

THE PEASANT

- THE LATIN AMERICAN PEASANT*. By ANDREW PEARSE. (London: Frank Cass and Co., Ltd., 1976. Pp. 289. \$19.50, \$10.00.)
- SOCIAL CLASSES IN AGRARIAN SOCIETIES*. By RODOLFO STAIVENHAGEN. (New York: Doubleday-Anchor Books, 1975. Pp. 266. \$3.50.)
- PEASANT LIVELIHOOD*. Edited by RHODA HALPERIN and JAMES DOW. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977. \$14.95, \$6.95.)
- FEAR IN THE COUNTRYSIDE*. By E. G. VALLIANATOS. (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger Publishing Co., 1976. Pp. 208. \$14.00.)
- POWER, POLITICS AND PROGRESS: SOCIAL CHANGE IN RURAL PERU*. By WILLIAM FOOTE WHYTE and GIORGIO ALBERTI. (New York: Elsevier, 1976. \$15.00.)
- RURAL COOPERATIVES AS AGENTS OF CHANGE*. UNITED NATIONS RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT. (Geneva, 1975.)

The history of the world's fauna is replete with examples of various species of mammals that have become extinct, leaving few if any traces behind. The hypothesis may be advanced that—*ceteris paribus*—the larger the creatures involved (e.g., mammoths), the greater the likelihood that all or part of their carcasses may withstand the inclemencies of natural decomposition and destruction processes and testify to their earlier vigorous existence. The latest species threatened with extinction anticipated to happen within a relatively few decades—namely the species *peasant* of the nonsocialist underdeveloped regions¹—being normally of relatively small stature (a phenomenon closely associated with various nutritional deficiencies which in turn are caused by perennial peasant poverty) can be expected to leave no traces behind whatever. Future generations will know of their existence only through a vast peasant literature, of which the books cited above are a modest sample.²

But why should the peasant be threatened with extinction when, for example, according to such authorities on agricultural and agrarian matters as the World Bank bureaucrats, there are still one hundred million poor peasants ("small holders") in underdeveloped World Bank member countries;³ and when the presence of peasants is still an undeniable fact, witness such disquieting events as relatively recent peasant rebellions in many parts of the world or the more reassuring, innumerable field and other studies on peasant activities and behavior, some of which have been incorporated in the literature under review here? The key (though not the full answer) seems to lie in Pearse's preface, where he states in his usual lucid and incisive style that:

The word [peasant], not only in the Latin American context but throughout Asia and Africa as well, evokes a *great contemporary problem*, namely, how can the rural majorities in the post-colonial countries find a *way of coming to terms* with the acquisitive expansion of the industrial urban nucleus, which is rapidly undermining their landbound security, but is niggardly in offering them advantageous places in the new society (p. ix, emphasis supplied).

Obviously this great contemporary problem turns around *the intensified class struggle* over the possession and control of land or other agricultural resources and the agricultural output between the landed elite, now closely associated with, if not actually represented by, the urban capitalists (the “industrial urban nucleus”) and the owners or tenants of small plots of land. Until recently—to be more precise, until the mid-1960s—it would seem that this struggle had its ups and downs from the point of view of the peasants. Although in the long run the peasants have been more often on the losing than on the winning side, there was sufficient evidence (e.g., tenure and agrarian reform laws, credit and colonization schemes, the spontaneous occupation of virgin lands) to support the theory that capitalist agriculture cannot survive without a more or less healthy peasantry and will constantly strive to regenerate it in order to exploit it through the production and marketing processes or by using (and needing) it as a source of cheap labor, and that, therefore, the class struggle was not entirely weighted in disfavor of the poor. If that has been the case until recently, it is certainly not the case today. Perhaps there still was for the peasants “a way of coming to terms” with their class enemy. But we have entered a new, spectacular phase of capitalist expansion developing at supersonic speed whose determined though not necessarily openly acknowledged goal is the final, rapid eviction of small plotters from the land. This scheme is carried out by “modernization,” i.e., by means of massive and increasing capital and technology transfers from the industrial nations to the underdeveloped agricultures. These transfers are operated by agribusiness firms (giant food and agricultural input manufacturing and distribution firms, including those providing services) and a host of supporting agencies, among which we find the World Bank, the Inter American and Asian Development Banks, the internationally operated private banks, or the “philanthropic” Rockefeller and Ford Foundations.

