

THE WORKING CLASS IN LATIN AMERICA:
SOME THEORETICAL PROBLEMS

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1. Introduction: The Background

THE failure of Latin American labour to create effective radical (not to say revolutionary) movements has been commented on often enough,¹ but at the same time a certain euphoria has often accompanied discussions of their revolutionary potential. Now that the optimistic signs of the past ten years have been followed by reaction, with military coups replacing centre-left governments in all states except Chile, Venezuela, Uruguay, Mexico and Cuba, it is useful to take stock and examine both the theories advanced to account for the Latin American labour situation and certain basic facts relevant to them.

The bare facts about Latin American labour are easily set out. During this century the population of urban areas has increased substantially.² Today, in the southern countries—Argentina, Uruguay, Chile—over 60 per cent of the population live in towns, in Mexico the figure is 40 per cent and in Venezuela over 65 per cent, while even in countries with small percentages of town-dwellers large numbers congregate in strategic centres. Between them the cities of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, with their suburbs and satellite-towns, house one-seventh of the population of Brazil. For the whole of Latin America the percentage of urban dwellers went up from 39.2 per cent in 1950 to 47.4 per cent in 1962. The annual urban increase of 4.6 per cent has been much faster than the total population growth of 2.5 per cent in spite of the higher birth rate in the rural areas. In Brazil and Venezuela the net immigration from rural areas between 1950 and 1960 was about 50 per cent of the increased urban population, in Mexico and Ecuador a little over 40 per cent, in Chile 35 per cent. Concentration in single urban centres is equally marked. By 1960 34 per cent of the population of Uruguay lived in Montevideo, 33.8 per cent of the population of Argentina in Buenos Aires, 24 per cent of the Chileans in Santiago, 24 per cent of Panamericans in Panama City, 14 per cent of Mexicans in Mexico City, 16 per cent of Paraguayans in Asuncion, and 14 per cent of Peruvians in Lima. 32 per cent of the total population of Latin America lived in towns of over 20,000 inhabitants. The statistics for urbanization are corroborated by employment figures. In 1960–61 the percentage of the economically active population in Argentina engaged in agriculture was only 19.2, for Chile it was 27.7, Venezuela 32.1,

Mexico 54.2 and Brazil 60.6.³ Thus even in Brazil with its large rural areas nearly 40 per cent were active in the urban sector. The reasons for migration were in some cases due to the attractions of the city, but generally they resulted from the failure of the countryside to provide jobs for an expanding population, even though the rural plight is not as extreme as **Andreski** suggests when he says that "the exodus is due less to the attraction of the city than to the disastrous conditions of rural life, and it amounts largely to the transfer of unemployment from the countryside to the cities".⁴

In spite of the urban explosion the majority of Latin American countries continue to be dependent on one or two (mainly agricultural) products for their exports. In Brazil coffee and cacao accounted in 1959 for 64 per cent of the exports, in Chile copper alone for 66 per cent, in Colombia coffee alone for 77 per cent, in Venezuela oil alone for 92 per cent, in Bolivia tin for 62 per cent and in highly urbanized Argentina meat and wheat accounted for 39 per cent and in Uruguay wool and meat for 68 per cent.⁵ As these constitute in most cases over 20 per cent of GNP (cf. 4.4 per cent for exports in U.S.A.), the dominance of extractive and agricultural industries on the economic structure is evident. Although the need for internal development in the post-depression years led to a dramatic rise in industrial activity in many Latin American countries, this did not lead to even one country becoming industrial, and only in sections of Southern Brazil did anything approximating an industrial culture emerge.⁶ Instead, the new industrial middle-class were absorbed into the aristocratic culture of the landed gentry, aped their manners, sent their children to their schools, built houses in their style and generally joined them in a socio-political hegemony. Banking and commercial services became their trade-mark so that the cities flourished with white collar workers. In Chile in 1960, white collar, professional managerial and service occupations amounted to 56 per cent of the non-agricultural populations; in Venezuela the 1961 figure was just under 50 per cent.⁷ The typical profile of a Latin American town thus included an upper class—pretty well overlapping with the rural upper class and consisting of between .5 per cent and 2 per cent of the population; a middle/upper class consisting of some 25–35 per cent and including professional and office workers and small tradesmen; a "transitional" class including artisans, semi-skilled workers in industry, miners and workers in the service trades; and finally a "popular class" consisting mainly of the day labourers, the unskilled, and the semi-employed. Outside this—and Latin American statistics are rarely specific—the occupants of shanty towns and the fringe areas of the towns whose jobs are midway between agricultural and industrial.

