Late Agrarianism in Brazil: Kautsky and Chayanov in the 1970s

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Karl Kautsky´s Agrarian Question (1899) and Alexander Chayanov´s studies of peasant economic behavior in the 1920s were separated by a generation, and both had a significant influence in East Central Europe soon after their appearance in German. By contrast, in Brazil, and more generally in Latin America, the influence of the two men was roughly simultaneous, in the 1970s and 1980s. This paper will lay a backdrop for the late appearance of populism (or something like it) in Brazil by considering the case of Romania, where I have done research on the interwar period. I will then turn to Brazil, where the questions many activists and scholars were posing in the 1970s seemed to find their answers in the writings of Kautsky and Chayanov.

In The Agrarian Question Karl Kautsky, the leading Marxist authority of his day, asked why there was a weaker tendency toward the concentration of ownership in agriculture than in industry, using Germany as a case study, and why the peasantry[1] had not disappeared, as in England. For Kautsky, part of the answer lay in the fact that the peasant was partly outside the market, since his family´s subsistence only minimally relied on commodity exchange. The Marxist scholar and politician held that the existence of a peasantry was useful to capitalist farmers, because it supplied them with cheap labor power at times of maximum demand for such

[1] At the level of production, the nature of the peasantry as a social class presented a thorny issue for Marxist and non-Marxist alike--a fact to which Teodor Shanin alludes in the title of his Chayanov-influenced study, The Awkward Class. According to A Dictionary of Marxist Thought, a peasantry by definition has access to the means of production (implements and land), and is thus distinct from an agricultural proletariat (composed of wage laborers), and also distinct from serfs, subject to extra-economic coercion. However, a peasantry by this definition "must pay a rent or a tribute to maintain its possession of the land," in labor, kind, or money.[1] A farmer who was proprietor of his land in this scheme would be a petit bourgeois, not a peasant. But the owner of a minifundium, so common in Romania, was often worse off than the rural proletarian, and was certainly not a bourgeois. Furthermore, Marx himself--for instance in his notorious comments on the peasantry in Eighteenth Brumaire (1959 [1852])--explicitly included small landholders in his harsh judgments (p. 338). At all events, owners of minifundia and small plots are considered peasants in this discussion.

labor. He argued that tenant farmers produced greater profit for the landlord than wage laborers. Peasants would accept conditions of "excessive" labor and undersell wage workers through a process of self-exploitation. They undervalued their labor, or even counted it as naught, or they "underconsumed" at a level of subsistence below what wage workers would accept. As Alavi and Shanin put it, "the peasant sector of the capitalist political economy is therefore a source of continuous ´primitive accumulation.´"[2] It follows that peasant economic activity was compatible with advancing rural capitalism.

Kautsky had conceded to Werner Sombart the facts that small farms were not disappearing and large estates were not expanding in the German countryside.[3] But Kautsky demonstrated how capitalism had revolutionized agriculture, though in less straightforward ways than industry. This fact owed, in part, to the phenomenon of differential (Ricardian) rent, Kautsky held, making some farms inherently more productive than others, and thus the tendency toward an equalization of the profit rate present in industry did not apply to agriculture.[4] Further, argued Kautsky, for the peasant cultivator, unlike the capitalist, labor expended on production for personal consumption was not considered a cost.[5]

The number of large and small farms tended toward stability precisely because large farms were labor-intensive, and their size was limited by the availability of rural labor.[6] Kautsky believed that if employment opportunities were limited to the self-employed peasant sector alone, peasants would limit the size of their families. But if there existed opportunities to work outside the farm, they would not, and larger numbers would stimulate the process of

[2] Alavi and Shanin, "Peasantry and capitalism" p. xvi.

[3] Kautsky, Cuestion (1974 [Ger. orig. 1899]), pp. 5-6.

[4] Ibid., pp. 80-81, 91. Ground rent in practice was complicated by the frequent coexistence of "natural," market-governed, Ricardian rent and "absolute" rent, based on monopoly ownership (p. 91).

[5] Ibid., pp. 124-26, 131-33, 201. Kautsky notes that the notion of excessive peasant self-exploitation was already present in J. S. Mill (p. 124). Kautsky ascribes the phenomenon to the existence of a (capitalist) market for agriculture coupled with backward technique (p. 125).

[6] Ibid., p. 186.

proletarianization.[7] Publishing in 1899, the same year as Lenin's Development of Capitalism in Russia appeared, Kautsky believed the vast majority of German peasants were already proletarians or semiproletarians selling labor power.[8]

Kautsky´s work was interpreted otherwise by the leading Romanian populist, Law Professor Constantin Stere, at the University of Iasi. In his study "Social Democracy or Populism?," Stere sought to establish the relevance of peasant-based populism and the irrelevance of Marxist socialism for the Romania of his day. He seized on the fact that Kautsky thought the peasantry was not disappearing, and Stere estimated that peasant tillers numbered 3.5 million, while workers in factory enterprises totaled only 40,000.[9] Thus peasants were 87-88 times more numerous than factory workers in Romania, and the latter were considerably fewer than artisans.[10] Under such conditions, social democracy--the Marxist analysis and program of the Second International--was irrelevant, Stere believed.[11]

Industrialization, which the Romanian government had attempted to stimulate with concessions to new enterprises in 1886 and l906, Stere contended, had palpably failed. Thirty years of protectionism had resulted only in the exploitation of the consumer, who had to import at artificially high prices or buy local goods at similar expense.[12] The basic conditions for industrialization in Romania were lacking, Stere believed. Romania could never hope to become an industrial state, because large-scale industry (industria mare) required large markets. To obtain large markets such as the Great Powers enjoyed, Romania would have to acquire colonies or protectorates by force, or win markets abroad through the superiority of its wares. Romania could not outvie the Western Powers militarily or industrially, in part because of the vast

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[7] Ibid., p. 199.

