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Notes and explanation of symbols

The following symbols are used in tables in the *Review*:

Three dots (...) indicate that data are not available or are not separately reported.

A dash (—) indicates that the amount is nil or negligible.

A blank space in a table means that the item in question is not applicable.

A minus sign (-) indicates a deficit or decrease, unless otherwise specified.

A point (.) is used to indicate decimals.

A slash (/) indicates a crop year or fiscal year, e.g., 1970/1971.

Use of a hyphen (-) between years, e.g., 1971-1973, indicates reference to the complete number of calendar years involved, including the beginning and end years.

Reference to "tons" mean metric tons, and to "dollars", United States dollars, unless otherwise stated.

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Individual figures and percentages in tables do not necessarily add up to corresponding totals, because of rounding.

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CONTENTS

Latin American and Caribbean development in the 1980s and the outlook for the future. <i>Gert Rosenthal.</i>	7
Features and phases of the "Swedish model". <i>Olof Ruin.</i>	19
Comments on the paper by Professor Olof Ruin. <i>Adolfo Gurrieri.</i>	27
Sweden and Latin America: comments on the paper by Professor Olof Ruin. <i>Francisco C. Weffort.</i>	31
The incorporation of women in development policies. <i>Cecilia López M. and Molly Pollack E.</i>	37
An overview of social development in Brazil. <i>Sonia Miriam Draibe.</i>	47
Integration trends in the Brazilian labour market. <i>Cláudio Salm and Luiz C. Eichenberg.</i>	63
The United States government's Caribbean Basin Initiative. <i>Wilfred Whittingham.</i>	73
The technological potential of the primary export sector. <i>Mikio Kuwayama.</i>	93
On Argentine-Brazilian economic integration. <i>Daniel Chudnovsky and Fernando Porta.</i>	115
The centre-periphery system and unequal exchange. <i>Edgardo Floto.</i>	135

Sweden and Latin America: comments on the paper by Professor Olof Ruin

*Francisco C. Weffort**

Is there such a thing as a "Swedish model"? The term is used several times in Professor Olof Ruin's paper, "Political Development in Sweden". Anyone who talks of a model admits the possibility that proposals based on the historical experience of one country (or countries) may be applicable to the experience of another country (or countries). And anyone who is familiar with the history of Latin American thought and politics knows that, in this sense, the idea of a "model" can prompt interesting—and at times disquieting—reactions in the minds of Latin Americans.

Of course it is always a matter of perspective. We always talk from the vantage point of the place where we are. Thus, in this case I shall always consider Professor Ruin's description of Sweden's political development from a Latin American point of view. Is there a "Swedish model" of political development for Latin Americans? This question has to be reworded. What can Latin Americans learn from Sweden? What should they regard as applicable and what as inapplicable to their circumstances?

I shall divide my comments into two parts. In the first part I will point out the historical and structural differences between what Professor Ruin tells us about Sweden and what we know about Latin America. It seems to me that these differences counsel Latin Americans against adopting a "Swedish model" (except perhaps in countries such as Costa Rica and Uruguay).

In the second part, I shall call attention to the similarities. These are not similarities in historical experience which allow us to take Sweden as a "model". I prefer to treat them as convergences, possible similarities of direction between what occurred (and is occurring) in Sweden and what, with much effort and good luck, could occur here. It is a question of general political principles and approaches which I think Latin Americans should adopt. In the event that they have already been adopted, they should be supported by all Latin Americans who seek to consolidate political democracy, economic development, cultural and social modernization and a more just and freer society.

I

The differences

I limit myself to five points.

First: Unlike Sweden, Latin America does not have a parliamentary tradition, which, according to Professor Ruin, helped to foster a

more stable political development in Sweden. Sweden is a country with a monarchic tradition where, however, absolutism was always more moderate than in the majority of European countries. Professor Ruin says that since the mid-sixteenth century "alongside the king there was always a parliament". This came about because, although the monarch's power became quite strong during the transition from the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries, the 1809 constitution was already characterized by a "balance of power between king and parlia-

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In this paper I seek to reflect my participation in the seminar on "Development, democracy and equity: the experiences of Sweden and Latin America" organized by the ECLAC Social Development Division in conjunction with the International Centre of the Swedish Labour Movement, held in Santiago, Chile, 29-31 May, 1989.

ment". From then onwards the parliament constantly changed, in the sense of offering institutional room for growing popular participation.

Latin America, in contrast, has a very deep-rooted presidential tradition. And many believe that the presidential system, with its propensity for plebiscites, has been a source of political instability and therefore of opportunities for the frequent recrudescence of authoritarianism in the region. In the nineteenth century—which in Sweden was the period of consolidation of the parliamentary tradition—the "unifying autocracies" referred to by Gino Germani were still in place in many countries of Latin America. And what followed, from the first decades of the twentieth century were oligarchic régimes of "restricted participation", and certainly still very far removed from European parliamentary democracies.

