Dialectics, Superexploitation, and Dependency: Notes on The Dialectics of Dependency

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1.

Many efforts were undertaken by social scientists with diverse disciplinary backgrounds to account for the particularities of the first six decades of the twentieth century in Latin America, particularly between the 1940s and 1960s, when the region became a genuine theoretical problem. The themes of backwardness, which incorporated (under)development, and those referring to the nature of the revolution and its tasks constituted the axes around which revolved the main proposals and discussions, which soon revealed profound interconnections. Highlighting the semi-feudal or capitalist nature of the region implied both identifying the tactical and strategic tasks in the political terrain and offering arguments capable of understanding the backwardness or capitalist maturity of the region. Similarly, identifying the tasks and projects needed to achieve development or escape backwardness (how to initiate and promote industrialization) implied defining the social subjects that would carry out the necessary tasks (the industrial bourgeois, the state) and the social classes and sectors that could obstruct advancement (such as agrarian groups or oligarchic miners).

The economic and political spheres were closely entwined in questions about the tasks needed to overcome backwardness and underdevelopment, or how to accumulate forces so as to transform the prevailing social order. Toward the end of the 1950s, the Cuban Revolution opened up and multiplied these discussions, thus obliging all social and political forces with projects in play to refine and deepen their positions regarding the character of the region’s development and its political transformation.

This close link between theoretical/political debates and real projects of social groups, whether around classes, fractions, or sectors, or diverse representational

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expressions such as political parties, movements, or academic centers, constitutes one relevant element for understanding the richness of the problems raised and the responses offered by Latin American social thought in those years, a period unparalleled in its history.

2.

Taking on Latin America as a theoretical and political issue implied a profound questioning of the most elaborate formulations resulting from the diverse schools and trends that participated in the debate. The Rostowian method, which was dominant in conventional economics, saw the problem of backwardness in the region as deriving from the lack of reforms and transformations. If those were implemented, it would be possible to overcome stages and attain development, following the model of the industrialized countries.

In this article, we critically evaluate the CEPAL (Economic Commission for Latin America, or ECLA in English) formulation of centers and peripheries, and debate its proposals about industrialization as a formula for retaining technical progress. In sum, this proposal posits the problem of underdevelopment as a trade issue between nations, specifically, the deteriorating terms of trade to the detriment of the region. Launching the industrialization process could reverse that process. It was not insignificant that this formulation assumed backwardness to stem from an external process, exchanges between nations. Doing so implied overlooking the role of the dominant local classes, who from this point of view were victims of the centers, and also failed to reveal the forms of the reproduction of capital. These matters came to the fore as industrialization of the region advanced, demonstrating that the problems of backwardness not only remain unsolved within that project, but also cause others to emerge. These problems can include growing poverty in urban centers, early monopolization, and new transfers of resources and earnings to the imperial centers, now via equipment and technology purchases for industry and due to partnerships with foreign capital in investments in the secondary sector.

In a relevant theoretical leap, and articulating that which initially appeared to be disjointed, it would be noted that development and underdevelopment are two sides of one and the same process, the unfolding and expansion of capitalism as a world system. Thus, development is not possible without underdevelopment, and underdevelopment is only the other, necessary, result of development. Dependency implies that certain economies are conditioned by development and the expansion of other economies (which are themselves subjugated). This reinforces the idea that the world capitalist system makes up a differentiated unit of diverse capitalisms, and that from this unity, and the role and differentiated places of these capitalisms, it becomes possible to grasp the idea of the specific dependent capitalism that takes shape in Latin America.
From this perspective, the problem posed requires us to move from fundamentally descriptive notions (which underpin prevailing categories and concepts, as well as relational notions that fail to account for the substantive contents of those relationships) to an explanatory theoretical framework that makes explicit the content and consequences of those relationships. This implies a radical critique of an economic history that highlights the inexorable succession of modes of production; of sociologism, which uses class struggle to explain everything, while failing to advance an understanding of class struggle itself; of the prevailing economic theory, which takes refuge in models derived from the courses and characteristics of the developed world; and of eclectic escapes and orthodoxy understood as repetition, trends, and tendencies that prevailed in diverse theoretical viewpoints in explanations of the character of Latin American capitalism.