[8] Ibid., pp. 203-204. See V. I. Lenin´s sympathetic review of Kautsky´s book at http://marxists.anu.edu.au/archive/lenin/works//1899/mar/kautsky.htm

[9] Twenty percent of the factories in this group had fewer than ten workers. "Socialdemocratism" (1907-1908), 2, no. 9: 320-21.

[10] Ibid., loc. cit.

[11] Ibid., p. 323.

[12] Ibid., 2, no. 10: 32.

technological lead of the West. Capitalism's progress within Romania, Stere held, was different from that in the West. Capitalist profits quickly flowed out of the country. Thus for Stere capitalism in Romania was a "vagabond capitalism."[13]

Agriculture in Romania, continued Stere, despite its partial transformation by capitalist forces, was not subject to Marx's laws of the concentration and centralization of capital. On this point Stere cited the authority of Kautsky—not quite accurately--as well as that of Werner Sombart.[14] Furthermore, in a nation overwhelmingly composed of peasants, cottage industry was necessary to employ peasants during the long winter months. Cooperatives would also be useful adjuncts to agriculture, as would some industrial enterprises to employ surplus labor; yet there was no substitute for a free landowning peasantry (which Romania lacked before the land reform following World War I). In sum, Stere was of the opinion that whatever role Marxist analysis had in charting the course of industrial society, it was of little value for the agricultural society of Romania. Romania should follow the examples of successful agricultural modernizers, such as Denmark, where the cooperative movement had made the country prosperous.[15]

Implicitly the Populists interpreted peasant agriculture as an autonomous mode of production, noncapitalist and anticapitalist. They artificially separated peasant farming from the rest of the economy, and Stere and others denied that the peasantry was internally differentiated. In this manner Romanian Populists denied the tendency which Lenin had noted in Russia toward the creation of kulak minorities and rural proletarian majorities.[16]

The study of the peasant economy was significantly advanced in the 1920s by the Russian theorist Alexander V. Chayanov, whose works in German were probably more

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[13] Stere, "Socialdemocratism," 2, no. 11: 199, 202; 3, no. 1: 69-70 (quotation). Jews could not own land, and were not full citizens until after World War I.

[14] Stere, "Socialdemocratism" 2, no. 8: 188-89; 2, no. 9: 313; 3, no. 1: 72-73.

[15] Stere, "Socialdemocratism," 2, no. 9: 330; 3, no. 4: 61.

[16] Ornea, Poporanismul (1972), p. 512; Stere, "Socialdemocratism," 2, no. 9: 338; Lenin, Development, pp. 174, 182.

influential in Romania than his Russian writings.[17] Chayanov's guiding hypothesis in analyzing the peasant family's economic behavior was the effort to balance consumption (the satisfaction of family needs) against the "drudgery" of farm labor.[18] In other words, the peasant tried to achieve a psychological balance between a maximization of income and a maximization of leisure (or a minimization of drudgery), a notion emphasizing peasant efforts to maintain traditional standards of living. Like Kautsky, Chayanov believed peasants did not consider labor an implicit cost, and would sometimes engage in a degree of superexploitation of self and family to maintain a given level of income. In years of a bad harvest, they might also seek other employment. "As a result," wrote Chayanov, "we have the situation--normal for Russia but paradoxical from a Western viewpoint--in which periods of high grain prices are, at the same time, periods of low wages."[19] Chayanov was especially interested in explaining demographic cycles of the peasant family, and based on empirical researches in Russia, he believed that economic activity and the amount of labor expended depended less on profitability (the key to capitalist production) than on family size and the above-mentioned balance between satisfying consumption demands and "the drudgery of labor."[20] He further argued that economic differentiation among peasants was due more to the moment in the family demographic cycle than to petty capitalist accumulation by "kulaks," the thesis then prevalent in the USSR.[21]

Chayanov's investigations and theories, often called "neopopulism," became important in postwar development economics after an anthology of his writings was published in English in 1966;[22] but his work had important reverberations in interwar East Central Europe, where a number of economists were studying the low productivity, overpopulation, and

[17] Especially Lehre (1923) and "Zur Frage" (1924).
[18] Thorner (1966), p. xv.
[19] Chayanov, "Peasant Farm Organization" (1966 [Russ. orig. 1925]), p. 109.
[20] Ibid., p. 195.
[21] Millar (1970), p. 219.
[22] Kochanowicz (1988), p. 30.