It is in this context that the development of labour organizations—

political and industrial—must be viewed.⁸ There are four main ways through which trade unions and labour parties have been organized: from the top by politicians in an attempt to create a strong power-base (e.g. Peron, Vargas and Goulart, Cardenas); by immigrants imitating European examples (notably anarcho-syndicalism at the beginning of the century particularly in Brazil, Chile, Argentina); by external advice and assistance (notably Communist unions, but latterly also by ORIT, the Latin American wing of ICFTU); and by the spontaneous activity of workers. In many cases the State itself sponsored the rise of unions even before a large proportion of industrial workers existed, but this has not produced a particularly large number of trade unionists.⁹ Although in Argentina 45 per cent of wage-earners belonged to unions in 1961, in Chile the figure was 19 per cent, in Brazil 18 per cent, and in Venezuela 10 per cent. In Mexico it was higher at 32 per cent. Rural workers are barely organized at all. In some countries (e.g. Brazil and Argentina) unions are industry-wide in construction, but in most they are based on craft and industrial plants with loosely-structured federations which have little power in industrial disputes. (In several countries the legislature prohibits collective action or strikes by federations.) Because of the lack of industry-wide unions, it is difficult to organize workers in small plants or businesses and union leaders at plant basis tend to be poorly trained. Union funds are generally poor and leaders obliged to make militant demands which they are unable to back up with industrial action. Although unions often express political ideologies, these are rarely clear-cut or programmatic but "vague attitudes . . . which can never be reduced to clear-cut ideas".¹⁰ As di Tella notes of workers in mining areas "Generally speaking, they are prone to support sweeping trade union or political claims, but are far more easily swayed by leaders from outside their class. . . . They tend to prefer sudden, drastic action to patient, long-term organization".¹¹ Thus, given the constriction of government legislation (conditions affecting union structure, finance, leadership, direct action and even political affiliation), unions are liable to react violently and sporadically. Alternatively, labour law becomes the most important subject on union training schemes, and alliances with government parties a political objective. Collective bargaining as such has played an insignificant part in industrial relations. Either the government has pre-empted this by creating labour courts and wage boards or else there is nothing but industrial anarchy under authoritarian employers. National labour relations policies barely exist. Consequently, even the complex machinery for resolving disputes that exists in many countries is ignored. Strikes (though normally illegal) are common and violence an important element in effecting changes in labour policy. Where, as in Argentina, unions have greater strength

and potential and a recognized function, their influence is directed most towards "spreading the inflationary pressures caused by the inflexibility of the economic system and the continuous, growing transfer of income out of agriculture".¹²

In general the efforts of trade unions to affect the standard of living or—more ambitiously—the politics of countries have failed for the working population as a whole. Between 1945–47 and 1955–57 real wages in Argentina fell by 11.4 per cent, in Brazil by 6 per cent and in Chile by 12 per cent. Inflation throughout the continent has meant that unions have to run fast to stand still. Between 1946 and 1956 the annual average increase in the cost of living was 15.4 per cent in Brazil, 12.4 per cent in Peru, 35.7 per cent in Chile, 19.8 per cent in Argentina and 63 per cent in Bolivia.¹³ In the midst of all this it is the day-labourer, the agricultural worker, the under-employed and the old and the children who suffered. Annual adjustments of salaries and wages are not for them: the only workers getting any form of guarantee in increment are those in established jobs.

The facts are clear—and the economic superstructure equally evident.¹⁴ But what interpretation can be put on them? Is the Latin American working class doomed, as Andreski has remarked, to a "Latin America falling under a rule of gangsters like those now ruling the most unfortunate states, whose sole title to membership of the 'free world' is their willingness to shoot or jail anyone accused of communism"?¹⁵ It is necessary to examine some of the theories advanced as explanations for the present state of the working class in Latin America before coming to any firm conclusion.

2. *Theories and Conundrums*

Unlike Britain, France or the U.S.A., there has been little social history of labour in Latin America, a condition shared with Africa and Asia. Most discussions of labour have been conducted by general sociological theorists, political scientists, economists, and occasionally anthropologists. What is everywhere lacking is detail, a fairly vigorous testing of the various theories advanced and to some extent a re-analysis of some of the data that exists. There has been some advance towards this by Alain Touraine and his Industrial Laboratory team at the Sorbonne, with the co-operation of sociologists in Santiago and Buenos Aires, and some useful work was done at the University of São Paulo before the coup. However, until the results of this research is evident, there remains a yawning gap between theory and fact, and it is clear that this gap provides one of the most important reasons for the consistent misreadings of the Latin American labour scene.

Broadly speaking, theories of labour in Latin America are of four

kinds: structuralist—socialchange, which aim to trace the involvement of workers in the socio-political system according to indicators of "modernization";¹⁶ "mechanistic" industrial relations theories which tend to concentrate on legal and economic issues and the interrelationships between political/legal constraints and the operation of a wage bargaining system;¹⁷ Marxist-impressionistic theories of the development of a revolutionary class consciousness and the consequent organizations and their *simpliste* and often equally impressionistic rejoinders;¹⁸ and the Hegelian-structural interpretation of Professor Touraine.¹⁹ In addition, there exist various studies of economic and political institutions and working conditions, social security and welfare programmes, leisure and culture in towns, community development projects and migration which include some element of theory, though normally of limited utility and sophistication, and which amount in the main to useful data that might be used in theories of explication. Because the various "grand theories"—structuralist, Marxist and Touraine's—provide the most ambitious framework for an attempt to analyse labour in Latin America, we shall begin with them and suggest the main gaps in present theories.