It was necessary to re-create Marxism, but not to repeat Marx, because the unprecedented problem was to substantiate the existence of a new modality of capitalism and to define its developmental trends within the framework of its relationships with the capitalist world system. That is what Marini’s book, *Dialéctica de la dependencia* (The Dialectics of Dependency, 1973), offers to theory and Marxism. No more, and no less.

In the course of exploring explanations, *Dialéctica de la dependencia* confronted many viewpoints. As we have seen, at issue was not a simple theoretical formulation. It was immediately and simultaneously a political proposal and it took a stand on that moment of the revolution in the region. Feeling the blow were proponents of classic theories of development, CEPAL-based structuralists and developmentalists, organic intellectuals from the local ruling classes and large imperial capital, as well as orthodox Marxism itself. Each placed Marini’s formula at the center of their critiques, once some of his initial advances became known. This intensified when *Dialéctica de la dependencia* appeared as a book in 1973.

The counterinsurgency and counterrevolutionary offensive that was forcefully unleashed on the continent in the 1970s and 1980s with the proliferation of military dictatorships and authoritarian civil governments was an assault that extended to Europe and the United States with the accession of the conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. It also reached the region’s universities with the marginalization or confinement of Marxism within curricula and programs of study, and with the increasing abandonment of its core concepts and categories. Social classes were no longer discussed, only civil society or citizens; domination gave way to governability, and exploitation was replaced by social inequality or poverty. Accompanying this long string of defeats was the conversion of numerous, important swaths of Marxist intellectuals.
In such a scenario, with so many losses, the abandonment and oblivion of Marini’s formulations appeared to be unimportant, contributing to the fact that his proposals were excluded from the discussion and he became unknown to many new generations of scholars in the region. This was paradigmatically reflected in Brazil, Marini’s home country, where his main writings only began to see the light of day, in Portuguese, during the last 15 years. The intellectual and political weight of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who became Brazil’s president, is not unrelated to this situation, beyond the elements already noted.\(^2\)

5.

Marini lists and explains a set of processes specific to dependent capitalism. Most notable is the rupturing of the circuit of capital, that is, the discrepancy between the spheres of production and realization, whether in foreign markets or in the upper area of local consumption. These particularities also included the predominance of workers as producers and their irrelevance as consumers, the burden of extraordinary surplus value and the difficulty of transferring accumulation to the field of relative surplus value, the transfer of value to the imperialist economies through unequal exchange, the acute form assumed by the processes of concentration and centralization of capital, and finally, but no less relevant, a system of production sustained by superexploitation.

Each of these elements and processes achieved varying degrees of coverage in \textit{Dialéctica de la dependencia}. Yet not all have the same weight in the configuration and functioning of dependent capitalism, despite its integration and singular articulation. Marini’s (1973, 91) prioritization is emphatic, noting that, “the basis of dependency is the superexploitation of labor.” And to clarify the imprecision of speaking of “labor” and not “labor power,” and the term “superexploitation,” which refers to the processes of violating the value of labor power, whether in its daily aspects, or in its overall dimension, a few pages later Marini (ibid., 92–93; emphasis added here and below) specifies: “super-exploitation is defined … by the greatest exploitation of the physical strength of the worker … and it normally tends to express itself in the fact that labor power is paid below its value.”

Marini realized that superexploitation, by violating the value of labor power, was and is a generalized resource in the capitalist world system. He reiterates that idea in another essay in 1996.\(^3\) Neither was he unaware of the fact that “reduction of wages below the value of labour power,”\(^4\) according to Marx, was a mechanism that capital uses to counteract the falling rate of profit. He was cognizant of Marx’s (1976b, 313) countless indications that: “In the chapters on the production of surplus-value it was constantly presupposed that wages are at least equal to the value of labour-power. Forcible reduction of wages below this value plays, however, in practice too important a part…. It, in fact, transforms … the labourer’s necessary consumption fund into a fund for the accumulation of capital.”
What does it mean to affirm that superexploitation is the basis for dependency if capital resorts to this process throughout the capitalist world system? Along with the generalization of enormous losses in social benefits and direct and indirect wages, as well as longer workdays and deteriorating working conditions for workers within core zones, there was a classic increase in the intensity of labor to achieve higher levels of productivity. As such, superexploitation tended to expand during the height of the current world crisis, which is manifested not only in the dependent world, but also in central and imperialist capitalism.

