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IDEOLOGICAL ELEMENTS IN THE PROCESS OF FORMULATING POPULATION POLICIES

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IDEOLOGICAL ELEMENTS IN THE PROCESS OF FORMULATING
POPULATION POLICIES

Los Angeles, California, May/1976

by

Margarita María Errázuriz

Introduction

The objective of this paper is to raise some points for discussion in this Seminar around the relationship between political ideologies and population policies, by way of analyzing what governments in Latin America have allegedly set themselves to do in relation to their specific population problems; the general political viability of population objectives and policies within specific political systems in the region; and the perspectives of adopting and implementing such policies in the near future, under the light of recent political developments in this part of the world.

Based on analyses and studies recently done, or even in process of development, at the Population Policies Sector of the Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE), ^{1/} this paper attempts a brief summary of the main aspects treated in them, ^{2/} highlighting particularly those related to its central focus of interest.

1/ The author is a researcher in the Population Policies Sector of CELADE. The ideas here developed, however, are of her personal responsibility and do not necessarily represent those of the institution to which she belongs.

2/ Although references to the sources used will be found throughout the footnotes, copies of some of the research papers taken as basic material for this paper will be distributed to the participants in the Seminar.

The subject matter of these notes is obviously not new. Its emergence could be traced back even to the formation of the first city-states and to the political writings of the classical Greek thinkers. What is new, however, is the increasing importance which the analysis of ideological considerations is being given, in the area of modern social sciences applied to the study of population-related matters, when dealing with the study of the formulation and implementation of population policies.

In Latin America, the subject has been increasingly treated and discussed by social scientists in the last decade or so, ^{3/} centering the attention on the particular population problem chosen as action target - population growth and on the role of governments in manipulating those demographic variables which impinge upon the tendency and change of such a phenomenon.

For a greater understanding of the way in which the problem has been posed, it is interesting to quote Sociologist Armand Mattelart, who was particularly worried with the ideological implications of the problem in general and of birth control specially. He states that birth control is a double-edge weapon, in the following sense:

" Some countries that have opted for austerity and responsibility, adopt it (birth control) in order to successfully achieve their social revolution, retarded by a too rapid population growth rate. Others have found in it an easy medical prescription and leave untouched the archaic social structures, in which the lower classes find their aspirations blocked". ^{4/}

3/ See Errázuriz, Margarita M., El tratamiento del problema de población en la producción de los científicos sociales en Chile (1958-1972), CELADE, Serie A, N°126, September, 1974, particularly pp. 65 ff.

4/ In "Prefiguración de la ideología burguesa", in Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional, N°1, September, 1969, pp. 78-118.

According to Mattelart, for most of the countries of Latin America the undertaking of birth control measures means the strengthening of the establishment and the weakening of the phenomenon of political radicalization.

Beyond the political and ideological meaning of the previous comments, it seems clear that what is assumed is, on the one hand, that most of the countries of the region face a "population problem", defined in terms of a disequilibrium between their population growth rates and their levels of economic and social development, and, on the other, that the means to solve this problem are chosen rather independently from the specific strategies of development opted for or followed by the different countries.

It is in these two general areas, however, where we can find some of the more meaningful ideological implications for the process of population policy formulation. For, on the one side, the definition of a set of interrelated variables as constituting a "problem" and the decision about which one of them is considered as an "obstacle" or main "cause" of the problem imply the existence, more or less explicit, of a theoretical and ideological framework which gives meaning and sense to those interrelations.

On the other side, the nature of the relationship which is established between population growth and socio-economic development as well as the way in which its problematic character is tackled depend, to a great extent, on the theoretical and ideological standpoint from which the processes of development and social change in general are conceptualized. This, of course, impinges upon the means chosen to face the problem as it has been defined.

