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Capitalism and population in Latin American agriculture

Recent trends and problems

*Carmen A. Miró
and Daniel Rodríguez**

On the basis of a body of empirical research, the authors explore the relationship between agrarian structure and population. After an introduction in which they present their theoretical and methodological orientation, they describe the current changing trends in agrarian structure, among which are the 'intensification' of the process of the penetration of capitalistic forms into agriculture.

After emphasizing and demonstrating that this process adopts a variety of forms in different countries and regions—and that hasty generalizations are thus dangerous—they describe the relationships between the process and some demographical variables, especially fertility and migrations.

In the final part they summarize their ideas and draw up some guidelines which could be useful for future studies on the subject. In this respect they stress that between agrarian structure and population there is a dynamic interrelationship of mutual influence, and that demographic changes should not be seen as a direct consequence of economic ones. In any case, in studying different types of demographic behaviour it should be remembered that these make sense, in part, because they occur in the context provided by styles of development which generate a surplus labour force, to which the excluded sectors respond with 'societal strategies' in which these types of behaviour play a major role.

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I

Introduction

This article is a revised version of an evaluation project carried out in the Executive Secretariat of the Programme of Social Research on Population in Latin America (PISPAL), the main objective of which was to assess the contribution of a series of research projects financed by the Programme in the field of agrarian structure and population.¹

This evaluation study was prepared by examining the contributions of 14 research projects carried out in different countries of the region—Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, together with one covering the five Central American countries—which set out from different theoretical perspectives but all centered on the field of studied mentioned; it was basically limited to the contributions made by these projects to the knowledge on the subject being studied, and did not consider the contribution made in terms of theoretical elaborations.

A summary of these contributions, as supplemented by those of other research carried out in the region, is presented here. However, this summary—as noted in some comments on the original text—amounted to something more than the sum of the results of the various research projects evaluated.

This was due, on the one hand, to the fact that the interpretative element became the most important part of this study, in that an effort was made to trace a profile of the evolution and current situation of Latin American agriculture as a whole: a question which none of the individual projects attempted to tackle.

¹The general report of this evaluation is to be found in the document "Capitalismo, relaciones sociales de producción y población en el agro latinoamericano", PISPAL, May 1980. The authors wish to express their gratitude to PISPAL for having made the general study possible, as well as to the social scientists of various countries of the region for their numerous and valid comments, especially those made during the Seminar on Agrarian Structure and Population held by CEBRAP (São Paulo, Brazil). Particularly useful were the criticisms and suggestions of Omar Argüello, Vinicius Caldeira Brant, Fernando Cortés, Eugenio Maffei and Arturo Warman. The content of this article, however, is naturally the exclusive responsibility of its authors.

Moreover, the review brought out the need to develop a certain analytical perspective, which sought to bring the subjects of agriculture and population more closely together at a structural level. It is this 'analytical perspective' which we feel is the principal contribution of this work and which makes it an autonomous product with respect to the material used and the purposes of the original general report.

At first we were concerned with the fact that the profile being drawn for all of Latin America was based on the results of research in only one group of countries on the continent and, within these countries, on a limited amount of research already carried out there. Two facts led us to proceed with the task: firstly, we received a series of comments, criticisms and suggestions from persons who were knowledgeable about these problems and who did not disagree with the conclusions we had reached in preparing the original document for PISPAL; and secondly, the review of some research and publications on agrarian subjects led us to the conclusion that the facts did not warrant any significant alteration of the results obtained.² Furthermore, the intense argument among the various currents of interpretation of the Latin American agrarian situation is not so much centered around what is actually occurring but rather what it is assumed will occur. A demonstration of this fact is the theoretical dispute between 'campesinistas' and 'descam-

pesinistas' or between 'Leninists' and 'Chayanovists'.

We have deliberately tried to avoid these controversies. The objective proposed here is more modest: to try to describe the general changing trends in Latin American agriculture during recent decades. Nevertheless, in so doing we must unavoidably refer to certain theoretical systems which claim to predict the future evolution of agriculture or rural society (the theory of 'modernization' is one example, although certainly not the only one). In adopting this approach no attempt has been made to formulate any kind of prognosis for the future of the agrarian classes or to take sides with respect to which is the 'better' option for agricultural development in the future. Without denying that both types of discussions are very useful, we consider that the objective factors available—particularly for making prognoses—are extremely limited. Moreover, we do not share the optimism of those who believe that it is possible, on the basis of general laws of development (capitalist or not), to deduce the actual course which will be taken by our societies in the coming decades. We consider this exercise to be irrelevant from the intellectual and practical point of view; furthermore, the economic reductionism implied in such an exercise has given ample proof of its inadequacy to predict the actual movement of specific realities.

It is assumed here that in Latin America the coherent proposal of alternatives of changes in our situation still requires an effort to understand and interpret the concrete phenomena which make it impossible to assimilate this situation to any of the 'classic models'. The characterization—invariably qualified by adjectives—of our societies as 'peripheral capitalism', 'dependent capitalism', 'lumpen development', etc., is eloquent proof of this fact.

In this context it is fitting, then, to make some brief references to certain characteristics of the research projects examined, all of which are recent.

The research carried out in the region in recent years appears to have taken a significant step forward in comparison with the previous knowledge on the agrarian reality and its relationship to population.

If a superficial comparison is made with

²For example, see CEPAL, *Las transformaciones rurales en América Latina: ¿Desarrollo social o marginación?* Cuadernos de la CEPAL series, No. 26, Santiago, Chile, 1979, where very similar conclusions were reached to those expressed here in the first part. It should be mentioned that this similarity is significant, since the research universes considered do not overlap, and in the CEPAL study, none of the PISPAL research results were consulted. This is quite logical when one considers that the greater part of the research was completed and published very recently. As examples we may cite, *inter alia*: M. Margulis, *Contradicciones en la estructura agraria y transferencias de valor*, El Colegio de México, Mexico City, 1979; Andrés Opazo *et al.*, *Estructura demográfica y migraciones internas en Centroamérica*, San José, EDUCA, 1978; Geraldo Muller, *Estado, estructura agraria y población*, São Paulo, Vozes, 1980; Ximena Aranda, *Empleo, migración rural y estructura productiva agrícola*, final report, Santiago, Chile, 1980 (in the press); Lucio Geller, *Fecundidad en zonas rurales*, Mexico City, 1979 (unpublished); José Matos Mar and José Manuel Mejía, *Los évenuales del valle del Chancay*, I.E.P., Lima, Peru, December 1979. Of the research concluded earlier, the results were disseminated through publications only in very few cases.

the interpretative frameworks previously available, which the research in one way or another has attempted to transcend, it seems obvious that there has been progress and that it has been substantial. In particular, this is because the research has tended to deal with relatively recent phenomena, but at the same time recognizing the historical matrix of these phenomena. Basically, this progress has been made in relation to the 'dualist' view with which our reality has tended to be interpreted, particularly in the case of agriculture.

It can also be said that in the research emphasis has been placed on capturing the actual movement of reality rather than superimposing general patterns which, in a certain sense, it was sought to exemplify through it. Without ignoring the theoretical approaches which guide the research, this emphasis has been placed on the research process as such; and it seems to have been an important factor in the advance of knowledge of the agrarian reality in the region. This change, to certain extent methodological, seems to have led to the need to go more deeply into the matter, in that global or aggregate analyses turned out to be insufficient to account for the concrete 'movements' within the 'trend'. Moreover, as is well known, aggregate data can obscure very significant differential phenomena. All these factors have led to greater caution in generalizing the interpretations and models, and to the growing need to 'make concrete studies of concrete situations'. This tendency towards a return to specificity seems to have been dictated by the realization that these concrete and specific phenomena cannot be understood by using the existing broad frameworks. However, this time it has not been a question of studying the information as a self-contained whole (a tendency previously noticeable in certain currents of thought): instead, an attempt has been made to give the information more meaning, locating it in broader contexts which make it more understandable, and this positioning has been a theoretical task.

Halfway through the past decade, various authors³ tried to systematize what was then

known of the relations between agrarian structure and population. If we compare the gist of these studies with what is known today, it is difficult to say whether there have been significant advances in certain areas of knowledge. We need only recall, for example, that very little is known about mortality and fertility in relation to agricultural phenomena. Very different, however, is the case of migrations; here there has undoubtedly been important progress. More is now known about the determining or conditioning factors of migratory movements, and it has been shown that these movements cannot be explained by economic factors alone, so that there has been a tendency towards a hierarchization of the causal factors of migratory movements. In this sense, it is undeniable that there has been a more refined evaluation of the possible economic factors, or the economic dynamics, affecting population movements. There is no particular pattern of accumulation, nor are there particular salary or income differentials which automatically produce population movements; there are, however, such elements as demand for labour, level of wages and standard of living, among others, which are conditioned by the way the so-called development process materializes in specific places.

