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MIGRATION AND MODES OF EXPLOITATION:
THE SOCIAL ORIGINS OF IMMOBILITY
AND MOBILITY

by

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Preface

This is a working paper which deserves that title more than is usually the case. It is what some writers euphemistically describe as "a living document" that is liable to evolve to the point where it bears little resemblance to the present version. That is partly because it is designed to be supplemented by several 'case studies'. But I do not wish to appear too defensive or apologetic, for hopefully it is more than a seemingly casual 'think piece'. It stems in part from a basic sense of frustration with much of what passes as the economic analysis of labour migration, a sense that while insights have been provided they have been lost in the plethora of ideologically questionable and often mechanically trivial exercises that fill the dominant journals devoted to 'developmental' issues. As an attempt to synthesise material that provides the nucleus of an alternative approach it is hoped that anyone who picks up a copy will be generous enough to provide comments, abusive or otherwise.

I apologise to those who dislike the term 'feudalism' for one of two reasons. First, I apologise to those who dislike it for ideological reasons; my only excuse is that I can think of no better term to describe the particular set of social relationships which in one form or another has existed in most parts of the world. Second, I apologise to those who, like Daniel Thorner, wanted to reject it for its association with a particular historical epoch in a particular part of the world. It seems to me, as to many others, that features characteristic of medieval European feudalism have existed in so many parts of the world in more recent times that to rename a familiar concept seems an unnecessary act of complication.

Although this is very much a working paper, which gives the writer a greater range of tolerable error, I would particularly like to thank Peter Peek. Though we may disagree on details, we see eye-to-eye on the fundamentals.¹ I would also like to thank Eddy Lee, Gerry Rodgers, and René Wéry, all of whom have been patient enough to listen and discuss part or all of the contents of the paper. None I am sure would want to be associated with the finished product. Finally, I am grateful to Gabriele Davidson and Mary Fairbrother, who have greatly assisted in the preparation of the paper.

¹ The interested reader may care to consult his recent paper which was written at about the same time as the present study. P. Peek: "Agrarian change and rural emigration in Latin America", Rural Employment Policy Working Paper, WEP 10-6/WP.22 (Geneva, ILO, August 1978).

I. Introduction

At risk of oversimplification economic analysis of migration has been dominated by two models. The first of these is associated with Lewis' general equilibrium and classical analysis by which underemployed labour moves from the traditional, subsistence, peasant sector to the capitalist, modern sector at a constant real wage.¹ As the industrial capitalist sector expands, the demand for labour grows, and the perfectly elastic supply of labour exists because the marginal and average product of labour in the subsistence sector are less than the market wage rate in the capitalist sector. But as development occurs the average and marginal productivity of labour in the 'traditional' sector rise, so that eventually market wages rise, which slows the growth of industrial employment and thereby slows the rate of migration out of the traditional sector.

The second model which has figured prominently in migration research is the partial equilibrium and neo-classical approach that places primary emphasis on individualistic, rational behaviour. This could be classified as being principally concerned with the 'final form' in the explanation of migration, to use Theil's econometric term; perhaps it ought to be called the lowest level of abstraction. Those working with some variant of this model have explained migration in terms of expected incomes, 'human capital' formation, or expected costs and benefits.²

Most of those analyses have concentrated on individual motivations and choices and have been dedicated to a remarkable proposition based on a remarkable premise, the premise being that people are rational and the proposition that they will move from areas of low economic opportunity to areas of greater opportunity. This is true, but trivial. Where these approaches are not simple tautologies - people move because they think it is better for them to move, and we know that because they move - they tend to indicate that one personal or household characteristic is more or less important than another.³ Such revelations are unquestionably useful, but showing that more educated people are more likely to migrate than the less educated, or that the rural-urban income differential tends to be positively related to the migration rate, should only be a rather minor part of migration

¹ W.A. Lewis: "Economic development with unlimited supplies of labour", The Manchester School of Economic and Social Studies, Vol. 22, No.2, 1954, pp. 139-91.

² For a very sympathetic review of studies in this tradition, see M.P. Todaro: Internal Migration in Developing Countries (Geneva, ILO, 1976).

³ J. Connell, G. Dasgupta, R. Laishley, and M. Lipton: Migration from Rural Areas: The Evidence from Village Studies (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1976); R. Sabot and H. Barnum: Migration, Education and Urban Surplus Labour: The Case of Tanzania (Paris, OECD, Development Centre Studies, Employment Series No.13, 1976).

research. The actual level of migration is scarcely explained, the tendency to rationalise any particular statistical result is extremely strong, and most fundamentally of all, such approaches are ill-suited to explaining the role of migration in the transformation of the socio-economic structure of production and distribution.

However, whereas this second, partial approach tends to obscure by abstracting from social, political and economic changes, thus leaving the process of migration essentially unexplained, the first Lewis-type approach is criticisable precisely because it postulates the existence of a specific dualistic economy in which the two sectors are unrelated other than by the supply of labour and in which it is assumed that the "subsistence" or "traditional" sector is stagnant and completely uncommercialised.¹ It is assumed that there is a surplus population ready and able to move to the urban areas at a constant real wage and that mass 'underemployment' exists prior to the existence and growth of the 'modern' capitalist sector. As such, dualistic models have tended to dichotomise "sectors" in an artificial and obscurantist way, employing terms such as "modern" and "traditional", or "formal" and "informal", which are hard to define in any analytically satisfactory manner.²

Dualistic models have been attacked because they have implied a policy of promoting 'modern' industrial firms to accelerate the expansion of the modern sector to the neglect of agriculture or 'non-modern' enterprises. They have been undermined by evidence and analyses suggesting that there is a host of dualisms in both urban and rural areas. And they have been criticised for neglecting the awkward fact that to create the labour surplus for the emerging capitalist sector diverse policies and economic tactics have often been deployed to raise the 'effort price' of labour force participation in 'traditional' economic activities.³ There is considerable evidence that governments and industrial-urban capitalist enterprises have actively forced down living standards in the rural 'traditional' areas in order to create the 'underemployment' necessary to ensure the supply of labour to industrial wage employment.

That last point is central to the following analysis. For the main objection to both the neo-classical and dualistic approaches is that they divorce the analysis from consideration of the social relations of production. And this is a widespread tendency even among those who do not adhere strictly to either approach.

¹ This is probably less true about Lewis' original 1954 article than about some analyses stemming from it.

² For a critique of dualistic models, see H. Brookfield: Interdependent Development (London, Methuen and Co., 1975), pp. 53-84.

³ See, for instance, G. Arrighi: "Labour supplies in historical perspective: A study of the proletarianisation of the African peasantry in Rhodesia", Journal of Development Studies, Vol. 6, No.3, April 1970, pp. 197-234; inter alia. Note a difference of implication in that dualistic models have tended to present migration as a "good thing" - providing labour for industrialisation - whereas the neo-classical models have tended to present it as a "bad thing" - contributing to urban unemployment.

Thus even when 'structural' factors, such as the 'distribution of land', landlessness, or extent of mechanisation, are considered as determinants of migration, most studies have abstracted from the associated social relations of production. The failure to incorporate this crucial dimension has led some observers to reject, for example, the eminently reasonable hypothesis that land pressure and the associated rural economic stagnation have induced migration. Some have questioned whether land pressure causes migration on the grounds that in many Asian countries there was considerable land pressure before migration or urbanisation occurred on any scale.¹ This can only be adequately explained by reference to the essentially feudal social relations of production in Asian agriculture. To argue too that the importance of land pressure should be downgraded because many Latin American and African countries had rapid urban growth without any over-all land pressure is also misleading.² Again, it could be explained by the prevailing social relations of production, which through the land tenure system, restricted land utilisation and the development of productive forces in rural areas.

The present paper is intended to provide a framework for the analysis of migration which takes account of such inherent weaknesses in the neo-classical and dualistic models. There is little or nothing that one would call novel in the paper, which is merely a modest attempt to present what could reasonably be described as a materialist approach to migration analysis. Thematically, in contrast to both the neo-classical and dualistic models, the materialist approach sets out to explain the level and pattern of migration by reference to social relations of production, the forms of property and particularly land tenure underlying those relations, and the limits to the development of the forces of production within the specific social formation being studied.

To provide a framework for the comprehensive analysis of migration it is necessary to consider the defining characteristics of specific social formations, and this makes it necessary to analyse the growth and dissolution of identifiable modes of production, and in particular the conditions for the transition from one mode to another.³ To consider these issues in anything like a comprehensive

¹ N.V. Sovanni: "The analysis of over-urbanisation", Economic Development and Cultural Change, Vol. 7, No.2, January 1964, p. 27.

² Ibid.

³ In any society the production and distribution of goods and services could be organised in various modes of production. The principal distinguishing feature of any particular mode is the method by which economic surplus is generated and distributed. Any mode of production is characterised by its technical or material organisation of productive forces (labour, machines, land, technological skills, scientific knowledge) and by the social relations of production (the relationships between the actual producers and those receiving economic surplus).

manner is clearly outside the scope of this study. Rather it concentrates on migration in the specific context of transitions from feudal or 'semi-feudal' to capitalist societies.¹ The focus on the feudal and capitalist modes of production is justifiable because *in various forms* the transition from one to the other, or the failure of the one to evolve into the other, has corresponded to the historical experience of many countries, notably in Western Europe, Japan, and Russia, and more recently in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, large parts of Africa, and the Middle East.²

The paper briefly considers the nature of feudal societies and the pattern of relative immobility in them; it then considers the causes of transition to capitalist relations of production, the principal forms that it can take, and finally, the role of migration in the process. In that context, a complementary paper will analyse the role of the state in controlling and influencing migration. Government policies or the lack of them can only be understood in terms of the dominant mode of production and distribution, and without considering the role of the state the level and pattern of migration cannot be fully explained.