The major differences between the structuralist and conflict theories of labour and social change hinge on the concept of progress and the mechanism necessary to achieve this.²⁰ In general, both have a generally evolutionist view of change and both utilize concepts of "modernization" as part of a typology for understanding the process of development. In the case of structuralist analysis the idea of development is embedded in a transition from traditional to modern sectors with the ideal of the "modern" taken as given and generally with the traditional as static.²¹ In their case, the analysis of labour is largely in terms of a typology based on a traditional—modern continuum: its utility is largely in assessing involvement in the "modern" sector and in creating a framework for explaining the structure of the absorption and "mobilization" process.²² This can have two—somewhat different—emphases: economic and political. In the economic case the actual degree of "industrialization" constitutes the main criterion of modernity, and therefore the social behavioral indices of modernity will tend to be drawn from economic standpoints. Efficiency and mechanization aptitudes, degree of permanency in the industrial sector, techniques and effectiveness of management, and so on will be prominent in any analysis.²³ On the other hand, most work utilizing the development thesis has been political and the criteria adopted to devise typologies have referred to degrees of political participation and the development of political institutions on a traditional-autocratic-democratic continuum.²⁴ This involves a somewhat abstracted and partial use of Talcott Parsons "pattern variables"²⁵ and, as with the economic-centred

analysis, a tendency to ignore the two-way process between the "traditional" and "modern" sectors both culturally and structurally.

It is clearly not possible to examine here all the theories that might come under the "structuralist" label,²⁴ but perhaps some remarks on the work of Germani will illustrate the basic dilemma. Although Germani's work is concerned with the wider theme of development, his various publications have paid particular attention to what he calls the "popular class". Further, he has been bold enough to outline a theory of social evolution in Latin America which specifically involves the workers and peasants, and he is a Latin American sociologist particularly concerned with examining the theory in the light of his own country's social conditions.²⁵

Germani's analysis is based on a structuralist model in which there are four key social groups; the traditional, the disposable, the mobilized and the integrated.²⁶ The transition from the traditional to the fully integrated modern society is today rapid and affects most areas of Latin America. As traditional society breaks down a "disposable" mass is thrown up and the machinery of the society is geared towards mobilization. Where a society is not able to develop the mechanism for integration rapidly enough the greater are the chances of violent upheaval. Latin American societies can therefore be classified according to whether mobilization and integration are almost complete, where mobilization is almost complete and integration incomplete, where mobilization expands but integration is in a state of equilibrium, and where mobilization is rapid or extensive but integration is low.²⁷ Social change is largely defined in terms of disintegration of old structures and mobilization in terms of the normative system of the global society. This assumes²⁸ a transition from the colonial society with its marked traditional features to representative democracy through six stages, including civil war, unifying autocracies, and three stages of gradually extended participation. Contrary to most of Europe, in Latin America the economic take-off has come after the mobilization of the popular sectors: consequently there is a problem of integration or where the norms governing the society are open to question because of the failure to achieve a high rate of economic development. In such cases, when the degree of mobilization outstrips the mechanism of integration, national-popular movements emerge led by elites committed in varying degrees to ideologies of industrialization. The demand of the mobilized sectors is for "participation", but to achieve this there has to be reform of the social structure. Although military régimes attempt to legitimize their power by appeals to the popular sectors, they cannot do this without modifying the concentration of land property. Though this is never achieved (except by revolution), the degree of participation is widened and, for example in Argentina under Peron, it "involves

spontaneity and also a certain degree of effective freedom totally unknown and impossible in the situation previous to the establishment of the national-popular movement . . . for individuals coming from the traditional pattern of prescriptive action, to take part in a strike, elect a trade-union leader or discuss with an employer represent a real change". Finally, the integration of the workers into the society is aided by growing nationalism which, accompanied by the mobilization of the disposable population and the transfer of loyalties from the local to national community, has helped to create a sense of citizenship rights and has provided elites with an ideology in their attempts to create a modern society.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore Germani's theory in detail.³⁰ Here it is important to discuss its implications for the analysis of class and labour movements in the light of the theories advanced by Alain Touraine and by the *marxisant* school of research, and of certain basic facts supplied by other research. The most important issues raised by Germani relate to the possibilities open to workers for co-ordinated action and the framework in which they operate. By providing a typology for social change using indices of modernization which derive from social and political factors, he has at least made a beginning. In his conceptual framework, Alain Touraine relies to some extent on Germani but his analysis is founded on a dialectical method, Hegelian rather than Marxist, stressing the character of social movements and their strategic options. He utilizes the concepts of defence, opposition and totality to define a social movement and equates these in various developmental stages with theories of mobility, nationalism and class relations.³¹ As with Germani he categorizes development according to ideal types, defined by the extent and type of popular participation in the political and economic system. He finds three situations in Latin America: (1) Where a *popular rebellion* directs its opposition against the "anti-nation", imperialist forces or colonial domination in response to a situation of acute economic dependence; (2) Where society is already mobilized by a national bourgeoisie or by the State and where social movements are dominated by the importance of individual social mobility and "collective mobility". Movements are defined in relation to the new inhabitants of the cities and to some extent against the middle class, but the movements take their definitions of "general interest" from the developmental process already under way in the cities. National unity becomes the main theme and the movements are what Germani defines as *national popular*; (3) Finally, the society is already dominated by the realities and problems of an industrial economy and faces the resistance from "archaic" sectors or social structures. Political movements appeal to the majority of citizens, not only workers, though this *populism* has constituted a