In these new ways of thinking about population phenomena, besides recognizing the importance of economic factors, it has been mentioned that there are factors of attraction and repulsion which operate simultaneously in regional circuits, where there is a sort of interaction between economic factors operating in different directions. On some occasions, economic aspects exert a direct and almost mechanical action which determines a migratory flow; however, it usually becomes necessary to include another order of causal factors. Three such factors have appeared most frequently in the research reviewed: those inherent in psycho-social 'modernization', which facilitate an

³Vinicius Caldeira Brant, "Dinámica poblacional, estructura agraria y desarrollo agrícola en Brasil", in *Demogra-*

fía y Economía, Vol. X, No. 2 (29), Mexico City, El Colegio de México, 1976; Luis F. Lira, "Estructura agraria y población: análisis del caso chileno", PISPAL, Working Document No. 4, Santiago, Chile, April 1975; Raúl Urzúa, "Estructura agraria y dinámica poblacional", PISPAL, Working Document No. 7, Santiago, Chile, April 1975.

understanding of why certain individuals or families migrate to a particular area with the same structural factors, or why more persons migrate from one zone than from another when both are relatively similar in other respects.

A second order of factors is 'cultural' (in the anthropological sense of the term).⁴ This element has been shown to be of importance in regions with a predominantly indigenous population having their own behaviour patterns and value structures which were largely independent of those existing in the overall society and which determined ways of living of their own. In these sectors a tendency was observed towards intra-rural migration, with a relatively minor trend towards migration to cities. This cultural element acted as a restraint on definitive migration, since it meant much more than merely changing a work relationship or leaving a place of residence. These are sectors which, moreover, possess their own *Weltanschauung*, whose rationale has little to do with that of the 'Western world'.⁵

Finally, there is the role of policy, which through its intervention in modifying the agrarian structure may bring about more or less radical changes in the trends 'inherent' in the economy, and thus the population variables; this was fairly evident in examining the agrarian reforms in Chile and Peru. The State can also act directly on population variables, and by modifying them it can alter what would be the 'natural' trend of the economic processes.

From a methodological point of view, this means that the social explanation of the changes which have occurred in population

dynamics should be sought on the level of the constellation or set of factors deriving from the overall movement of the style of development, and not among additive, isolated and lineal effects.⁶

The research seems to have demonstrated that in practice all of these factors do not have the same importance. In given historical situations some have more influence than others, and occasionally some factors are completely lacking. However, as a general rule it may be stated that the economic factor is the one which seems to offer the best capacity of explanation, confirming and refining the existing knowledge in this field. Once again it is pertinent to call attention to the fact that the division between 'factors' is made in rather an instrumental sense, since what are normally involved are social phenomena, whose division into political, economic, cultural and other dimensions is only analytical.

Moreover, one of the significant conclusions which may be drawn from examining the ways in which the phenomena of agrarian change are usually related is that it is always insufficient to try to explain behaviour by resorting to one single demographic variable (in this case migration, which is the one social sciences are most concerned with), without considering the others closely related to it.

Ultimately, it seems pertinent to state that, by definition, the relations between agrarian structure and population cannot be properly understood unless we include the basic constituent elements of population dynamics. It is impossible to understand population dynamics as such if we study only one of its components, which is what has frequently occurred in the region. One does not have to be very clever to conclude that migratory phenomena may vary significantly between different areas if the natural growth rates of the population in their areas of origin differ greatly among themselves, and to understand these rates it is essential to know the level of deaths and births.

⁴Anthropologists have distinguished different dimensions in the concept of culture: culture as opposed to nature; culture as the way of life of a society; culture as civilization. Here, specifically, the term is used in its 'way of life' dimension, as the totality of the works and practices of man, with a particular social and spatial-historical concrete manifestation. The bearers of this dimension of culture are not classes or social strata, but 'entire societies' such as peoples, nations or tribes. An interesting discussion on the subject is to be found in José Luis Najenson, *Cultura nacional y cultura sub-alterna*, Toluca, Mexico, Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México, 1979.

⁵Among other works, see: CEPAL, *op. cit.*; Andrés Opazo *et al.*, *op. cit.*; José Matos Mar, *op. cit.*, and Teófilo Altamirano, "Estructuras regionales, migración y asociaciones regionales en Lima", Peru, 1977 (mimeographed), Department of Social Sciences, Universidad Católica.

⁶See Claudio Stern and Fernando Cortés, *Hacia un modelo explicativo de las diferencias interregionales en los volúmenes de migración a la Ciudad de México 1960-1970*, Cuadernos del CES, No. 24, Mexico City, El Colegio de México, 1979.

II

Current trends in agrarian capitalism

On the basis of the research examined, it may be stated that the most general trend in Latin American agriculture since the 1950s is increasingly characterized in all countries by the penetration of capitalism. Let us clarify at once that this penetration has not necessarily meant an increase in the rural proletariat in absolute or relative terms, nor has it meant a reduction in the peasant economy. In some cases this penetration has indeed involved these processes, but the general trend would appear to be that in most cases capitalism initially produced an increase in wage-earning workers (permanent and/or seasonal), either by dissolution of the social relations of production of the 'tenant farmer' type or similar, or by processes—although always limited—of disintegration of the relatively autonomous peasant economy. However, during a second stage—variable for each country—this penetration, which perhaps could be called intensification of capitalism, tended instead to trigger poorly defined processes whose characteristics fluctuate from deproletarianization to sub- and/or semi-proletarianization, by way of hitherto unknown phenomena of rearticulation with the peasant economy.⁷

Within this trend, there is another that stands out very clearly: that of the rapid and growing replacement of permanent workers by seasonal workers. Of course this does not necessarily mean that the latter are increasing in absolute terms, but their relative weight is increasing within the group of wage-earning categories. These seasonal workers have very different characteristics in different countries. Thus, for example, in Brazil, the transformation of resident and permanent workers into 'volan-

tes' or 'boías-frias'⁸ (deprived of their means of subsistence) is a possibility in regions where they have no access to land ownership, thus obliging them to seek urban residence, but without opportunities for stable employment in the cities. In other places, such as Peru, some areas of Argentina and others in Central America, the seasonal work is done by inter-rural migrants who sell their labour on a casual basis and then return to their regions of origin. In this case, the process assumes a particular form of articulation between capitalism and the peasant economy which is very far from fitting the classical patterns of proletarianization. This leads to the crystallization of a 'intermediate' formula where two contradictory trends are joined: "one, the total destruction of traditional relations, leading the labour force to total dependence on wages, and the other, the maintenance of the peasant economy through the monetary input from wages. This is a phenomenon which, in social terms, results in the semi-proletarianization of the peasantry as the specific form adopted by the exploitation of the labour force for this state of capitalistic agrarian development"⁹

In Guatemala, for its part, seasonal migration has tended to originate in areas lacking in farming opportunities,¹⁰ and to be directed towards areas of capitalist agriculture whose productive organization is based on crops for external trade; this movement was described as being 'widely observed'. This type of migration (as in Peru) predominates in indigenous areas which, in view of their structural conditions, should be highly expulsive.¹¹

⁸These are seasonal rural workers who travel daily from an urban area, taking their food with them and eating it cold (*boías-frias*).

⁹José Matos Mar and José M. Mejía, *Los eventuales del Valle del Chancay. Migración estacional, proletarianización rural y reforma agraria en un circuito regional*, Lima, Peru, I.E.P., 1979.

¹⁰I.e., those where the small farmer and minifundista predominate, and all the land is occupied.

¹¹Andrés Opazo *et al.*, *Estructura agraria. Dinámica de po-*

⁷However we should recall that the overlapping of different productive forms has been noted by several authors as a characteristic feature of Latin American agriculture since the beginning of its integration into the capitalist economy. See A. García, *Reforma agraria y economía empresarial en América Latina*, Santiago, Chile, Editorial Universitaria, 1967.

Finally, it was observed that in some areas and for some crops (for example, coffee) the demand for seasonal labour continued to be covered, as before, by the family labour of the tenant farmer or small producer located inside or on the periphery of the hacienda.

It is surprising to find that this type of relation is present, among others, in one of the coffee-growing agricultures which generally showed high indexes of technification and 'modernization', namely, in El Salvador, where it was observed that between 1950 and 1961 there was an expansion of the tenant farmer system, precisely in the predominantly coffee-growing areas. This type of labour relation is interpreted as "the result of extremely unfavourable conditions for the sale of labour, at the same time as there is a need for the agrarian bourgeoisie to maintain a docile and cheap labour force for the harvest".¹² As is well known, in El Salvador the productivity per hectare is among the highest in the world; however, "the higher yield in the coffee plantations is mainly explained by the high labour-intensity".¹³ Might this situation have something to do with the type of 'precapitalist' relations being re-established?

In other countries (Mexico and Peru, for example) seasonal work is done simultaneously by migrants of varied origin, by unemployed urban workers from areas near those of the crops, by poor farmers who then return to their regions of origin to reinitiate the cycle the following year, by itinerant migrants who follow the different harvests throughout the country, etc.