underemployment in the countryside.[23] Local economists were carrying out similar studies, some of them writing before the publication of Chayanov's major works, or apparently unaware of the Russian economist's contributions. In Poland, as early as 1917 Leon Biegeleisen showed that across a variety of countries small farms had higher net revenues per hectare than larger farms.[24] The Polish National Institute of Rural Economy in the 1920s found a negative profit level for small farms, consistent with Chayanov's explanation. Some Polish researchers tried to model the behavior of the peasant farmers independently of Chayanov's work. The Polish school, like Chayanov, "stressed the elasticity and adaptability of peasant farms." The Poles, however, focused on overpopulation (as opposed to the demographic cycle) more than Chayanov had, because of the greater man-land ratio in Poland than in the Soviet Union. Further, several Polish economists tried to establish how many peasants could leave farming with a decrease in total output.[25] Similar researches on the peasant economy were being conducted throughout East Central Europe.[26] Even in relatively-backward Bulgaria, detailed empirical studies of peasant

[23] Ernst Wagemann, head of the Institut for Konjunkturforschung in Berlin also accepted Chayanov's view that the peasant did not include the implicit cost of his own or his family's labor in calculating his expenses, and therefore, by the accounting of capitalist farmers, the peasant farm often operated at a loss. Wagemann, Neue Balkan, p. 112.

[24] Discounting, presumably, the value of peasant labor.

[25] Kochanowicz, pp. 16, 22, 31 (quotation).

[26] A study that synthesizes much of this work is Warriner (2nd ed., 1964 [1939]). For other estimates on surplus agricultural population in interwar East Central Europe, based on differing assumptions, see Moore's study for the League of Nations, Economic Demography (2nd ed., 1972 [1945]), passim.

Doreen Warriner, a British economist who emphasized the importance of disguised unemployment in the agriculture of East Central Europe between the Wars, subsequently modified her views. In the introduction to the second edition of The Economics of Peasant Farming (1964), she states that the studies of the interwar years (including her own), focusing on man-days of labor per year, considerably overestimated labor redundancy in peasant agriculture, by failing adequately to take into account the seasonality of farm work. Thus, in an extreme case, if 230 man-days are needed per year, but must be worked in three months, three men, not one, will be needed. Warriner did not try to re-estimate redundancy, and her caveat on her earlier work implicitly assumes little labor mobility in agriculture. In retrospect, the author believed that her calculations incorrectly focused on disguised unemployment and ignored the more important long-term fall in output per head in agriculture. This led to an exclusive emphasis on industrialization, as opposed to focusing on the productivity issue--raising output per farmer. Warriner, pp.xxvii and xxx.

behavior were conducted in the interwar period, and Chayanov's work was used. Bulgarian agronomists and economists also tried to estimate the economically nugatory agricultural labor force, which amounted to 37% in 1926, and 46% in 1935, according to one study.[27]

In Romania, the interwar period was rich in studies of peasant culture and economy--a project at the core of a rapidly-developing social science tradition. Most impressive of the approaches to peasant issues was Dimitrie Gusti's "monographic" school, which in the 1920s and 1930s sent multidisciplinary teams of researchers to live in representative villages in order to study all aspects of peasant life, including household budgets and other aspects of peasant economy.[28] Gusti had trained with Wilhelm Wundt, Karl Bucher, and Gustav von Schmoller in Germany, where he took his Ph.D. at Leipzig, and had also studied with Emile Durkheim in Paris.[29] Gusti founded Romania's leading intellectual journal of the period, Studies in [Social] Science and Social Reform[30] in 1919, and in the 1930s was able to obtain King Carol's patronage for his group's researches. Using methods devised by Ernst Engel, Frederic Le Play, Ernst Laur, and Chayanov, Gusti and his students tried to determine to what extent the local peasant economy in a given region was capitalist, "natural" (subsistence-oriented), or mixed, studying both money budgets and those in kind, for whole villages.[31] Among the many impressive publications of the Gusti group, especially for its breadth, was the five-volume 60 Romanian Villages, directed by Anton Golopentia and D. C. Georgescu.[32]

Like Poland, Romania had an official Agronomy Research Institute which undertook economic studies. A member of the Institute, Nicolae Cornateanu, defended peasant holdings in

[27] Egoroff (1936), pp. 135 (citing Chayanov), 152-53. Egoroff was pessimistic, however, that significant numbers could be shifted from agriculture to industry (pp. 157-58). Cf. the similar view of Whipple and Toteff on Bulgaria (1939), pp. 73-75.

[28] E.g. See Gusti (1936).

[29] See Vulcanescu (1937), pp. 5-94.

[30] Arhiva pentru stiinta si reforma sociala.

[31] Stahl, "Scoala" (1937), pp. 172, 181, 184-85; Stahl, Amintiri (1981), p. 32.

[32] Golopentia and Georgescu, eds., 60 sate romanesti (1941-43), 5 vols. Vol. 2 includes an extensive economic analysis by P. Stanculescu and C. Stefanescu. They offer information by region, crops cultivated, and size of plot, providing detailed family budget studies by size of holding and region.

1935 with the results of a survey which showed the superior productivity of small plots. He conceded, however, that if labor had been accounted for in capitalist terms, peasant income would be negative in much of the country.[33] In fact, the method which Cornateanu had used excluded any imputed cost of (unpaid) labor by the peasant and his family.[34] Most studies, in any case, were even more pessimistic.[35]

Chayanov had an important intellectual and political impact in Romania as early as 1925, when the economist and politician Virgil Madgearu discovered him. For Madgearu and his Romanian Peasantist Party[36], the peasant economy, based in part on petty commodity production organized by family units, did not involve a significant internal differentiation of the peasantry. This, because, as Chayanov argued, the family demographic cycle tended to keep differences in wealth from becoming extreme--a view sharply at odds with Lenin's Development of Capitalism in Russia. As a Romanian Marxist scholar later put it, the Marxist view (more precisely, the Leninist view) held that the peasantry was a "conglomeration" of classes with contradictory interests.[37] But Madgearu and his National Peasantists followed Chayanov in arguing that the demographic cycle would keep the peasantry relatively undifferentiated over time; they denied, at least partly for political reasons, that the post-land reform peasantry was becoming stratified into a kulak class (chiaburime) and a far larger rural proletarian mass. That is, for the National Peasantists, the peasantry was defined as a single class.