But before making hurried judgments and thus closing the case on a process with identical attributes here and there, it is worth recalling that in *Dialéctica de la dependencia* Marini (1973, 93) maintained that “the combinations of forms of capitalist exploitation are carried out in an unequal manner in the totality of the system, thus creating distinct social formations depending on the predominance of a determined form.”

The undeniable fact that superexploitation is present here and there raises the question of whether this indicates that it has the same meaning within imperialist and dependent capitalism, achieves the same predominance, has the same repercussions for the reproduction of capital, and generates the same social formations. If that were so, we would need to clearly state that Marini was wrong to claim it as the basis for dependency, and we should seek to explain why dependent capitalism is unique, if indeed this notion has any meaning.

The first thing to note is that in times of world crisis, such as the current situation, capitalism, in any social formation—underdeveloped or developed, dependent or imperialist—resorts to superexploitation to counteract the falling rate of profit, as Marx observed. Furthermore, superexploitation also exists during normal periods in the developed world for certain sectors of workers, particularly documented or undocumented migrants, due to lower wages and long workdays, lessening the intensity for most local workers. The problem is therefore not to confirm that capital resorts to superexploitation under conditions of crisis, or that sectors of workers experience reduced or lessened intensification within normal conditions of reproduction. The obvious answer is that capital has done it and will continue to do it. But this—in my opinion—is not the problem.

Those who observe that superexploitation operates system-wide, and proclaim that it constitutes a generalized process, thus minimizing or diluting its role in dependent capitalism, make the following logical extension: if superexploitation has a *historical presence* in the totality of the system, then it also has the same *theoretical relevance* throughout the system.

The central issue, as Marini’s quote above makes clear, is to point to the predominant forms of exploitation in distinct social formations, in “normal” periods of reproduction, and the sectors of the working population they affect, as well as the *impact they have on the reproduction of capital*. Thus, the central problem is how the predominance of different forms of exploitation and superexploitation
affects the processes of reproduction of capital. That is the key to the differentiated social formations. To analyze superexploitation in an isolated manner, as something external to those problems, will surely lead us down mistaken paths.

6.

There are three forms of superexploitation. One is the appropriation of part of the workers’ consumption fund, to be transferred to the capital accumulation fund, or the immediate payment at the point of the purchase-sale of labor power of a level of wages in which labor power is remunerated below its value. Another is the extension of the workday, which can imply a premature exhaustion of workers, with which capital appropriates future years of life. When this span of time is not adequately remunerated, it affects the total value of labor power. The third form of superexploitation is associated with an increase in productivity, which in turn allows for an increase in the intensity of labor or the reduction of “dead time” during working hours. Capital would prefer every second of the hour to be spent in value production. As in the previous case, that can imply premature fatigue and appropriation of future years of work and life, without equivalent compensation or possibilities for their recuperation. Here, as with the extension of the workday, it is the life fund that is expropriated.

Of these three forms, I maintain that capital’s appropriation of the workers’ consumption fund has the greatest significance in the totality of processes of superexploitation that define the reproduction of capital in the dependent economies and in the political derivatives of the problems indicated above. Since payment of wages below the value of labor power implies immediate appropriation of a substantive part of the workers’ consumption fund, their participation in the internal market becomes limited. In terms of accumulation, workers therefore matter to capital as producers, not as consumers. This fosters the creation of a productive structure that fails to provide for the major necessities, promotes the rupture of the circuit of capital, and creates reproductive patterns dedicated to external markets and/or narrow internal markets that require robust purchasing power. With the resulting concentrated income, the basis for establishing communities is illusory and fragile. The state is also built on weak foundations and is fractured, since the class struggle is characterized by intense, persistent confrontation. Ultimately, this form of superexploitation best articulates with the set of processes that define the reproduction of capital in dependent social formations.