II. Feudalism: Eras of Immobility

The feudal mode of production

In some primitive modes of production, notably pastoralism, mobility constitutes the form of life; Marx even called this "the first form of the mode of existence".³ In many infertile regions of the world, where the density of population is extremely low, this form of life has persisted for countless generations. But if there is mobility, it is nevertheless group mobility, particularly if hunting and gathering form the basis of production. The low and unpredictable productivity of labour make co-operation and distribution a matter of 'balanced reciprocity'. The defining characteristic is that production is based on the temporary, communal appropriation and utilisation of land.⁴ Communal

¹ I am aware that the term 'society' is not as unambiguous as the term 'social formation', which is to be preferred. However, like others before me, I will use the terms interchangeably. To avoid misunderstanding it should be noted that use of the term "transition" does not imply any mechanistic, teleological paradigm. There is no reason for feudalism to necessarily lead to capitalism, though there are tendencies making that "progressive" movement likely. We should certainly not rule out the possibility of regression.

² A more general analysis, which is planned, would consider the possibility of different patterns of migration in the context of the controversial "Asiatic" and "African" or lineage modes of production. There are good reasons for dispensing with the concept of an Asiatic mode; the so-called African mode has been the subject of considerable research recently, especially among French anthropologists such as Meillassoux, Rey, Terray, and Coquery-Vidrovitch.

³ K. Marx: Grundrisse (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1973), p. 472.

⁴ Wealth is measured in movable property, notably by the size of the herds.

property also persists for some time when the tribe or clan settle, but in both forms of primitive communalism there are tendencies leading to changes in property relations and therefore social relations of production.¹

In primitive communal societies the social appropriation of the surplus is initially based on simple redistribution to clan or tribal members; this restricts the development of productive forces through maintaining a rudimentary division of labour.² It is only when more complex distribution systems develop that a more refined division of labour and thus a greater development of the forces of production become possible. Such changes allow and accompany population growth and the growth of a group of unproductive members of the community, perhaps elders or warriors, who receive part of the surplus as chiefs or heads of the clan or tribe.

Thus the beginning of alternative modes of production seems to lie in the existence of tribute paid by clansmen or tribal members to chiefs and corresponds to a certain, limited development of the forces of production which allow the creation of a surplus product that can be transferred in that way. From that, the transition to feudalism has historically evolved through clan rivalries and from the imposition of quasi-military control of a particular territory and the people living there. Thus the growth of the feudal mode of production - and of course the slave mode - is intimately related to colonisation and conquest.

Although there is no reason for feudalism to stem from a process of land grants to loyal supporters in return for services rendered to a powerful conqueror or colonising leader, that has often been a feature of the growth of feudalism, notably in Latin America.³ In such circumstances a tribute-hierarchy has been institutionalised and has been associated with the transition to some form of villeinage.

The feudal mode of production is essentially a system of production-for-use based on a subject peasantry and complex ties of interdependence between members of the dominant class and the peasants. The development of forces of production is left to the actual producers, who are the peasants or serfs. Conversely, the landlords or other receivers of the economic surplus have no direct involvement in production. The transfer of surplus can take various forms, and need not be done

¹ The European developments have been brilliantly summarised by Anderson, particularly in his discussion of Eastern Europe in the early middle-ages. P. Anderson: Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism (London, New Left Books, 1974). On an abstract, conceptual and excessively scholastic level, see also P. Hindess and P. Hirst: Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975).

² For an interesting survey of such societies in contemporary times, see M. Sahlin: Stone Age Economics (London, Tavistock, 1974). The controversy over his concept of the 'domestic mode of production' has detracted from the many insights provided by the book.

³ For a brief review of that process, see A. Pearse: The Latin American Peasant (London, Frank Cass and Co., 1975), Chapter 1. For a global, historical view, see J. Critchley: Feudalism (London, Allen and Unwin, 1978).

through the mechanism of feudal rent. Nevertheless, feudal rent in one form or another has been the most common form of exploitation. The classic form of feudal rent consists of labour services, with the peasant having to provide labour on the landlord's demesne in return for the usufruct right to a small plot of land and access to communal land. But this strict form has co-existed with other forms of rent or has been replaced by them. Thus it has been common for peasants to transfer surplus product through sharecropping agreements or in the form of money rent. Feudal élites have also acquired surplus through diverse forms of usury, and in many societies systems of taxation have been developed to transfer part of the surplus through the state to those élites. The latter has been regarded as a key feature of the so-called 'Asiatic mode of production'.¹ However, where taxes fulfil the same function as feudal rent it would only complicate matters unnecessarily to regard as different a mode of production and distribution that was in other respects similar but which relied primarily on taxes rather than on more direct forms of rent.

In contrast to capitalist ground rent, which with interest payments consists of expense deductions from profits, feudal rent in its various forms is the means by which the surplus product is extracted from the actual producers.² In feudal societies the transfer of surplus relies on a systematic pattern of interdependent relations, typically between landlords and peasants, marked by diverse forms of reciprocal rights and obligations. But as such, whether the degree of benevolent paternalism is great or small, the social relations of production consist unmistakably of hierarchical domination. In the course of the institutionalisation of feudal society this evolves into a system of legalised inequality, as practices become habits and as habits become traditions and traditions become laws. In the process, distinct strata of the population come to have distinctive rights and obligations.³

¹ For a recent attempt to resuscitate the Asiatic mode of production, drawing heavily on the work of Wittfogel and on the concept of the 'hydraulic' society, see U. Melotti: Marx and the Third World (London, MacMillan Press, 1977), passim. The effort is unconvincing.

² Thus the distinction between feudal rent and absolute rent, the latter being the capitalist form. Under capitalism, of course, the primary means by which economic surplus is appropriated is the wage rate, the direct producer being exploited through providing the employer with surplus value.

³ It is an apt aphorism that capitalism is a system of inequality based on equality, whereas feudalism is a system of equality based on inequality. In capitalist society there is a presumption of equality of opportunity to become unequal, immortalised by Tawney's tadpoles. In feudal society there is no such pretence; but in the context of institutional and traditional restrictions on mobility between social categories, there is a presumption of equality within such categories.

The class struggle which takes place in the feudal mode of production is a struggle by the landlords to make the peasants into a body of subordinated producers. Accordingly the landlords' objective is to separate the producers from ownership and control of the means of production, to preserve and if possible enlarge the number of workers under their control, so as to increase the amount of surplus they can obtain. For their part, the peasants' objective has always been to secure greater autonomy as producers.¹

Because of their class objective the landlord class and the state which represents their interests have endeavoured to acquire an extensive monopolisation of land ownership. And, because production has been primarily for use and because land ownership has been primarily a power base, there has always been a systematic underutilisation of land for cultivation purposes.² Feudal élites rely on the peasants to be the direct producers and there is clearly a limit to their rate of exploitation. But the role of land ownership in the feudal social formation has been very controversial; it is generally argued that the ownership of huge areas of idle land has had as much to do with political power and social prestige as with maximising income from production, but the fact remains that such ownership restricts opportunities for independent smallholding peasants and thus facilitates a high level of exploitation.

Although the ownership and control of land has been an important determinant of the ability of landlords and their ilk to appropriate surplus product, it is clear that the classic version of feudalism as represented by the European experience has had many variants. For that reason it is more appropriate to consider various combinations of feudal modes of exploitation rather than the feudal mode of production per se. As a short form the latter term has a certain advantage, but by emphasising feudal modes of exploitation it should be possible to avoid spawning additional modes of production. In particular it should enable us to avoid further discussion of the so-called Asiatic mode of production, even though it is clear that the European form of feudalism had a different composition of modes of exploitation than, say, the nineteenth century Chinese case, where a class of bureaucrats extracted surplus primarily through the mechanism of taxation, while preserving a subordinated peasantry as the direct producers.

¹ Without that autonomy they would not be motivated or able to develop the forces of production on the land, because any surplus product above the socially determined level of subsistence would be likely to go in expanded feudal exactions.

² For instance, consistent with the predominantly feudal nature of most Latin American countries at the time, it was estimated that in the 1960's the amount of idle land was more than twice the amount of cultivated cropland on latifundios in the combined area of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, and Peru. E. Feder: The Rape of the Peasantry: Latin America's Landholding System (New York, Anchor Books, 1971), p. 68. The estimate was based on a series of national surveys carried out by CIDA. See also, S. Barraclough, assisted by J. Collarte: Agrarian Structure in Latin America (Lexington, Mass., D.C. Heath and Co., 1973).

The mechanisms by which the surplus product is appropriated must be the focus of any analysis of the dynamics of feudal societies. But this can only be done adequately through considering the social relations of production which in feudal societies rest more on social traditions, obligations, and rights than on legal, contractual arrangements. It is the combination of those relationships and the degree of exploitation that determine the extent of peasant migration.

The process of immobilisation

The growth of feudal society has invariably amounted to little less than a process of immobilisation. The forms that process has taken have varied to such an extent that any generalisation is likely to be inadequate. Nevertheless, the principal mechanisms by which the subordinated producers have been immobilised can be identified and one can hypothesise that the way by which the process has been achieved has depended in part on the nature of the previous mode of production and on population density.

The influence of population density - or more exactly the ratio of labour to other means of production (in effect, land) - can be illustrated by three schematic scenarios. First, in relatively densely populated areas in which a peasant economy was firmly established, the feudal imposition would tend to be relatively loose and indirect; monopolisation of landownership and the erosion of traditional livelihoods would be sufficient and easy enough to induce peasants to place themselves in a position of 'dependent insecurity' on the estates. This is the case in which the peasants are enticed into a feudal relationship, in which they provide labour services in return for basic 'protection' against penury and destitution. But once ensnared, the peasants are likely to experience a slow increase in feudal exploitation.