For, there is a variety of possibilities in terms of the means to act upon the "obstacles" or "causes" of the problem, particularly in the case of population phenomena, which are highly sensitive to a wide range of economic and social factors. Thus, it is possible, for instance, to choose some direct means - as birth control - or some indirect means, which may go from the adoption of social policies affecting the whole of the social structure to the adoption of policies which might produce drastic structural reforms. These options and decisions would heavily depend on the particular conception that those in power would have of the problem of development and the strategies favored in order to solve it.

From this set of angles from which the ideological aspects of population policy formulation could be analyzed, this paper will confine itself to an analysis of the ideological tenets implicit in the Latin American governments' explicit proposals on the kind of population policies they would have implemented in their countries, from the standpoint of their specific development strategies.

Given the general relationship between development strategies and population policies and the ideological elements implicit in it, the analysis of the Latin American governments' proposals just mentioned will be preceded by a brief account of the nature of such ideological elements of that relationship. Then, the possibility that the governments' population policy proposals may become implemented is discussed in the light of the findings of a research done in 1972 for the Chilean case. And, lastly, the future perspectives for

the formulation and implementation of population policies in the Latin American region are estimated, given the findings of the above mentioned research and the dominant political trends in the region at the present historical juncture.

I. DEMOGRAPHIC DYNAMICS, DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES
AND POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES

1. Demographic Dynamics and Development Strategies

Among Latin American scholars, the study of demographic variables and of the economic and social factors which determine their dynamics has increasingly left aside that analytical perspective which centers around the study of the effects of isolated social or economic variables on the demographic dynamics. Instead, they have tended to emphasize that such dynamics are rather the consequence of particular clusters or configurations of specific socio-economic factors which influence differentially the different social sectors or strata which make up the social structure of a society. ^{5/}

This type of analysis seems particularly relevant for the study of the Latin American societies, where social scientists have come to agree on the existence of highly heterogeneous economic and social structures, resulting from the articulation of different modes of production, which have their origin in the process of change that the dominant mode of production necessarily undergoes.

5/ For example, see CELADE, Políticas de población y la familia: el caso latinoamericano, Santiago de Chile, 1974, Serie A, N°124. Urzúa, Raúl, La Investigación en Ciencias Sociales y las Políticas de Población: sugerencias para la programación de actividades de PISPAL, Santiago de Chile, April, 1974, mimeo.

In this way, the different economic and social structures and the particular configuration of factors affecting the demographic behaviour of the social units which are part of them assume particular characteristics depending on the specific historical stage and type or mode of development of a given social formation.

Therefore, the analysis of the structural dimensions which condition the dynamics of demographic variables, is inseparable from the study of the development strategy implemented in a country, which shapes the form that the process of change of those dimensions takes, as well as their effects upon specific components of the social structure.

The advancement in the scientific knowledge of this area has relevant consequences for the formulation of population policies: The first and most important one is the understanding of the population problem; then, the formulation of policies and the selection of the means for their implementation in the broader scope of the development strategies followed.

2. Development Strategies and Political Ideologies

In order to establish the relationship between development strategies and political ideologies and, through this, to clarify the nexuses between population policies and ideologies, it is necessary to refer at least to two aspects of fundamental interest.

In the first place, development strategies always have as a referent a given social model which is ideologically defined. The basic constitutive elements

which inspire the ideology and shape the social model are related mainly to a set of values which are considered to be absolute; a concept about the type of society in which those values could become concretized and a definition of the means which, according to those values, would allow to reach the proposed aims.^{6/} According to these elements, ideology plays the role of legitimizing the development strategy that is adopted.

In the second place, there are some political variables that condition the adoption of a given development strategy as well as the emphasis placed upon different components of such a strategy and, through this, the adoption and characteristics of certain social policies.^{7/}

The option for a certain kind of development strategy depends on the characteristics of the power structure and on the particular functioning of the specific political system of a given social formation. The composition or internal structure of the social class which has the hegemonic control of the society and the variety of interests corresponding to its different fractions play a central role.