With regard to seasonal labour, the solution to the problem is not to keep on repeating that this is a law of agrarian capitalism which exists all over, but rather to seek to understand its characteristics, which transform it into a hitherto unknown phenomenon, both by its proportions and by its specific features, whether they unify the labour markets, reproduce the 'autonomous' peasant economies, recreate

phenomena such as the so-called tenant farmer system, or form combinations of all of these. These are some of the characteristics making it a relevant social fact which must be explained, not only in order to understand why it occurs and what new types of social categories are arising, but also in order to understand population phenomena connected with it, or to find out its effects on demographic variables which have caused so much concern both to governments and social scientists inside and outside the region, and to international organizations.

At the beginning of this chapter it was mentioned that the intensification of capitalism does not mean growing proletarianization nor rural disintegration. What does it mean, then? The answer is that this intensification¹⁴ may be understood in at least two senses.

On the one hand, it means what could be called a growing submission of agricultural activities to the logic of capitalism. Expressed more simply, it means that agriculture is increasingly becoming a sector where investments are being made in order to obtain profits. Thus it enters into competition with industry, construction or other economic activities as a focal point to attract investments. In order to understand this phenomenon, we must examine the growing integration of industrial and financial activities with those of agriculture. For the financial sector, agriculture is just one more area to which capital may be directed, as long as its profitability is assured there. On the other hand, there is an increasing need for industry to be able to acquire food and raw materials at low prices. What leads to this growing integration appears to be the needs of the process of capital accumulation: on the one hand, pressured by internal or external competition, industry needs to cut costs and thus seeks to impose its rationale on agriculture also, while on the other hand, the imposition of this rationale requires high initial investments (for example, purchase of large tracts of land,

blación y desarrollo capitalista en Centroamérica, San José, Costa Rica, EDUCA, 1978, p. 111 *et seq.*

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 154.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 151.

¹⁴We have chosen the word 'intensification', rejecting those of 'development' or 'penetration', because the two latter terms appear to have too many 'connotations'. By using the term 'intensification' we are trying to avoid the idea of a progressive advance of capitalism which is increasingly penetrating the rural areas and homogenizing them as regards relations of production.

acquisition of machinery and equipment, chemical products, certified seeds, fertilizers, etc.), and it is at this point that the financial sector becomes indispensable. Finally, the basic logic of the system's operation dictates that investments are made to obtain profits. The penetration by some large transnational conglomerates (with industrial, financial and agricultural activities) in Latin American rural areas confirms this. For example, in the Amazon region of Brazil large transnational corporations, typically 'industrial', have made investments in the purchase of large haciendas in northeastern Matto Grosso, northern Goiás and southern Pará. Among the most notable are Volkswagen, Georgia Pacific, Anderson Clayton, Goodyear, Nestlé and Mitsubishi, *inter alia*.¹⁵

Creating the conditions to make the above-described process possible is a question which is resolved politically. The process of accumulation does not exist in the abstract, but takes material shape in given classes and concrete, real social groups, which in order to impose their interests must superimpose them on those of other classes and groups. The typical case of how this process has occurred appears to have been Brazil, where after the resolution of the political crisis in 1964 the necessary conditions began to be created for enabling agriculture to be brought under the new 'style of development'. In their excellent study, Cardoso and Muller have shown how this phenomenon occurred in that country. Chile, almost ten years later, seems to have sought to follow the same path, but in no way is it suggested here that the intensification of capitalism in agriculture implies political models such as those of Brazil and Chile. There are many factors influencing the political solution reached in each country, and these can only be seen empirically in each particular case. Mexico appears to be a good example of how the intensification of capitalism in agriculture has occurred by completely different means, and it is very difficult to argue that they will be repeated in other areas.

¹⁵F.H. Cardoso and C. Muller, *Amazonia: Expansão do Capitalismo*, São Paulo, 1977, Ed. Brasiliense, p. 161. Of course this process is in no way exclusively Brazilian.

A second conceptual elaboration of this intensification of capitalism in agricultural activity is that whereby the different sectors composing non-capitalist agriculture (i.e., the traditional latifundio, minifundio, independent peasants, etc.)¹⁶ become increasingly dependent on the capitalist sector in general. This dependence may, in the case of the minifundio, occur through the casual sale of labour; in the case of the independent peasant, through the sale of production surpluses on the market; in that of the latifundio, through the need to restructure its internal relations of production in order for it to continue to participate in the market with some success; or else through a combination of relationships such as those described. At all events, the relations between these sectors and capitalism (and not just agricultural capitalism) are becoming increasingly close and frequently essential.

A very good illustration of these processes is that which occurred in the Baixada do Ribeira in the State of São Paulo, Brazil; this region is the largest producer of tea in the country and the largest producer of bananas in the State. There, the companies' production is completely oriented towards the internal and external markets. The almost absolute dependence of the small and medium-sized landholders on large-scale capitalist enterprise is illustrated by the case of tea, where the agro-industries possess their own haciendas and the organization of labour is completely of the wage-earner type. However, these agro-industries also deal with family or independent units of production, to which they supply fertilizers and other production inputs. These same enterprises send their trucks for transporting merchandise during the harvest periods, and the classification of the tea leaves for quality is also done by the enterprise, without the participation of the small producers, who are paid in accordance with this classification. These small producers may be tenant farmers, sharecroppers or owners of small farms. "On the subject of small producers, whose function transforms their productive

¹⁶These are defined as non-capitalist according to the internal social relations of production or labour typified by these units: e.g., non-remunerated family labour, sharecropping, tenant farmers, etc.

organizations into 'house industries', it may be said that their subsuming of family work is based on the control of the conditions of production by agro-industries. An important aspect of this form of organization of agricultural labour is that it does not imply the sale of labour, but of the product thereof." When the demand in the market is reduced, the haciendas of the enterprises maintain their levels of production, but the demand for production by independent producers declines.¹⁷

This new general trend calls for two very important clarifications. Firstly, it does not mean that there is a progressive process of homogenization in the agriculture of the region; on the contrary, this general trend tends to manifest itself only in certain areas and limited geographic spaces. In the Chilean case, it primarily takes place in the central zone, and in Brazil it is clearly observed that, *inter alia*, the northeastern zones are excluded from the new style of agricultural development. In Central America, the process is also limited, particularly in those economies based mainly on banana enclaves. In the other areas of the country there still exist traditional latifundios, independent farmers, small and medium-sized capitalized family producers, etc. Nothing, for the moment, warrants the assumption that these areas will 'inevitably' be integrated into the former system. Although capitalism makes these sectors more dependent, it does not necessarily transform them, as will be seen below.

To illustrate this trend towards 'non-homogenization' of Latin American agriculture, it is relevant to refer to the cases of Peru and Brazil. In the former, the capitalist modernization of agriculture assumed the nature of a drastic agrarian reform: expropriation of 10 million hectares, which benefited 375 000 rural families, and establishment of almost 2 000 associative enterprises. In the latter, on the other hand, the modernization process was carried out through the creation of incentives to encourage 'private enterprise' (domestic and foreign) to invest in the rural area: tax rebates, loans with negative rates of interest and con-

struction of infrastructure on the part of the State (for example, the trans-Amazonia highway). In both cases the State has been a protagonist: in the former, by promoting agrarian reform, and in the latter, by creating 'incentives'.

As regards the results of modernization in the 'Peruvian way', it may be said that despite the redistribution of land, which was on a scale unprecedented in the country and has affected the most important economic sector of Peruvian agriculture, after ten years "it has not achieved the proposed goals of overcoming agricultural underdevelopment and *unequal regional development*".

The redistribution of income has benefited only minority sectors, and the majority have still not been able to "rise above the level which economic experts qualify as *extreme poverty*".

As for employment, "although until now no precise information has been available, it is possible to affirm that not only has the existing gap not been closed... but it has even widened".¹⁸

We cannot say the 'Brazilian way' either that it has signified a process of homogenization of the rural area, despite the growing penetration of the large transnational and national conglomerates and the very significant action of the State in creating the conditions for the modernization of agriculture. On this subject, Juárez R.B. Lopes holds that "the latifundio system, minority control over the access to land ownership and, consequently, cheap labour and *itinerant primitive agriculture, with very low levels of capitalization*, are the main features of a picture which in general terms is still valid".¹⁹

F.H. Cardoso and G. Muller, for their part, affirm that "the type of growth adopted, which involved the exploitation of labour and the concentration of profits and wealth, showed that in itself it did not lead to improved con-

¹⁷G. Muller, *Estado, estructura agraria y población*, 1978, p. 140, *et seq.*

¹⁸J. Matos Mar and J.M. Mejía, *op. cit.*, 1979, pp. 126 and 127.

¹⁹Juárez R.B. Lopes, "El desarrollo capitalista y la estructura agraria en Brasil", in *Estudios sociales centroamericanos*, CSUCA, Costa Rica (17): pp. 175-186, May-August 1977.

ditions for the population, nor did it correct distortions".²⁰

Obviously, the intensification of capitalism in agricultural activities, whether by one way or the other, did not tend to homogenize the rural areas or resolve the 'imbalances' and 'distortions', nor has it benefited the population. On the contrary, it has sharpened the contrasts, as in Amazonia, where "exploitation and progress, semi-slavery and large-scale capital, violence and economic growth do not separate like water and oil, but blend together to make possible the 'cleaning-up' of the frontier".²¹ Moreover, there is no indication that agrarian capitalism improves the conditions of the rural population in terms of distribution of wealth, income and employment.