Appropriation of part of the consumption fund causes children and adolescents to enter the job market prematurely and workers must accept prolonged workdays to receive overtime pay. This extension of the workday continues to be relevant from the standpoint of its effect on the totality of the reproduction of capital in dependent capitalism.

Payment of wages below the daily value of labor power, which is crystallized socially and historically, fixes the average wages of a social formation. It *drags*
down the wages of the other workers, even though some sectors do not receive super-exploitative wages, thus converting these economies (the dependent ones) and superexploitation into “a necessary condition of world capitalism” (Marini 1973: 91), due to their impact and relevance in establishing profit rates in the capitalist system as a whole.

As home-based work and piecework wages surge, and wages violate value, the intensification of work receives further impetus in dependent capitalism. Nevertheless, intensity basically remains associated with high productivity, accompanied by above-average wages, giving those workers a share in the most important domestic market. But premature fatigue remains a constant and with that comes the deterioration of living and working conditions, in tandem with the rate of intensity.

Consumption by the strata of low-income wage earners increased due to credit expansion by companies trading in semi-durable goods, such as televisions, furniture, or refrigerators, as well as to extensive payment reductions. Although in the long run the real prices of products increased greatly, these were some of the ways in which purchasing power was increased. In the process, those sectors become disciplined through the debts incurred, ushering in conditions favorable to prolongation of their workdays and increasing the intensity of their work. In the case of wage earners with higher purchasing power, social and labor discipline is attained through the fear of job loss and thus of their acquired durable goods (homes, automobiles, etc.).

In advanced economies, elevated productivity can be coupled with intensification, but that does not marginalize those workers from consumption. On the contrary, under normal conditions (unlike times of crises like the present) it tends to elevate it. In periods of crisis, however, the effect on wages and prolongation of the workday, added to increased intensity, also occur in the core zones.

From the preeminence of wages below the daily value of labor power to the extension of the workday, with intensification playing a lesser role, it can be argued that superexploitation is the basis for dependency and only dependent capitalism, as long as it has an impact on the forms assumed by the totality of the process of reproduction of capital and generates specific social formations.

This is not to deny that the bulk of the immigrant population, much of which is undocumented, experiences conditions of superexploitation in terms of appropriation of the consumption fund and the extension of the workday in the so-called core countries, or to imply that they play a non-negligible role in determining the profit rate in those economies. However, under normal conditions of reproduction, those are not the working or living conditions of most of the working population in those economies, and therefore their situation, however grave, does not define the modalities of reproduction of capital. The same can be said of workers in dependent capitalism whose wages and working conditions are above the prevailing superexploitation. Their situation does not define the predominant modalities in the
reproduction of capital. In short, a form of capitalism that under normal conditions mainly superexploits workers by paying wages below the value of their labor power or by extending the workday is not the same as one in which the predominant forms of exploitation are increased intensity of labor and the prolongation of the workday. Radically different consequences flow from how capital is reproduced in one case or the other, as different as the ways of life of the working population and the organization of community life.

7.

Another stumbling point for some critics of Dialéctica de la dependencia is the logic of the so-called law of value and its validity. Their main points can be summarized as follows: as capitalism expands and advances, so does the law of value, and with that, value and its mediations—output and market prices—increasingly become the level upon which market exchange tends to be generalized. Any process that deviates from this logic, they maintain, is an “anomaly” that sooner or later will tend to be corrected by the inexorable advance of the tendency of the law of value thus understood.

Marini’s attempt to establish another basis for a theory of dependent capitalism was met by critics as an atrocity. His formulation of a structural and permanent violation of the value of the labor power, as well as the setting of prices of commodities above their true value—thereby contributing to unequal exchange to the detriment of dependent economies—was in their view a threat to the principles of capitalism, which moves toward extending the law of value.