In this case, the government, as the visible entity which formulates the development strategy, is only the instance which formalizes the reproduction

6/ More details about this subject are found in Correa, Germán and González, Gerardo, Actores políticos y población: El caso chileno, October, 1974, pp. 8 ff, (draft manuscript).

7/ For a more elaborated treatment of these aspects, see Correa, Germán, "Estrategias de Desarrollo, Poder y Población", paper presented at the Seminar on Political Structure and Population Policies, organized by CELADE and sponsored by PISPAL (Santiago de Chile, May 1975), particularly its revised version, to be published with the proceedings of that Seminar.

of the conditions which allow a class to maintain its hegemonic control over society.

For this reason, the most significant element to understand the relationship between a given development strategy and the political ideology behind it, is the analysis of the nature of the dominant class and of their class interests, inserted in a particular power structure and acting within a given political system.

It is important to stand out the relation between dominant class, power structure, and political system. The distance between the interests of the dominant class and the interests expressed by the dominant ideology, as well as the distance between the formulation of development strategies and policies and the concrete implementation of those strategies and policies, are explained precisely by the composition of the power structure and the nature of the political system.

The distance existing between these phenomena, in spite of the ideological domination exerted by the hegemonic class, is due to the fact that the political-ly strategic aim of the dominant class is to keep the power position it holds, subordinating to such aim the economic and social objectives of the nation as such. This, however, is not done without cost for the hegemonic class since, being a part of a particular power structure in which other social forces and political actors have a share of power, it finds itself compelled to negotiate such strategic aim in varying degrees. At the same time, this class sees

itself constrained by the nature of the political system in which it functions, in as much as such system establishes the "rules of the game" which govern the performance of the political actors who are part of it.

In this way, there seem to be clear the main elements which have to be taken into account for the analysis of the ideological aspects which play a role in the process of formulation population policies. First, the close relationship between population policies and development strategies. Then, the ideological components which frame the definition of a given development strategy. Later, the analysis of the ideological elements which intervene through the power structure and the political system, in the formulation of a policy, establishing the rank of possibilities within which a development strategy or a particular set of public policies can be turned into practical actions.

In the light of these analytical elements, it seems to be interesting to review the positions of the Latin American governments with respect to the different population problems they face. On the basis of those elements and on that derived from the general knowledge we have about the historical and political reality of these countries, the analysis can be made of the ideological tenets behind the development strategies of the countries of the region and of the governments' stance in relation to different population aspects.

II. IDEOLOGICAL ASPECTS IN THE LATIN AMERICAN GOVERNMENTS' POSITIONS WITH RESPECT TO DEMOGRAPHIC PHENOMENA ^{8/}

The social scientists' propositions about the relationship between demographic dynamics and development strategies seem to have been duly taken into account by officialdom in the region, considering the agreements adopted by governments in the meetings held on the occasion of the World Population Year. This may be proved by the fact that one of the modifications introduced to the proposal for a World Population Plan of Action -prepared by the United Nations Secretary General and presented to the consideration of the governments of the world in Bucharest- was that of insisting on the idea that the emphasis placed on the economic and social factors determining demographic dynamics leads finally to stand out the need for complete insertion of population policies into development policies. ^{9/}

At the same time, as a consequence of these recommendations, in the Second Latin American Meeting on Population, which was held in Mexico in 1975, general proposals were made in terms of stimulating the creation of national entities responsible for population policies, standing out the need of placing them within the governmental administrative structure at a level which would allow them to formulate population policies duly integrated into the general development policy and to have enough decision capacity as to make possible the implementation of inter-sectorial policies.

^{8/} This section has been elaborated mainly on the basis of a work done by González, Gerardo and Errázuriz, Margarita M., "Año Mundial de Población", in Notas de Población, CELADE, diciembre 1975, Vol. 9, pp. 75-83.

^{9/} See, WPPA, 94.

It is thus sufficiently clear that scientific thought as well as political decisions agree on the close interrelation existing between demographic dynamics and development strategies.