The second clarification is that the intensification of capitalism in agriculture does not necessarily imply the extension of wage relations, since this will depend on many factors, among which population factors are particularly important. It has been shown that in conditions of a large oversupply of labour, the haciendas in Brazil, the co-operatives in Peru and the agro-commercial enterprises in Central America tend to replace permanent workers by seasonal ones, which in many cases has put an end to the old semi-servile relationships and proletarianized the worker, depriving him of all the means of production, especially land. A similar phenomenon appears to have occurred, either naturally or in an induced form, in areas which have plenty of immigrant labour in the harvest seasons (in the Peruvian co-operatives both phenomena exist together). What is important is that in one way or another, when there was enough labour for the harvest and the work of production in general, proletarianization became the dominant phenomenon.

When, on the other hand, this labour supply does not exist, or the population has other alternatives such as moving into the forest or emigrating to frontier areas, a tendency is observed to re-establish typical tenant-farmer relations of production, or directly semi-servile ones. Clear examples of this situation are given

by the studies in the Baixada (São Paulo), in the Amazon and in certain areas of Central America. Naturally here we must take into account other types of factors, such as the degree of mechanization, the nature of the crop, etc. However, the re-establishment of semi-servile forms of labour in some cases was the initiative of the agro-industrial enterprises themselves, when the relative shortage of labour was an important conditioning factor. It does not appear to be an outrageous hypothesis to suggest that, at least in some cases, paid labour is not the best alternative for the profitability of the capitalist enterprise, nor is it likely that semi-servile working conditions are due solely to lack of supply of labour either.

In this respect Cardoso and Muller have stated that, with the penetration of the large-scale capitalist enterprise, "in certain areas the bases of previous forms of subsistence economies break down, as does the economy based on the sale of surpluses of family production in the market, but the frontier mentality and the greed of exploitation lead to the integration into the large-scale agro-capitalist enterprise of ways of life and work which may continue to be qualified, imprecisely but suggestively, by the word *semi*: semi-servile, semi-human, semi-proletarian".

However, in the cases where proletarianization became the dominant sign in the relations of production, a considerable part of this new proletariat—often the majority—became 'seasonal' wage-earning labour, which has meant an 'atypical' proletarianization, in so far as most of these workers are at least spending the same amount of time as wage-earners as they are as rural producers. Thus, they earn wages between three and six months of the year, and during the rest are farmers and work as such, on land which they own or rent. This redefinition of the relation between the enterprise and the minifundio seems to have become the most widespread in the whole region. Its existence may be observed in northern Argentina, central Chile, Peru, various regions of Brazil, and Central America; it also occurs in Mexico, although sometimes the farmer is legally an *ejidatario*, or common land user. The main point of this redefinition is that paid labour becomes a *substantial* element in the re-

²⁰F. H. Cardoso and G. Muller, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 9

establishment of the peasant economy. It is no longer something the farmer falls back on in periods of crisis because of bad harvests, or to defray extra expenses (for example ceremonial ones), or, as in the case of young peasants, to accumulate some money in order to get married or contribute to the family economy, if only in a rather marginal way, as observed in Santiago del Estero, Argentina.²² Income is now a *basic* element of family subsistence and of the *subsistence of the peasant economy*.

This phenomenon is also different from the so-called latifundio-minifundio system, through which the large landed estate was assured, *inter alia*, of a reserve labour force for periods of greatest demand. The current situation, with an abundant oversupply of labour, would make the old mechanisms of maintenance of labour superfluous and unnecessary. Reinforcing this hypothesis is the situation observed in certain areas where, since the above-mentioned oversupply does not exist, retention mechanisms are maintained and even intensified, sometimes, reaching varying degrees of semicomulsiveness.

As has been suggested, the combination of subsistence activities, which have grown significantly in the region, with the seasonal sale of labour has become a survival strategy for the working population and no longer a reproduction strategy for the haciendas or plantations.²³

This situation does not seem to be temporary, but has become part of the structural definition of agriculture, in so far as the enterprise does not offer alternatives to this situation and thus is not in a position to finance the subsistence of the seasonal worker for the entire year, since the very possibilities of its profitability depend upon this type of wage-earner and the conditions of exploitation to which he is subjected. For his part, the peasant cannot subsist on his piece of land alone, which barely offers him a supplement for his survival and, at the same time, a stable place of residence and protection during periods of crisis. The peasant

economy seems to be a refuge only to the extent that it maintains and creates ties of co-operation between the units comprising a community. And in the case of the indigenous peasantry, these ties of co-operation seem to be independent of the current agricultural situation, and are determined by cultural traditions from time immemorial, which are coming back now as a vital element in ensuring the survival of the various members of the community.

On this particular point it is interesting to take a look at what has occurred with the Chilean peasantry since the so-called 'agrarian counterreform'. The economic model which favours 'comparative advantages' has led, for the peasants in general and also for the particular type of peasant resulting from the process of individual parceling of land encouraged by the military régime, to severely limited living conditions. To deal with this situation, the farmers have organized themselves into what may be called an informal minifundio system, where each parcel of land is made up of a group of minifundios where the owners of the parcels, their children, ex-owners and landless labourers work. Because of the shortage of money, there is practically no demand for paid labour in these units, but there are systems of land subdivision and exploitation where fractions of the parcels are given out for sharecropping, tenant farming or even sub-tenant farming. Here there is an exchange of labour for labour, and also an exchange of land for labour. Such exchange systems, called 'mingas' or 'mingacos', had disappeared many decades ago in the central region of Chile. From this evidence it has been concluded that "the Chilean farmer, both in the reformed subsector and in the rest of agriculture, appears to be in a cycle where subproletarianization or the transition to mere subsistence is a more dominant process than proletarianization".²⁴

The Chilean case appears to demonstrate that co-operation between peasant units is undoubtedly one way of dealing with prolonged conditions of economic crisis for this

²²Lucio Geller, *Fecundidad en zonas rurales: el caso de Santiago del Estero*, Mexico, CIDE, 1979.

²³Vinicius Caldeira Brant, *População e força del trabalho no desenvolvimento de agricultura brasileira*, São Paulo, CEBRAP (mimeographed), 1979.

²⁴Eugenio Maffei, "Cambios estructurales en el sector reformado de la agricultura en Chile, su efecto en la demanda de fuerza de trabajo campesina y las migraciones rurales: 1964-1978", Santiago, Chile, G.E.A., August 1980.

sector. In this situation, the peasant economy, although redefined, does not appear to be leading towards any other form but rather is becoming a new component element of the current agrarian structure. Whether the peasant economy will evolve towards total disintegration, as some views assume; or whether on the contrary it will evolve towards establishing a type of farmer who is capitalized and becomes an important element of the agrarian structure, as in France or, with all his peculiarities, the Argentine peasant of the pampa zone; or as it appears to be evolving in some areas of northern Mexico,²⁵ will not depend so much on the inherent necessities of the accumulation model

now existing or predominant, but rather on the political capacity of various social groups and alliances of classes, which may be able to impose their solution on the whole of society, and in turn will have the capacity to superimpose themselves on external conditions which, generically speaking, we could call a dependency situation.

In this sense the keys for understanding the possible future alternatives of the agriculture of the region can only be found in a profound understanding of the phenomena which appear to be emerging, seeking to rearticulate the theory in the light of new findings, and not the reverse.

III

Effects on population

It is more difficult to detect a trend in the relationship in Latin America between agrarian structure and population variables. In fact, in the theoretical formulations it has not been specified *how* a productive process conditions a higher or lower population growth rate: "the few explanations of this do not go beyond simple postulations".²⁶ Unfortunately, for example, after carefully examining the advances made in the study of the relationship between changes in agriculture and fertility, it is not possible to go much farther than to recognize that there is a certain empirical basis for making suggestive hypotheses.

In this respect, we may cite the examples

²⁵There are other alternatives, such as those expressed by authors such as E. Feder, who, calling himself a *descampesinista*, does not believe in the future proletarianization of these sectors. In this connexion, see his article "Campesinistas y descampesinistas", in *Revista del México Agrario*, Vol. XI, No. 1, January-February-March 1978, Mexico, D.F. In it, Feder emphatically holds that "capitalist expansion into the farthest corners of the rural sector of the underdeveloped countries, under foreign initiative and domination, must inevitably end in the displacing of peasants and wage-earners" (p. 65).

²⁶C. Ruiz Chapetto, "Caracterización de zonas para el estudio de la dinámica demográfica del sector agrícola de México, 1970", Centro de Estudios Económicos y Demográficos, Mexico City, El Colegio de México, undated.

of research which has made a serious attempt to connect phenomena of the agrarian structure, such as the social relations of production, with fertility levels. In the first case, an aggregate-level study in Argentina concluded that "the provinces with lowest rural fertility appear to be those where there is a marked predominance of rich farmers of capitalistic production. On the other hand, poor peasants predominate, singly or jointly, in all the provinces located in the highest ranges of rural fertility".²⁷

In Uruguay, too, an attempt was made to relate the fertility variable with the existence of predominantly peasant or wage-earning economies and as in the previous case data was used from the provincial (departmental) level. Here, however, the results were exactly the opposite to those obtained in Argentina.