Second: Here we lack the independent peasantry which developed in Sweden from the early nineteenth century and which found institutional room for expression in parliament. Sweden, Professor Ruin tells us, "never experienced periods of open feudal serfdom". Latin America, although it was never feudal in the European sense of the word, was and remains seigniorial in many countries. We are the typical case of a continent made up of large landholdings with all the consequences that this implies for a social structure based on the relations of dependence between very large and very small landholders, and between owners and landless labourers.

The idea of a rural society where small and middle-sized landholdings predominate and generate an independent rural middle class, understood as a factor of stability in democracy, applies perhaps in the best of cases to some regions within some countries. What still predominates, in contrast, is the model of large holdings, although it may be in decline in many places and undergoing intense modernization in others. Agrarian structural reform is one of the many failures of reformist policies in Latin America.

Third: Sweden is an example of the development of a liberalism which is not only political (institutional) in content but also social. Professor Ruin's description shows that the historical

alliance—since early in this century when a modern parliamentary system was established in Sweden—between the working class represented by the Social Democratic Party and social sectors represented by the "party of the liberals, currently called the Popular Party", would not have been possible without the favourable ideological outlook expressed in the social nature of Swedish liberalism.

In our case, liberalism has been from its origins the ideology of the big landholders. It became consolidated in the majority of countries as an ideology in the style of the big landholders, i.e., in economical and social respects based strictly on the private, and politically very formalist and legalist. Consequently it was totally out of touch with the "social issue", in other words, with the claims of the working class and the social problems created by the development of capitalism, in particular industrial capitalism. As it is put by some liberals who are unhappy with the rigidity of their own traditional attitudes, we are the typical case of a political development in which claims for political liberty and claims for social equality have always been separate. In other words, here the liberals, especially those with rural ties, have nearly always been opposed to the interests of industrial workers. From this point of view, we represent the antithesis of the Swedish experience.

Fourth: By the end of the nineteenth century Sweden had already acquired the characteristics which were to convert it into a typical example of an "organized society". Parties, churches, associations (e.g., the anti-alcoholics league) in Sweden at the end of the last century prefigured the face of Sweden today. It was a society of organized and independent groups which—for that very reason—proved able to coexist and to make pacts with each other. In addition to the political alliances between workers and peasants (and between socialists and liberals), this capacity to make pacts was revealed in the Saltsjöbaden Agreement of 1938, which initiated a period of lasting harmonious coexistence between employers and employees.

In Latin America the social and political relations which have prevailed since the end of the nineteenth century define us as societies composed of social groups endowed with a poor capacity for organization and independence. For

example, from the viewpoint of the workers' social and political history the typical experience of Latin Americans seems to evolve from dependence towards conflict. We move from phenomena of mass dependence —exemplified by our various forms of populism in which co-operation between classes occurs at the cost of the autonomy of the people at the bottom— to the assertion of their independence in social struggles.

The increase of our organizational capacity increases our capacity for conflict instead of decreasing it. Perhaps the same argument is true for other social sectors, e.g., industrialists or bankers. That is to say, the more organized we become, the more difficult it is to make pacts. Perhaps this ratio between organizational capacity and capacity for conflict will change its sign in the future and foster new ground for agreement between classes. However, that must be a very distant future, for it would be an illusion to imagine that such a possibility lies just around the corner.

We might also speculate that if things go well for political democracy in the future, we will move closer to a United States "model" of society, i.e., conflict and independence at the economic and social levels, and guarantees of equality at the political-institutional level, rather than to a social democratic European "model". But since things do not always go well here for political democracy, the conflicts generated by

situations of extreme social inequality, economic crises etc., run the risk of leading directly into mass violence and equally large-scale State repression.

That is the problem: we are not an "organized society" like Sweden or a consolidated democracy like the United States. While United States culture asserts that the price of liberty is the vigilance of the citizens over the State, here the price of the independence of a social group seems to be mistrust of other social groups. No reader of Hobbes should be surprised if this war of "all against all" in a civil society lacking the protection of a strong political democracy paves the way for the Leviathan of the authoritarian State.

Fifth: In the historical and social beginnings of the establishment of a parliamentary system and then of social democracy Sweden experienced an extraordinary emigration which amounted to almost 20% of the population. This "relative overpopulation" which could not find employment in the patterns of the modern society then being built did find opportunities in other countries, especially in the United States. Most of the countries of Latin America have "relative overpopulation", but the excess simply has nowhere else to go. How can a society "organize itself" when its "normal" functioning presupposes the exclusion of such vast numbers of the population?

II

Convergences

The similarities, as I have already mentioned, are found not so much in the historical experiences as in the general principles of political behaviour and approaches. I wish to mention here four points of possible convergence.