Beyond these general recommendations the governments of the region made concrete statements in relation to the characteristics which in each country assumes the behavior of the demographic variables. Thus, the more debated subject in those meetings was whether population growth is or is not an obstacle for national development. The speeches of the government delegates in those opportunities allow us to observe that the positions on this matter vary considerably, what can be explained, in part, by the different demographic situations of the countries and, in part by the different emphasis given to different aspects of development.

The Cuban Government, for instance, expressed that population growth has not been an obstacle for their development. Panamá, on its side, even though admitting that the nature of its demographic evolution has resulted in an extremely young population age structure -with obviously unfavorable results for production and with a constant pressure on its main social services- pointed out the fact that the most intense demographic growth of the country took place together with the highest economic growth rate of its history. This would of course make highly relative the character of obstacle to development that could be attributed to population growth. Both countries, Cuba and Panamá, emphasized the effects of the dependency relations on the problems of development, considering them as determinants of the relative backwardness suffered by the countries of the region. In their view, to attribute this backwardness to rapid demographic growth was equivalent to evade the main cause of the problem.

On the other side, the governments of countries such as Colombia and Dominican Republic referred to the character of a vicious circle that takes the relationship between the dynamics of population growth and the development of their respective countries. Dominican Republic did not hesitate in qualifying "that problem (rate of demographic growth) as a factor obstructive to national development". ^{10/}

At the opposite extreme are located governments such as those of Brazil and Argentina, which assign a positive value to population growth. In the particular case of Argentina its government considers that its main task is to completely populate its territory in order to make the whole of its resources productive.

This aim has a central political value, since it is believed that the world shortage of resources will at the end subordinate the "rich countries" to the "poorer countries" in which, providentially, the greatest concentrations of raw materials are found. Brazil, on its side, focuses the role of population in development, emphasizing its productive importance rather than its consumption weight, which leads them to conclude that "an increasing population is a positive factor in the development equation". These countries view the growth of their brut geographical product as an indicator of their development process.

^{10/} Quotations appearing in this section have been taken from the speeches of the delegates from the governments of the region given at the Second Latin American Meeting on Population, held in Mexico. See CEPAL, Informe de la Segunda Reunión Latinoamericana sobre Población, Doc. ST/CEPAL/Conf. 54/L.9.

Ecuador assigns also a positive value to rapid population growth, taking into consideration the scale economies that are allowed by an increasing population. This, in their view, would contribute to overcome what they esteem to be an "insufficient (national) market".

Therefore, it is clear that the role attributed to population growth in terms of the development process varies according to how the different national governments conceptualize their problem of development and the dimensions of it which they relate with demographic dynamics.

From the brief references made to their positions on this matter and from what we know about these countries, it seems clear that in such a conceptualization there are strong ideological influences. Brazil and Argentina and their longstanding historical value-objective of becoming subcontinental powers, Cuba and its drive for building a socialist independent society, Panamá and its drive for conquering national independence and sovereignty, and so on. The referents of such values have, of course, some historical and empirical concreteness but, nevertheless, they still are values ideologically organized and translated into the governments' positions.

A more complete view of the position of the governments of the region in reference to their fertility level, degree of urban concentration, and international migration may be appreciated in Table I. It may be observed that there is a higher degree of agreement among governments in relation to the problem of urban concentration than with respect to that of fertility levels. Such consensus may be easily explained on the basis of two main reasons

- the problem of population distribution seems to be a more ideologically neutral problem than the problem of population growth; and
- the urbanization process -which goes together with the process of dependent capitalist development- takes on particularly critical characteristics in the region, depending on the stage of development and the historical moment of each country.

However, in spite of the crucial acuteness of the problem, the recognition of its existence is not necessarily followed by the formulation of policies aimed at solving it in an integral way, as it will be seen later on.