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[33] Cornateanu (1935), pp. 37, 97. Cristian Racovski had argued before the War (and postwar land reform) that real incomes of peasant families were negative, and the populist Constantin Stere agreed. Racovski, "Poporanism" (1908), p. 350; Stere, "Fischerland" (1909), p. 371.

[34] Ornea, Taranismul (1969), p. 164.

[35] See Love, Crafting, p. 65, for other studies.

[36] After 1926, the National Peasantist Party.

[37] Ornea, Taranismul, p. 351.

Not only did Romanians and other Eastern Europeans in the early twentieth century have access to German-language debates—and Chayanov was mainly known in German—they also were familiar with Russian debates between Marxists and populists, and among Marxists. These were almost totally unknown in Latin America. If classical populism was altogether unknown in Brazil, Marxism fared little better before the end of World War II. The latter doctrine was poorly understood and poorly diffused in Brazil before Third International (from 1919). Radicalism in most of Latin America, like its Iberian counterparts, tended to revolve around anarchism more than socialism at least until the 1920s, and in many nations, including Brazil, perhaps until the early 1930s. In addition, most socialist parties in Latin America were not exclusively or predominantly Marxist-oriented until the Third International forced the issue in the early twenties.

In Brazil, before the First World War Marx and Engels were mentioned primarily in journalistic works, and there were no Portuguese translations of their books, or even their articles. Furthermore, the Brazilian Communist party (Partido Comunista Brasileiro), founded in 1922, published little of theoretical interest before 1930.[38] Caio Prado, Jr., the leading Marxist intellectual of the quarter-century after the Second World War, retrospectively noted that in 1930 he was unable to obtain works by Marx--presumably in any language--in Sao Paulo bookstores.[39] In the twenties and thirties Marxist-Leninist works were generally only available in French, and the PCB militant, Heitor Ferreira Lima, who studied under Comintern auspices in Moscow, later wrote that Brazilian Communists of the period knew little directly of Marx and Engels.[40]

After 1945, however, Brazilian Marxism became much livelier, and debates among Marxists focused on the nature of agriculture in Brazil: Was the colonial regime and its

[38] Carone (1986), pp. 59, 63.
[39] Amaral Lapa, p. 23.
[40] Konder, p. 143.

successors feudal, semifeudal, or capitalist? The most inventive of these writers, and probably the most influential, was the historian Caio Prado, Jr., a member of the Communist Party, but one who failed to accept the PCB thesis that progressives should support the national bourgeoisie against foreign imperialism.

Between 1960 and 1966 he elaborated his argument: From the outset Brazilian agriculture had been capitalist in its essential features, i.e., the Portuguese colony was a mercantile enterprise in which there existed, at a theoretical level, legal equality among the settlers. This relationship implied the right of employers and employees to negotiate contracts in a wage labor regime. The latifundium was associated with the scale of the commercial enterprise, not with feudal traditions. For the nonfree population, slavery was a form of labor control associated with commercial capitalism, not feudalism. Sharecropping (parceria), which some writers believed was a vestige of the feudal economy, was, on the contrary, a capitalist relationship between employer and employee, as its continued existence in Sao Paulo cotton culture during the 1930s exemplifed, Prado wrote in 1960. Cotton cultivation was undertaken with a level of technique superior to that of the older coffee plantations in the region, where wage labor prevailed, a fact which bore witness to the modernity of the sharecropping arrangement in cotton, Prado held.[41]

In The Brazilian Revolution (1966), Prado flatly contended that a "feudal or semifeudal system, or even simply one related to feudalism in the proper sense, [had] never existed" in

[41] In the early 1960s Prado wrote two important articles on capitalism in early Brazilian agriculture, viz., "Contribuicao" (1960) and "Nova contribuicao" (1962). These and other articles of the period originally published in Revista Brasiliense (which Prado edited) are collected in Prado, Questao (1979). On the mercantile nature of the colony and of the latifundium, freedom of contract, the nature of slavery, and sharecropping as a modern form of labor relations, see "Contribuicao," pp. 48-50, 66-68, and 70, respectively. Later writers would emphasize that coffee production in Sao Paulo under the colonato labor system was not based on wage labor alone, but also on usufruct, and this fact complicated the matter of whether the arrangement was fully capitalistic. See Love, chapter 13.

Brazil, which had been part and parcel of the international capitalist system from the sixteenth century.[42] Here he explicitly contended that rural workers generally do not want direct ownership of farmland, as peasants do; rather, they want better wages and working conditions. Great landowners were "a legitimate agrarian bourgeoisie." Further, at no other time than the last twenty years, during which "imperialist capital literally submerged our economy," had the Brazilian bourgeoisie enriched itself more: There was no meaningful "national bourgeoisie,"[43] a chimera so long the cynosure of Communist Party strategy.