In contrast, in sparsely populated areas, in which perhaps some sort of shifting cultivation or hunting-and-gathering existence was prevalent, the imposition of feudal ties would be more formal and rigid from the outset, making serfdom relatively likely and leading to the widespread use of labour services. With a sparsely populated region based on hunting-and-gathering, the sort of indirect extraction of surpluses implied in the first scenario would be ineffectual because the mode of production onto which feudal control was latched would generate little in the way of surpluses. Nevertheless, there is a limit to the coercion that is feasible. The subordinated producers have to be induced to produce a surplus and be put in a position in which they are just not sufficiently exploited to find desertion from the estate an acceptable risk. Ultimately, the rigidity of the feudal mode of exploitation would depend on the political power of the landlord class.¹

¹ The classic contrast is between Western Europe, in which feudal ties were relaxed when the population density declined in the wake of the Black Death, and Eastern Europe where labour scarcity led to the imposition of crushing labour services in what is known as 'the second serfdom'.

To complete this illustrative comparison, it is clear that in extremely sparsely populated areas feudal systems are unlikely to have existed in any form because it was simply not worthwhile. In that case the only feudal exactions would be indirect, through the state in the form of official tributes or taxes, and actions by individual landlords or policies introduced by the state designed to restrict access to such areas, thereby drawing smallholders or 'primitive' cultivators into the nexus of the feudal economy.

As the first two scenarios seem more relevant, the process of immobilisation in the early phases of feudal society can be conveniently summarised in the following hypotheses. In relatively densely populated or 'labour surplus' regions peasants would be lured into dependent insecurity, whereas in relatively sparsely populated areas they would be forced into subordinated relationships. In practice of course the situation would never have been so clear-cut, but the balance of coercion and enticement could be expected to vary quite systematically.

The mechanisms by which mobility has been restricted in feudal societies can be identified in the social relations of production and the various modes of exploitation. In that context serfdom should only be regarded as the most institutionalised form of social control. Historically serfdom often verged on slavery and was almost defined in terms of its attendant immobility. Thus in fourteenth century Europe the legal definition of serfdom was glabae adscripti (bound to the earth).¹ As such the serfs' mobility was legally restricted. This is not to suggest that migration did not occur in such circumstances. But if it did so on any substantial scale it reflected a crisis in the mode of production. In general migration was minimal.

Only marginally less oppressive than traditional serfdom have been elaborate systems of indentured labour. These too have verged on slavery. Since they often involved wage payments their role will be briefly considered in a later section in the context of semi-feudal relations of production. However, the essence of this form of labour coercion has been that peasants, or more typically, immigrant workers, have been lured into indentured employment and then bound to some estate through a legally enforced long-term contract. Particularly characteristic of sugar and tea plantations in colonial territories in the nineteenth century, they were especially common in countries in which a chronic labour shortage was perceived.

Apart from such formal controls a number of more invidious mechanisms have restricted mobility in feudal societies. The principal mechanisms are the nature and level of rent, the extent of paternalism, usury and related forms of exploitation, state policies geared to preserve feudal interests, and corresponding controls on entry to the urban labour force.

¹ M. Bloch: Les caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française (Paris, 1952), pp. 89-90. Bloch's two volume Feudal Society is still essential reading on medieval feudalism and contains interesting discussions of the legal controls.

Land tenure and dependent insecurity

Perhaps the most powerful influence on peasant mobility is the land tenure system and in particular the nature of rent. For fully grasping the constraints to migration however, it is essential to distinguish between peasants formally tied to feudal estates through some rental arrangement and those who are relatively independent smallholders. In many feudal societies the size of the latter group has been small, but in others the 'independent' peasants have comprised the largest group even though the feudal landlord class has remained hegemonic.¹ It is clear that the potential for migration is greater the greater the independence of the peasantry, if only because there is somewhat greater scope for saving and because leaving the land does not involve loss of that land.

Such independence should not be exaggerated however, for typically where feudal exactions have not been extended there have been very good reasons, the most likely being that the fertility of the soil or the nature of the terrain makes direct feudal controls inappropriate means of exploitation; the influence of population density was mentioned earlier. While the peasants locked into the feudal mode of production will be exploited primarily through forms of feudal rent, those formally independent in the sense that they have ownership of land and other means of production will typically be exploited through land taxes, the persistence of traditional forms of tribute paid to the government (local and national), low prices for peasant produce through the limited circulation of money and monopsonist control of marketing outlets, or the need to complement peasant production with casual wage labour on neighbouring estates. To reiterate, given the dominance of the feudal mode of production in any social formation, the mode of exploitation of the peasantry will be determined by specific local and historical circumstances.

Moore addressed himself to this issue in his brilliant and already classic comparative analysis of rural societies, during which he considered the relatively static village structure in Japan between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, when there were persistently oligarchical social relations and an internal solidarity comprising effective vertical ties with higher authority. Moore's explanation was that:

"... the landlords maintained most of the old village structure because through it they could extract and sell enough of a surplus to stay on top of the heap ... The substitution of tenancy relations for pseudo-kinship was the only institutional change needed. ... Unlike the English landlord of the eighteenth century, the Prussian Junker in the sixteenth, or the Russian Communists in the twentieth, the Japanese ruling classes found that they could get their way without destroying the prevailing

¹ For this among other reasons the notion of a composite class of peasants has caused considerable conceptual difficulty. On this see T. Shanin: The Awkward Class (London, Oxford University Press, 1972); E.R. Wolf: Peasants (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1966).

peasant society. If working through the traditional social structure had not brought results, I doubt that the Japanese landlord would have spared the village any more than did landlords elsewhere."¹

To 'get their way' meant maximising the surplus product they could squeeze out of the peasantry and to do that it was implicit that the peasants were riveted to rural areas.

Such 'independent' peasants apart, most peasants in feudal societies have been tenants of one kind or another. Evidence is sparse and certainly required, but it seems reasonable to hypothesise that, for a given level of exploitation, peasant migration will normally be less where labour rent is involved than where share-cropping or cash rents prevail. In the first case the peasant and his family are forced to provide regular labour services in return for the usufruct rights to a small plot of land on which they produce minimal subsistence requirements. In such circumstances the possibility of migration is strictly limited, because the peasant has little or no opportunity to acquire any surplus or even a cash income - the undeveloped division of labour preventing output growth, and the limited circulation of money making it extremely hard to save to finance migration. Moreover migrating would mean surrendering the right of possession to the rented land.

With sharecropping tenancies a somewhat more flexible mode of exploitation would be involved. Correspondingly, a somewhat greater proportion of the surplus might be acquired by the peasants, especially in times of favourable harvests, and some saving from sales could be made. Sharecroppers also have relatively weak ties to the land and instability of tenure has been a chronic feature of many share-cropping systems.² In India, for example, the sharecropper was formally a "tenant at will" and could be dismissed whenever the landlord wished. In so far as share-croppers have a more tenuous relationship to both the land and the landlord, their propensity to migrate could be expected to be greater than that of labour service tenants.

The peasants paying a money rent also could be expected to have a higher tendency to migrate. Where the payment of rent was the only condition for retaining possession of the land one or more members of a peasant family could leave the land, either seasonally or for a longer period. Moreover, the landlord would be less likely to place obstacles in the way of such movements.

However, the formal tenancy arrangements have been bolstered by more informal controls. These include systematic denial of access to means of production, coercive and demeaning domination, and diverse forms of paternalism. Most fundamentally of all peasants have only been able to cultivate small, often fragmented

¹ B. Moore: Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1967), pp. 312-3.

² J.M. Paige: Agrarian Revolution: Social Movements and Export Agriculture in the Underdeveloped World (New York and London, MacMillan, 1975), p. 60.

plots of land. The feudal élite's monopolisation of land ownership, or in some cases the locking-up of land by the state through such devices as Crown Land legislation, forced peasants onto small plots, such as the minifundios of Latin America - or what Tawney in the context of China called Lilliputian holdings. Consequently, peasants had no margin to cover the risk of something like a harvest failure, and that forced them to behave servilely to make a moral claim on the benevolence of the landlord in times of crisis. Correspondingly, by limiting the peasants' access to the main means of production the landlords could actually intensify the level of exploitation, simply by increasing the peasants' insecurity and dependence.

As far as coercion is concerned, the landlords' exercise of arbitrary powers has traditionally included physical punishment for petty offences or for failure to perform some unwritten obligation. In many feudal communities landlords have been able to stipulate that permission had to be obtained before a peasant could leave an estate even temporarily. More importantly still, landlords have had a monopoly of key resources such as water for irrigation, and bridges and footpaths to the peasants' fields. Such powers have invariably placed peasants in a position of subservient dependence, for their access to such facilities has depended not only on their ability to pay but on the goodwill of the landlord.

By inducing a pervasive sense of dependent insecurity landlords have undermined peasants' independence and initiative. By means of a web of restrictive paternalistic practices, including ties of fictive kinship, the peasant is reminded almost daily that he should be grateful to the landlord, not only for the use of a plot of land, but for protection against the ever-present threat of complete destitution. In return for all this, the peasant is expected to reciprocate by servility, to provide labour or rent as required, and to remain on the land.

Paternalism and the essential vagueness of the social relations of production in feudal communities have allowed landlords to alter the rate of exploitation according to their perception of the amount of surplus they could extract from the peasants.¹ By that means they could prevent any accumulation of wealth by the peasantry. As a corollary, the peasants remained on the borderline of subsistence and destitution, a condition conducive to the conservative behaviour which has always characterised peasant communities.

