

JOURNAL FÜR ENTWICKLUNGSPOLITIK

herausgegeben vom Mattersburger Kreis für Entwicklungspolitik
an den österreichischen Universitäten

vol. XXII 1–2006

IN MEMORIAM: ANDRE GUNDER FRANK

Was bleibt von der „Entwicklung der Unterentwicklung“?

Schwerpunktredaktion: Karin Fischer und Christof Parnreiter

Mandelbaum Edition Südwind

Journal für Entwicklungspolitik (JEP)
Austrian Journal of Development Studies

Herausgeber: Mattersburger Kreis für Entwicklungspolitik an den Österreichischen Universitäten

Redaktion: Gerald Faschingeder, Karin Fischer (verantwortlich), Margit Franz, Inge Grau, Irmi Maral-Hanak, Franziska Herdin, Karen Imhof, Johannes Jäger, Bettina Köhler, Franz Kolland, René Kuppe, Bernhard Leubolt, Barbara Nothegger, Andreas Novy, Christof Parnreiter, Petra Purkharthofer, Kunibert Raffer, Anselm Skuhra

Board of Editors: Dieter Boris (Marburg), John-ren Chen (Innsbruck), Hartmut Elsenhals (Leipzig), Jacques Forster (Genève), John Friedmann (St. Kilda), Peter Jankowitsch (Paris), Friedrich Katz (Chicago), Helmut Konrad (Graz), Ulrich Menzel (Braunschweig), Jean-Philippe Platteau (Namur), Dieter Rothermund (Heidelberg), Heribert Steinbauer (Wien), Paul Streeten (Boston), Osvaldo Sunkel (Santiago de Chile)

Produktionsleitung: Pia Lichtblau

Umschlaggestaltung: Michael Baiculescu

Inhaltsverzeichnis

- 4 Editorial
- 8 COLIN LEYS
A Tribute to Andre Gunder Frank
- 12 ANDREA KOMLOSY
Vom europäischen Weltsystem-Modell zur globalistischen
Analyse. Entwicklungen und Diskussionsanstöße des
Andre Gunder Frank
- 37 RONEN PALAN
Andre Gunder Frank's Legacy in Contemporary International
Relations
- 55 RICARDO DUCHESNE
Globalization, the Industrialization of Puerto Rico and the
Limits of Dependency Theory
- 84 MARCOS AGUILA, JEFFREY BORTZ
Andre Gunder Frank: The Limits to the Latin American
Lumpenbourgeoisie
- 98 Ausgewählte Bibliographie von Andre Gunder Frank
- 112 Rezension
- 117 Schwerpunktredaktion, Autorinnen und Autoren
- 120 Impressum

COLIN LEYS

A Tribute to Andre Gunder Frank¹

Andre Gunder Frank was one of the most influential progressive thinkers about development in the twentieth century – perhaps the most influential of all. His famous article attacking modernization theory, *Sociology of Underdevelopment and Underdevelopment of Sociology*, first appeared in 1967 in a magazine called *Catalyst*. I imagine *Catalyst* was a fairly obscure publication because the article was soon being passed around in various copied forms (this was the pre-photocopier age), like samizdat. Most of us read it, however, in 1969 when it came out in his Monthly Review book, *Latin America: Underdevelopment or Revolution*. In this book the critique of modernization was first linked to dependency theory, which he had absorbed during his time in Chile in the mid-1960s. He extensively cited and quoted the Latin American historians and social scientists who had developed the dependency perspective. He did for Latin American dependency theory what the *New Left Review* did for continental European Marxism at the same time, making it available to English language readers.

It is hard for anyone under the age of 60 to grasp the significance of this – a successful intellectual challenge to orthodox ideas before May 1968 and the anti-Vietnam War struggles in the USA had dispersed the stifling atmosphere of the Cold War and McCarthyism. Frank's book effectively broke the grip of modernization theory, and made dependency the dominant paradigm for the decade of the 1970s. For those of us working in Africa at that time, it was a confirming revelation. It made sense of what we were seeing in Africa, whereas modernization theory made no sense of it. As Engels said of how his generation of young German radicals reacted when they first read Ludwig Feuerbach's critique of idealism, *The Essence of Christianity*: 'we all at once became Feuerbachians' – now we all at once became *dependen-*

tistas. Frank was not our only source of dependency thinking. For example Walter Rodney from Guiana was teaching in Dar es Salaam and his book on *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* was a major influence there, and there were many others. But I think Frank influenced most of them too. There is another parallel with Feuerbach, whose radical politics kept him effectively exiled from Berlin, where the intellectual action was. Frank and his Chilean wife Marta Fuentes had to flee Chile in 1973 when the government led by his friend Salvador Allende was overthrown, and Allende himself murdered. Frank, who had German nationality, although he grew up in the US, had already been banned from re-entering the US as a result of his radical politics – his son Paul says his trouble began with his opposition to the Korean War. And his 1967 article devastatingly attacked the development establishment, whose modernization ideology was promoted by the most influential American journal of development at the time, *Economic Development and Cultural Change*. So after Chile Frank became a nomad. He never settled down again, even when he had the chance of a permanent job, but held numerous jobs for short periods in at least half a dozen countries including Brazil, Mexico, Germany, England, the Netherlands and Canada. He always felt an exile – even when he was allowed to live in the USA again.