Table 1

LATIN AMERICAN GOVERNMENTS' POSITIONS ON FERTILITY LEVELS,
URBAN CONCENTRATION AND INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AS DEVELOPED
IN THEIR OFFICIAL STATEMENTS AT THE SAN JOSE AND MEXICO MEETINGS ON POPULATION

Country	Fertility			Urban Concentration	
	Acceptable	Insufficient	Excessive	Acceptable	Excessive
Argentina		X			X
Bolivia	-	-	-		X
Brasil	X				X
Colombia			X	-	-
Costa Rica			(X)	-	-
Cuba	X			X	
Chile			X		X
Ecuador	(X)				(X)
El Salvador			X		X
Guatemala			X	X	
Haití	-	-	-		X
Honduras			X	-	-
México			(X)		X
Nicaragua	X				(X)
Panamá			X		X
Perú			(X)		X
Rep. Dominicana			X		X
Uruguay		X		-	-
Venezuela	-	-	-		X
TOTAL	4	2	10	2	13

	International Migration				
	Emigration			Immigration	
	To Discourage	To Allow	To Encourage	To Restrain	To Stimulate
Argentina	X				X
Bolivia	-	-	-	-	-
Brasil	-	-	-	-	-
Colombia	-	-	-	-	-
Costa Rica	-	-	-	-	(X)
Cuba	X				-
Chile	-	-	-	-	-
Ecuador	-	-	-	-	-
El Salvador	-	-	-	-	-
Guatemala	-	-	-	-	-
Haití	X				-
Honduras	-	-	-	-	-
México		X			-
Nicaragua	-	-	-	-	-
Panamá	-	-	-	-	-
Perú		(X)			-
Rep. Dominicana	X				-
Uruguay	-	-	-	-	-
Venezuela		-	-	-	-
TOTAL	4	2	-	-	2

(X) Information implied from the text.

III. POLITICAL ACTORS IN THE PROCESS OF POPULATION POLICY FORMULATION

Governments' statements and decisions do not necessarily have a direct correspondence with actual policies and actions. The possibility that official statements become concrete policies depends on the political viability of the proposed governmental actions. Such viability, in turn, is conditioned by the composition of the power structure and the position that the political forces which control the government have within it as well as by the nature of the political system within which it operates the political decision-making process.

In this sense, a public policy is a kind of negotiated end product which probably embodies the main political and ideological orientation of the forces in government, although not exclusively so, since it also incorporates, at least in part, the demands and interests of other political forces and actors. This is particularly true, we think, for a democratic political system, where negotiation and coalition politics are the main rules of the game.

It seems, therefore, relevant for the subject we are dealing with to take a look at the way in which this phenomenon would operate and the impact it would have on the formulation of population policies. To do this, we are going to present some of the results of a research done in Chile in 1972-73 on "Actors in the Formulation of Population Policies in Chile between 1958-1973". A part of such a project was a series of interviews with the leaders of the more representative political parties of the country and it is to this part to which we will refer in the next pages.

11/ The report on this part of the study was done by Correa, Germán and González, Gerardo, Op. cit. A summary of the main findings appears in González, Gerardo, Political actors and population policies in a democratic system, paper presented to the Population Policy Research Program Conference, Bellagio, Italy, May 25, 1975.

One of the more telling findings in relation to the point we are trying to make is given around the problem of the unbalanced spatial distribution of the population in the Chilean territory.

In spite of deep political cleavages existing in Chile at the time of the research, there was a rare consensus among all of the political leaders, irrespective of their party affiliation, about the fact that the intensity of rural-urban migration just as the excessive growth of the capital city -Santiago- have had highly negative effects, both for the rural areas as for the capital itself. ^{12/} However, no Administration in Chile, with the possible exception of that of Eduardo Frei (1964-1970) has ever formulated and embarked itself in the implementation of a policy oriented to decrease the migratory flow toward Santiago. ^{13/}

^{12/} Among these negative effects, political leaders pointed up:

- de-population of the less developed areas;
 - relative over-population in the cities which is not productively absorbed, giving place to the emergence of a marginal social stratum, characterized by unemployment, subemployment and extremely poor living conditions;
 - spoilage of the urban environment;
 - increasing occupation of the best agricultural land for urban settlement).
- See Correa, Germán and González, Gerardo, op. cit. p.21.