This conservative behaviour has tended to reduce the extent of income differentiation within peasant communities. This is partly because peasants have generally relied on some network of "balanced reciprocity", evolved as a customary way of preserving the viability, subsistence, and survival of peasant families or

¹ For instance, in Peru peasants found that any increase in their herds was susceptible to confiscation by the patron on the grounds that the expansion somehow showed the colono had not been paying sufficient attention to the patron's land. Paige, 1975, op. cit., p. 155.

kinship groups.¹ Where surplus is extracted systematically the levelling mechanisms, about which Nash and other economic anthropologists have written, are likely to be particularly important. Admittedly, pressures on the relatively affluent peasants to provide for less fortunate relatives or neighbours might contribute to a desire to leave the community among those who consider themselves capable of accumulating wealth through 'entrepreneurial' activity. But the nature of a peasant economy in a feudal society, where personal aggrandisement is likely to be regarded as contravening the 'moral economy' of peasant life, is likely to induce a high propensity to share any 'windfall gains' and to make peasants willing to participate in simple co-operative forms of labour, such as exchange labour. Typically, the survival of the community or family has relied on the joint efforts and division of labour of various family members. That has placed a burden on each individual to fulfil certain customary obligations, and has in the process made migration out of the community much more than an act of personal independence. Indeed feudal exactions have often, implicitly or explicitly, turned the possibility of individual migration into a threat to the livelihood of whole families. A classic example is the type of sharecropping arrangement whereby the peasant is forced to provide a level of output well in excess of one man's capabilities, which forces him to rely on the labour input of family members.²

Similarly, it has been common for peasant families to be embroiled in a web of exploitative relationships, with men having to perform certain duties and women having others, and with the family having to provide labour services for the local religious institutions as well as for the landlord.³ In those circumstances it has scarcely been possible for members of peasant families to migrate. Whenever they have been able to do so - when they have been able to hire someone to carry out their labour services or work for a wage or share of the product on the peasant farm - it is surely indicative of a transition in the mode of production.

The fact that feudal exploitation has pushed the peasants to the margin of bare subsistence and destitution, and the tendency for this to be perpetuated by the peasants' behavioural adaptation by which any surplus left over is shared, has left peasants in a precarious position. And that has meant that whenever the subsistence level has been threatened by some adversity, such as a harvest failure or an illness or an increase in taxes or rent, they have fallen foul of the most

¹ M. Nash: Primitive and Peasant Economic Systems (San Francisco, Chandler Publishing Co., 1966).

² Incidentally, such arrangements clearly encourage population growth, just as they discourage out-migration, and for the same reason.

³ For example, although making no mention of the religious obligations which were important in other parts of Latin America, as they were in Europe and elsewhere, Hobsbawm listed no less than eleven forms of 'universal or almost universal services' which peasants were obliged to provide landlords in La Convención in Peru. E.J. Hobsbawm: "A case of neo-feudalism: La Convención, Peru", Journal of Latin American Studies, Vol. 1, No.1, 1969, pp. 39-40.

invidious form of exploitation by which peasants almost everywhere have been locked into rural poverty and thus been constrained from migrating to areas where income-earning opportunities were more favourable. This is chronic indebtedness.

Usury and peasant mobility

Whether a sub-class of usurious moneylenders has evolved in the 'pores' of feudal society or whether landlords themselves have induced indebtedness as a means of intensifying exploitation, usury has been an endemic feature of feudal-type societies. Though its overriding function has been to increase the amount of surplus appropriated from the peasantry it can be seen as a means of dispossessing the peasants of ownership or control of means of production and at the same time binding peasants to the land, their rural poverty, and to estate obligations in particular. As such usury has typically been both a mode of exploitation and a means of facilitating other forms of exploitation.

It is often assumed that low incomes in rural areas induce rural emigration. Yet in view of the association of chronic indebtedness to poverty and to freedom of movement it is apparent that a reduction in rural incomes may actually reduce rural emigration, whereas a rise in income levels, by allowing debts to be paid off, could increase migration, and in certain circumstances even be a necessary precondition for migration.

The means by which peasants have been lured or forced into debt are numerous, but it is characteristic of feudal society that the two major results of usury, debt bondage and debt peonage, have been supported by the apparatus of the state, which has been prepared to enforce onerous conditions on the debtor. The odious practice of debt peonage, by which the debtor is forced to work on some estate until such time as the debt has been paid, has been possible because the state has legally enforced it. Debt bondage refers to other forms of indebtedness which restrict the peasants' freedom of movement. Often landlords have lent money at exorbitant rates of interest to induce permanent indebtedness, sometimes having themselves borrowed from local moneylenders.¹ But the peasants have been forced to resort to such loans by diverse means - through being obliged to pay rents in advance for their plot of land, having to request a loan to tie them over until harvest time, or to compensate for a poor harvest, or to meet the cost of social customs, or to meet many other contingencies.

In India, for example, moneylenders have lured peasants into bonded labour by such means, and have done so with the support of the caste structure and religious dogma. Rates of interest of 30 per cent or more have forced impoverished villagers to work in the creditors' fields in lieu of the interest payment and left them in a position of almost permanent indebtedness, unable to pay off the principal.²

¹ Feder, 1971, op. cit., p. 147.

² M.K. Pandhe (ed.): Bonded Labour in India (Calcutta, Indian School of Social Sciences, India Book Exchange, 1976).

This widespread phenomenon has persisted despite legislation passed in 1920 which was ostensibly designed to prevent debt bondage. That legislation proved largely ineffectual in many states of India (but particularly in such areas as Uttar Pradesh, south Bihar, and Rajasthan) because the social relations of production in the village economy allowed the non-cultivating class to preserve traditional forms of exploitation. In doing so they were aided by patwaris and other local officials and by the continuing illiteracy of the villagers, who remained ignorant of their rights. So in circumstances of poverty and indebtedness a deeply ingrained sense of fatalism was likely to preserve a set of attitudes conducive to resignation and immobility.

To give another example: a recent analysis of labour exploitation in Bolivia before the revolution of 1952 described the numerous ways by which the colonos, or serfs, were exploited and put into debt, concluding that the colonato system was "socially, psychologically, and economically enslaving to approximately 40 per cent of the country's population".¹ As such there was no hope of moving off a hacienda, and as Pearse concluded

"Freedom for the peasant to wander in this society with neither land rights nor a patron behind him was no better than the freedom of a cockroach to walk about the fowlyard."²

Often the peasants have had to pay a rent for use of landlord's mill, or buy provisions from the landlord's 'company store' at monopolistic prices, or having been forced into debt have been obliged to sell their crops to the landlord at harvest times when prices have been relatively low and buy back some proportion of the crop later when prices have risen.

Whereas landlords have often tied peasants to the land as tenants, in other cases they have restricted mobility of landowning peasants by lending mechanical equipment or renting out crucial agricultural inputs and thereby putting peasants into almost permanent debt. Thus it has been observed that as a result of the ejido land reforms in Mexico "patrons-in-capital" replaced "patrons-in-land".³ Similarly in Iraq in 1964 the sheikhs, having had their land expropriated, still managed to take up to 90 per cent of the crops of former tribesmen in payment as rent for mechanical equipment.⁴ By no means has the monopolisation of land been a necessary condition for feudal exploitation and control.

¹ S.M. Smith: "Labour exploitation on pre-1952 haciendas in the lower valley of Cochabambu, Bolivia", The Journal of Developing Areas, Vol. 11, January 1977, p. 243.

² A. Pearse: "Peasants and revolution: The case of Bolivia", Community and Society, Vol. I, November 1972, p. 270.

³ Pearse, 1975, op. cit., pp. 239-40.

⁴ R. King: Land Reform: A World Survey (London, Bell and Sons, 1977), p. 398.

Moneylenders, often richer peasants or outside traders, have been particularly important agents in tying peasants to the land. Many peasants have been lured into what could be described as commercial bondage. For instance, moneylenders in contracting to purchase peasant produce, have supplied the peasant producers with credit in the form of consumer goods rather than cash loans, and have given those goods grossly inflated imputed prices. Once in debt the peasants' bargaining position has been undermined. Similarly, in many cases merchants, having lured peasants into debt, have turned the peasants' 'secondary occupations' to their advantage, sometimes selling them the raw materials and buying back the finished product, making monopolist and monopsonist profits in the course of a few days. Thus the indebted village worker has not only been put in a subordinated position through indebtedness and dependency but been isolated from the market and the source of the means of production.

Usury in its various forms is a feudal mode of exploitation and as such has traditionally been a powerful means of restricting mobility. But if indebtedness is not used in that way, or if examples of indebted tenants being evicted can be cited, that does not mean that feudal relations of production are not operative.¹ Whether landlords use indebtedness to tie peasants to the land or to evict those incapable of providing high levels of rent will depend primarily on population pressure on the land, on whether or not there is landless population. However, what is important is that through the mechanism of indebtedness the non-cultivating class can not only increase the amount of surplus pumped out of village artisans and cultivators but, if necessary, control the level and pattern of rural emigration. And in traditional feudal societies usury has been a widely used method of restricting mobility.

Feudalism and rural bias

Feudalism is essentially, though not entirely, a mode of production based on and suited to agriculture, or at least to an economy in which the division between agriculture and industry has not been developed and where auto-production of food is the main material basis of modes of exploitation. The existence of powerful landlords or vast estates has meant that political, economic, and ideological power has been based in the countryside. Correspondingly, the growth of feudal relations of production has generally coincided with restrictions placed on urban expansion.