This process is so new that it was not recognized by students of peasants and agriculture until a couple of years ago, and its impact is still widely ignored. It consists essentially of the *relocation* of numerous “commodity systems” into underdeveloped agricultures (paralleling a similar trend in industry or banking) and, in the case of products produced both in the industrial and underdeveloped agricultures, in the *fusion* of these agricultures into sets of global commodity systems operated from the industrial countries.⁴ These agribusiness firms contributed and still contribute decisively to an enormous ownership and production concentration in the industrial agricultures and to the rapid elimination of small (“inefficient”) producers. They now bring to the underdeveloped world their preconceived ideas about the advantages (for agribusiness) of bigness in production, processing, or marketing and the need to evict the small producers (peasants) from the land. In the industrial countries, the elimination of small, “inefficient” producers did not cause any serious conflicts since the displaced agricultural labor force could be absorbed rapidly in other sectors. But in underdeveloped countries, the peasants have nowhere to turn. This is not only of no particular concern to the cynical leaders of the “modernization” of underdeveloped agricultures—since the new unemployed are not a burden for them or for the governments of industrial countries—but they attempt to hasten the

peasant eviction by any and all means at their disposal. One agribusiness leader said that the faster the peasants left the countryside, the better it would be all around. Thus the opportunity for peasants “to come to terms” with new foreign capitalists in underdeveloped agricultures and their local allies is rapidly being eliminated together with the peasants—all the more so if one keeps in mind that giant agribusiness is deeply involved in local politics and has the power to keep local governments from making even the slightest concessions to the peasants. Thus agribusiness is the most powerful counterreform, antipeasant movement that ever existed in the history of agriculture.⁵

Is this view not too one-sided and too radical? Does not the World Bank, for example, and do not the giant agribusiness firms themselves “assist the rural poor” with large-scale credit schemes, demonstrating thereby their keen interest in maintaining a peasantry in order to extract an ever increasing surplus from them? This objection might have some slight validity were it not for the fact that the infusion of capital and particularly of new, modern technologies into the peasant sector will clearly and inevitably (a) add to and accelerate sharply the process of ownership and production concentration (pronounce: peasant eviction); (b) fortify still more the agribusiness firms since the loan funds for the poor are all bound to end up in the firms’ own cash registers; and (c) hasten the organization of a capital rather than labor intensive agriculture. The objection is not valid because the growth of underdeveloped agricultures under guidance of industrial agribusiness firms is not dependent anymore on the survival of an exploitable peasantry. It has now become expendable.⁶

It would be reassuring if these assertions could be substantiated fully by statistics. Unfortunately the agricultural and population censuses of underdeveloped countries are becoming every day more “inoperative” because underdeveloped governments know that land tenure and occupational data are political dynamite. If they are published at all, they appear diluted and at a time when they are already out of date. It is doubtful that this or a future U.S. government will ever endorse such an ambitious undertaking as the CIDA studies in Latin America, which revealed the full depth of the Latin American peasantry’s tragedy. Mexican census data were recently analysed by a German sociologist who concluded that the number of ejidatarios declined by nearly 50 percent between 1960 and 1970, as the following table shows.⁷

<i>Rural Labor Force</i>	1950	1960	1970
Total	4.8	6.1	5.1 (- 17)
Landless	2.1	3.3	3.0 (- 8)
Ejidatarios	1.4	1.5	.8 (- 47)
Producers (excl. Ejidatarios)	1.4	1.3	1.3 (- 6)

(Figures in millions.) Data in parentheses give percentage change between 1960–70.

These statistics reveal the havoc wrought today in a modernized agriculture under U.S. influence—and Mexico is a test case par excellence. The mathematically inclined reader can easily predict how many decades it will take for this important peasant sector to disappear completely from the scene if present trends are allowed to continue, which they no doubt will. Rudimentary data from other countries confirm the acceleration of peasant evictions and the increase in the number of the landless under the impact of an expanding capitalist agriculture.