Thus, in Uruguay it was found that "whenever the productive form was more clearly cap-

²⁷Lucio Geller, "Informe de avance de la investigación", Buenos Aires, I.T.D.T., 1975, p. 38 (mimeographed). The author first made a correlation analysis only for the year 1960; he then proceeded to prove this hypothesis with data from two censuses. The results of both analyses tended to confirm the hypothesis that the persistence of peasant forms of production is responsible for the high fertility in Argentine rural areas.

italistic and there was greater rural proletarianization... we found higher levels of fertility"; in addition, "both in the context of the latifundio-minifundio complex and in the autonomous minifundio system, where higher fertility and birth rates might be expected, ... the levels are clearly decreasing". It was concluded from this that "the process of rural proletarianization has a positive impact on levels of fertility and birth rates".²⁸

In Mexico, a study now in progress found that the fertility rate in the State of Sonora is extremely high (46.7 per thousand) and is above the national average—which is already high for Latin America—despite its being a State with a high degree of development of wage relations and with highly technified agriculture.²⁹

In the cases of the research carried out in Argentina and Uruguay, the type of analysis does not ensure that a problem of 'ecological fallacy' is not involved in the exercise, since the conclusions drawn on the behaviour of families are based on aggregate data at the provincial level.

At all events, it is observed that the theoretical propositions are extremely general, and various 'readings' may be made of them according to individual preferences. Thus, whenever hypotheses are proposed on fertility, these are on a very general level; for example, the attempt to establish a connexion between fertility and the means of production is a procedure which, although it might serve as a point of departure, is completely inadequate for making any progress in concrete investigation. Thus, the results obtained in Argentina may be interpreted as corroborating the basic hypothesis of the study; but they may also be 'read' as corroborating other hypotheses, such as that fertility decreases as one moves up the social scale, while they may also be interpreted from the point of view of the theory of modern-

ization. Thus, for example, it could be maintained that paid labourers have lower fertility than poor peasants, because the wage-earning relationship fits into modern patterns of behaviour while the peasant, on the other hand, fits into traditional patterns. This does not imply any attempt to adhere to this type of theory, but only to show by this example the weakness and generality of the existing theoretical propositions. However, it must be recognized that these proposals show some progress in that they open the way to a new means of discovering and interpreting the phenomena relative to population growth.

Perhaps the most significant of the research work done has been the effort to theorize on the above-mentioned connexions, thus attempting to prove some of the hypotheses and suppositions. This represents an effort to seek an 'explanation' which usually had not been made previously. The results have led the authors to make the previous frameworks more complex, since it is accepted that the relationships are not direct or lineal; all this makes it more possible now than ever before to propose less mechanical and more elaborate hypotheses, in that empirical material is now available and not merely the speculative ability of good researchers.

The situation is different with respect to the migration variable, as mentioned in the first part of this article. The progress made by the research reviewed is probably related to the fact that on this subject there is a greater amount of accumulated knowledge in the region,³⁰ and the point of departure of this research is thus much broader. All of this undoubtedly helped to make it possible, on the one hand, to handle this variable more rigorously, and, on the other, to obtain some significant results.

Above all we should mention in this respect that the process of the intensification

²⁸S. Prattes and N. Niedworok, "Estructura organizativa de la producción y dinámica poblacional del sector rural", Montevideo, CIESCU, 1977, p. VI-23.

²⁹Mario Margulis and Martine Gibert, "Aproximación socio-económica y demográfica del valle del Yaqui", Mexico City, CEED, El Colegio de México, 1978, p. 125 (mimeographed).

³⁰This would appear to be due, in turn, to the fact that this demographic variable is, in the short term, the most sensitive to the changes taking place in the economic structure. To observe the impacts of economic changes on mortality and fertility, it would seem necessary to consider relatively longer periods of time than those during which impacts on migratory flows occur.

of capitalism significantly affects migratory movements, although not in a uniform way, doubtless because of the unequal development of the capital, in both space and time. Its most widespread significance in Latin America is that this process of intensification has meant the expulsion of broad population contingents from rural areas to other rural areas and to urban contexts. These latter movements (rural to urban) are the ones that have been relatively more frequently studied within the subject of migrations, and they recognize or confirm the principal known causes of this expulsion process: the growing technification which has accompanied agricultural activity (both capitalist and non-capitalist), the expansion of the capitalist economy in areas of peasant or subsistence agriculture which have a strong tendency to retain labour, and patterns of land use which mean less use of labour. The most extreme case, which has been very widespread in various countries of the region in the past two decades, has been the replacement of various crop-farming activities by others related to the raising of animals for meat. Another definitive influence on this migration has been the imbalance in the peasant economy between productive resources (mainly land) and demographic growth; in any case it must be stressed that this definitive migration has not always been directed towards the cities. In many cases, migration to frontier areas, or to other areas which allowed the peasant to recover his position as an independent producer has been important.³¹ This type of migratory movement has been clearly observed in Colombia, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, Brazil and certain areas of Argentina and Paraguay.

These findings cast some doubt on some relatively generalized interpretations with regard to a supposed 'growing modernization' of

society, meaning by this not only the well-known psycho-social factors but also a redefinition of labour relations. It would appear that the peasants, or at least a considerable number of them, are trying to maintain their old life-styles rather than be forced to take on urban or rural-industrial patterns, even though the preservation of these peasant life-styles often means miserable conditions for the entire family group. Of course this 'preference' may in some cases be conditioned by the non-existence of other alternatives, or by the fact that if these exist they are not, in material terms, much better than those associated with the maintenance of the 'traditional' life-styles.

It may be recalled that in various cases (Brazil, Argentina, Costa Rica, Guatemala), emigration to frontier areas was directly or indirectly induced by governments or government agencies. In some cases, this initiative was taken in order to alleviate socio-economic problems of landless peasant contingents, as apparently occurred in Central American countries and Colombia. In others, it represented an attempt to resolve a 'population question', as shown in Brazil by demographic pressures in the most backward areas of the country; or else this initiative simply originated in geopolitical criteria, when it was considered necessary to 'protect' the political frontiers by populating them, as in the Argentine case, or to fill 'demographic vacuums' in order to integrate the country, as occurred in the Amazon area.

This brings in two relevant questions which we have tried to emphasize in the previous pages: firstly, the importance of governmental activities in understanding such aspects as population dynamics, and secondly, the fact that migrations cannot always be interpreted as 'functional' to the accumulation model, although this was probably true during a certain stage of urban industrial growth. Today, however, governmental efforts to redirect migratory flows to other rural areas would appear to indicate that massive, continuous and growing migration to the cities has ceased to be necessary for the process of industrial capitalist accumulation. It should also be remembered that in industry, too, there are phenomena of increasing growth of technification, specialization of workers, and, ultimately, the loss of

³¹The relative importance of the opening up of frontier areas in attracting population in various countries of Latin America should be noted. These findings contradict some affirmations which assumed the contrary (for example, Marshall Wolfe, 1970). *Acta Conferencia Regional Latinoamericana de Población*, Mexico City, 1970, pp. 149 and 159. M. Wolfe, "Rural Settlement Patterns and Social Change in Latin America: Notes for a Strategy of Rural Development", in CEPAL, *Economic Bulletin for Latin America*, Vol. X, No. 1, March 1965, pp. 1-21.

relative importance of the wage-earning sectors within the whole group of occupational categories. At the same time there is an increase in the number of own-account workers, and it is difficult to sustain the functionality hypothesis, with regard to them. We should perhaps remember that this 'reserve army' is continually increasing, due to the generally high natural growth rate in the urban areas. It would appear that the reserve army available to industry is already large enough for it not to need to be increased any further.³²

In addition, and as we have seen in different concrete historical situations, relative overpopulation and higher wages are deeply influenced by factors such as labour union power and the political situation of each country. The case of Mexico is particularly revealing in this respect.

Seasonal migration has become one of the phenomena most closely related to the new type of agricultural development in the region; thus, for example, it has been estimated that in Central America seasonal migrants constitute nearly 70% of the labour force employed in agriculture. In El Salvador, of the 670 000 persons constituting the active agricultural population, it is estimated that more than 50% are employed for less than 6 months in the year.³³

³²We should recall that this hypothesis, from different points of view and using different language, has been suggested previously by various authors: José Nun, *Revista Latinoamericana de Sociología*, Buenos Aires, 1969, No. 2, pp. 138-236; Marshall Wolfe himself (1965); or Anibal Quijano, *Dependencia, cambio social y urbanización en Latinoamérica*, CEPAL, Santiago, November 1967, as well as M. Margulis, *Contradicciones en la estructura agraria y transferencias de valor*, Ed. El Colegio de México, Jornadas 90, Mexico City, 1979, *inter alia*. It is not our purpose to discuss here the position which defends the hypothesis of 'functionality' to explain the accumulation process, the growth of the tertiary sector, of the so-called low-productivity workers, of the 'informal' sector, etc. For an interesting exposition of this perspective, see Francisco de Oliveira, "A economia brasileira: crítica a razão dualista", *Seleções*, CEBRAP 1, 2nd. edition, São Paulo, 1976, especially pp. 24 and 55. Nor are we attempting to 'revive' already obsolete ideas such as the theory of marginality, but rather to adopt a specific hypothesis, which has been proposed by some authors who have studied the subject of marginality and does not exclude this current of thought, in order to try to get out of the dead-end situation currently offered by the authors who explain everything in terms of the logic of capital.