Urban centres have invariably predated feudalism, some having developed as a result of clan concentrations for defensive purposes, as trading posts, or as points where chiefs or their equivalent received, consumed, or spent the surplus product. Cities have always had an important role, but that has varied, just as

¹ J.M. Alier: "Relations of production in Andean haciendas: Peru", in K. Duncan and I. Rutledge (eds.): Land and Labour in Latin America (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 145-149.

the power of different social classes has waxed and waned.¹ However, feudalism is the first mode of production which involves a sharp conflict between town and country. Towns are not only points of refuge for escaping serfs or peasants (welcomed there as an additional source of labour power) but are mercantile centres in which burghers, merchants and craftsmen have a common interest in securing part of the surplus product appropriated from the subordinated peasantry. Given the inherent conflict, the dominance of the feudal mode of production implies the temporary and rarely unchallenged triumph of rural over urban society.

Significantly, wherever feudalism has taken root towns and cities have tended to decay, while the extent of urbanisation has stagnated or declined. In medieval Europe the growth of feudalism coincided with urban stagnation, and in Latin America in the early nineteenth century there was some de-urbanisation as feudal relations of production were extended.² It has been noted of the Brazilian urban areas in the nineteenth century, "The role of the city was marginal, dependent on the rural environment. Social control was in the hands of the powerful families. ... The city was only an entrepot where they went to get what they needed, the little that their sugar mills did not produce."³ Similar ruralising tendencies seem to have existed in India following British colonisation, with the resultant retrenchment of the zamindars.⁴ Nothing could be more wrong than simplistic claims that urbanisation is a linear positive function of 'economic growth'.

The dominance of 'rural' over 'urban' areas has typically been preserved by a considerable degree of decentralisation of political power, a feature so characteristic of feudal societies. Individual estates or clusters of villages have been ruled by some powerful landlord or small group of otherwise privileged persons who have generally assumed responsibility for local administration and judicial matters in what have become almost autonomous, self-contained communities. As such

¹ For instance, Anderson's analysis of the function of cities in classical antiquity, particularly in Greece and in the Roman Empire, is illuminating. Anderson, 1974, op. cit. On the influence of urban patterns in antiquity and in the Iberian Peninsular on subsequent Latin American urban developments, see R.M. Morse: "A framework for Latin American urban history", in J.E. Hardoy (ed.): Urbanisation in Latin America: Approaches and Issues (New York, Anchor Books, 1975), pp. 57-107.

² Morse identified a U-shaped curve in the ratio of urban to rural population in Latin America from the mid-eighteenth to late nineteenth century. R.M. Morse: "The development of urban systems in the Americas in the nineteenth century", Journal of Inter-American Studies, Vol. 17, No.1, February 1975, p. 7.

³ J.A. Rios: "The cities of colonial Brazil", in L. Hanke (ed.): History of Latin American Civilisation, Vol. I: The Colonial Experience (London, Methuen, 1969), p. 333.

⁴ Moore, 1967, op. cit., pp. 345-55. The zamindars' role as local despots had developed under the Mogul empire, their role being to extract and channel surplus to the centre. Their local powers merely increased under Pax Britannica.

the landlords or other local despots have constructed a powerful set of political controls over the movement of the subordinated producers in those areas. Moreover, the essentially self-contained nature of such communities has meant that communication and transport systems have been undeveloped or allowed to fall into a state of disrepair, which has made travel between rural and urban areas both costly and inconvenient. But above all, migration has been impeded by the variety of legal and extra-legal restrictions which powerful landlords have been able to enforce.

Finally, the slow growth of urban populations in feudal societies has also been due to urban barriers to in-migration. In medieval Europe craft guilds effectively barred entry by outsiders to a wide range of occupations and, in some cases, made it impossible for migrant interlopers to earn a living. Elsewhere race, religion, and language have been used as criteria for rigid social stratification. In Latin America the traditional estament system served a similar function, as did the caste system in India. Perhaps the most widely recognised has been the patronage system of Japan (known as *oyabunkobun*), which was established in the eighteenth century and has persisted in modified form.¹ In many countries elaborate apprenticeship schemes, reflecting traditional hierarchical (rank-based) property relations, made entry to many occupations by adult migrants hard or impossible. In those circumstances the potential migrant could only expect to earn a small fraction of the average income of urban workers, who in the main occupied a niche tradition had allotted them. Although segmented labour markets remain under capitalist relations of production they are much more widespread in pre-capitalist economies in which the detailed division of labour has not been developed. On the reasonable assumption that urban in-migration is a positive function of expected income, which is a function of the extent of 'openness' of the urban job market, a highly structured urban labour market could only help to discourage rural-urban migration.

The role of the state

The law of the emperor yields to the customs of the village.

(Vietnamese proverb)

In feudal societies the central government's role has essentially been one of non-intervention, thereby allowing the political decentralisation so characteristic of such societies. Social and productive relations based on custom, power, and patronage have been undisturbed. Generally, the government has abstained from labour relations, particularly in the case of the great majority living in rural areas, while few if any laws have been passed to protect workers. Property and contract law has been undeveloped, or not enforced, and in particular no effective system of property titles has existed. As a result peasant landholders have been

¹ R.P. Dore: British Factory, Japanese Factory (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1973).

in a precarious position, being unable to obtain access to institutional credit because they had no land title to offer as security and being liable to lose land and its assets to landlords or other powerful groups. Moreover, the lack of secure titles prevented the development of a market for land.

Yet these various symptoms of a policy of non-intervention should not imply a complete inability of central governments to formulate labour policies. In many feudal societies the law has been used to enforce debt peonage. In others the state apparatus has been used to coerce labour back to rural areas, often forcibly sending migrants back from urban areas.¹ The state has also contributed to feudal exploitation by introducing and enforcing legislation stipulating long-term contracts for indentured labourers, as in Malaya, Ceylon, and Brazil. In short, where state intervention has been required to maintain feudal controls legislation has been used.

Nevertheless the major feature of landlord-dominated states has been the delegation of authority to areas controlled by individual landlords or their representatives. As such, however rudimentary in form, local government machinery has been manipulated to intensify feudal exploitation and restrict peasant mobility. Besides local judicial control, landlords have often been able to introduce local systems of taxation, involving diverse dues levied on various groups of the local population. Often these have been extremely complex and burdensome; for instance, one analysis estimated that in Rajasthan in India there were no less than 86 different types of tax which custom had sanctioned.² Why should such complex 'tax' systems be introduced in such an impoverished society in which the great majority of the population were living on the margin of survival and in which there were few consumer goods? The answer is surely that landlords or 'tax-lords' were eager to extract as much of the economic surplus as possible, which was most effectively achieved by imposing layers of demands, each of which in themselves were too small to cause mass resistance.³ But the heavy total demand on the peasants' resources was likely to force them into regular indebtedness, which restricted mobility, especially where landlord-dominated courts could impose heavy fines and other penalties on those attempting to flee their obligations.

¹ For one account of government action to assist landlords in this way, specifically in central and southern Mexico, see F. Katz: "Labour conditions on haciendas in Porfirian, Mexico: Some trends and tendencies", Hispanic American Historical Review, Vol. 54, No.1, February 1974, pp. 1-47.

² R. Pande: Agrarian Movement in Rajasthan (Delhi, University Publishers, 1975), p. 22.

³ Note that in many feudal-type societies the 'king', or central ruler, awarded certain favoured individuals with an area (or fiefdom) from which to collect tax revenue, ostensibly for the central government.

Other essentially feudal policies have also restricted mobility, some stemming from the political decentralisation, others from control of the central government machinery by powerful landowners.¹ Of the latter category, perhaps the most important has been trade policy. In traditional feudal societies trade policy could be expected to consist of free trade in manufactured goods and protection for food and other items of rural production, or merely general protection. With heavy import duties on food, the rural-urban terms of trade would raise rural and depress urban living standards, thereby incidentally discouraging rural-urban migration. Moreover, free trade in manufactured goods would impede manufacturing investments, thus lowering the growth of urban-industrial jobs and the opportunity for potential migrants. By the same token, this combination of policies would enable rural landlords to raise rents and reduce the size of the parcels of land rented to peasant families. If industrial growth was allowed, such practices would encourage a flight from the countryside.

Within rural areas powerful landowners have often collaborated in impeding modernisation, seeing it as a threat to their customary affluence, power, and capacity for exploitation. It has even been suggested that in some Latin American countries, such as Chile and Ecuador, hacienda owners long opposed railway construction in the regions they dominated precisely because they feared it would allow outsiders into the provinces and provide peasants with a means of emigration.² Indeed, there is plenty of evidence that in such societies estate owners have also dominated local government in urban areas as well as rural areas, and have used municipal legislation to consolidate their control of the land.³ They used urban government machinery to enlarge their estates and restrict the opportunities of the rural population.

In that connection the various legal controls on rural-urban migration in such societies have often been brought into force, though their effect on the level of peasant emigration is hard to assess. Vagrancy laws have been common, as have less legalistic controls. For instance, in imperial and colonial Vietnam those found without a tax card showing their village affiliation were assumed to be bandits, and were subject to immediate arrest.⁴ In such circumstances peasants were disinclined to migrate or risk losing even a tiny plot of land.

¹ The following is meant to merely mention some of the principal policies that could be expected. For a somewhat extended analysis, see P. Peek and G. Standing: "Government policies and rural-urban migration", International Labour Review, forthcoming, 1979.

² R. Mellafe: The Latifundio and the City in Latin American History (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1971), p. 11.

³ W. Glade: The Latin American Economies: A study of their institutional Evolution (New York, American Books, 1969), pp. 61-2.

⁴ Paige, 1975, op. cit., p. 292.