favourable atmosphere for the progress of trade unionism. Movements are directed against those who impede progress—normally the urban and rural bourgeoisie. In these three stages, Touraine sees a progress from consciousness of one's own class to consciousness of the opposite class and finally to consciousness of class conflicts and alliances. As examples of the three types of situation he instances the Mexican Revolution (popular rebellion), the Kubitschek-Goulart régimes in Brazil (national popular) and the Opposition Socialists in Chile (popular front). For "distorted" versions of these situations, there are the Bolivian Revolutions (popular rebellion on the one side and an institutional system partially resting on the middle class on the other); **Peronism** (extreme nationalism sacrificing economic development and becoming authoritarian); and Uruguay (the lack of economic potential dooms the popular front to maintaining economic stagnation and social immobility). The industrial working class, though always an important element in the development of new political solutions, is hardly in a position to dictate its own terms. In a situation of popular rebellion the emphasis is on collective mobility: this favours militancy and the existence of activists who devote themselves to a movement or apparatus. However—if one refers back to Germani's distinction between mobilization, participation and integration—because most workers have not yet the elementary machinery for participation, the emphasis is on this (an ironic slogan for Latin American labour could thus be "No mobilization without participation"). But this, in countries which are only partially industrialized, is hardly revolutionary enough. Participation is in the institutions of the urban society: as the Bolivian Revolution showed, even a major revolution effected by industrial workers cannot succeed against the combined offensive of the urban middle-class and the rural gentry. In the second stage although there is strong "participation" in mass movements there is only a mild involvement in their activities: trade unions are closely related to the national popular parties and dominated by the political apparatus. As Touraine says elsewhere²² of a country with this situation, "Brazilian trade unionism hesitates between independence from the State, which implies a reformist orientation, and the maintenance of links with the State, which condemns it not to be a live social movement". Here, too, therefore the political participation of the working class comes to involve alliance with radical nationalist forces among the bourgeoisie (Goulart, Kubitschek, Peron). In the third stage—that of popular front solutions—as social mobility becomes possible and fairly rapid, the unions and labour movements cease to be revolutionary at all and concentrate on "instrumental" aims.

What Touraine does in this analysis is to combine elements of Germani's theory of social change and group conflict with an attempt

to develop a theory of class consciousness. In the course of this, he has conducted a series of projects which amplify the theory and develop its usefulness in describing precise situations. Perhaps the most coherent of these is his study of São Paulo because it provides an important case of the degrees of transition and also because of the existence of alternative Marxist-oriented theories on Brazil with which to contrast it.¹⁰ After noting a distinction between traditional industrial workers (mainly Italian or Portuguese and including a large proportion of skilled workers) whose trade union behaviour is not different from European, and the new working class (unskilled and consisting of immigrants from the interior), Touraine bases his analysis on the unskilled immigrants. Migration has three major causes: involuntary displacement from the countryside, acceptance of new orientations towards the urban areas without commitment to them, and an active sense of mobility involving consciousness of social ascent. In turn this produces three levels of attitudes: a search for individual economic advantages with lack of solidarity in the work place; concrete solidarity with work and family groups; and an "image of society based less on class conflict than on opposition of social levels, more agrarian than industrial". Among displaced workers there are two types of behaviour—"segmented conscience" (attachment to some elements of industrial behaviour but at the same time a general acceptance of paternalism and personalization of social relations in work); "split conscience" (absence of any integration—instability, use of drugs and stimulants, prostitution, etc.). In both these cases, the urban process is more significant for the workers' orientation than the industrial situation. Workers either adapt apathetically to work demands or seek economic independence by means unconnected with mass consumption characteristics of industrial societies. Consequently, demagogic movements are a fertile field for activity among these groups. In the second category of workers (who deliberately accept the orientations of urban society), there is a certain consciousness of mobility with relative integration attitudes. Traditional submissiveness continues, but there also exists a "utopian non-conformism"—hope for improvement in the long run. Industrial society is accepted but more for its consumer values than productive or political. Finally there is complete integration accompanied by strong consciousness of mobility.

Trade unionism in São Paulo consequently involves conflict both between workers as a whole and the bosses and also between various categories of workers. The well-integrated workers constitute a privileged category whose interests are partially those of solidarity with the capitalists, both taking advantage of the domination created by industrial and commercial centres and the "colonies" of the interior of Brazil. An alliance between this group and bourgeois politicians in the

1930s created a form of trade union structure which today makes the newcomer to the town think of the union as a part of the industrial system. Union fees are deducted as tax from his-wage, the union is a distributor of "services" and the expression of an indirect involuntary participation in power. Consequently, although the new workers enter automatically into a union system, few are personally attached to it. The older, established workers are shocked by the arrival of large new non-militant masses. They either try to radicalize them through communist-based unions (but the two groups have widely-diverging interests) or they work with the state and try to support an ideology of nationalist and political intervention. Either way the workers have little opportunity to be revolutionary: success in industrial terms only contributes to regional imbalance: the peasants and agricultural workers have little chance of sharing in the fruits of urban-industrial action. And within the urban sector, the continuation of family and neighbourhood ties as well as the legalistic structure of industrial relations act as a brake on working class consciousness and maintain "traditional" attitudes.