However, these events of historical importance would not give a complete picture of reality since it must be assumed that the take-over of the most dynamic, the most modern sectors of underdeveloped agricultures by foreign capitalists is also bound to affect the traditional land monopolists. As Erich Jacoby pointed out recently in a magnificent passage:

The transfer of capital in the form of technology has become the dominant factor in the rural areas of the Third World, while the landlord class gradually has to give up an essential part of its traditional functions of controlling land and local labor. The balance of power is changing in favor of the transnational corporations which form a united front on the basis of their monopoly position against the underdeveloped countries in which they operate. . . . Those [of the rural elites] who fully understand this process are accepted as junior partners in the internationally organized agribusiness, where they will function as intermediaries of the transnational corporations. . . . In reality, however, the actual participation of the new elite is of marginal importance only for the smooth functioning of the transnational mechanism. *It may even be claimed that the once powerful elite has been politically expropriated* (emphasis supplied).⁸

Hence the peasants no longer face the traditional landowners, who more often than not were invisible absentee landlords but still part of the local power structure which could be made the object of criticism or attack; they face the international jet-set agribusiness clique against whom well-tested peasant protests are totally ineffective.

He whose view of the status and future of the Third World's peasantry is influenced by these dramatic trends is no doubt unfairly prejudiced against new peasant studies such as those under review here, unless they reveal some insight into the processes that bring about these trends. If they don't, he feels a bit like a nostalgic visitor to a wax museum confronted with things of the past, although he may acknowledge the excellence of the reproductions. The unfairness lies in the fact that these trends are, as I mentioned earlier, so new as to have been practically invisible until recently. Curiously enough, Vallianatos' *Fear in the Countryside*, whose subtitle is *The Control of Agricultural Resources in the Poor Countries by Nonpeasant Elites*, appears on first sight to come closest to an attempt at viewing the modern status of the peasantry from my own cataclysmic vantage point, as the titles imply. This well-intentioned book is slightly oversold by a

statement of Congressman George E. Brown who refers to it as a "passionate analysis of world food problems"; a foreword by Jean Mayer, Harvard Professor of Nutrition; and a preface by Roger Revelle, Harvard Professor of Population Policy. It presents many arguments with which one can wholeheartedly agree (for example, "Today we are paying the price for the optimism of the 1960s—the heyday of the green revolution" [p. 64]; or "Technology transfer has a social dimension that even transcends the development of technology itself" [p. 70]) and it presents a relatively global analysis of the problems studied since it touches on the Colombian and Indian peasant or food situations and contains some interesting source material. But apart from this it deals, often unsophisticatedly, with a hodgepodge of up-to-date topics—population, food, land tenure, the green revolution, the antisocial activities of CIMMYT and IRRI, technology transfers, the rural poor, the Rome Food Conference etc. They are not brought into clear relation to each other or analyzed from a consistent economic, political, or sociological frame of reference so as to give a systematic view of what is wrong with the world's state of agriculture, and one is bound to conclude that passion and compassion are not sufficient tools to throw light onto a very complex issue.

In contrast, neither Pearse nor Stavenhagen can be accused of lacking deep insights into the functioning of a modern rural society whose accelerated decomposition (Pearse talks about "the dissolving peasantry," p. 264) they attribute to the systematic expansion of agricultural capitalism. Their two books vie with each other for excellence, although both of them stop short of the latest catastrophic developments. This is particularly true for Stavenhagen whose by now well-known *Social Classes* has long been a standard text in Spanish-speaking countries or Latin American institutes all over the world. It was first written in the mid-1960s and slightly revised for this extremely well-translated edition. Although Stavenhagen did not "attempt to develop a theory of agrarian societies or rural social classes" (p. xiii), to my knowledge his essay is the first systematic effort to bring Marxian class analysis to bear on underdeveloped rural societies—using Africa (Ivory Coast) and Central America as examples—and specifically to examine the sociopolitical and economic effects of an expanding capitalism on the rural sector. Regardless of location, capitalism has a highly divisive effect and creates a complex and mobile rural class structure (for Africa the author speaks about "classes in formation" and a "rural society in transition," pp. 144ff.), testifying to a high degree of insecurity of tenure and hence of rising conflict potentials and actual conflicts. Stavenhagen concludes that capitalist-style modernization of underdeveloped agricultures, whose objective is to bring about higher rates of growth, consciously supports the large estates at the expense of the smallholders and the peasant economy and that "the results of these policies in the next few years will be disastrous for the majority of the peasant population in Latin America" (p. 229). His conclusion for Africa is essentially the same: "A growing class of pauperized peasants, . . . the African peasantry is undergoing a process of marginalization similar to that which, under different historical circumstances, is taking place in Latin America." Had Stavenhagen considered the probability of an ultra-rapid elimination of the

peasantry through a massive modernization process under agribusiness leadership, rather than through the progressive enlargement of a class of commercial entrepreneurs, he might easily have reached the conclusion (as I do) that this newest phase of capitalist expansion greatly reduces the social (class) complexities of the rural sector through the much more rapid proletarianization of the rural labor force, although one should not conclude from this that it thereby simplifies the solution of the agrarian problem.