An issue of historical abstraction in Marx (“in the chapters on the production of surplus-value it was constantly presupposed that wages are at least equal to the value of labour-power”) is assumed to be a valid issue for any historical dimension. But a related aspect is that “forcible reduction of wages below this value plays, however, in practice too important a part for us not to pause upon it for a moment” (Marx 1976b, 747–48). Thus, in spite of the previous assumption, Marx here negates the validity of the law of value.

Materialist dialectics points out that all processes are made up of that which affirms them as such and of that which simultaneously negates them. Negation is not external to or beyond processes. Rather, it is what explains the movement from the very heart of what bourgeois science conceives of as steady and stable.

Because reality is dialectic and operates in negation, we can affirm that capitalism is simultaneously civilization and barbarity, a proposition that for formal logic is an aberration. Negation runs through all the great Marxist ideas: the general law of capitalist accumulation indicates that with greater wealth and concentration, capital inevitably produces a higher incidence of poverty and misery in society; the process of concentration of the means of life and production that gives life to the bourgeoisie represents for its negation, the class of proletarians, dispossession and bareness.
Because Marini rightly refers to the dialectics of the process of dependency (the book’s title is not merely a nod to rhetoric), lasting attention is paid to the contradictions and negations that the process generates. For this reason, specifically regarding the issue at hand, he maintains that “the development of mercantile relations lays the foundation for a better application of the law of value to take place.” “Simultaneously,” Marini (1973, 32–33) emphasizes, this “creates the conditions for the different ways in which capital tries to circumvent,” or to negate that law.

In terms of exchange between nations, where some produce manufactured goods (or more technologically advanced goods) and others produce raw materials, Marini (ibid., 34–35) maintains that the former, due to “the mere fact” that they “produce goods that the others do not produce, or not with the same ease, allows the first to circumvent the law of value. In other words, they sell their products at prices above their value, thus creating unequal exchange,” to the detriment of less technologically advanced nations.

At the same time, Marini maintains that superexploitation implies “remunerating” labor power “below its value” (ibid., 42), which signifies violations of the law of value. For him, the “call to contribute to the accumulation of capital based on the productive capacity of work, in core countries, is something Latin America must do by means of accumulation founded on the superexploitation of the worker.” Moreover, “in this contradiction lies the essence of Latin American dependency” (ibid., 47). He also maintains that “the dependent economy—and therefore the superexploitation of work—[that is, the violation of value] appears to be a necessary condition of world capitalism” (ibid., 91) and not merely an accidental element that moves outside the laws governing world capitalism. Finally, we briefly highlight the role of negation in Dialéctica de la dependencia, whereby “superexploitation does not correspond to a survival of primitive modes of capital accumulation, but rather is inherent in it and grows correspondingly with the development of productive labor power” (ibid., 98). For that reason, it advances capital accumulation, and it is not a prior event or compatible only with the primary stages of accumulation.

These citations are sufficient to show that dialectical Marxism has nothing to do with processes that have only positive aspects, lack negation, and therefore are without contradictions. In the case at hand, capitalism advances, expanding the law of value, but simultaneously fosters mechanisms that violate and negate it. Therefore, development and dependence, as well as knowledge and technology, along with intensification and superexploitation, are simultaneously modern and contemporary processes, but also contradictory.

Fernando Henrique Cardoso argued that industrial capitalism is based on the production of relative surplus value. For that reason, previous forms of exploitation
(absolute surplus value) can have *historical relevance*, but nevertheless lack *theoretical relevance*. Cardoso invokes theoretical irrelevance in his attempt to disqualify superexploitation as a basis for dependent capitalism. In his postscript to *Dialéctica*, Marini responds that if Marx had shared this opinion, he surely would not have occupied himself with the study of absolute surplus value, or, more seriously, “integrated it as a basic concept in his theoretical outline” (ibid., 93).