In the increasingly polarized national and international politics of the late 1960s, the obvious implication of Prado's book was that his country, as fully capitalist, was ripe for revolution, contrary to the official position of the nation's Communist Party, of which he had long been a member. To put the proposition another way, after 450 years of capitalist development, how long did one have to wait for the inevitable contradictions to occur? The time was now. His having authored The Brazilian Revolution was the unstated reason for Prado's incarceration in 1969, because the book had, in the government's view, inspired a new generation of urban guerrillas.[44] In the tension in Marxist theory between ascribing the primary motor of historical change to contradictions in forces and relations of production on the one hand, and ascribing it to class struggle on the other, Prado implicitly opted for the latter course.

But it was not only Communist Party members and other secular leftists who were interested in applying Marxist theory to Brazilian social reality. Significant numbers of Roman Catholic clergymen, Brazilian and foreign, regular and secular, looked to Marxism to understand the vast economic and social disparities in Brazilian society.

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[42] Prado, (1966), pp. 51, 301.
[43] Ibid.,, pp. 68, 166, 188.
[44] Gabeira (1979), pp. 31-32.

The Roman Catholic Church took a new turn under the peasant Pope, John XXIII, whose lead Paul VI followed in the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). The Council resulted in a mobilization of Catholic clergy and laity in efforts "to spread literacy among the peasantry and transform their attitudes toward land [tenure], hygiene, and the environment."[45] A radical position was evident by 1968 at the Second Latin American Bishops' Conference (CELAM) at Medellin, Colombia. Sin was declared to be a collective matter, as well as a personal one. Among other things the Conference recognized the legitimacy of revolutionary insurrection. At the economic level, CELAM supported the contention of Structuralism and Dependency[46] that Latin American was the victim of unequal exchange in the international trading process.

In Brazil, the institution of the military regime in 1964, and its determination to open the Amazon frontier to capitalist ranchers and international corporations by the early 1970s, brought hundreds of priests, friars, nuns, and lay Catholics into direct contact with peasant cultivators. In fact, Vanilda Paiva, the editor of the most important collection of writings about the Church´s involvement with the "agrarian question," draws an explicit comparison with the "To the People" movement in Russia in the summer of 1874: "The evolution of Catholic lay and religious sectors

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[45] Fr. Fr[ancois] Houtart, L´eglise (1963), p. 58.

[46] *Structuralism* characterized the international economy as a set of relations between an industrialized Center and a Periphery exporting foodstuffs and raw materials. Focusing on the problems of the Periphery, the school emphasized 1) structural unemployment, owing to the inability of traditional export industries to grow and therefore to absorb excess rural population; 2) external disequilibrium, because of higher propensities to import industrial goods than to export traditional agricultural and mineral goods; and 3) deteriorating terms of trade--all of which a properly implemented policy of industrialization could help eliminate.

The essential elements of *Dependency* were 1) a characterization of modern capitalism as a Center-Periphery-relationship between the developed, industrial West and the underdeveloped, technologically backward Third World; 2) the adoption of a system-wide historical approach, and the consequent rejection of Boekean dualism and Parsonian modernization theory; 3) the hypothesis of unequal exchange, as well as asymmetrical power relations between Center and Periphery; and 4) the assertion of the relative or absolute nonviability of a capitalist path to development, based on the leadership of the national bourgeoisies of the Latin American nations.

that "went to the people" [after 1964]…did so in the sense of developing and radicalizing aspects [of Catholicism] that relate them to classical populism…having as a goal the construction of "democracy from below" [democracia de base]." The writer explains this by the Catholic activists´ assimilation of the progressive and radical ideologies of the 1960s—various forms of Marxism, Structuralism, Dependency, Liberation Theology, and the Pedagogy of the Oppressed[47]; the firmness of the hierarchy in its pronouncements in favor of human rights and redemocratization; and the hierarchy´s championing of "social reforms that permitted the application of distributive justice in the capitalist structures of a developing country."[48] Many of the conflicts between the Church and the military regime had to do with the incompatibility of the logic of the Church on social issues and the logic of capitalism, Paiva held. The laity involved in this effort split into two groups--those who became secular radicals—some even turning Maoists—and those who remained faithful to resolving the Church-posed problem of "massification versus personalization," and attempted to bring "personhood" to the rural population through pastoral and educational service. They responded to the call of John XXIII in considerable numbers, "going to the people," as Paiva put it. In this contact with the common people, these Catholic activists "radicalized aspects of the ideology that deifies the simple people and their way of understanding, principally in the case of the peasantry."[49] Another authority and

[47] *Liberation Theology* was a theology directed to oppressed peasants, workers, and "marginals," and promoted a combination of action and critical reflection. Its goal was that the people (i.e. the excluded majority) should assume its own history and transform society in a radical fashion.

Pedadogy of the Oppressed, developed by Paulo Freire, is a consciousness-raising method of making peasants and others literate while empowering them, and was viewed as subversive in the Brazil of the 1960s.

[48] Paiva, "A Igreja," in Igreja e Questao Agraria (1985), pp. 62-63.

[49] Paiva, p. 63.