³³Figures from various sources in CEPAL, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-77.

This migration may assume a rural-rural or urban-rural character. Seasonal urban-rural migration occurs in very dynamic areas of Brazil and also in plantation areas of Nicaragua, Costa Rica and El Salvador. The most significant feature of this type of migration is that it tends towards a sort of unification of the urban-rural labour markets. The combination of labour in the two areas during different periods of the year, or the intra-family division of labour, emerge as situations which tend to destroy old forms of division of labour, both on the overall regional level and on the intra-family level. These phenomena appear to be closely related to the processes of accumulation of capital, in both the urban and rural areas. The seasonal hiring of rural wage-earners by the enterprise means that the latter assumes the costs of reproduction of the labourer strictly for the time when it needs him. Moreover, this form of hiring frees the enterprise from the need to pay for social benefits and other legal obligations which exist for permanent workers, while the unstable employment status of the workers makes it very difficult for them to set up labour union organizations to negotiate better working conditions. It is clearly situations of this type which make it possible to transform agriculture into just as profitable an activity as others, and this has led the large national and transnational conglomerates to commit enormous investments in the sector, not only in order to obtain food and raw materials at low prices to cut down the costs of industrial activities, but also because the agricultural activity has been transformed into a 'business' in itself, which has become important in the general process of accumulation.

However, in quantitative terms the most significant seasonal migration appears to be that originating in subsistence economies. This type of migration is observed in all the countries studied (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, the Central American countries, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay). In Peru, it is seen in relation to the large sugar, cotton or rice enterprises; in Brazil, mainly on the frontiers; in the Central American countries, on the plantations of different export products; in Mexico, in the harvest season in the Morelos region and in the north, for the picking of cotton and the harvesting of

crops such as tomatoes and strawberries. Chile is probably the country where the phenomenon is of most recent appearance.³⁴

In the literature of migration, this phenomenon of intra-rural migration has been studied the least. Some of the works consulted showed how difficult it was to grasp this phenomenon from census sources, and even more so when an attempt was made to compare two or more censuses. In Argentina there was agreement among researchers only that the phenomenon existed both in the north (industrial crops: sugar, tung, etc.), and in the south (fruit growing activities), but there was no agreement about the significance of this type of worker in the wage-earning category as a whole, or if the tendency was towards an increase or decrease in the phenomenon, this being due, among other reasons, to changes in the census definitions and the fact that the censuses were carried out at different times of the year. In the case of Uruguay, it was shown that intra-rural migration was relevant in relation to the raising of sheep for wool, but the lack of data made it impossible to draw stricter conclusions about its significance.

In all the above cases, the origin of the migration was rural and was specifically located in areas of peasant economies.³⁵ In the few cases for which information is available, the data are conclusive; thus, for the western region (Quetzaltenango) of Guatemala, where most of those described as small producers and non-remunerated family labourers live, it is estimated that more than 300 000 workers move to the coffee and cotton plantations of Guatemala and the south of Mexico. It should be taken into account in this respect that the total agricultural population of Guatemala is estimated at 700 000 workers.³⁶ From the point

of view of the agricultural enterprise, the significance of hiring this type of worker is probably similar to that of hiring urban workers: the same type of wage relation is established, with similar degrees of exploitation of the labour force, etc. From the point of view of the peasant economy, however, as already mentioned, its significance has changed and in most cases appears to have represented a drastic break with the old forms of articulation between the agricultural enterprise and small producers. It is interesting to go more deeply into the significance of these changes as regards population.

The rearticulation between the agricultural enterprise and the subsistence economy, in conditions of high population growth involving an increasing shortage of land, means a relative slowdown of migration to the cities. And this slowdown seems to be explained mainly by the tenacity of the peasant economy in re-establishing itself and subsisting. From the small producer's point of view, he 'uses' the sale of this seasonal labour to maintain his peasant status, and the explanation of this seems to be found on two levels: firstly, in economic factors (the security represented by his piece of land), and secondly, in cultural factors: the maintenance of the peasant unit means conserving a 'way of life', which in the case of the indigenous farmer is linked with the 'community'. However, according to the available evidence, the preservation of this 'way of life' means, for the peasant, growing levels of absolute privation, and it is by no means clear what the repercussion of this reality is on the reproductive patterns of this sector. Furthermore, we must take into account that these are associated with an increasing deterioration in the relationship between man and the land, which is so fundamental for the peasant way of life, and this would appear once again to reinforce the above-described migratory patterns. One of the studies examined³⁷ attempts to show that at higher levels of relative neediness there are higher levels of fertility, which, if this were true, would inevitably lead at some point to the total disintegration of the peasant economy. However, this result does not appear to have come to

³⁴However, it has been observed that between 1955 and 1976 the permanent sector (including producers) has increased by 79%, while the non-permanent sector has increased 176%. Silvia Hernández, *El desarrollo capitalista del campo chileno*, Buenos Aires, Ed. Periferia, 1973.

³⁵The term peasant economies is used here in its broad sense. In no case do we intend to take part in the discussion which has been developing in the region about Chayanov's concept of the peasant economy. Nor does its use imply adherence to the conceptual elaborations made by the 'campesinistas' and 'descampesinistas' in this respect.

³⁶Cuadernos de la CEPAL, *op. cit.*

³⁷S. Prattes and N. Niedworok, *op. cit.*

pass up to now.³⁸ The peasant economy, with a greater or lesser degree of difficulty, has tended to maintain itself and in some countries to increase. What are the factors contributing to this situation, which is as far removed from the systems of interpretation emphasizing growing 'modernization' as it is from those predicting the inevitable disintegration of the peasant economy? Until now the knowledge acquired has been extremely inadequate and incomplete for attempting to answer this question, and still less for risking predictions.

In some of the research it has been suggested that the minifundio, the subsistence economy and the peasant unit in general, rather than expelling the population, actually constitute a factor of retention. This is the type of agricultural unit which retains the most population when compared with the other forms of organization of production in agriculture.³⁹ It has also been suggested that the maintenance and re-establishment of this type of productive organization, which fulfills an economic function, might also satisfy a political and social one, since the urban-industrial economy is not in a position to absorb the surplus population of rural areas generated by the intensification of

capitalism there. This becomes more evident with the implantation of development styles characterized as 'concentrative and exclusive': faced with this situation, the only possibility of retaining population in rural areas would be to maintain the peasant economy. Historically, the peasant's ability to organize and exert political pressure has always been below that shown by the popular urban sectors (wage-earning or not).

From the economic point of view, it has been maintained that the peasant economy permits the productive use of land and labour which would otherwise be excluded from production: in the case of land, because of its low quality; and in the case of labour, because of its surplus nature. The analytical separation between 'economic functions' and 'political functions' only makes sense for purposes of argument. The facts suggest that the place of this type of productive organization in the global social order is being redefined. It will be up to future researchers to clarify what today seem to be only moving shadows—as in Plato's metaphor of the cave—, whose real essence has not yet been grasped.

IV

Towards new systems of interpretation

For several decades it has been known that the primarily urban capitalistically oriented transformations which occurred in a more or less general manner in the region substantially coincided with the introduction of health cam-

paigns which contributed to significant decreases in the previous mortality rates. The expanding urban economy required labour, the stagnant and/or latifundio-minifundio rural areas offered it by way of migratory processes, and the rural areas penetrated by capitalism gradually aided this flow, replacing men by machines. This was the easy phase of industrialization, whose goal was to substitute imports, and in it the high rates of population growth, both urban and rural, and the rural-urban migratory flows had a relative 'functionality' for the system being imposed.⁴⁰

³⁸Shanin held that "Many peasant farming establishments which, by accepted standards of calculation, are working at a loss and should go into bankruptcy continue to operate and even to invest". T. Shanin, "A definição de campones: conceituações e desconceituações - o velho e o novo em uma discussão marxista", in *Estudios*, CEBRAP 26, São Paulo, 1980.

³⁹That is, it retains more population per surface unit even though its productivity may be at very low levels when compared with that of capitalistic units. These differences in productivity should be borne in mind in order not to confuse the term 'retention of labour' with 'demand for labour'.

⁴⁰On this point, the argument of F. de Oliveira, *op. cit.*, is particularly cogent.