In many respects this analysis does not differ in detail from that offered by Marxist theorists such as Ottavio Ianni.¹⁴ The difference is in the emphasis on the structural causes and on the ultimate revolutionary **potential**. Ianni sees the structural features of Brazilian capitalism as being the single most important determinant of workers' behaviour. "The working class was inserted into a political system designed to avoid or to limit the emergence of fundamental social tensions". The industrial bourgeoisie is the key to political and industrial relations. Although he recognizes the same differences between sections of the working class, Ianni sees the structure of capitalist development as being more crucial in determining the outcome. As long as Brazil is in a semi-developed state, the situation is likely to continue. However, this is "transitional". As the capitalist structure approaches its maximum development, the modification of the substructures slows down, the vertical mobility decreases, the industrial bourgeoisie exhausts its possibilities of controlling other groups, the fundamental mechanism of the system begins to operate. During the last few years the proletariat has begun to find its direction.

Another emphasis on the revolutionary potential of the urban workers in Brazil is placed by Azis Simao¹⁵ and M. Lowy and S. Chucid.¹⁶ Both of these pieces of research suggest that newcomers to town tend to be reformist in outlook while those who are more integrated into urban and economic life tend to be more radical and support the Communist party. It is clear that although this may have limited truth, it produces no evidence of the progressive radicalization of the worker under urban conditions. A fairly high proportion of these

workers come from Europe in the first instance so that even if they showed any tendencies towards radical action, this may follow more from their European political education and experience than from any social and cultural factors in Brazil. (It also begs the question as to whether the Communist party is "radical" in this context.) But further, as Touraine convincingly argues, the workers movement has only taken a revolutionary direction when it has had to fight simultaneously against personal power in individual firms and against a capitalist system unable to ensure economic progress. And this, in turn, is determined by government social legislation which, in response to crisis, tries to provide a rational structure for industry. To date, therefore, the most important stimulant for trade union activity—and any "revolutionary" potential—is the government, for the labour movement "the conditions commanding its birth also determine its reformist line". This does not, of course, rule out any revolutionary development (the structural factors suggested by Ianni might begin to operate), but it does cast serious doubt on suggestions that the workers' movement is becoming progressively more revolutionary. But this optimistic—and somewhat naive—judgement is characteristic of many Marxist-orientated workers (unless they have pronounced Chinese sympathies when an analysis closer to Touraine's might be made). It is therefore not too difficult to demolish the theory. Henry Lansberger, in an analysis of trade union leaders in various Latin American countries, demonstrated that by and large they were not revolutionary. In Chile he found that the leaders in Santiago were not very radical, "supporting the idea that ideological divisions lose their appeal in the course of economic development".²⁷ In his book on Peru, Payne comes to similar conclusions, while the substantial writings of Touraine and Alexander point in a similar direction. However, simple refutations are not in themselves adequate. After all, the Bolivian Revolution *was* largely backed by the tin miners; the unions provided a notable rallying-point for radical politics in Brazil in the early 1960's; and communists are, as **Andreski** points out, "extremely powerful in Unions throughout the continent. With the exception of Argentina (where they have to compete with the *peronistas*) they are unquestionably the most dynamic element in the labour movement".²⁸

3. Possibilities

The functionalist and Hegelian theories of labour are useful because they provide an alternative to the naive optimism of many Marxists and hopeful liberals who have written on Latin America. Germani and Touraine suggest the structural features operating against any degree of radical action and the extent to which segmentation of societies is a crucial determinant in moulding class attitudes and affecting strategy.

Further, if Germani's theory of social change does involve some approximation to an ultimate global society (Argentina plus the U.S.A. one would assume) which relies only on partial evidence, at least some sort of model is necessary if any analysis of development is to make sense. The failure in his particular model is mainly that he does not sufficiently take account both of those internal factors that distort the possible outcome (after all Soviet industrial society is structurally and ideologically different from American and so is French from Japanese) and of the crucial external influences that mould both the economic and social structure of Latin American countries. To some extent, Touraine goes part way towards meeting these criticisms. His analysis is firmly set in a colonial situation (Germani seems reluctant to consider the basic fact that Latin American societies do function politically and economically as colonies of the U.S.A. and that incipient nationalism is a response to this situation not simply to "nation-building" and the need for "integration"). Touraine also has more to say about the ways in which class consciousness is moulded by national ideologies and shifts in the social structure. He is a shade more comparative in his conclusions and less optimistic.

But ultimately the analysis of the working class in any country must take into account of three crucial factors: shifts in the social and economic structure which provide the reasons for change and the precise composition and distribution of the working class which appears: the working and living conditions which this structure produces for the workers; and the methods by which the working class comes to see its own situation and articulate its own interests in relation to the structure. Unfortunately the analysis of the Latin American working class has concentrated almost exclusively on the first factor—almost as if the analysis of the origins of the English working class depended entirely on Neil Smelser for its interpretation and data. Not only has the study of Latin American labour no E. P. Thompson, it barely has its Engels or Booth. Touraine's work is an important step towards a systematic covering of the crucial area of the relationship between culture and the working class. But we need more even here. It is important to document both the cultural parameters of action which Touraine primarily concentrates on) and the actual vision which the groups which constitute the class have of themselves and of the possibilities of action. If we lack the detail, the outline of what this might be is becoming clear.