Exile from the mainstream can spur originality, but can also lead to extremism. Feuerbach notoriously went on to say 'man is what he eats', allowing his powerful critique of idealism to be reduced to the crudest kind of materialism. Frank committed himself to ill-judged positions too. Even his version of dependency theory had a sort of Parsonian-Marxist quality. It was framed in terms of three interrelated contradictions, the nature of which wasn't all that clear. It was curiously ahistorical, given that history was of its essence. And it made the underdevelopment of the periphery into a necessary cause of the development of the metropolises – an implausible position that he later abandoned, like many others – including dependency theory itself. Many Latin American social scientists felt uncomfortable with the way he handled the concept of dependency – including some of the Chilean Marxists in the MIR, with which Frank was aligned when he was there.

His formulations also allowed mediocre minds in the US and Britain – and I dare say others elsewhere – to make laboured criticisms that showed,

to their satisfaction, and the satisfaction of the doyens of American development studies, that Frank was wrong. For instance Frank had maintained that the underdevelopment of the colonies and ex-colonies had been a necessary cause of the industrialization of the colonial powers. So his critics huffed and puffed to show that it was historically implausible that Britain *could* not have industrialized without looting India. Frank also argued that the periphery had developed, and could develop, only when its links with the metropolises were weakened. So American academics did elaborate cross-national quantitative surveys, using “key indicators” (of sometimes absurdly dubious value) to show that the level of investment and trade between the periphery and the centre varied *positively* with the level of development at the periphery, not *negatively* as, on their reductionist reading of it, Frank’s thesis implied.

But by then Frank himself had long moved on from those formulations, and so had those most influenced by him. Yet part of his impact was due, I think, to his capacity to frame his ideas in extreme, dramatic ways that challenged existing positions very effectively, and provoked telling responses. The fact that he framed his version of dependency not in terms of dependency, but of *underdevelopment*, is a case in point. “Underdevelopment” had been introduced into the official language of the United Nations and its regional agencies as a euphemism to replace the term “undeveloped” which had itself been introduced as a euphemism for ‘backward’. Frank now took the term and gave it a new, subversive meaning. For him, underdevelopment was a *process*. In his usage, “to underdevelop” became a verb, what the metropolises had done and were still doing to the periphery. For him, to call a country underdeveloped no longer implied that it was short of capital and technology and advice from the developed countries, but that it was an ongoing victim of their rapacity. And Frank’s usage spread rapidly, throughout the third world, and among progressive students and activists everywhere.

So the orthodoxy needed a new euphemism: “underdeveloped” was dropped, and replaced by ‘less developed’, which remains with us to this day. It is one of the few cases I can think of where the ideologists of the right have been forced to surrender of a term to the ideologists of the left. That was a remarkable achievement in itself, and I think really due to the single-

handed intervention of Andre Gunder Frank. And it wasn't just a semantic victory. For the next decade the intellectual initiative passed from the American mainstream, and its institutional allies in Europe, to their opponents in the third world. Of course many others were part of this. Indian historians and social scientists had developed their own version of dependency theory long before Frank's popularisation of the Latin American version of it, and of course there were influential counterparts elsewhere, such as Franz Fanon – the English translation of *The Wretched of the Earth* appeared in 1967, simultaneously with Frank's famous first article. From the late 1960s onwards there was a convergence of thinking about development, in which Frank's way of modelling dependency was debated and challenged and refined by progressive thinkers from all over the world. But I think it is true to say that more than anyone else Frank initiated this debate, and to a remarkable extent it continued to evolve around his formulations – long after he himself had moved on from them, in fact.

From the 1980s onwards, as the Washington Consensus descended on the world like an iron blanket (replacing the Iron Curtain), Frank became more and more pessimistic about the prospects for any kind of nation-based developmentalism. He turned first to World Systems theory, and finally to a conception of development as a global process, occurring on a scale, and for reasons, more or less beyond conscious human intervention: a process based on westward moving centres of innovation, starting in China and eventually, in the twenty-first century, arriving back via Europe in China again. I don't want to dwell on this, partly because I am not familiar enough with that phase of his work, but also because I don't think it is possible to abandon the commitment to development – and because development is inescapably linked to imperialism, and imperialism is, evidently, very far from being something unconscious. No serious student of development today can do without this kind of broad historical analytic framework, and our understanding of it is due significantly to the work of Andre Gunder Frank.

¹ The tribute was presented at a memorial event in Queen Elizabeth House, Department of International Development, University of Oxford, on May 12th 2005. The written version was slightly shortened by the editors.