From the 1960s on (it should be noted that time-references are always artificial and arbitrary), the relatively 'functional' situation of the previous phase appears to have become more complicated. On the one hand, the increase in capitalistic activity in agriculture, as well as stagnation, appears to have accelerated the expulsive process, while the urban economy has had growing difficulties in incorporating the new migrant contingents productively. It is at this point that the theme of 'marginality' appears on the scene.

There gradually begin to appear in different countries of the region—although not in all of them—styles of development with 'exclusive' characteristics,⁴¹ which in terms of population imply the intensification of capitalism in the urban areas, meaning a lower capacity for absorption of jobs and no capacity for offering alternatives to the rural migrant.⁴² The phenomenon of 'extreme poverty' seems to be becoming widespread; it is no longer only a question of 'marginality'.⁴³

The basic change between the previous period and the one beginning approximately two decades ago seems to have been the following. In the first, both the latifundio in agriculture and the industrial economy in the urban setting required given quantities of labour. In

agriculture it was retained through systems such as tenant farming, sharecropping, etc., for the harvest seasons, while urban activities and enterprises required this labour force for their expansion and in order to maintain relatively low wages. Thus the high rates of fertility and the process of expulsion of the rural population appear indeed to have been 'functional' for the expansion of the urban industrial economy. In both cases the population was required: by the latifundio, in order to reproduce itself as such, and by industry in order to expand.

Today the widespread phenomenon of relative over-population both in agriculture and in urban areas (we are speaking here in terms of a general trend) implies that the capitalist industrial enterprise in the city no longer requires "more" surplus population,⁴⁴ since its expansion is fundamentally based on investment in machinery and high-level technology. The existing population surpluses, enlarged by the high natural growth rate of the urban areas and those which the new capitalist dynamic generates, seem to be sufficient to keep salaries down. In addition, in rural areas the changes in land use patterns, the incorporation of machinery and equipment and the massive introduction of chemical products have drastically reduced the need for permanent workers. In turn, the existing overpopulation makes it unnecessary to retain in or around rural areas the labour force required for the periods of higher demand. What is being suggested is that, to the fundamental question of how capitalist development determines or conditions population dynamics, should now be added the question of how the 'excluded'⁴⁵ sectors manage to survive. Let us clarify this question.

⁴¹For some of the most interesting studies and critiques on this new style of development, see F.H. Cardoso and E. Faletto, "Estado y proceso político en América Latina", in *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, April-June 1977, No. 2, UNAM, Mexico City (this also appears as a postscript to the 14th and subsequent editions of the book *Dependencia y desarrollo en América Latina*, Ed. Siglo XXI, 1978); Guillermo O'Donnell, "Reflexiones sobre las tendencias generales de cambio en el Estado burocrático-autoritario", CEDES working document No. 1 (also in *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, January-March 1977, No. 1), and Raúl Prebisch, "Capitalismo periférico, crisis y transformación", Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico City, 1981. These studies have been developed from different perspectives, but they have as a common denominator the placing of the new Latin American reality in the context of the world capitalist economy, emphasizing the importance of the political dimension in the understanding of the new configurations.

⁴²On this subject Solon Barraclough stated that "there is no longer any place for the peasants to go. There are no new sources of large-scale urban employment" ("Perspectivas de la crisis agrícola en América Latina", in *Revista de economía campesina*, No. 1, Mexico City, March 1977, p. 24).

⁴³It is interesting to recall in this connexion that, in the thematic and conceptual development of the term 'marginality', 'poverty' was only one of its dimensions, among several others. Later the phenomenon 'poverty' with the

adjective 'extreme' became a subject of discussion and study in itself. A good systemization of the ways in which marginality was understood in the region, and a sharp criticism of the same, may be found in Gino Germani, *El concepto de marginalidad*, Buenos Aires, Ed. Nueva Visión, 1973. A review of the historical development of the concept may be found in Jorge Giusti, *Organización y participación popular en Chile*, Buenos Aires, Ed. FLACSO, 1973, chapter I.

⁴⁴For Latin America as a whole it was estimated in 1975 that unemployment and underemployment amounted to 34%, or 29.3% in the urban areas of the region. See ILO, *Employment, growth and basic needs*, Geneva, 1976.

⁴⁵The precise concepts of sociology do not appear suitable for application to the new phenomena mentioned. It is

It is not a matter of believing that the system has stopped worrying about the 'population problem'. The birth control policies seem to be fairly eloquent in this respect, as are the attempts to redirect migratory flows to frontier zones. However, the available evidence seems to indicate not only that these measures do not resolve the problem of the survival of the excluded masses, but that the problem of 'extreme poverty' continues to grow. It would thus seem that the new styles of development which are being imposed are structurally incapable of offering job alternatives and generating sufficient income to make it possible to rise above the levels of 'extreme poverty'. It is in this respect that the problem has now been assumed—because they have no other alternative—by the excluded persons. It is a question of a labour force which is no longer 'required' (or required only partially). Thus, the criterion of the "reproduction of the labour force for capital" appears to be inadequate by itself to explain the new phenomena linked to the population dynamic.

In this context significance is therefore acquired by the problem of 'survival strategies'—strategies whose fundamental role is to ensure immediate material survival, whether of the family group, the "barrio" (as in the classic study of Cerrada del Cóndor by L. Lomnitz),⁴⁶ or the peasant community, indigenous or not. The possibilities for implementing these strategies are strongly conditioned by the current style of development (and thus by the process of accumulation), but this does not determine the concrete strategies adopted.

In this situation we should ask what roles demographic components play, and how they play them. Caldeira Brant notes that the families of 'boia-fria' labourers organized themselves by dividing the work throughout the year between the rural and urban areas, between domestic work and other work which

allowed them to obtain income. This distribution of the members of the family among various occupations is what "guarantees a continued, albeit minimal, flow of money". And in turn this situation is one "which ensures the functioning of the labour market despite its fluctuations". Thus, the combination of domestic activities and the sale of labour becomes a "subsistence strategy of the working population".⁴⁷

For Chile, Maffei notes the rearticulation which has occurred between the peasant units and the minifundistas, whose principal objective is to organize the productive retention—although at very low levels of productivity—of the surplus population. As in the previous case, labour is sold seasonally, when conditions permit. The dialectic relationship between capitalized enterprise and subsistence enterprise "does not disappear with modernization in rural areas, nor with agrarian reform or counter-reform"; the facts show that there is merely a redefinition.⁴⁸

Matos Mar and Mejía, for their part, point out the desperate efforts of the indigenous Peruvian peasants to hold on to their plots of land, as a means of community subsistence. Here it was observed already that the most frequent protagonists of migratory flows are the members of recently-formed domestic units, or young sons of small farming families. It should be recalled that seasonal labour on the hacienda can be extremely unstable, whether because of bad harvests or because the seasonal labourer—who is almost without legal protection—may be laid off at any moment: in other words, his situation as a wage-earner is structurally unstable. Finally, if he cannot work because he is ill, his only recourse is his piece of land. From the point of view of this type of peasant, the rearticulation between the capitalist enterprise and himself and his piece of land, whether owned, held communally or rented, is explained by the logic of maximizing 'security' rather than profits, whereas the latter logic predominates from the point of view of the enterprise.

In Argentina, Geller pointed out, as a part

therefore preferable to use terms which are deliberately vague but which try to reflect real phenomena, rather than using precise concepts whose relationship with concrete phenomena is unclear.

⁴⁶Larissa Lomnitz, "Supervivencia en una barriada de la Ciudad de México", in *Economía y Demografía*, Vol. VII, No. 1, Mexico City, El Colegio de México, 1973.

⁴⁷V. Caldeira Brant (1979), *op. cit.*, p. 81.

⁴⁸E. Maffei, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

of the survival strategies of the peasants in Santiago del Estero, the role of the daughters in the family as contributors of monetary income and that of the sons in productive work. Concretely, this author states: "The sons are preferred in the area for their ability to contribute to the agricultural tasks of the family productive unit and because of their greater probabilities for selling their labour in an eminently rural area whereas the daughters, whose work is less highly prized in the area, are the ones who contribute the most, monetarily, when they migrate, especially at younger ages. It may be concluded, then, that the functionality of the daughters in family strategies of the area is symmetrical with that of the sons in space and time".⁴⁹

In agriculture, the agricultural enterprise no longer bothers to provide a piece of land so that the rural worker can maintain himself during the seasons of the year when he does not work. In the urban setting, the State increasingly neglects the paid labourer; it is not concerned with enforcing the laws which favour him, or else it simply reduces or eliminates benefits such as health, housing, unemployment insurance, etc.⁵⁰

The 'invisible hand' of the market must regulate the problems of supply and demand in all fields: it is responsible for 'eliminating' sources of inefficiency, whether they are economic activities or merely workers.

Up to now we have deliberately emphasized the aspects which mark the 'trend', and within this we have pointed out the characteristics which most distinguish it from the previous phase of development, precisely in order to call attention to what appears to be an emerging phenomenon. In the field of the relations between agrarian structure and population it would appear fundamental to study the subject of 'survival strategies'. Naturally, this study must necessarily be placed within the context of the characteristics of the new style of development and, within this, its manifestations in agricultural activities.