Stavenhagen presents a relatively dynamic aggregate analysis of the rural class structure, but Andrew Pearse's magnificent *The Latin American Peasant*—by far the best sociological treatise in an abundant recent literature on peasants⁹—makes a verbal motion picture of the process of capitalist expansion, the effects of the "spread of the market economy," and their economic and social impact on the plot-bound producers in which only the international dimension of the agribusiness-induced wholesale eviction of the peasants is treated in passing (p. 252). Pearse sets the foundation of his analysis with an excellent, concise exposé of the history of Latin America's agrarian structure (chapter 1) and pursues it through a set of case studies to cement his argument, which he summarizes in his last chapter ("The Terms of Incorporation"): namely that the peasants are bound to seek new ways of incorporating themselves into the new society dominated by the urban-industrial complex. Given the "obsolescence of the subsistence system, . . . under the new circumstances the primary asset is not the control of local resources but ability to manage the nexus with the town and the large society, not only for obtaining credit and commercial advantage, but also for getting the benefits which the new agencies offer and the prestige which association with them confers locally" (pp. 254–55).

Essentially, this decline of the subsistence system "draws out a 'progressive' element" which "becomes economically differentiated from the rest of the peasantry by its ability to operate on the market, to use rather than be used as labour, and to benefit from new facilities." On the other hand: "Those whose resource base gives them no relief from hardship, and who are unable to deal directly and adequately with the new sources of benefits, and the markets in the town, are obliged to rely upon the new and old nexus men for whatever they can get" (p. 255). But the "majority of the peasantry has neither the resources nor the social advantages necessary to make the full reorientation necessary to benefit from incorporation, and they are forced into a bad bargain with the society . . . a process of forced marginalisation" (pp. 255–56).

These passages reflect Pearse's novel and exciting attempt at discussing the peasant issue within the context of the wider and changing society¹⁰ where *landgroups*, defined as "a group of families forming part of a larger society and living in permanent interdependence, interaction and propinquity by virtue of a system of arrangements between them for the occupation and productive use of a single land area and the physical resources it contains from which they gain their livelihood" (p. 51), and *the rural town* (pp. 56ff.) form important elements. Hence Pearse is forced to examine, and he examines carefully, the effects of capitalist penetration not only on the peasants themselves but also the transformations and dissolutions of the landgroup that follow from it. This discus-

sion leads him to study not only the changes having occurred in the large landholdings (chapter 3, "The Transformation of the Estate") but also of the individual peasant holdings themselves (chapter 6, "Peasant Destinies"). No student of the agrarian problem of Latin America (or elsewhere), regardless of his political orientation or theoretical background, can avoid taking a careful look at this material with its rich insights based on years of experience in the field, its careful methodology, and its enticing style.

Going from one extreme to another, the same can unfortunately not be said of Whyte and Alberti's disappointing *Power Politics and Progress*. Observers of the Peruvian scene will find interesting historical information on three important agricultural areas (Cuzco, Junin, and the Chancay Valley, chapters 3–17) and recent peasant movements there. But the authors' attempt at relating power politics and progress is set at such a low level of sophistication that I can hardly abstain from judging this volume a miscarriage, containing few if any new insights on the functioning of Peruvian rural society about which there is considerably better material available. I would judge that the CIDA reports on Peru and other countries, particularly on Ecuador and Brazil for example, are much more to the point. Neither the problems on which ten years of research were spent by the authors nor the answers are set out clearly and it remains uncertain what the authors understand by "progress" except that it seems related to peasant movements and organizations.

The worst sections are chapter 1 ("Prologue to an Intellectual Exploration") and chapters 18–22. In the former the authors maintain that "In the course of explaining the process of social change in rural Peru, we came to make major changes in our theoretical framework and research design. In our last chapter, we focus directly on this process of intellectual change" (p. 3); and that: "We began within a framework of 'modernization' theory, which put great emphasis on personality aspects of the development process. . . . We abandoned the modernization framework and came to focus on *structural change*" (pp. 4, 5, authors' emphasis). This is hardly interesting, nor does it justify devoting a boring 109 pages (part 5) to an effort to "place the empirical materials into a theoretical framework" (one would expect a social scientist to reverse the analytical procedure), not even if the authors try to convince their fellow sociologists of the shortcomings of the approach they rejected, since there are better ways of doing it. However we grant that the intellectual acrobatics served them to "modernize" themselves in the process.