Although other policies and laws restricting mobility in feudal-type societies could be mentioned, it is worth noting one that is more likely to be considered in the context of semi-feudal relations of production, as discussed in the following section. That is because it concerns the system of income relief for the landless poor. Feudal society is based on non-wage forms of exploitation, but almost invariably some wage labour has existed. However, the availability of wage employment has been very limited, incomes have been low and erratic, and in many cases those performing occasional wage labour have been the poor peasants with a sub-subsistence plot of land. To preserve this segment of the population landlords and other recipients of the rural surplus product have often fostered poor laws along the lines of the Speenhamland System, introduced in England in the eighteenth century. That was a convenient device for retaining an impoverished pool of workers in rural areas, for it provided poverty relief only for those labourers who had lived *and* worked in the area. To migrate therefore meant foregoing a claim on social assistance.

Thus various types of local and national policies have been used in feudal societies to restrict population mobility, or if not used directly for that purpose have had the effect of impeding migration.

III. Semi-feudalism and Dependency

So far the analysis has concentrated on the significance of feudal modes of exploitation and the associated restrictions on geographical mobility, without considering the inherent instability of those restrictions (an issue for subsequent sections) or trying to depict any particular social formation as wholly feudal. Indeed the term feudal society has been left as somewhat vague and used only as a means of focusing on the critical mechanisms of exploitation and control. But before shifting the discussion to the question of transitions from feudalism to capitalism, and thus to the various functions of migration in that process, it seems appropriate to insert a few notes on what can be described, not entirely satisfactorily, as semi-feudal relations of production.

With semi-feudalism various feudal modes of exploitation are used to attract and retain an adequate supply of wage labour. In other words, the primary capitalist mode of exploitation, wage labour, coexists with the primary feudal modes of exploitation. Such combinations have featured in many so-called peripheral or dependent economies where foreign capitalist interests have penetrated, either as colonisers or as "neo-colonial" direct investors, and where pre-capitalist relationships of production have been deliberately preserved and strengthened in the interest of capitalist expansion.¹ At an abstract level, with semi-feudalism

¹ Inter alia, see C. Bettelheim: "Theoretical comments", printed as an appendix to A. Emmanuel: Unequal Exchange: A Study of Imperialism of Trade (London, New Left Books, 1972), pp. 297-8; also J. Banaji: "Backward capitalism, primitive accumulation and modes of production", Journal of Contemporary Asia, Vol. 3, No.1, 1973, pp. 393-413.

wage labour is an integral part of the social relations of production and there is extensive commodity production, although the peasants continue production-for-use rather than for exchange. But the transfer of surplus is done not only through the wage mechanism (surplus labour) but through such pre-capitalist mechanisms as feudal rent and usury, including debt bondage. These are functional to the specific mode of production rather than mere vestiges of some waning mode. The workers typically are also tenants of the employer, rent being deducted from the wage, and are subject to indebtedness to the employers in their guise as money-lenders, shop-owners, etc.¹ Thus the characteristic feature of feudal societies remains that of social, economic, and political subordination. But *a priori* the *primary* means of exploitation is indeterminate.

An essential difference between the feudal and capitalist modes of production is that with feudalism rising productivity on the land tends to lead to a reduction in the rate of exploitation because of the tendency for feudal rent to be a fixed sum (or at least only adjusted with a lag). The peasant can thus keep any increase in the surplus product once the rent has been paid, which gives the direct producer an immediate interest in improving productivity (developing the forces of production). With capitalist relations of production it is the workers' income, the wage, which is relatively fixed, so that increases in productivity tend to raise the rate of exploitation, and are thus not in the immediate interests of the direct producer. But semi-feudalism encompasses elements of both the feudal and capitalist modes. Surplus product is extracted by feudal 'rent', but the peasant is left with any surplus above the rental payment. However, the peasant is also a wage worker, so any increase in the peasant's productivity on his own or rented plot reduces the wage which the employer has to pay to ensure the worker a subsistence standard of living. Thus with semi-feudalism the peasant is discouraged from developing the forces of production even though, unlike the worker in the capitalist mode of production, he is not actually divorced from ownership or possession of the means of reproduction. Furthermore the dominant class (the landlords, the plantocracy, or capitalists) also have an interest in restricting the development of productive forces outside the dominant sector because that threatens their labour supply. The result is what should be described as *contrived stagnation* in the peasant economy.

Semi-feudal relations of production are most likely in rural areas penetrated by capitalist forms of production where there is widespread availability of land for possible peasant settlement. Such relations therefore have been much more likely in 'land surplus' than in 'land scarce' countries. They have also been characteristic of agrarian systems based on primitive technologies which have relied on the relatively inefficient application of uncommitted, 'unskilled' labour,

¹ Semi-feudal relations of production have been discussed most often in terms of recent agricultural relations in India. Contributors to a protracted debate in the Economic and Political Weekly included Alavi, Banaji, Cleaver, Prasad, Saith, Sau, Rudra, and Patnaik.

characteristic of such a 'semi-proletarianised' work force. In other words, with primitive technology a cheap, low-quality labour force would be adequate, whereas a more advanced technology with higher potential productivity would require a more fully committed, skilled (or in effect proletarianised) labour force.

Before considering the implications of semi-feudal relations of production for mobility, it is worth delineating the three main types of 'semi-feudal' agrarian organisation. All three are capitalist in the sense that they are geared to capital accumulation and rely on wage labour; but all three also appropriate surplus product from the direct producers.

The first is the so-called '*modern hacienda*' still found in many parts of Central and South America, and in modified form elsewhere.¹ Modern commercial haciendas in Peru are an example of this type of system. Legislation passed in the 1930's made community land inalienable, and thereby tied comuneros to the land by ruling out land sales and enabling haciendas to hire workers for less than subsistence wages. In some cases cotton estate owners assisted in the registration of so-called indigenous communities with the intention of legally binding peasants to an inadequate amount of land so that they were forced to labour on neighbouring cotton estates.² The coffee fincas of Central America have also traditionally relied on daily wage workers who supply part of their subsistence requirements from peasant farming.

The second type of institution is the typical *plantation*, on which labourers have received low wages supplemented by small rented plots of land on which to produce part of their subsistence requirements, and various paternalistic mechanisms have helped tie workers to the estate and workers have been indirectly exploited by induced indebtedness. Essentially semi-feudal indentured labour systems as applied in many plantation-dominated economies, have often involved semi-feudal relations, as did the Brazilian colonato system, for instance.³ And in the case of Peru, the widely-discussed system of labour recruitment known as *enganche* (literally, the hook) was used traditionally to lure workers into estate employment; cash advances and the resultant indebtedness forced workers to work for very low wages from which the plantation made substantial deductions.

The third main type of agricultural institution that could be described as semi-feudal is the *migratory labour estate*. Such estates have been common in a few countries, including Algeria, Kenya, Angola, and the State of California in the

¹ For a general analysis of this phenomenon in Latin America, see E. Feder: "Latifundio and agricultural labour in Latin America", in T. Shanin (ed.): Peasants and peasant Societies (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1971). Also, A. de Janvry and C. Garramón: "The dynamics of rural poverty in Latin America", Journal of Peasant Studies, Vol. 4, No.3, April 1977, pp. 206-16.

² Paige, 1975, op. cit., p. 340.

³ Among the many studies of the latter, see J.B. Lopes: "Capitalism in the periphery: Agrarian conditions and the development of the working classes in São Paulo" (São Paulo, CEBRAP, 1977, mimeo).

USA. For instance under colonial regimes they flourished as centres of grape cultivation in Algeria, and of coffee cultivation in Angola and Kenya.¹ Once again, while wage labour has been used on such estates the wage rate has been less than the cost of reproducing labour power, the wage being artificially depressed by coercion and the expropriation of native lands. In Angola, for example, labour contractors used hiring methods that were similar to the enganche system in Peru, giving small advances to get workers to sign a long-term labour contract, or giving gifts to achieve the same objective. Once enmeshed in estate employment the temporary migrant worker was expected to supply part of his subsistence needs through peasant production by other family members. But, crucially, the migrants received wages that provided a lower standard of living than that obtained by smallholders growing coffee elsewhere in the country.

The immediate question is whether or not migration will be greater in the context of some form of semi-feudal relations of production than in more purely feudal societies. The first point to note is that with all these various semi-feudal systems there is a greater degree of force and coercion involved than is customary in societies characterised by traditional paternalistic landlord-peasant relations. This is not to romanticise the latter in any way. But it is clear that in most landlord-dominated societies the force has been more veiled and the relationship between the exploitative class and the direct producers more personal, even to the extent of fictive kinship arrangements and a web of customary reciprocities. With semi-feudal relations the exploiting class is intent on accelerating capital accumulation and is more involved in the actual production process.

In those circumstances the peasant-workers would be less tied to some village community from any sense of dependent insecurity. Their insecurity would be much more nakedly exposed. But in addition those workers who have only a tiny plot of land from which the produce part of their subsistence requirements would be likely to have less sense of attachment to the land than traditional peasants. This of course would be even more the case for rural labourers without any land at all.² Being less committed to the land implies a greater propensity to emigrate from the rural community.

Moreover, with semi-feudal relations of production rural workers are less isolated from the labour market and from the over-all labour process, making communication and knowledge of labour market opportunities correspondingly greater. And as plantations or estates essentially rely on an undifferentiated mass of unskilled workers, individual opportunities to improve incomes is minimal in

¹ Paige, 1975, op. cit., p. 67.

² S. Mintz: "The folk-urban continuum and the rural proletarian community", American Journal of Sociology, Vol. LIX, No.2, 1953, pp. 136-43.

characteristic of such a 'semi-proletarianised' work force. In other words, with primitive technology a cheap, low-quality labour force would be adequate, whereas a more advanced technology with higher potential productivity would require a more fully committed, skilled (or in effect proletarianised) labour force.

Before considering the implications of semi-feudal relations of production for mobility, it is worth delineating the three main types of 'semi-feudal' agrarian organisation. All three are capitalist in the sense that they are geared to capital accumulation and rely on wage labour; but all three also appropriate surplus product from the direct producers.