The influence of cultural and psycho-social factors should be looked at from this perspective. The question we should ask is not how 'functional' a cultural pattern is for the adoption of a given strategy, but rather what role this pattern plays in the adoption of the strategy; this role may or may not be fundamental. The influence of population policies (primarily birth control) on survival strategies, and their articulation with them, should also not be sought from *a priori* positions which assume that there must be relations of adaptation or determination between them; it is the task of the research process to clarify these questions. It will thus not be surprising if 'contradictions' are found.

From the point of view of the agrarian structure, it would appear that three main subjects should be given priority in order to understand the population dynamic. The first is the growing agro-industrialization of the countryside, a trend which is including an increasing number of products and subordination to its dynamics broad areas where different productive forms coexist. Secondly, there is a certain generalization of capitalist enterprise in agricultural activities. This generalization may appear primarily because of the increasing proportion of the total volume of production of certain products covered by it, without implying, as already indicated, growing proletarianization in relative or absolute terms. Finally, and linked with the preceding subject, there is the rearticulation of the relations between the agricultural enterprise and the peasant unit. This rearticulation appears in various forms, identifiable as 'typical', among them the 'semi-proletarianization' of the agricultural worker; the 'submission' of the peasant unit to the capitalist enterprise through the marketing and financial circuit, and, finally, the 'function' which appears to have been assigned to the small or medium-sized family agricultural unit in the new 'style of development' prevailing.

Undoubtedly, the basic perspective for explaining all these 'movements' in agrarian structure is the process of accumulation which underlies the 'concentrative and exclusive' style of development generally being imposed. The abandonment of the watertight compartments into which capital was formerly divided

⁴⁹L. Geller, 1979, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

⁵⁰This lack of protection of the labourer by the State is particularly acute in countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile and Uruguay.

(mining, industrial, agricultural, etc.) seems to be one of the most significant features of this process. Another relevant characteristic of this new style of development is the redefinition of the role of the State in society. This political redefinition seems to be as important as that mentioned with respect to the former division of capital by type of activity.

From the viewpoint of population, the global 'problem' which appears to be most significant in the studies examined, and the one which most concerns scientists in the region, is the 'relative over-population' which appears to be growing faster all the time. In this respect Urzúa points out that when we study the determining factors governing the surplus of agricultural labour, "our attention is no longer centered on mortality, fertility or migrations as separate phenomena, but we are obliged to treat them as a whole".⁵¹

The subject of 'overpopulation' is of the highest importance. There seems to be a certain consensus among the researchers in the region that it tends to aggravate the problem of labour surpluses. In this article we have emphasized that the excluded sectors in agriculture have to seek formulas which allow and assure their survival; moreover, we have pointed out that labour surpluses and survival strategies are understandable in the framework of styles of development, and the specific characteristics of this development in different countries and regions is not independent of demographic factors (capitalism cannot implant labour relations of the 'boia-fria' type when there is an acute shortage of workers).

All this leads to the conclusion that a dynamic interrelationship is created (and it cannot be established that these are simply cause and effect relations) between the movement of the agrarian structure and 'population', and this can only be fully understood if—and only if—we study the behaviour of the three basic variables which constitute the demographic dynamics—something which must be done with the same rigour with which the dynamics of the agrarian structure have already been studied.

In more concrete terms, it should be noted that in order to understand migrant flows (a favourite theme of Latin American socio-demography) we must consider that these are not only conditioned or determined by structural changes such as the replacement of men by machines but also by given rates of natural growth in a certain age structure, which are caused by certain levels of fertility and mortality, both recent and in the past, and which cause these flows to increase or decrease. Similarly, these levels affect the possibilities of reproduction of self-contained peasant units, so that, for example, decreases in mortality may contribute to unbalancing the relationship between man and the land. And this leads us to an interesting point.

It is possible that the replacement of the permanent worker by the seasonal worker has been strongly conditioned by population dynamics rather than by technological changes. The oversupply created by recent increases in the natural growth rate make it concretely possible to replace the permanent worker by the 'boia-fria', even though the crop produced may be the same and may continue to be grown with the same technologies.

The emphasis on the need to study fertility and mortality does not originate in appraisals of the type that there 'must' be a balance in population research between the different components of the population dynamics; it is considered, however, that such study is necessary in order to understand the changes which have occurred in the agrarian structure. This study is also indispensable in order to understand what are identified—although sometimes without naming them—as population 'problems', such as migratory movements or the so-called relative overpopulation.

Methodologically, the correct procedure would be to start asking ourselves how the agrarian structure conditions population. This conditioning may occur directly through the demand for labour; thus, for example, as a response to a greater demand, the migratory flow may increase, and/or, at the same time, this situation may induce high levels of fertility. But this conditioning may also be indirect, through government policies or actions such as intensifying birth control policies in order to

⁵¹R. Urzúa (1975), *op. cit.*, p. 58.

keep the surplus labour force, in the medium term, from exceeding certain limits which may be considered 'conflictive', in that these workers cannot be absorbed by the productive structure.

We must then ask ourselves how the concrete population dynamics fits into the above process. For this we must accept that the population dynamics has a certain degree of 'relative autonomy' with respect to social factors. In view of the current situation of the region, with the particular style of development which, with some differences, has been imposed in many of our countries, the survival strategies mentioned earlier seem to be an expression of this 'relative autonomy'.

To clarify this reasoning, let us make a comparison with the economic behaviour shown by the family unit in the face of economic crisis situations. In his study of the rural economy in pre-Soviet Russia, Chayanov found that the peasant economic unit, faced with a sharp drop in market prices, increased its levels of production, rather than decreasing them as would be expected in line with the capitalist rationale of production. He explained this situation by attributing to the peasant economy a rationale which had nothing to do with that of 'bourgeois' business. What is interesting to grasp here are the empirical results of his research, which permit it to be affirmed that the rationale of peasant units (and of the subproletariat or semiproletariat) with respect to demographic behaviour (fertility and migration) is not governed by the rationale of maximizing income or wellbeing, nor is it a simple reflection of the needs of the 'current accumulation model'; instead, a totally different rationale may exist. Throughout this article we have shown some sympathy for the analyses which tend to attribute a rationale based on maximization of security to the behaviour of certain social sectors. And here we must keep in mind that this rationale may even be quite opposite to that of the accumulation model. For example, it may be assumed that from the point of view of capital it is necessary to decrease fertility rates (birth control policies and the elimination of health protection for broad

social sectors in some countries may be interpreted in this sense),⁵² but the family unit, in contrast, may favour a rationale holding that "there is more income when there are more workers" —particularly during an economic crisis situation such as the one considered in Chayanov's study— which may be completely opposed to the needs of the accumulation models.

This is just one example.

We must also not lose sight of the fact that some cultural patterns may reinforce this 'relative autonomy' in demographic behaviour.

'Population problems' should be analysed in the light of their dialectic interrelationship between capital's need for labour, on the one hand, and the reproductive rationale of the family, on the other.

For the present, it would appear risky to try to predict the concrete effects that given survival strategies will have on population variables. There is some empirical evidence that might make it possible to risk some hypotheses; however, for now, we want to draw attention primarily to the *existence* of this dynamic which, on the one hand, recognizes the logic of the accumulation process, and thus the logic of the hegemonic classes in this concrete situation; and on the other, the logic of the subordinate sectors. For the former, the logic may be expressed concretely through population policies (for example, 'family planning'), social policies affecting the population (for example, health policy), economic policies (for example, reductions in real wages), and also through 'politics' pure and simple (for example, the undermining of labour unions and parties to avoid struggles on behalf of the interests of certain social groups). For those who have been subordinated, the logic in terms of population would appear to be concentrated specifically at the level of the families composing these social sectors.

⁵²How should the evolution of the data on infant mortality in Greater São Paulo, the modern Brazilian industrial centre, be interpreted? Between 1940 and 1950 the infant mortality rate dropped by 32%, but between 1960 and 1973 it increased by 45%. Cândido Procópio Ferreira de Camargo, *et al.*, *Crescimento e Pobreza*, fifth edition, São Paulo, Edições Loyola.

Note by the Director

The heterogeneity of the agrarian structures of Latin America is well known. In the past the *hacienda*, the *estancia* and the plantation dominated the agricultural activity and much of the social and economic history of the region. Since the end of the nineteenth century in some countries, but only for a few decades past in others, the general processes of economic and social development, together with changes in technological patterns, have made possible the formation of a solid entrepreneurial stratum based to a considerable extent on the old *hacienda*-type forms. *CEPAL Review* has shown its interest in this modern entrepreneurial stratum in various articles, especially that of Gerson Gomes and Antonio Pérez, "The process of modernization in Latin American agriculture" (No. 8, August 1979).

However great the significance that the units of large economic dimensions may have had in the past and may still have today, however, they coexist, now as then, with peasant-type forms of organization of production in the broad agrarian space of Latin America. For this reason, the latter merit special consideration and form the central focus of the articles presented below in this issue.