Marini adds that the real problem with Cardoso on this point is “if the forms of exploitation diverge from that which engenders relative surplus value … they should be excluded from an analysis of the capitalist mode of production.” “Cardoso’s error,” he notes, “lies in responding affirmatively to this question,” as if “the superior forms of capitalist accumulation” (Marini 1973, 93) imply the exclusion of *inferior forms or are independent from them*.

The idea behind this remark is that the development of relative surplus value as an advanced form of capitalist development does not involve the elimination—either theoretically or historically—of distinct forms of exploitation. On the contrary, its persistence and expansion are correlated with the expansion of advanced forms. Marini indicates elsewhere in his writings that “superexploitation does not correspond with a survival of primitive modes of accumulation of capital, but rather is *inherent in it and grows in a correlative fashion with the development of productive labor power*” (ibid., 98).

10.

From time to time, and as part of a ritual similar to those carried out by ancient cultures to placate some vengeful god or exorcise some evil spirit, proclamations arise that show us that new economies have broken with backwardness and underdevelopment, and that they are moving toward the goals and benefits of the so-called developed regions and economies. First it was South Korea, then Malaysia and Singapore, and today it is China, perhaps India, and possibly Brazil. The first thing that is surprising is the noise generated by conventional economics in these scenarios. But if capitalism is an organization that leads to development, why all the commotion?

When these rituals are periodically repeated, some clarifications are appropriate. At a general theoretical level, Marxist dependency theory indicates that at the center of the capitalist world system, generating development in one region or economy requires the extension or intensification of underdevelopment, in that region or in other economies within the world system. That is because *one of the central components* of what we call development is the concentration in some region or economy of work and particularly the wealth produced by peoples and economies that, due to reasons of simple plundering (under colonial relations) or because of unequal exchange (monopoly prices set by those with technological or other advantages), are expropriated through rules that govern international economic
relations, coupled with the increased exploitation of the working population and technological transformations in economies moving toward development.

The logic of value does not allow us to evade this situation. If China, India, or Brazil are now undergoing processes that lead to development, as many suggest, we may ask how these economies can attain values that open doors in that direction, and therefore what work people must undertake to foster that possibility, in addition to the intensification of all of the mechanisms of exploitation of their working populations.

In reference to more concrete situations, Marxist dependency theory states that from at least the time in which Latin America was a formally independent region, as far as we know, during this historical stage an autonomous, strong bourgeoisie did not emerge with projects and the political will to lead development-oriented processes. Under these conditions, faced with a local and regional bourgeoisie that has been subjugated to the projects of other capitals, usually imperialists, without autonomy, a political will, or its own projects, the underdevelopment that emerged only produced new projects or patterns of reproduction in which the “development of underdevelopment” prevailed, in Andre Gunder Frank’s happy formulation, along with new and more acute forms of dependency.

Marxist dependency theory has not made the Latin American bourgeoisie incapable of leading projects of development; instead, it has revealed that incapacity by explaining the reasons for this social and political conduct. Its analysis has shown the naïveté and fallacies of the international bodies and academic sectors that conclude after extensive and descriptive studies—like children’s letters to Santa Claus—that it would be good to have a bourgeoisie that is dynamic, autonomous, committed to knowledge and technological development, to the establishment of knowledge societies, and is willing to create internal markets that pay better wages to most of the working population.

These calls begin with the assumption that the Latin American bourgeoisie will behave differently from the way it does now. Those studies leave off exactly where they should actually begin. That is, they should explain what it is about Latin American capitalist development and the condition of dependency that leads to the emergence of our currently existing ruling classes, and not to those that some would like to have, or are assumed to have appeared idyllically in other regions.

In this context, Marxist dependency theory questions the festive and light interpretations according to which Latin America is currently witnessing neo-developmentalist forces and projects, thanks to the bourgeoisies of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico. Recall that the notion of “developmentalism” emerged
during the middle of the last century, under the imprint of an industrial bourgeoisie that entertained illusions of pulling the region out of backwardness, closing gaps, insuring the welfare of most of the population, and ultimately leading a development project. It is unnecessary to recount the paths taken in that period of history. Suffice it to say that at the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century, Latin America as a whole, and each economy with its particularities, achieved wage levels that had already been reached in the 1960s. That was presented as an enormous triumph, but for four decades the standard of living had seriously declined for the majority of the population, social inequality reached record levels, and poverty and misery affected millions of homes, despite the triumphs touted from time to time in their defense.