I have considerably greater difficulty in evaluating fairly Rhoda Halperin and James Dow's reader on *Peasant Livelihood*—not so much because I am not basically sympathetic to their institutional approach, but perhaps because I am neither an anthropologist nor an economic anthropologist, like one of the editors. (One author, Stephen B. Brush, seems to make the point that some peasant-related problems, such as employment, are just beginning to be examined by anthropologists, p. 61.) I have a vague feeling that the editors' and the various authors' hearts are "in the right place," but some aspects of this work lead me to the conclusion that they may live in the proverbial university ivory tower from which they go only occasionally on organized, foundation-sponsored safaris to

observe the wildlife of the peasantry from well-protected, imaginary Land Rover. I am referring to the stilted language; to the (perhaps) superficial impression given of some "Brandeis kids" exercising their fertile minds on a new, still somewhat strange and unknown world to them (the peasants' world); and particularly to the fact that most of the chapters (except that by Anthony Leeds, "Mythos and Pathos: Some Unpleasantries on Peasantries") fail to take into account some of the best recent literature that has appeared since the mid-1960s on agrarian problems and on the very issues taken up in this volume.

This impression seems justified for a variety of reasons. The volume is oriented towards an (unsuccessful, I would say) amplification of Karl Polany's concept of economy (an author I shamefacedly admit I have not read). According to the editors, Polany defined the economy in substantive terms as the material-means-provisioning process (p. 1) and as an "instituted process through which humans in society interact with nature to supply the material means of livelihood. This means that the economy is not a single institution, but that it may be organized by many institutional arrangements. . . . Activities of individuals can best be understood in institutional contexts" (p. 2). There is doubtless little one can quarrel with in this frame of reference except that the editors admit that Polany did not develop a systematic classification of economies, that some of his writings are contradictory and vague (p. 14), and, I would have added, that they do not appear very original but practically old fashioned, as judged from the various quotes they offer.

They and the various authors then proceed to analyze institutions that shape the peasant economy. But to start with, the reader's tranquility of mind and his curiosity are startled by the ambivalence with which peasants and peasantries are being treated. Thus, Benjamin Orlove entitles his chapter "Against a Definition of Peasantries: Agrarian Production in Andean Peru," and Anthony Leeds, whose amusing chapter title I quoted earlier, has an entire diatribe (pp. 228–32) against the concept "peasant," which "has no precision whatever" and is "not scientific"—all for reasons that I find hard to justify, particularly since other more clear-minded authors do not find the characterization of hundreds of millions of dead or living peasants qua peasants so objectionable.¹¹ I will admit that a perusal of the *Journal of Peasant Studies'* various articles on peasants, for example, gives evidence that authors are not of one mind regarding a subject that they find "extremely complex." I often wonder whether the urban-based experience and mentality of many authors, including those of *Peasant Livelihood*, do not cause them to invent these complexities in order to avoid discussing more fundamental issues. And, actually, what are the institutions that *Peasant Livelihood* (surely an ill-chosen title in view of Orlove and Leeds' objections) analyzes in order to deepen Polany's concepts of the substantive economy? They are "religious and political institutions which control the production, distribution and consumption of many material things" (p. 3), to which various chapters are devoted (with the exception of consumption for which, according to the editors, there is not enough information available; I believe this to be an error). Now I do not find these institutions to be necessarily nonfundamental—quite the contrary—but the manner in which they are treated reflects such a

limited horizon that in the final analysis it fails to give real insight into the functioning and make-up of peasant economies. I cannot quite make up my mind whether this is due to the theoretical framework itself or to some other cause.

One chapter, for example, deals with "Irrigation Farming in the Andes: Evolutionary Implications," prepared by William P. Mitchell. It attempts to discuss the relationship between the (local) political power structure and the use of water for irrigation on the theory that, one way or another, irrigation may explain the development of authoritarian political patterns of the type called "oriental despotism," a theory developed by Karl A. Wittfogel (and which, incidentally, Mitchell seems to disprove).¹² Since Mitchell concludes that the irrigation systems studied "are too small and localized to account for the origins of political despotism in states larger than the local community," I fail to see the relevance of his analysis, limited to a purely local level.