The first is the so-called '*modern hacienda*' still found in many parts of Central and South America, and in modified form elsewhere.¹ Modern commercial haciendas in Peru are an example of this type of system. Legislation passed in the 1930's made community land inalienable, and thereby tied comuneros to the land by ruling out land sales and enabling haciendas to hire workers for less than subsistence wages. In some cases cotton estate owners assisted in the registration of so-called indigenous communities with the intention of legally binding peasants to an inadequate amount of land so that they were forced to labour on neighbouring cotton estates.² The coffee fincas of Central America have also traditionally relied on daily wage workers who supply part of their subsistence requirements from peasant farming.

The second type of institution is the typical *plantation*, on which labourers have received low wages supplemented by small rented plots of land on which to produce part of their subsistence requirements, and various paternalistic mechanisms have helped tie workers to the estate and workers have been indirectly exploited by induced indebtedness. Essentially semi-feudal indentured labour systems as applied in many plantation-dominated economies, have often involved semi-feudal relations, as did the Brazilian colonato system, for instance.³ And in the case of Peru, the widely-discussed system of labour recruitment known as *enganche* (literally, the hook) was used traditionally to lure workers into estate employment; cash advances and the resultant indebtedness forced workers to work for very low wages from which the plantation made substantial deductions.

The third main type of agricultural institution that could be described as semi-feudal is the *migratory labour estate*. Such estates have been common in a few countries, including Algeria, Kenya, Angola, and the State of California in the

¹ For a general analysis of this phenomenon in Latin America, see E. Feder: "Latifundio and agricultural labour in Latin America", in T. Shanin (ed.): Peasants and peasant Societies (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1971). Also, A. de Janvry and C. Garramón: "The dynamics of rural poverty in Latin America", Journal of Peasant Studies, Vol. 4, No.3, April 1977, pp. 206-16.

² Paige, 1975, op. cit., p. 340.

³ Among the many studies of the latter, see J.B. Lopes: "Capitalism in the periphery: Agrarian conditions and the development of the working classes in São Paulo" (São Paulo, CEBRAP, 1977, mimeo).

USA. For instance under colonial regimes they flourished as centres of grape cultivation in Algeria, and of coffee cultivation in Angola and Kenya.¹ Once again, while wage labour has been used on such estates the wage rate has been less than the cost of reproducing labour power, the wage being artificially depressed by coercion and the expropriation of native lands. In Angola, for example, labour contractors used hiring methods that were similar to the enganche system in Peru, giving small advances to get workers to sign a long-term labour contract, or giving gifts to achieve the same objective. Once enmeshed in estate employment the temporary migrant worker was expected to supply part of his subsistence needs through peasant production by other family members. But, crucially, the migrants received wages that provided a lower standard of living than that obtained by smallholders growing coffee elsewhere in the country.

The immediate question is whether or not migration will be greater in the context of some form of semi-feudal relations of production than in more purely feudal societies. The first point to note is that with all these various semi-feudal systems there is a greater degree of force and coercion involved than is customary in societies characterised by traditional paternalistic landlord-peasant relations. This is not to romanticise the latter in any way. But it is clear that in most landlord-dominated societies the force has been more veiled and the relationship between the exploitative class and the direct producers more personal, even to the extent of fictive kinship arrangements and a web of customary reciprocities. With semi-feudal relations the exploiting class is intent on accelerating capital accumulation and is more involved in the actual production process.

In those circumstances the peasant-workers would be less tied to some village community from any sense of dependent insecurity. Their insecurity would be much more nakedly exposed. But in addition those workers who have only a tiny plot of land from which they produce part of their subsistence requirements would be likely to have less sense of attachment to the land than traditional peasants. This of course would be even more the case for rural labourers without any land at all.² Being less committed to the land implies a greater propensity to emigrate from the rural community.

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¹ Paige, 1975, op. cit., p. 67.

² S. Mintz: "The folk-urban continuum and the rural proletarian community", American Journal of Sociology, Vol. LIX, No.2, 1953, pp. 136-43.

conditions of semi-proletarianisation.¹ By the same token, there is less need for reciprocal labour systems than are found in many peasant societies.² And that in itself could only weaken the ties to the village community and, most particularly, to the kinship network.

So, for several related reasons the propensity to migrate could be expected to be greater in a community dominated by semi-feudal relations of production than in more traditional feudal societies. But there is one further set of issues which should be considered - the nature of urbanisation in different types of society. The topic is complex, and a few notes will have to suffice to indicate the general dilemma. The basic issue is whether the nature of the agrarian system influences the pattern of urbanisation, and thereby the pattern and level of rural-urban migration.

In an influential article, Wolf and Mintz drew some distinctions between haciendas and plantations. The latter have existed mainly to serve an export market, whereas haciendas have mainly served local markets - though there are counter examples, such as the case of sugar plantations in Argentina. Wolf and Mintz claimed that the basic difference was that the hacienda had "scarce capital" and employed "factors of production" not only for capital accumulation but also "to support the status aspirations of the owner", in contrast to the plantation which was merely a means of furthering capital accumulation.³ Although their distinctions have been shown to be oversimplified, it does seem likely that, whereas all feudal and semi-feudal systems restrict urbanisation and rural emigration, plantations would foster a different pattern of urban growth than would manorial estates or haciendas. In medieval feudal society urban centres were typically the locality of some feudal lord or group of nobles, where retinues of servants congregated, small-scale handicrafts were conducted, and markets were located. Traditional haciendas in Latin America generally fitted into that schema, making urban decentralisation a feature of social formations dominated by haciendas. In contrast, plantations have tended to restrict the development of internal markets, and being export-oriented have fostered the development of primate cities, without

¹ This point is considered by Paige as having an important influence on the type of class struggle to be expected in rural societies. In traditional land-lord-dominated communities in which access to the land is the main means of income and security the class struggle typically takes the form of agrarian revolt and land invasions. Where wage labour is the basis of income, the struggle is generally concerned with altering the distribution of income, and is therefore likely to result in trade union reformist activity. However, achieving a socialist transformation of productive relationships would presumably be easier in the latter case, where there would be less of a tendency to want some small plot of land on which to cling as an independent, petty producer.

² C. Erasmus: "The occurrence and disappearance of reciprocal farm labour in Latin America", in D.B. Heath and R.N. Adams (eds.): Contemporary Cultures and Societies of Latin America (New York, Random House, 1965), pp. 173-199.

³ E.R. Wolf and S.W. Mintz: "Haciendas and plantations in Middle America and the Antilles", Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 6, No.3, September 1957, p. 380.

any substantial network of smaller towns.¹ If that is the case rural-urban migration in an economy with a primate city would tend to be less, because of the limited number of points of destination (definitionally) and because a larger proportion of the population would be far away from an urban centre. However, in the case of a primate city rural-urban migration would appear to have a greater impact on the urban economy, and be more likely to be associated with urban unemployment, congestion, and related phenomena found in many primate cities. But whether rural-urban migration will be greater in societies having a high level of urban primacy is an empirical question for which there appears to be little evidence.

To sum up this and previous sections, with both feudal and semi-feudal relations of production in rural communities labour mobility will be curbed. Moreover, not only will urbanisation be restricted, but the pattern of urbanisation will reflect the nature of the dominant mode of production in those rural areas. Above all, and in stark contrast to the assumption of dualistic models of development, the existence of an 'underemployed' surplus population in rural areas ready and available to move to the 'modern' capitalist sector in urban areas cannot be presumed. Migration does not merely reflect a divergence in rural and urban income levels, and rarely has the 'modern' sector acquired an unlimited supply of labour without a struggle.

IV. Transitions to Capitalism

"At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or - this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms - with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution."²

The decline of feudalism and the question of the transition to capitalism, both in its historical European context and as an on-going process in the world, has been the subject of a vast, fascinating and rapidly growing literature which it would be impossible to summarise in a short essay. Yet to place the phenomenon of migration in its socio-economic context it is essential to grasp the main elements involved - and that applies as much to transitions of any social formation as to the specific case of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. The following notes are, therefore, an attempt to identify the elements which, in one form or

¹ There is considerable empirical support for this hypothesis. Among the indirect evidence, McGreevey found a strong correlation between exports per capita and the degree of primacy in national economies. W.P. McGreevey: "A statistical analysis of primacy and lognormality in the size distribution of Latin American cities, 1750-1960", in R.M. Morse (ed.): The Urban Development of Latin America, 1750-1960 (Stanford University, Centre for Latin American Studies, 1971), p. 125.

² K. Marx: Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859) (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), pp. 20-21.

another, should be considered in the analysis of the function and changing level and pattern of migration in the development of capitalism.

The basic premise for any realistic analysis of a transition is that *the pressure to change will reflect the fact that the forces of production can no longer develop within the limits imposed by the existing social relations of production*, making prior changes in those social relations a necessary condition for the further development of material wealth.

In other words, the period preceding a transition will be one in which the limits imposed on the development of the forces of production by the social relations are such as to create stagnation and widespread social unrest, evidenced by riots, rebellions, civil wars, or strikes, all of which might appear to be directed at more narrowly defined issues but which in reality reflect the contradictions inherent in a hitherto dominant mode of production. In the case of the impending dissolution of feudalism, typical signs will be agricultural involution, peasant uprisings (which are likely to be atavistically inclined rather than directed at affecting a transition to capitalism or socialism), or what is a reflection of the same malaise, a mass flight from the countryside.¹

In considering the transition from feudalism to capitalism it is useful to distinguish between those tendencies contributing to feudal dissolution and those that cause the transition to capitalism. First, as with all modes of production based on intrinsically antagonistic classes, there are various tendencies in the feudal mode of production which make stagnation and declining living standards likely, even though it is invalid to claim that there is no pressure to develop the forces of production in feudal society, as even Lenin seems to have thought.² The fact is that crises will occur when the social relations of production not only impede the development of productive forces but create conditions leading to declining living standards and economic stagnation. Although there are others, two factors deserve particular attention: population growth, and the struggle over the distribution of surplus product.