^{13/} During Frei's Administration a policy of regional development was announced, and even put to practice, which had as a central objective the creation of conditions in the provinces and rural areas which would help to stop or decrease the population outflow from these areas as well as to slow down Santiago's growth. This policy was not successful and the growth rate of Santiago continued increasing. In the opinion of Frei (one of the interviewees), such failure was due to the fact that the policy was not as integral and intense as the complexity and magnitude of the problem required. See Ibid., pp. 229, ff.

It is important to emphasize that although political leaders agreed on the existence of this problem and on its acuteness, they showed relevant disagreements on the causes of it. The analysis of their opinions on this matter clearly shows that the main reason for this divergence in the diagnosis of the problem is found in the different ideologico-theoretical perspectives from which political leaders analyzed it, depending on their respective party of affiliation. ^{14/}

It is easy to infer from here that if there is no agreement on the main causes of a problem, among those who make the political decisions to face it, it is hardly possible that a policy could be drawn to solve such a problem. Instead, what we would probably have, in case there is an intention to do something about it, it would be a number of conflicting policy proposals.

^{14/} The leaders, at the same time that identified the problem, pointed up its causes. For some of them the causes should be found in the mistaken policies on agricultural development, in an irrational and politically-oriented agrarian reform, etc. (National Party-rightist). For others, the causes were the lack of sound agricultural, rural and regional development policies based on a rational and socially-oriented land exploitation (Christian Democrats, center). And still for others, besides the above mentioned causes, there was the problem of the logic of functioning of the capitalist system and of an archaic productive process in the rural areas (Popular Unity, leftist). In sum, the high level of rural-urban migration as well as the concentration of the population in a few urban areas were either the effect of a defective political conduction of the development process or the expression, at the demographic level, of the general crisis of the social system as a whole. See Ibid, p. 21

The possibility of any of them being finally approved as the official policy, will depend on the political strength of those who have proposed it and on their capacity to exert pressure upon decision-makers at the governmental level.

It is therefore relevant to postulate, as the research we have mentioned does, that political actors in a democratic political system seem to rule their actions on the basis of two main principles:

- the political significance attributed to some given phenomena in terms of their own political aims and projects; and
- the political viability of an action, given by the degree of conflict with other political actors it might produce and, therefore, by the obstacles that might arise for its implementation to take place.

Therefore, if a certain problem has no high political significance for a given political actor -i.e., a political party- and if the actions to face it might arouse resistances and conflict with other political forces or even with the party's own constituency, then it is very likely that no policy will be ever be formulated and no relevant actions taken to solve such a problem. This seems to have been the case with the problem of rural-urban migration and high urban concentration of the population in Chile.

On the basis of these elements and of the analysis about the possibility of designing and implementing a spatial distribution policy in Chile, the referred study attempts to go beyond the specificity of the Chilean case, drawing the following generalization: in a representative democracy, with a

system of multiple political parties and a high level of political organization and participation of the social base, the actions of the political actors who constitute the power structure are oriented to "the central objective of winning, consolidating or increasing power, which depends on the degree of electoral support". ^{15/} For this reason, the so called "populist policies" acquire a high political significance and a legitimizing character with respect to the ruling class, in as much as they are attributed a redistributive objective. At the same time, long-term policies tend to have low political significance as they do not contribute to achieve a greater electoral support.

The dynamics of this type of political system tends to be oriented to give priority to the satisfaction of the demands of the bigger and more organized social sectors which have a greater degree of political participation.