Stephen B. Brush's chapter on employment ("The Myth of the Idle Peasant: Employment in a Subsistence Economy") is still more deficient in that it fails to relate this topic to the gigantic factors that contribute to the peasants' tragic fate in a modernizing agriculture under capitalist expansion. He is concerned with a definition of employment, and hence of unemployment (or underemployment). He starts his analysis with the misleading, if not wholly hypocritical, concepts used by classical economists whereby less than full employment is defined in terms of the marginal productivity of underemployed workers being zero (or somewhat above zero—it does not really matter).¹³ This in turn leads Brush to discuss, among other things, the wholly unrealistic and irrelevant question "of what occurs in peasant villages in order to maintain a certain level of output despite the loss of workers." While for certain purposes it is correct that "in measuring employment, one is faced with the difficult task of deciding what is and is not work or labor," and on this basis Brush tries to understand the nature of peasant activities, it is now accepted by many that it is not exclusively the productive work or labor that is of concern but also the remuneration received by the worker.¹⁴ Apparently Brush is unaware of the not-so-recent efforts to update the concepts of employment or un- and underemployment (which have been hammered out by various ILO conferences and reports, for example) and to bring the concepts more in line with reality, a task that was urgently needed after economists such as Viner and Schultz had succeeded in leading the discussion into a dead-end street. Finally, the authors fail to demonstrate that their approach is better than others to explain the dynamic changes, or better the dramatic degeneration, of the peasant economy, a subject they ignore almost entirely.¹⁵

The UNRISD report on *Rural Cooperatives as Agents of Change* is the ultimate in a series of eight booklets on cooperatives in various parts of the world and incorporates the research efforts of a group of people under the leadership of the well-known sociologist Orlando Fals-Borda. It is a fitting terminal piece for our discussion of peasants because it demonstrates vividly the peasants' impotence in a world dominated by the industrial-urban nucleus (to use Pearce's terminology). A major conclusion of the UNRISD study is that "rural cooperatives in

developing areas today bring little benefit to the masses of poorer inhabitants of those areas and cannot be generally regarded as agents of change and development for such groups" (p. ix). *Rural Cooperatives* is, however, only a summary of the preceding reports, several of which are based on extensive field studies (excellent teaching material to boot), including a discussion and criticism of the research findings and supplementary notes on some of the major issues regarding cooperatives in the Third World. The real "meat" must be sought in the volumes dealing with Africa, Latin America, and Asia. UNRISD, whose director is now Solon Barraclough replacing Donald V. McGranahan, ought to be commended for engaging in a field of such importance to peasants and for having the courage to publish its discouraging findings.

Peasants will undoubtedly remain the center of interest for a large number of social scientists for many years to come. But I begin to doubt the usefulness of new peasant attitudes—peasant community, peasant movements and organizations, and other peasant-related studies—unless they are dedicated to the urgent problem of *peasant survival* in a world—the Third World—utterly bent on their destruction. As I see it, peasants "survive" in one of three ways all of which imply that they will cease to be peasants: a few may, as Pearce aptly describes it, become integrated in agriculture-related institutions, say, as dealers, truckowners, or drivers; myriads will become mere wage workers, proletarians mostly employed on a temporary basis on the worst, most inhuman and degrading employment terms and thus join the agricultural reserve army, and many may even become totally unemployable human vegetables; or they will move to towns or cities to join a reserve army that is neither agricultural nor industrial, obliged literally to live on the urban garbage of the capitalist system. It is astounding that so little attention is now given in the industrial countries to the fate of hundreds of millions of poor ex-peasants, perhaps the largest single new proletariat of the twentieth century; and I point specifically at academics, who seem to ignore that we are witnessing not a slow process of peasant eviction from societies unable to absorb more members of a wasted labor force, but a world-wide genocide by starvation let loose by an aggressive agricultural capitalism dominated by cynical power- and profit-hungry investors out to control the human and physical resources of the agricultures of the Third World. If, for example, a small fraction of the enormous funds at the disposal of reactionary business management schools (such as the Harvard School of Business), whose major function is to beautify the image of giant agribusinesses and provide them with new ideas on how to invest their super-profits in Third World agricultural ventures in order to make super-super-profits at the cost of decent employment and living conditions of the Third World's agricultural labor force, thereby contributing sadistically to reducing their life expectancy to an insignificant number of years—if, to repeat, only a small fraction of these funds could be devoted to well-publicized research on the tragedy befalling the majority of the ill fated ex-peasants, one would be able to sigh a small sigh of relief. If social scientists fail to engage in such research or fail to encourage it, they become fellow conspirators

in a scheme that is inevitably bound to drive poverty, hunger, and misery to unprecedented and unmanageable heights.