Catholic activist, Roberto Romano, agrees with this interpretation, and the title of his book is Brazil: Church against State (Critique of Catholic Populism).[50]

Although the Brazilian Catholic hierarchy originally supported the military dictatorship that came to power in 1964, the National Council of Brazilian Bishops[51] (CNBB) became the leading source of resistance against the torture and other outrages of the regime by 1970. The CNBB denounced the military's capitalist modernization project as unjust (for example, the government's collusion in expelling peasants from the land, as ranchers moved into the newly-"developed" Amazon Valley). The bishops of the Northeast and Central West Brazil went further, declaring capitalism to be "the root of evil," in a document which the sociologists Michael Lowy calls "the most radical statements ever issued by a group of bishops anywhere."[52] The CNBB itself, working with Marxist social scientists, issued a Pastoral of the Land, based largely on Kautsky´s analysis in The Agrarian Question, which had only recently become available in Spanish- and Portuguese-language editions. In the 1970s and 1980s, there is some evidence that certain Church circles even espoused the belief that peasants could and would successfully resist capitalism, a position reminiscent of the views Russian Narodniki had held a century earlier.[53]

As most of the literature in the modes debate was closely tied to the issues of land tenure and use, Otavio Guilherme Velho, who had studied populism and Chayanov's neopopulism in Britain under Peter Worsley, perceived the emergence of a Brazilian populism both in efforts to specify a "peasant" mode of production and in some articulated schemes. "Classical" populism, personified by Constantin Stere in turn-of-the-century Romania, was totally lacking in the Brazil

[50] Igreja contra o Estado (Critica ao Populismo Catolico)
[51] Conferencia Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil.
[52] Lowy, 87.
[53] Velho, Sociedade (1982), pp. 125-29.

of the early twentieth century, though a Soviet ideologue perceived it in the heterodox Marxism of the Peruvian pensador Mariategui.[54] Among the reasons for classical populism's lack of reverberations in Brazil one might cite the absence of collective property traditions, or even closely-knit and relatively egalitarian peasant communities outside the southernmost states, where German and Italian settlers became smallholders. In addition, Brazilians did not have access to the nineteenth-century Russian debate about capitalism, as did the Romanians, and the late appearance of Hegelianism and then of Marxism in Brazil also impeded any expression of classical populism before the doctrine's demise with the Russian Revolution.

Velho's reference to populism alluded to currents within the progressive wing of the Catholic Church, whose members, in Velho's estimation, viewed the "peasant" or "small producer" in the late 1970s as "external to capitalism" and opposed to its advance. According to this view, because small peasants did not use paid labor, they were not capitalist. Furthermore, peasants tended to conceive of land not as a commodity, but simply a location for the application of their labor. They sought free land in Amazonia, where they resisted capitalist penetration and their violent expulsion; in this understanding, according to Velho, the peasant constituted a "transforming potential" for the whole society.[55] Though Velho overstated the tendency toward classical populism, there were currents of thought in the Catholic Church, whose social views

[54] Jose Carlos Mariategui, often viewed as Latin America's most original Marxist thinker before World War II, hinted that Peru's indigenous ayllu, which he viewed as an Incaic form of agrarian communism, could be the foundation for the transformation from a semifeudal stage of development directly to socialism in the countryside. Thus, Mariategui would seem to be a "stage-skipper," despite his following Lenin in condemning the Narodniki. Nor was Mariategui alone: the idea that peasant collectivism could be the basis for passing from "feudalism" to socialism was shared by a leading Latin American spokesman at the Sixth Congress of the Communist International in 1928, Ricardo Paredes of Ecuador; Paredes' views were echoed by a Uruguayan delegate, Sala. In the event, Mariategui's praise of "Incaic socialism" seemed to a Comintern critic in 1941 a reincarnation of the Russian populist tradition. See Mariategui, Siete ensayos (1959 [1928]), pp. 9, 53, 68-71, 89; Internacional Comunista, 2: 180-81; 367; Miroshevski ([Russ. orig. 1941]), pp. 55-70, esp. 68.

[55] Velho, Sociedade (1982), pp. 125-29.

were authoritatively enunciated by the CNBB, providing some evidence for his position. The CNBB was much affected by the Marxist debate about the nature of Brazilian agriculture. Kautsky's Agrarian Question, employed by the Romanian Stere in his articles of 1907-1908, was frequently cited in a recent Portuguese translation in the CNBB's Pastoral of the Land (1976).[56] The document asserted that the notion of private property was deeply rooted in the mentality of the Brazilian "rural worker," making him strive to defend his land against capitalist landlords, whether as a squatter (posseiro) or owner.[57] Data for 1975 showed how extreme the ownership of land was in Brazil: The agricultural census of that year revealed that more than half the agricultural units held 3% of the land under cultivation or pasturage, and less than 1 percent accounted for almost half the land. Many of the large property owners also held more than one farm or ranch.[58]

At the CNBB's eighteenth assembly in 1980, the body drew a distinction between a "property of exploitation" and a "property of labor."[59] The former was based on profit-seeking, and "permits the enrichment of some at the expense of the whole society," while the latter, worked by the farmer and his family, included both private and community property, "alternatives to capitalist exploitation." Such properties of labor were being "destroyed or mutilated by capital."[60] The Bishops' classification of two types of rural holdings was that of the Paulista sociologist, Jose de Souza Martins[61], who saw an inevitable struggle over peasant

[56] CNBB, Pastoral da terra (1976), in which Velho was also cited as a contemporary authority.

[57] Ibid., p. 189.

[58] Souza Martins, Expropriacao (1980), p. 45.

