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Title: Theory and Practice in the Career of Fernando Henrique Cardoso: Part II

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Abstract. This is the second installment of an analysis of a man who was both a scholar of politics and the political leader of his country. (See IBPP, Vol. 2, No. 10.) The article was written by Dr. Ted Goertzel of Rutgers University. Dr. Goertzel can be reached at goertzel@crab.rutgers.edu.

Cardoso did not need to abandon Marxism for another theory because his interpretation of Marx allowed him to include all of the factors he thought important. Although he was thinking more and more like a mainstream sociologist in some ways, he continued to be emotionally tied to his Marxist roots. In an interview published in 1978, Cardoso told an interviewer: "If you want to know my personal statement of faith, I am favorable to abolishing the system of exploiters and exploited! But this is a statement of faith, which has perhaps a biographical or moral importance. What is important is to develop a political attitude, not a moralistic attitude. What is important is to know which forces are moving in a given direction, to introduce the act of faith into the reality of the current situation."

Cardoso's focus on the dialectical flux of events distinguishes him from positivist social scientists who test and retest what they hope will be lasting theories. Robert Packenham, for example, has spent years testing and criticizing a set of ideas that he and others call "dependency theory." And they have found the theory, especially in its "development of underdevelopment" version, to be wrong. This version of dependency theory, most closely associated with the work of Andre Gunder Frank, predicted that the third world countries would get poorer and poorer as long as they were involved with multinational capitalism. Their only alternative was to break out of the world capitalist system and follow a socialist path to development.

Packenham, and many others, have plenty of statistics to prove that this theory was wrong. Cardoso says, yes, of course, the world has changed. In the nineteenth century, capitalists extracted raw materials from Latin America and did their manufacturing in Europe. Today, multinational companies do their manufacturing in the third world countries, and this has allowed some of these countries to develop rapidly.

Cardoso never believed in "dependency theory" in the sense that social scientists such as Packenham use the word "theory." For Cardoso, the dependency of third world nations on the world economy is an important topic for study, not a theory to be tested. Ever since his days as a student at the University of So Paulo, his mentor Florestan Fernandes taught him to use social theory as a tool box from which one selects the best tool to do a particular job. As the problems change, one must put down one tool and pick up another. Cardoso's goal was not to defend Marxism or any other theory, but rather to understand and influence the society which was emerging around him.

In the 1970s, the Brazilian capitalist economy was booming and revolutionary movements had been decisively suppressed. The Issue of the day was figuring out how to make a transition back to democracy, despite the unquestioned military hegemony of the armed forces. Marxism didn't help much with this problem, so Cardoso reached into his theoretical tool box and pulled out other ideas. He often quoted the Italian writer Norberto Bobbio on the process of democratization. In his maiden

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speech to the Brazilian Senate, he quoted from Max Weber, the preeminent sociologist of bureaucracy and public administration, not from Karl Marx.

This does not mean, however, that Cardoso became a Weberian instead of a Marxist. Cardoso's focus is on the problem of the day, not on any particular theory. He is an applied sociologist, using whatever theories and methods he needs for the case at hand. As such, he insists that he is often a better Marxist than many of his more doctrinaire critics. He argues, for example, that the widespread belief among leftists that the rich countries will become richer while the poor will become poorer is "anti-Marxist. In the vision of Marx, the system will tend to homogenize, to become more dispersed...." Cardoso believes that, in today's world, "capital is going to China and to the emerging countries, in great quantity. For a very simple reason: you have an excess of capital in the world, a surplus. And the profitability is much greater in the periphery"(Cardoso, 1996; subsequent quotes from this source).

Cardoso thinks that much of his "leftist" opposition is rooted in moral idealism rather than in scientific analysis. He observes, "consider the criticism of the government which is summarized in the phrase 'neoliberal'. This is pure posturing, on a purely ethical plane....It is only a moral condemnation. They start from a distortion--as if the government were really neoliberal--and they make a moral condemnation. They do not see reality, they do not see the real social patterns, they do not see that which is changing. They do not see even the facts. This prevents political action."

Cardoso believes that in the post-Soviet world there is no viable alternative to the capitalist mode of production. The only realistic approach in this historical conjuncture is to do whatever is necessary to make Brazil into a prosperous, modern capitalist nation. In effect, he agrees with Jose Luiz Fiori's argument that he is using his Marxism in support of the new capitalist world order. He observes that his government "is making it possible for the most advanced sectors of capitalism to prevail. It is certainly not a regime at the service of monopoly capitalism nor of bureaucratic capitalism, but of that capitalism which is competitive under the new conditions of production. It is, in this sense, socially progressive." To advocate anything else in today's world, he believes, would be moral posturing, good for the soul perhaps, but not helpful to Brazil.

This does not mean that Cardoso has given up on the human concerns of the left. Like all Brazilian progressives, he is deeply concerned about the suffering of the country's huge impoverished and marginal populations, especially the landless peasants and the shantytown poor in the cities. And he is painfully aware of his government's limitations in meeting these urgent needs. He frankly concedes that his government is not the "regime of the excluded, because it does not have the conditions to be. I would like to incorporate them more, but I cannot say that this will be." In Cardoso's view, the poor are not part of the dynamic sector of the economy; they cannot be the social basis for progress. Nor can the working class be the vehicle of universal values, as Marx had anticipated. "What was Marx's grand revolutionary proposal?" Cardoso asks. "It was that there was one class, and only one, that, by its specific nature, would be the carrier of universal values. Today this is difficult to sustain, if only because this class, today, is diminishing in quantity and changing its behavior....you will see that progressively the unions are no longer against the employers, they are against the government."

Cardoso wants to help the poor and dispossessed, not only for ethical reasons, but also because society cannot function smoothly with millions of people at its margins. In his phrase, the excluded are "sand in the machinery" of society, and social programs are needed to integrate them into the mainstream. However, these programs can be paid for only if the economy is vigorous and the government cuts waste, corruption and unnecessary bureaucracy. In terms of practical politics, he has much in common

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with Franklin Roosevelt or Bill Clinton. (See Interview of F. H. Cardoso. (October 13, 1996.) Caderno Mais of the Folha de So Paulo; Cardoso, F. H. (1978.) Democracia para mudar. So Paulo: Paz e Terra, p. 58.) (Editor's Note: IBPP readers might want to consult the following concerning intellectuals and politics: Policy actors: Bureaucrats, politicians, and intellectuals. (February, 1990.) International Social Science Journal, 42(1); Special Issue: Intellectuals and social change in Central and Eastern Europe. (1992.) Partisan Review, 59(4).)(Keywords: Cardoso, Policy, Praxis.)