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NOTES

1. I exclude socialist agricultures because the literature under review focuses on the capitalist countries, with the exception of Pearse (pp. 243–50).
2. My argument that peasants are about to become extinct may sound exaggerated to some readers. For a similar view, see Roger Bartra, "Y si los campesinos se extinguen?" *Historia y sociedad* (México, D.F.), no. 8 (1976). In German, published in *Lateinamerika, Analysen und Berichte 1* (Berlin: Olle und Wolter, 1977).
3. See, for example, Robert McNamara's "Address to the World Bank's Board of Governors," Nairobi, 1973.
4. See, for example, Ray A. Goldberg, *Agribusiness Management for Developing Countries—Latin America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger Publishers, 1974), pp. 44, 110, where this guru of agribusiness lumps domestic (U.S.) and foreign growers together under the heading "U.S. Fruit and Vegetable Market System, 1971."
5. Hence it is no coincidence that, for all practical purposes, agrarian reforms are now a dead issue in underdeveloped countries.
6. I have discussed these issues in "McNamara's Little Green Revolution," *Comercio exterior* (English edition), August 1976 and in "Agribusiness in Underdeveloped Agricultures: Harvard Business School Myths and Reality," *Economic and Political Weekly* (Bombay), 17 July 1976. In Spanish in *Revista mexicana de sociología* (Spring 1977).
7. Renate Rott, "Strukturelle Heterogenität und Modernisierung," Berlin, Freie Universität, 1977.
8. "Structural Changes in Third World Agriculture as a Result of Neo-Capitalist Developments," *The Developing Economies* (Tokyo), September 1974, pp. 207, 209.
9. Two chapters of Pearse's book were published on previous occasions: chapter 2 ("The Context of Peasant Action") in a slightly abbreviated form in my *La lucha de clases en el campo* (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1973), and chapter 4 ("Peasants and Revolution in Bolivia") in *Economy and Society 1*, no. 4.
10. Pearse's approach in this respect is similar to Eric Wolf's excellent "Fases de la protesta rural en América Latina," in my *La lucha de clases*, chapter 13, wherein the author explains changes in the forms of rural protests in terms of changes in the aggregate socioeconomic structure.
11. Rhoda Halperin does define peasants (pp. 11ff) in "terms of three dimensions of the substantive economy—the physical, the cultural and the social, . . . used to facilitate the understanding of process of livelihood." Pearse is considerably more to the point. He defines the peasant as "the agricultural producer and cottage draftsman of preindustrial and partially industrialised societies who produces for the provisioning of his own household, and for market exchange, and lives in landgroups . . . with others of his kind with whom he shares certain facilities and services and day-to-day social interaction" (p. 1)—a definition which is simple and "operational" and satisfying. He emphasizes later (p. 73) in a footnote that his "use of the word peasant is less categoric [than Caio Prado Jr.'s, the great Brazilian social scientist] and therefore can apply to all who labour with the exception of those who have no access to land on their own account, and who live from wages in towns and cities."
12. My own leaning would be in the opposite direction. Since irrigation systems function (and function best) when the various users of water plan and manage it in a coordinated and cooperative manner, they could be—and often are—the basis for a democratically organized community, depending on the overall socioeconomic and political structure of the state.

13. Solon Barraclough has repeatedly demonstrated the irrelevance of these concepts.
14. The author's greatest merit lies in drawing attention to a widespread misconception that peasants are lazy, drunken, inefficient, irresponsible and so forth, and hence not worthy of credit and other assistance. The chapter does not reply effectively to that accusation that, after all, is the response of the landed elite to the just reclamation of an oppressed peasantry, for the purpose of intensifying the terror.
15. In this context, I should like to draw attention to a new booklet that deals with some of the problems of the modern peasant world: Theodor Bergmann, *Structural Changes and Political Activities of the Peasantry* (Occasional Paper No. 7, SSIP Verlag, Saarbrücken, 1976 [Germany]).