First: Sweden's modern development has followed a historical sequence which is extremely attractive in the eyes of Latin American democrats and socialists. We are emerging from a long period of military dictatorships whose technocrats wanted us to accept the theory that it is first necessary to wait for the pie to

grow bigger before it can be redistributed. The sad thing is that notwithstanding this theory and the dictatorships which inspired it, in several countries the pie has simply not grown. In others it has grown a little. And even in those cases where it has grown a lot there has been no actual redistribution.

Today we are witnessing a situation of stagnation in the majority of our countries which demands the identification of new avenues for growth. In such circumstances the Swedish case is extremely inspiring. It suggests that it is possi-

ble to *grow* and to *redistribute*. Although of course Sweden had various opportunities when it enjoyed favourable economic circumstances, which are the very ones lacking in current Latin American conditions, the Swedish experience of simultaneous growth and redistribution suggests the idea that redistribution, instead of being just the effect, could also be the cause of growth.

Second: Sweden's modern development began with *political democracy*, followed by *social democracy* and now *economic democracy* is expected. In other words, first come the political institutions (parliament, parties, etc.), then *social rights* (Welfare State) and *redistributive economic policy*, and, lastly, changes in the production structure designed to democratize economic life (e.g., wage-earner funds). It is in this area called economic democracy where the issues of the socialization of production have their place.

Despite the schematic nature of this sequence—which also applies to all these comments right from the start—it does bear some similarity to the situations today in various countries of Latin America. Although the topic of socialism is part of the Latin American debate, the fact is that economic democratization in the sense described above is beyond the reach of most of our countries.

But it is also true that in Latin America today, as in Sweden early in the century, the *starting point is political democracy*. It is likewise true that the next step in Latin America—which has to be taken soon if we believe in the need to consolidate political democracy—is *social democracy*, which means precisely the consolidation and extension of social rights and the achievement of a redistributive economic policy. From the perspective of the political democracy-social democracy sequence Sweden's experience provides an excellent example, despite all the differences already mentioned and whatever our idea of the prospects for economic democratization (or socialization).

Third: Latin America may also be able to find a point of convergence with the Swedish experience in terms of the actors and social forces promoting these changes. Unlike other European countries which relied more on their bourgeoisies and middle classes, Sweden's demo-

cratic development was based essentially on the industrial working class and the peasantry. In other words, on what in Latin America we include under the generic heading "popular classes".

From what is known of the historic experience of countries such as Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico, it seems clear that the future is reserving a fundamental role for the popular classes in the development and democratization of Latin America. We are in a region in which, according to Weber's classic formulation, the traditional classes are *no longer* able to lead society. And although it can also be argued that the workers and the "popular classes" in general are still unable to do so, it appears that they are drawing closer to that point as modernization advances and political democracy is consolidated; and even because modernization and political democratization have been increasingly used in the majority of our countries to denounce the shortcomings of our industrial bourgeoisies, conceived as national classes. Unlike those classes which are vehicles of important projects for the entire national society in which they themselves exist, our industrial bourgeoisies seem more apt to benefit from the State than to direct it.

Fourth: *Last but not least*, a note on a cultural factor which may prove decisive in relation to the possibilities for development of democracy and for advances in equality in Latin America. Sweden is a triumphant example of a political culture which believes in the possibility of reform, i.e., which believes in the possibility of gradually changing society. The issue of the significance of reform is today a decisive one for the future of Latin America.

After much mistrust of reforms many Latin Americans have come to value the "small advances" made in recent and indeed difficult times. An entire political culture which was used to the idea, globalizing in direction but at times with a totalitarian leaning, that everything has to change (or else nothing can be changed) was forced by the pressure of events to admit that *even a small change is better than no change at all*. It may be that this perception will move us more in the direction of the Swedish experience than towards any particular "model".

Maybe in Sweden this is called pragmatism. Here in Latin America the appreciation of "small advances" has a dramatic significance which must be well understood. A reform policy must contain more than the element of calculation and cynicism which is usually attributed to pragmatism and it must be based on the conviction that not only is there no other way to advance but perhaps there is no other way to survive. For those who had to fight against State terror, several previously obscure issues became clear. For example, it became clear that *habeas corpus* is an essential "small advance". It was thus easier for them to understand that in countries in which millions and millions of people live in situations of dire poverty the responses to immediate problems, no matter how "small", may make the difference between life and death. Born out of major historical defeats of demo-

cracy and of the workers of Latin America, the conviction which underpins a policy of reforms in Latin America should mean the rebirth of hope for those who seemed to be condemned for ever to have no hope whatsoever.

Instead of a new pragmatism, perhaps the dramatic conditions of Latin America will create a new moral basis for establishing a policy of reforms. Despite my ignorance of Swedish history, I am convinced that in this respect Latin American socialists and democrats find themselves very close to the situation of the socialists and democrats in Sweden during the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century and to all those who are able to understand the meaning of their struggle. They were the source of a "new beginning" for human history in that part of the world. And that is precisely what is being attempted here.