That workers throughout Latin America are not conscious of themselves as primarily an *industrial* working class is, we think, apparent. Also clear is that the emergence of the so-called "middle-sectors"³⁹ has not produced the buffer-zone between the oligarchy and the masses which might act as a focal point for industrial working class identifica-

tion. The identification of the middle-class and the new bureaucracy is with the ruling rural oligarchy and with the consumption standards of the external world, notably the United States. This middle class, as Charles Wagley noted in Brazil "are culturally the most conservative sector of Brazilian society . . . fusing with the old traditional upper class to form a new dominant segment of Brazilian society."⁴⁰ If they begin to support trade unions, they are only prepared to support segmented unions with no political power urging that "the State must increase its control over the workers organizations. above all in relation to the petitions for increase in salaries and the right to strike".⁴¹

In this context, and in the context of mass migration from the towns and the continuation of uneven economic development, the workers' reaction is uncertain and compromising. In Mexico, they must define their actions in relation to Government. Only 32 per cent of wage earners actually belong to unions. The major trade union centre, the *Confederacion de Trabajadores de Mexico*, is officially represented as the labour sector of the ruling *Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, and non-CTM unions also have close connection with the government. Over the past forty years the attitudes of unions have reflected closely the shifts in government policy. Strikes have increased under Presidents sympathetic to the unions—largely to bring pressure so that government policies become more radical.⁴² On the whole the industrial workers have less of a "class" consciousness than a "sector" consciousness: identifying themselves with an urban privileged sector against the "marginal" population who threaten their position by invading the market for jobs. But the political elite recognizes that a conflict between the "marginal" population and the established industrial classes would lead to a breakdown of stability. It therefore struggles to maintain harmony. The marginal sectors—by the very nature of their position—are without organization or leaders. Their typically representative figure is Manuel of Oscar Lewis's *Children of Sanchez*,⁴³ the would-be entrepreneur forced to grub around for a living on the market stalls of Mexico City and Guadalajara. The contrast between his position and that of the established workers is vast. Only 22 per cent of wage-earners are covered by the insurance schemes of the Institute of Social Security and their wages are double the national minimum wage: some industrial workers get four times the national minimum. These workers have little consciousness of class and organize in industrial pressure groups to improve their economic status in the context of a paternalist neo-capitalist society. In contrast to them the marginal workers commonly react by violence, indifference, petty entrepreneurship or retreat to the countryside with which they continue to have close personal ties.

In Peru and Brazil the milieu is different: the state is less munificent, more restrictive, but the outcome is much the same. The Aprista unions in Peru move from being a radical popular movement to being an integrated part of the political structure, representing the interests of established workers in the centre of power, accepting the system and defining its interests against the "marginal" workers, the migrants and the peasants.⁴⁴ The Communist and other radical unions can hold out if they have a well-integrated community on which to base their activities—for example mining villages—but in the end they are baffled by the enormous task of mobilizing the rootless and motiveless and their response to pressure is through meaningless violence and political action which has no strategic possibilities. Much the same holds for Brazil. Established workers participate in the struggle for power as "mass of manoeuvre", a conscious pawn, manipulated by the Ministry of Labour. There emerges what Fernando Cardoso calls "control syndicalism",⁴⁵ a fight for better conditions within the capitalist system and within the context of the political apparatus. For those outside there is apathy. They were agricultural workers displaced by the land and motivated less by a wish for social ascent and integration in industrial life than by poverty. "This makes them less demanding in relation to 'fate' and in some measure, better disposed to accept the living and working conditions of the industrial system. Sooner or later they expect to get out of industry and into business or the service occupations." If the constant urges by politicians for a "national effort", for increased participation begin to widen their sense of the possible, and if Goulart released a potential for industrial action, this has barely yet **crystalized** into a mobilization of the marginal sectors for revolutionary action: nationalism and status often means the Brazilian football team, and the negro Pele is the symbol of social mobility.

Thus although the working class in most Latin American countries is barely conscious of itself as a class and of a political potential (the Bolivian revolution is something of a special case warranting separate treatment),⁴⁶ it is constantly on the edge of a revolutionary dilemma. Under conditions of stability and under nationalist-popular governments, it defines itself in relation to those governments, seeking to ensure social mobility and a measure of economic success within the system. But the army of migrant workers compromises its position: the threat of instability is always present.

This brings us back to the theoretical issues we began with. Most of the sociological and economic research on labour in Latin America is conducted against an evolutionist perspective in which workers' attitudes towards politics are related to a typology using a **traditional-industrial** continuum. As has been suggested, this has some use partic-

ularly when discussing nations which actually are industrializing. But not all nations have even the potential of being industrial. Most of them have for the long-term no alternative but to improve their agriculture while at the same time having to solve the social problem of an increasing urban population. Urbanization entails the creation of expectations derived from an industrial society without providing the basic wealth which can even remotely fulfil those expectations. Thus a *lumpenproletariat* is created deriving its ambitions from the urban society while retaining many of family and cultural characteristics of the rural society. Of course this phenomenon is not new in developing countries: what is perhaps unique in most parts of Latin America is that neither the rural nor the urban structure changes in any important way as a consequence. It is not surprising that the "marginal" workers do not develop any "industrial" class consciousness: there is only a minimal industrial environment in which this may occur.

