

## BOOK REVIEWS

### GENERAL

*Lumpenbourgeoisie: Lumpendevlopment. Dependence, Class, and Politics in Latin America.* By ANDRÉ GUNDER FRANK. Translated by MARION DAVIS BERDECIO. New York, 1972. Monthly Review Press. Bibliography. Pp. 151. Cloth. \$6.00.

This is a sketch of Latin American history after the conquests. Its principal thesis is that the capitalist-imperialist milieu throughout the period predetermined internal structures and led to the present near-hopeless situation. Salvation will come uniquely "with the only true development strategy: armed revolution and the construction of socialism" (p. 145).

The real culprit throughout is the overseas metropolis, but a major part of Frank's purpose is to trace the evolution of local bourgeoisies through the centuries as lackeys of the neocolonial powers and the relatively modern multinational monopolies that are major policy determinants at home and abroad. The work concentrates almost entirely on the evolution of ills and their effects. The final chapter, "Alternatives and Options," promises more than it delivers; it only touches on alternatives described by Hélio Jaguaribe, on the Peruvian experience, and on Perón to reach abruptly the conclusion stated above in its entirety.

There are no real surprises in the volume as an historical sketch. The colonial period *was* exploitative, the revolutions *were* of the growing creole elite, independence *did* involve "liberalism" in the sense of freely traded primary products for industrial goods (the "first" dependence), and import substitution *has* led to a dependence, new in character. Frank's concentration on the decision-makers and their reactions to changes in the world scene is an interesting and useful contribution. The point to the volume is that their rational responses to external and internal stimuli led to the present despicable state of affairs.

There is not much quarrel with the general proposition that capitalism (whatever that is taken to mean—but certainly not "free market economies") has not done much for the masses of Latin Americans in 400 years. The decision-makers are appropriately burdened with a major portion of the blame for this. But this is not a startling conclusion: given unsatisfactory results, the fault presumably lies with those who made the decisions—assuming, of course, that other decisions would have produced more satisfactory results, an untested assumption.

Major questions raised concern the “inevitability” of the model. It is not a repetitive model, and tracing the historical evolution does not give clear prediction of lumpendevlopment if socialism does not replace the existing pattern. Present symptoms are increasing inequality, increasing dependency, low rates of growth, and unemployment. Is there no alternative to armed revolution and socialism? If the decision-makers do respond rationally to environmental stimuli, might they not do so to perceived threats of revolution—and in some ameliorating way?

Nor does Frank permit division of his conclusion. That is, socialism apparently can only be achieved after the prescribed armed revolution. This is an old quarrel on which no light is shed here. And one might also have wished for a discussion of how small, raw-material-rich socialist countries are expected to handle the dependency problem—and even perhaps a glimpse of the stimuli impinging on the decision-makers in such an environment. These were, however, not part of the task set by the author.

There are minor questions raised as well. Many of these are related to the enormous sweep of history, geography, and ideology reported in few pages. Generalizations must be frequent and simple. Sometimes they are too simple (e.g., “the greater the wealth available for exploitation, the poorer and more undeveloped the region today; and the poorer the region was as a colony, the richer and more developed it is today” [p. 19]). Some generalizations are not sufficiently supported or are not supported at all and seem only to be self-serving (e.g., “The figures [not given] also prove that the so-called aid of the imperialists is not a response to a pre-existing scarcity of resources in Latin America, but that the scarcity is subsequent to, and created by, the ‘aid’” [p. 106]).

Finally, the terminology may be suitable for convinced Marxists, but the endless use of the title catch words in the text become for the to-be-convinced reader something of a burden (e.g., “the ‘European’ lumpenbourgeoisie built ‘national’ lumpenstates which never achieved independence but were, and are, simply effective instruments of the lumpenbourgeoisie’s policy of lumpendevlopment” [p. 58]). This quickly damages much of an otherwise effective presentation.

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