[59] In Portuguese, terra de exploracao and terra de trabalho.

[60] CNBB, Igreja (1980), p. 30.

[61] See Souza Martins, Expropriacao, chapter 3, where he uses terra de negocio as a synonym for terra de exploracao (p. 60). Elsewhere he uses “propriedade capitalista” and “propriedade familiar.” (p. 59). Souza Martins takes responsibility for the theoretical framework

tenures legitimated, in peasants' eyes, by their own labor, and capitalist tenures, in which rural workers' labor was exploited. He believed Brazil had several "anticapitalist" property regimes--peasant smallholdings, community property, and untitled occupation (posse).[62] Yet in Souza Martins' own work, Velho's "populist" charge does not ring true: Peasants and Politics in Brazil (1981) does not suggest any possibility of a successful resistance to capitalism by peasants outside modern forms of political struggle.[63] Nevertheless, Velho suggests there were clergy and laity among Catholic radicals and progressives who believed it possible. Church leaders in the 1970s in any case seemed ripe for populism in their convictions that the creation of a small property regime in Brazil was urgent, and that the federal government was an ally of large capital in the struggle for land.[64] In this understanding, the state was a driving force for the advancement of capitalism, as it had been in imperial Russia a century before.

In distinguishing between properties of peasants and capitalist farmers and ranchers, the Catholic hierarchy and Souza Martins found support among clergy working directly with peasants. In a simply-written pamphlet aimed at peasant readers, Fr. Carlos Mesters, a Dutch Carmelite friar, defended an “egalitarian society” and “autonomy of production” for peasant producers against “the exploitation of labor.” He wanted “priests without land,” instead of “latifundist priests.”[65]

One might think that the immense agricultural frontier in Brazil would satisfy peasant hunger for land, but the extreme concentration of land in Brazil cited above is not simply the result of remote history. Rather, the latifundium in Brazil has been, and continues to be, a

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of the document at the CNBB's eighteenth assembly, and denies that it is populist. Interview, Sao Paulo, 1 Aug. 1985.

[62] Souza Martins, Expropriacao, pp. 60-61.

[63] Souza Martins, Camponeses (1981).

[64] Romano (1979), pp. 237-38.

[65] Mesters, Projeto, 2d ed (1983), pp. 22, 24, 34.

dynamic phenomenon, as speculators and wealthy landlords use State institutions at various levels to monopolize frontier lands. Violence on the frontier, mainly by large ranchers against peasant cultivators, was an everyday phenomenon reported in Brazil´s newspapers in the 1970s and 1980s.

An unpublished memoir by a Belgian priest working in the Amazonian lowlands at that time shows how the missionary clergy struggled against the spread of the latifundium. Father Frans Gistelinck spent the latter 1970s in Santa Luzia, Maranhao, working with peasants who were losing their tenures to claim jumpers (grileiros). The claim jumpers exercised power through the control of notarial records or tried to force peasant squatters (posseiros) into submission by extracting rent and operating as monopsonists for peasant produce. In Gistelinck´s understanding, the claim jumpers were acting on behalf of Senator Jose Sarney, who later became president of the Republic (1985-1990).

Gistelinck began his memoir with the assertion that there were two types of farms—those of peasants, based on the labors of a family, and the capitalist form, based on wage labor. He argued that in the logic of the peasant unit of production that land wasn´t seen as a commodity, but "a means of production that is incorporated into the productive process through family labor on small farms." Land is (or should be) a free good. The peasant will migrate to virgin lands deep in the forest rather than be proletarianized. For the capitalist, however, land has already assumed a specific market value, and can be alienated to an owner. But the peasant farm wasn´t merely a subsistence producer. On the agricultural frontier, such farms supplied food for the towns of the interior of Maranhao.[66] Gistelinck realized that peasants were in competition with capitalist farmers, and that the peasant and capitalist farming was imbricated, under the domination of the latter. Yet there were several possibilities for articulation between peasant and

[66] Gistelinck, pp. 10, 12, 32.

capitalist tenancies. Since Gistelinck cites Kautsky as one of his sources, we may infer that Gistelinck´s views were strongly influenced on these matters from the German theorist.

As for peasant theology, land is a gift of God, and farmers have an obligation to cultivate it to furnish rice, manioc, and beans for the people (o povo). In this view, lands are to be divided according to the needs and possibilities of each family, and cooperative labor (the ancient Portuguese tradition of mutirao) was the fundamental element in living together. Capitalists, of course, reject this view, wrote the Belgian priest.[67] For him, as for other proponents of Liberation Theology, more important than material results was the "permanent process of action and critical reflection, the basis for the liberation of the people."[68]

Among the several possible interpretations of a "peasant" mode of production, Brazilian Marxist writers avoided the contention of the Romanian populist Stere and the neopopulists in Romania´s National Peasant Party, such as Virgil Madgearu, that peasants formed an undifferentiated class.[69] Meanwhile, Chayanovian interpretations of peasant behavior made their first significant appearance in the 1970s. Whereas the medium of Alexander Chayanov's influence in Romania had been his German (and possibly Russian) publications in the 1920s, his impact in Brazil and the Third World at large was based on the rediscovery of his theories through an English-language compendium of his work edited by Daniel Thorner and others in 1966.[70] Even in Poland, where Chayanov was known in the 1920s, the 1966 "rediscovery" raised his salience as a theorist.[71]

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[67] Ibid., pp. 13, 38.

