovation in the region is projected as a paradigm of anticipated development. Scholars and policymakers then produce weighty tomes that repeat the advantages and qualities of the great development models, without the slightest bit of critical analysis. After all, the diagnosis is that we are not developed because we have yet to do that which the developed have done, particularly in terms of research and technological innovation.

Although capitalism has been around for at least five centuries and the Industrial Revolution took place two and one-half centuries ago, a historical case cannot be easily made that confirms a theory of development that proposes that any economy, *without direct or indirect links to others for the appropriation of value*, has attained "development" due to its *solitary internal effort*. However, the contrary can be confirmed: "developed countries" have reached that status by relying on a substantial contribution from the colonies and/or economies and regions that they have plundered, or from the creation of mechanisms that allow for the reappropriation of what had previously been expropriated by others. The power of this discourse, however, does not rest on its ability to prove its claims, but rather on its ability to impose truths.

Discussions of underdevelopment and dependence have not been set aside because new theories have emerged that better explain the Latin American reality. Rather, the problem is related to the full-blown counterrevolutionary process active in Latin America since the 1960s and 1970s. That process is evident in other shapes and forms in the developed world's policies, from dominant neoliberalism to the

Washington Consensus. This has affected academia generally and the region's academy in particular; moreover, the failure of socialism is not unrelated. It became commonplace for certain forms of critical thought to oppose the atrocities carried out by capital in all aspects of social life, all the while using language that does not fundamentally break with the interpretive frameworks that emerged to justify and defend capitalism. This was done without theoretically or conceptually confronting capitalism's processes.

NOTES

1. For example, holocausts propitiated by psychopaths, world wars waged hazardously and marked by individual or group ambitions, economic crises produced by the lack of moderation of a few, and revolutions brought on by subversive individuals and "Oriental" tyrants (as Lenin was characterized).
2. In all cases, references to Latin America in this work include the Caribbean.
3. As Louis Sala-Molins stated, "European Enlightenment philosophers railed against slavery, except where it literally existed." Cited by Žižek (2009, 111).
4. In Alain Badiou's terms: "In Marx's analysis of bourgeois or capitalist societies, the proletariat is truly the non-existent characteristic of political multiplicities. It is 'that which does not exist.' That does not mean that it has no being.... The social and economic being of the proletariat is not in doubt. What is in doubt, always has been, and is now so more than ever, is its political *existence*" (Badiou 2009, 130–131).
5. Such as the revolutionary forms of organization (guerrilla warfare or political party) and the means for the revolution (armed or institutional). The dichotomist designation is to emphasize the terms the debates—mistakenly—assumed.
6. It is significant that the anticapitalist revolutions were produced in the peripheral world: Russia, China, Cuba, and Vietnam. The debate on the course of these revolutions goes far beyond the objectives and limits of this essay.
7. To speak of developed and underdeveloped is no small matter. They are terms that "radically altered the way the world was seen. Until then, North/South relations had been organized largely in accordance with the colonizer/colonized opposition. The new 'developed/underdeveloped' dichotomy proposed a different relationship.... Every state was equal *de jure*, even if it was not (yet) *de facto*. Colonized and the colonizer had belonged to two different and opposed universes.... Now, however, 'underdeveloped' and 'developed' were members of a single family" (Rist 2009, 73–74).
8. An exception was Anibal Pinto, who developed the notion of "structural heterogeneity"—which is more descriptive than explanatory—as a framework for recognizing the differences in productivity between sectors of regional economies. See Valenzuela Feijóo's (1991) generous chart on this.
9. When considering the case of Southeast Asian countries as a model for overcoming underdevelopment, there is generally an emphasis on the role of the state (protectionism) and the capacity for technological innovation, but little attention is given to the significant influence of factors related to the international economy. For example, one forgets that "industrialization supported by exports [in this region] would not have been successful without the following ... factors: ... modifications in the international division of labor, favored by the transfer of production lines to countries with scarce development; ... a period of rapid expansion for international commerce, and the hike in the prices of manufactured goods; the wide-ranging support these countries received *due to their geopolitical role in the East-West conflict, and the leadership and revitalizing effect of Japan in its old colonies*" (Giacomán 1988, 281; emphasis added).

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The Neoliberal Chilean Process Four Decades after the Coup

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ON THE FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1973 COUP THAT OVERTHREW THE SALVADOR Allende government and marked the beginning of the Chilean military dictatorship, the country is breathing a rarefied air. The recent emergence of an organized student movement has helped to popularize criticisms of the Chilean "economic model" and its politico-institutional framework. Such criticism, in turn, has spread to different spheres of social life and has been expressed in the explosion of other grassroots movements linked to the world of labor and to community organizations. This article aims to provide an overview of the historical background of the recent situation. Our goal is not to reflect on possible contingencies or on the meaning of this new scenario, but rather to offer a comprehensive reading of the historical process that frames contemporary reality. It is not possible, from our perspective, to understand what is happening in Chile today without analyzing the political, economic, social, and cultural process that led to this moment.

We propose that the pattern of reproducing capital in Chile, the political process of dictatorship, the subsequent procedural democracy, and the associated sociocultural mechanisms must be understood as part of a unified process. Thus, the current pattern of reproducing capital required a particular form of political legitimacy (Osorio 2012) that operated effectively during the decades of 1990 and 2000, but later started to reveal significant cracks, raising important questions about the direction of the new scenario.

Changes in the Pattern of Reproducing Capital and the "Model"

With some ambiguity, what is called the Chilean "economic model" is usually associated with a series of economic and social policies first implemented in 1974. These policies are usually characterized as neoliberal. "The model" also assumes a certain institutional order, since it was introduced by the military dictatorship.

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