In Latin America, the major sectors of the population are constituted by the middle classes and the urban proletariat. The actions of the political actors will tend to be oriented, therefore, to satisfy their demands, channeling public resources towards the cities where these social sectors are predominantly located. "Thus, a vicious circle is set up in which the concentration of population, the capacity for political pressure and the priority assignment of public resources mutually reinforce each other" ^{16/} contributing to a greater concentration of population. In spite of this, the probability of implementing a population policy on this matter would be low.

^{15/} González, Gerardo, "Political actors ...", *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34

^{16/} *Ibid.*, page 34.

"This would be due to the fact that, first, its effects are felt only in the long run, and, second, given the necessarily regional redistributive character of the regional and rural development policy that would be necessary to attain such demographic goals, its implementation would place it in contradiction to the logic of the functioning of the political system. The ensuing conflict would have as a consequence its low political viability." 17/

The referred study heavily emphasizes the importance of the nature and functioning of the political system. According to its conclusions the characteristics of the latter seem to play a more important role than the composition of a given power structure, with different political ideologies and class interests, in the formulation of a given population policy.

Obviously, the relations existing between the nature of a given political system and the composition of the power structure should not be disregarded. But a more rigorous analysis of the subject would require a closer study of the ideological elements implicit in the nature of a given political system.

Obviously, this last subject goes far beyond the scope of the present paper. Here we only attempt to point up some of the different levels and phenomena through which the ideological elements may play a role in the process of formulating population policies. This would allow us, finally, to attempt some reflection on the future perspectives of population policies in Latin America.

17/ Ibid, page 35

IV. IDEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE FORMULATION OF POPULATION POLICIES IN LATIN AMERICA

Besides the academic interest that the discussion of the ideological aspects intervening in the process of formulating population policies has, it seems relevant to deal with the subject when considering the possibilities that population policies have of being formulated in Latin America in the near future.

From the analysis of the governments' statements, it is observed that most of them would be willing to implement actions towards overcoming the unbalanced population distribution, while only a minor proportion of them would be willing to act particularly over population growth.

Given the importance of the nature and characteristics of the political system for the possibility of designing meaningful and workable population policies and given the fact that in the course of the 1970's there has been in Latin America a predominant tendency toward the establishment of authoritarian military regimes, it seems relevant to reflect about the implications of such processes for future population policies.

In other words, having occurred some important changes at the political system level in most of the countries of the region, what possibilities do governmental statements on population have to become actual policies on this matter?

In the last years, a growing tendency to establish military authoritarian political systems in South America has been observed. The development strategies chosen by these governments present very little variation

as to the social model chosen and as to the type of policies to which priority is given. Peru is the only country with a military government which keeps away from the classical liberal capitalist model.

Now, it seems to us that the more relevant characteristics of the resulting political systems in terms of the possibility of formulating population policies would be:

- there is a greater capacity for political control and, therefore, the composition of the power structure would not be a really significant element in the process of political decision making;
- in general, these governments are long term administrations, so policies may not be privileged by their immediate effects, but rather by their capacity to attain long-range objectives. Short term redistributive policies might be aimed only at maintaining the minimum basis for the regime's survival, effect which could also be partially obtained by coercive measures;
- some ideological elements inherent to and characteristic of military groups should be considered. From the point of view of population policies, duly importance should be given to the significance that these groups attribute to geo-political considerations within typically nationalist models.

All of these aspects would probably allow the formulation and implementation of regional and agricultural development policies, in order to exert some influence over the excessive concentration of population. At the same time, it is unlikely that they would intend to decrease population growth

rates through actions explicitly aimed at achieving this purpose. If this were the case and the population growth rates continue decreasing in these countries, this would be explained by the indirect effect of economic and social policies affecting population growth.

In reference to the countries of Central America, whose political reality is substantially different from the one observed today in South America, the considerations made in section three of this paper are specially pertinent.

What we might expect in relation to these countries would be that sectorial policies would be stated which would lessen the problems of population they face, although without tackling integral solutions to them.