[68] Ibid., p. 38.

[69] Except Alberto Passos Guimaraes, author of Quatro Seculos do Latifundio, who wanted to see peasants integrated into the capitalist economy.

[70] See Chayanov (1966), and Heynig (1982) on the importance of the English-language compendium (p. 124). Spanish translations of Chayanov appeared in the 1970s.

[71] Kochanowicz, p. 30.

As noted, for Chayanov, as for Kautsky, the peasant family did not count its labor as an expense of production, and therefore could accept remuneration lower than that of capitalist farmers, who had to incur labor costs. His thesis that peasants balanced consumption against the drudgery of labor could be challenged by the same empirical studies used against J. H. Boeke's notion of dualism in Asian labor markets. This literature argues that peasants *do* attempt to expand their consumption of commodities without obvious limits.[72] But Chayanov, unlike Boeke, also considered another variable, the demographic cycles of the peasant family. Based on research in Russia, he believed that economic activity depended less on capitalist profitability than on family size and the balancing of consumption and the irksomeness of agricultural labor.

Chayanov began to appear in the literature on the Brazilian peasantry in the mid-1970s,[73] and was especially important in the work of scholars such as Velho at the National Museum in Rio. Using Chayanov´s ideas as modified by later scholars, Afranio Garcia Jr., who like Velho, was a researcher at the National Museum, studied peasant economic activity in northeast Brazil. Garcia began a series of studies in the latter 1970s culminating in The South: The Road from the Peasant Clearing (1990),[74] a work richly informed by the theory of peasant economy, but firmly grounded in an empirical study of peasant existence in the Northeast. Examining economic conditions, the portions of product consumed and marketed, noncapitalist economic calculations,

[72] At a theoretical level, the Romanian-American Georgescu-Roegen has, by implication, argued that Boeke put the wrong interpretation on peasant idleness. Georgescu holds that there is more leisure in overpopulated countries than in developed countries because there is no effective choice between more leisure and more income; the economic cost of greater leisure is zero. See his "Economic Theory" (1976 [1960]), p. 131. A similar argument is implicit in Clifford Geertz's analysis of Boeke's Java; see Geertz (1963), p. 141-42. For a variety of empirical studies showing the error of Boeke´s thesis, see the works cited in Love, Crafting, p. 244, note 5.

[73] E.g. Shepard Forman (1975).

[74] Garcia, Sul (1990). An early version of the work with the same title had been defended as a dissertation in 1983, and a French version of Sul was published in French as Libres et assujettis (1989).

family patterns, and the social differentiation of peasants, Garcia saw the migration of landless youth from the Northeastern state of Paraiba as an open-ended strategy: Though many became proletarians, others returned to Paraiba to become independent producers and, occasionally, even small merchants.[75] Garcia wrote without the advantages of the systematic teamwork that characterized the Romanian peasant studies of Dimitrie Gusti and his associates in the 1920s and 1930s, but he produced a monograph of distinction. The empirical investigations in Garcia's book set it apart from the earlier and more speculative array of works attempting to specify the mode(s) of production in Brazilian agriculture.

In conclusion, we may note that obvious difference between the Romanian and Brazilian debates over economic development was the absence of the populist and even neopopulist voices in Brazil virtually until the 1970s. Partly as a consequence, just as Romanian populists had argued that the West's huge technological lead resulted in market monopolies which precluded the rise of an authentic capitalism in backward countries, so the argument was reinvented by Brazilian dependency theorists sixty years later. Furthermore, the Romanian populist Constantin Stere, like Celso Furtado and other Latin American dependency theorists, noted that labor-saving technology also meant a smaller number of consumers in the national market. Like dependency writers, Stere also stressed the international character of modern capitalism--its "vagabond" nature, putting large firms outside the control of the national state. More fundamentally, the agenda of neopopulists and other students of peasant economy in Romania during the interwar years included a wide array of scientific studies unparalleled in Brazil; among other things social scientists in Romania and elsewhere in East Central Europe tried to measure "disguised unemployment" long before the idea became a building block of development economics in 1945-50.

[75] Sul, pp. 159-60, 292. The study might be called neo-Chayanovian, in that the Chayanov method is critiqued and modified on the basis of writings by later observers of the peasant economy such as Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, Jerzy Tepicht, and Boguslaw Galeski. Garcia's Terra (1983) complements Sul, and deals with peasant family life cycles.

The absence of populist and neopopulist discourses in the South American nation in the first half of the century, as well as that of the German Historical School, meant that Marxism was less likely to be critically examined by its early advocates than it was in Romania. It is debatable whether populism ever had any authentic voice in Brazil, as opposed to being an epithet. Beyond that particular ideological construct, there was relatively little interest among Brazilian researchers in rural freeholders and dependents until peasants, broadly defined, became more important in the political process and contested frontier occupation with speculators and latifundists in the decades after 1970. Modes-of-production writers turned their attention to "archaic" relations of production in the informal economy of the cities, where rural migrants had recently arrived, and to larger processes in the countryside. By the seventies, as well, Chayanovian neopopulism, which in Brazil owed its original appeal in part to addressing the then-fashionable issue of specifying non-capitalist modes of production, formed a small but growing and empirically-grounded tradition. To date, however, studies of peasant economy in Brazil still do not approach the breadth and depth of Romania's peasant studies in the interwar years.

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