**13.**

The strong theses of *Dialéctica de la dependencia* had an impact during the region’s past history and currently remain highly topical. Setting in motion a new pattern of reproducing capital, exporters of specialized production that emerged over the last 40 years, reveals the existence of serious imbalances, disparities, vulnerability, and degrees of dependency in the region. Construction of a new export economy was carried out and sustained by exacerbating multiple forms of dispossession and exploitation, with the purpose of making regional economies competitive in external markets. Their situation as exporters following the new pattern denotes the preeminence of external markets in which realization occurs to the detriment of consumption and the revitalization of the domestic market comprised of most of the working population. Thus, not just any exporting economy has been formed, but rather one that does not meet the needs of producers, thus opening greater spaces to transfer part of the workers’ consumption fund to the accumulation funds, while prolonging the workday. All of this aggravates the structural superexploitation present in the region. It is thus not coincidental that the common course of growth and dynamism of regional exports, collapsing wages, job insecurity, and unemployment and underemployment during the last three or four decades has slowed slightly in some cases, but wages have consistently remained below the levels of the 1960s and 1970s. As such, the most dynamic productive structure has little or nothing to do with meeting the needs of most of the population.

The unequal distribution of income and the acute concentration of wealth, in which 5 or 10 percent of the population appropriates 40 percent or more of the wealth generated, underscores the consolidation of a narrow base of high-powered consumers in the domestic market. This meets the needs of the production, assembly, or local industrial sweatshop, when they exist, of luxury goods, be they iPads, cell phones, televisions, cars, or imported goods, accentuating the presence of a reduced and narrow modernity amid generalized barbarity and lives subjected to indignity.
14.

If economic theses fail to offer a respite to sympathetic views concerning the barbarity imposed by the logic of capital in the dependent world, then political theses will not offer correct political solutions either. Only by ending dominant power relations can we open a horizon for a dignified life for the majority of the people of the region.

15.

Leaving aside Marini’s postscript, En torno a Dialéctica de la dependencia (Regarding the Dialectics of Dependency), written for its first edition, Dialéctica de la dependencia consists of 64 pages (49 keystrokes in each of its 29 lines). Expressed in letter-sized pages, with 80 characters in each of its 28 lines, and an interline spacing of 1.5, there are approximately 40 to 45 pages, depending on the font used in the original. In these few pages, with an enormous synthesis of language, the main explanations (still known to us today) were formulated about the reasons for dependency in Latin America and its fundamental tendencies. Arduous years of study and militancy are condensed in these few pages, laden with the future.

NOTES


2. Cardoso’s critiques of Marini in Brazil were widely disseminated, contributing to the fact that Marini’s theses and writings did not become well known. For more on this topic, see Fernando Correo Prado’s article, published both in Comunicacao & Política (2014) and in Argumentos (2013).

3. See Ruy Mauro Marini and Márgara Millán (1996, 65). Below I provide two proposals useful for inscribing the previous quote and defining superexploitation as a general process of the capitalist system. For a discussion of the notion of superexploitation, see Osorio (2013).

4. Specified as a footnote in both the edition of Capital published in Spanish by Fondo de Cultura Económica (Marx 1973, 235) and the one published by Siglo XXI (Marx 1976a, Part 6, 301), in accordance with the German edition, which refers to “the reduction of wages below the value of labour power.”

5. There is a point at which not even the greatest remuneration can compensate for the increased fatigue, due to the impossibility of recovering the energy lost during time of rest (given the level of exhaustion).

6. This is part of a particular assumption (wages represent the value of labor power) for the explanation of a particular problem (how surplus value is produced). It is not a valid assumption for general analysis or for explaining whatever problem.

7. This error is repeated by the “positive” interpreters (and those who do not recognize negation) of the law of value.
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