Both the functionalist and Marxist analysis therefore present us with enormous problems when faced with situations in which there is apparently no absolute development. By offering us schemas involving the analysis of whole societies in the context of an evolutionary perspective, they provide us with an *either/or* choice which, the Latin American evidence seems to suggest, leads to a distortion of the truth. The industrial working class is unable to develop an effective political presence precisely because of the uncertainty in economic development, and because of the persistence of "traditional" influence in both rural and urban structures. The dilemma is well instanced in Argentina, at once the most urbanized and industrial Latin American country and one with a dominating agricultural sector. Since July 1966 the military junta has embarked on a policy of "economic liberalism"—devaluation of the peso, restriction of wages, emphasis on agriculture rather than industry, limitation of industrial and services imports and general anti-inflationary measures. The conflict between government and unions has been sharpened as a consequence. Although the *Vandorista* faction of the CGT—representing skilled workers and some on other established jobs—attempted *co-operation* with the junta, a major dock strike in October led to deterioration in government-labour relations, culminating in a successful general strike on the 14th December. The government responded by appointing Dr Guillermo Borda, formerly an active *Peronista* and labour lawyer, as Minister of the Interior (responsible for labour affairs).⁴⁶ The root of this conflict is the almost total dependence of Argentina on foreign (particularly U.S.) investment and the distortion this produces in the economy by emphasizing consumer goods and a form of industrial servicing which the economy cannot sustain. The choice is between resistance—and a bid for national development—or total capitulation to external capitalist pressures.

Most studies of class consciousness in Latin America therefore seem to be missing the point. Although interesting sociological material might be collected by surveys of established workers in the mines and the larger cities, the key to the Latin American future is with the "marginal" and the rural workers. Their culture—the Church (not always a reactionary influence), the kinship network, the pattern of occupation and land-holding, petty entrepreneurship and violence—is the culture of the majority of Latin Americans, the no-man's land that is neither traditional nor modern, sensitive only to possibilities, not industrial commitments. If they are hardly conscious of themselves as a class (though the emergence of peasant leagues in Brazil and Peru might suggest that this is less true than it was), they are however conscious of their bitter poverty. This poverty is the most strategic fact for the future of Latin America.

NOTES

1. H. Lansberger, "The Latin American Labor Elite: is it Revolutionary?" in S. M. Lipset and A. Solari, *Elites in Latin America*, Oxford 1966; and Stanislaw Andreski, *Parasitism and Subversion*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966.
2. Figures from *Urbanism in Latin America*, Seminar on Urbanization problems in Latin America, Santiago, 1959, UNESCO 1961 and Union Panamericana, *Estudio Social de America Latina*, 1963-64, pp. 18-65.
3. Source: I.L.O.: Yearbook of Labour Statistics, 1965.
4. Andreski, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
5. For summary see J. Gerassi, *The Great Fear in Latin America*, Collier, 1965, pp. 19-39.
6. See C. Veliz (ed) *Obstacles to Change in Latin America*, Oxford U.P., 1965, esp. introduction by C. Veliz and articles by Pinto, Urquidi, Furtado and Jaguaribe.
7. Calculated from Table 43 (198) of Union Panamericana, *Estudio Social de America Latina*, Washington 1964, p. 98.
8. Figures from I.L.O. *Curso para sindicalistas Latinamericanos sobre planification y desarrollo Econornico y Social*, Geneva 1965.
9. For brief summary see International Institute for Labour Studies, *Labour Relations and Economic Development*, Geneva 1964, pp. 79-127.
10. E.C.L.A.: *El desarrollo social de Americano Latina en la postguerra*, Mar del Plata, Argentina 1963 (mimeographed), p. 10.
11. T. di Tella: "Tensiones sociales en los paises de la perifevia," *Revista de la Universidad de Buenos Aires*, 6th Yr., No. 1 (1961), pp. 49-62.
12. Aldo Ferrar: *La economica Argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1963, p. 254.
13. S. Andreski, *op. cit.*, p. 122.
14. See, esp. Celso Furtado, *The Economy of Brazil*, 1965.
15. Andreski, *op. cit.*, p. 277.
16. Many American sources but for the most coherent and influential Latin American work see G. Germani, *Politica y Sociedad en una Epoca de transicion*, Buenos Aires, 1962.

17. See R. Payne, *Labor and Politics in Peru*, Yale 1965, R. Alexander, *Industrial Relations in Chile, Argentina, Brazil*, and the publications of the U.S. Department of Labor.
18. For the first see I. L. Horowitz, *Revolution in Brazil*, Dutton, 1964; for the second S. Andreski, *op cit.*, and H. Lansberger, *op. cit.*
19. For Touraine, see below 31.
20. For general structuralist statements see W. Moore, *Social Change*, Prentice Hall, 1965.
21. See James Petras "The 'harmony of interests'", *International Socialist Journal*, 16/17 (1966), pp. 481-503, for a critique of structuralist theories as used in Latin American Social Science research.
22. For general statements see K. Deutsch, "Social Mobilization and Political Development", *American Political Science Review*, LV, 3 (1961), pp. 493-514; and K. Deutsch *Nationalism and Social Communication*, (N. Y. 1953); S. M. Lipset, *The First New Nation*, Heinemann, 1963; S. N. Eisenstadt, *Modernization, Protest and Change*, Prentice Hall, 1967.
23. For a classic general theory in these terms: C. Kerr and others, *Industrialism and Industrial Man*, Heinemann, 1961.
24. For the classic statement see G. Almond and J. S. Coleman, *Politics of the Developing Areas*, Princeton, 1960. And for an application, though with a narrower emphasis on communications, see Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society*, Glencoe III, Free Press, 1958.
25. See: T. Parsons, *The Social System*, Free Press, 1955, ch. 7.
26. But see D. I. Davies "Comparative Sociology and Theoretical Models," *British Journal of Sociology*, June 1967.
- 27a For major works see G. Germani, *Politica y Sociedad en una Epoca de transicion*, Buenos Aires, 1962; "Démocratie representative et classes populaires en Amerique Latine", *Sociologie du Travail*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (1961), pp. 96-113; "Social Change and Intergroup Conflicts", in I. L. Horowitz (ed) *The New Sociology, O.U.P.*, 1964, pp. 391-408; and *La integracion politica de las masas y el totaliterismo*, Buenos Aires, 1956.
- 27b "The process of transition is characterized by an initial disintegration of the traditional structure (in at least some of its portions). On the group level, this disintegration is revealed through the displacement of the groups with relation to the place which corresponded to them. Such displacement has at times been called 'disposability', and the groups affected by this process have been called 'disposable groups'. When this disposability is translated into a more intensive participation than occurs in previous structures or in spheres formerly excluded, then we speak of mobilization. When changes have occurred which make it possible on the one hand to legitimate, and on the other to afford effective possibilities of achievement of the added degree of participation of the mobilized groups, then we speak of integration."
(G. Germani, in Horowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 395)
28. See Germani, 1964, *op. cit.*, p. 403.
29. Germani, 1961, *op. cit.*, pp. 405-7.
30. Fortunately the task has been undertaken elsewhere: See Jorge Garcia-Bouza, "Factors of Change in Latin America", unpublished transaction: 6th World Congress of Sociology, Evian, September 1966; W. E. Moore, "Social Change and Comparative Studies", *International Social Science*

- Journal*, 1963, No. 4, pp. 522ff; J. Nun, "Los paradigmas de la Ciencia política; un intento de conceptualización", *Revista Latinamericana de Sociologia*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1966; and Juan F. Marsal, *Cambio Social En America Latina*, Solar-Hachette, Buenos Aires, forthcoming.
31. See A. Touraine "Movilidad social, relaciones de clase y nacionalismo en America Latina", *America Latina*, Year 8, No. 1, Jan./March 1965, for the Latin American application of a thesis worked out in more general terms in A. Touraine, *Sociologie du L'action*, Editions du Seuil, 1965.
 32. "Industrialization et conscience ouvrière à São Paulo", *Sociologie du Travail*, Vol. 3, No. 41 (1961), pp. 77-95.
 33. A Touraine, 1961, *op. cit.*
 34. See, e.g. Ottavio Ianni, "Condicoes institucionais do compartamento politico operario", *Revista Brasiliense*, No. 36, 1961, pp. 16-39.
 35. Azis Simão: "Industrialisme et syndicalisme en Brésil", *Sociologie du Travail*, Vol. 3, No. 4, 1961.
 36. Michael Lowry and Sarah Chucid "Opindes et attitudes de Lideres sindicais metalurgicos", *Revista brasileira de Estudos Politicos*, (Belo Horizonte), No. 13, Jan. 1962, pp. 132-169.
 37. H. Lansberger, "The Labour Elite: is it Revolutionary?" in Lipset and Solari *op. cit.*, and H. Lansberger, M. Barrera and A. Toro, "The Chilean Labor Union Leader: a preliminary report on his background and attitudes", *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 17, No. 3, April 1964.
 38. S. Andreski, *op. cit.*, p. 203.
 39. John J. Johnson, *Political Change in Latin America: The Emergence of the Middle Sectors*, Stanford, 1958. For a critique see James Petras, "The Latin American Middle Class", *New Politics*, IV, 1, Winter 1965, pp. 78-85.
 40. C. Wagley, *An Introduction to Brazil*, p. 126.
 41. Economic Commission for Latin America, *El Empresario Zndustrial en America Latina*, Mar El Plata, Argentina, 1963, pp. 16-17.
 42. See P. Gonzalez-Casanova, "L'evolution du système des classes en Mexique", *Cahiers Znternationaux de Sociologie*, Vol. 12, No. 39, (1965), pp. 113-136.
 43. O. Lewis: *Children of Sanchez*, Secker & Warburg, 1962.
 44. See R. Payne, *op. cit.*
 45. F. H. Cardoso: "Le prolétariat brésilien, situation et comportement social", *Sociologie du Travail*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (1961), pp. 50-65. (But originally worked out by A. Touraine in "Contribution à la sociologie du mouvement ouvrier: le syndicalisme de contrôle", *Cahiers Znternationaux de Sociologie*, Vol. 28, (1960), pp. 57-88.)
 46. See R. Alexander, *The Bolivian National Revolution*, Rutgers U.P., 1958.
 47. For summary of recent economic events see "Argentina", in B.O.L.S.A. *Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1967), pp. 2-8.