¹ It is a moot question whether rebellion and migration should be seen as in some sense substitute reactions. To the extent they are substitutes, it would be an important contribution to knowledge to determine the conditions tending to produce one rather than the other. Interestingly one Latin American study suggested that migration was a substitute for revolution in the face of a conflict between economic stagnation and enhanced aspirations ("a mental change"). G. Germani: "Emigración del campo a la ciudad y sus causas", in H. Gilberti, et al (eds.): Sociedad, Economía y Reforma Agraria (Buenos Aires, 1965), p. 74.

² V.I. Lenin: The Development of Capitalism in Russia, reprinted as Collected Works, Vol. III (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1960), p. 66. Of course, the Asiatic mode has been depicted as the static mode par excellence.

Feudal crises

"There are districts in which the position of the rural population is that of a man standing permanently up to the neck in water, so that even a ripple is sufficient to drown him."¹

The growth of the peasant population has been encouraged by traditional feudal oligarchies simply because the increase in numbers tends to push up the level of rent. For their part peasants have responded to their own population growth by attempting to intensify production on their landholdings. But their ability to do so has been severely limited by primitive techniques of production, limited or no access to financial resources for investment, and a division of labour dictated by the household structure. Moreover even where peasants have the wherewithal to develop the forces of production, there tend to be social mechanisms designed to prevent the more entrepreneurial or innovative peasants from benefiting at the expense of the majority.²

Perhaps the most important long-term reason for stagnation and growing instability of peasant economies is the remorseless process of land fragmentation. In general peasant land is not commoditised in feudal societies, and the main form of land transfer is inheritance. This does not pose a threat to the stability of the system with a constant population, but does do so if there is population growth. The result has been that not only has the average size of peasant landholdings declined but, perhaps more crucially, individual landholdings have come to exist in a fragmented form, as peasant families have subdivided land to ensure equal (or whatever the local concept of 'fair') shares of land of different quality or of land in different locations in the village. It is common for small landholdings to consist of scattered strips of land, each of which are barely worth farming.³

In peasant communities with a limited amount of land, population growth leads to more intensive cultivation which, given primitive techniques of cultivation and a process of land fragmentation which impairs productive efficiency, tends to lead

¹ R.H. Tawney: Land and Labour in China (Boston, Beacon Press, 1966, first published in 1932), p. 77.

² Note the earlier discussion on 'balanced reciprocity'. For good recent discussions of the various mechanisms designed to inhibit personal advance in traditional peasant communities see J.S. Migdal: Peasants, Politics and Revolution: Pressures towards Political and Social Change in the Third World (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1974), Chapter IV, pp. 60-84; G. Hunter: Modernising Peasant Societies: A Comparative Study of Asia and Africa (London, Oxford University Press, 1969); Nash, 1960, op. cit.; Sahlins, 1974, op. cit.; inter alia.

³ In analyses of agricultural production and the relative performance of different size-categories of farms, too much emphasis has been placed on the size of landholdings per se. Although land fragmentation has been widely documented, most economic studies have concentrated on simple size indicators. It is pertinent to add that land fragmentation does not only arise as a result of inheritance customs and population growth. In some ecologically sensitive areas (as in Vietnam) the possession of scattered strips of land reduces the risk of total loss of crops and income, and thus represents an insurance policy.

to soil erosion and exhaustion. At the limit this leads to what Geertz in his analysis of the Javanese peasantry aptly described as agricultural involution.¹ However, the peasants' increasing distress is only directly related to population growth in the sense that the social relations of production prevent the producers from developing the productivity of the land and their labour.² In that context, the thesis associated with Boserup that population growth induces technological change and thus the accelerated development of productive forces is incomplete.³ That will only be the case when and if the restrictive social relations of production are transformed - and population growth provides a spur to such changes.

Whereas the growth of the peasant population is associated with declining living standards and a likely reduction in the surplus available for appropriation, the growth in the size of the class of exploiters causes further tensions in the social relationships. Whether or not feudal estates fragment themselves, the simple arithmetic of a demographic expansion means an expansion in the amount of surplus necessary to maintain the living standards of the dominant class. Consequently landlords will be inclined to increase the rate of exploitation.

Thus there will be twin causes of increasing tension in the social relations of production. As a result of population growth and the static nature of the peasant economy the peasantry will experience a declining ability to meet pre-existing obligations and living standards, while the feudal class' increasing need for revenue will lead to a higher level of exploitation. Whatever the relative contribution of these tendencies, the result will be a process of "decremental deprivation" of the peasantry, which is likely to lead to unrest and rural emigration.⁴ In such circumstances landlords could adopt either of two courses. First, they could "tighten the screws", riveting the peasants more firmly to the villages and attempting to increase the rate of exploitation to offset the declining level of surplus generated. In that case peasant rebellions are almost inevitable, for very soon it would become truly a case of starving, degraded men

¹ C. Geertz: Agricultural Involution: The Process of Ecological Change in Indonesia (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1966).

² Clearly any quasi-Malthusian interpretation (leading to population control as the recommended answer to poverty) would be thoroughly erroneous. As Marx noted, in the course of perhaps his most pithy refutation of Malthusianism, "In different modes of social production there are different laws of the increase of population and of overpopulation; the latter identical with pauperism." K. Marx: Grundrisse, 1973, op. cit., p. 604. See also R.L. Meek (ed.): Marx and Engels on the Population Bomb (Berkeley, Ramparts Press, 1971; first published in 1953). Meek's introduction was an early warning of the ideological nature of 'population control' policies.

³ E. Boserup: The Conditions of Agricultural Growth: The Economics of Agrarian Change under Population Pressure (Chicago, Aldine, 1965).

⁴ On the concept of decremental deprivation, see T.R. Gurr: Why Men Rebel (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 46-50.

and women having little to lose but their feudal chains to rural impoverishment.¹

The second reaction by the landlords, which comes through superbly in Moore's work, is to relax the screws of feudal exploitation in an effort to retain control of the peasants and appease their rising resentment and frustration.² To preserve exploitative relations exploitation is reduced to prevent the peasants becoming so deprived of their basic needs that they have little alternative to either the 'political' expedient of rebellion or the more passive expedient of tramping off to some rural or urban wilderness. But such reductions in the level of exploitation have generally represented a progressive change in the social relations of production. At first the change may be only quantitative, but ultimately it will become qualitative, if only because mere relaxation of feudal modes of exploitation does not overcome the basic causes of stagnation. To the extent that social relations of production were radically changed, the forces of production could be developed, involving changes in the social and detailed division of labour, technological innovation, etc. But such changes in the forces of production could only follow changes in the social relations of production.³ And even so, the causes of stagnation are not the causes of the transition to capitalist relations of production, or at least are not sufficient causes of that transition.

Factors in the transition to capitalism

Once again it would be well beyond the limited purpose of this essay to go into an exhaustive analysis of this question. At best we could hope that the following comments capture the essence of the process in its various forms. Fortunately there is a valuable literature which has effectively delineated the main elements and in some cases attempted to identify the principal ones. Thus Maurice Dobb in his seminal work correctly identified the inefficiency of the feudal mode of production in contrast with emerging capitalism as the primary factor leading to the penetration of capitalist relations of production, and in that context stressed the motivational importance of the growing needs of the ruling class for revenue.⁴

¹ E.J. Hobsbawm: Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movements in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1959); and E.R. Wolf: Peasant Wars in the Twentieth Century (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1969).

² Moore, 1967, op. cit., passim. In a recent penetrating and provocative analysis, Scott has highlighted this phenomenon in the context of South-East Asia. J.C. Scott: The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in South-East Asia (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1976).

³ Countless illustrations could be provided, but the crisis of feudalism in medieval Western Europe is the classic example. Rural living standards only started to rise after the onset of the feudal crisis. Anderson, 1974, op. cit., p. 204.

⁴ M.H. Dobb: Studies in the Development of Capitalism (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963; originally published in 1946), p. 42.

As such, Hilton's thesis that the struggle for rent was the "prime mover" in the classic West European transition from feudalism to capitalism is compatible with that analysis.¹ More generally, it is clear that the principal factors are the social struggle for the surplus product, whether that takes the form of feudal rent, taxation, tributes, or some other form of feudal exploitation, and the inefficiency of those forms of feudal exploitation compared with other forms of generating and distributing economic surplus. But that stated, it is equally clear that this only identifies a condition for change.

It has to be assumed that the dominant class attempts to maximise the surplus accruing to it in ways that are most suited to its particular capabilities and mores. It is in that context that landed oligarchies have responded to population pressure (density and growth) by altering the modes of exploitation at their disposal as alternatives became more efficient.

Population growth is itself a reflection of social and economic development and is by no means an autonomous phenomenon. Yet demographic expansion has tended to undermine the ability of peasant families to meet their rental or other feudal dues while retaining enough to preserve their level of subsistence. It has also encouraged two changes that presage the shift to capitalist relations of production - a change in forms of exploitation by landlords and the growth of class differentiation of the peasantry. Population growth has generally resulted in the growth of a body of itinerant workers, whose availability as cheap wage labour to work on estates has encouraged the commutation of labour rent to rent in kind and money rent. That transformation has sometimes been interpreted as the dissolution of feudal exploitation. This is certainly not the case. But it has created conditions for that dissolution and the growth of capitalism. One reason is that, although the shift from labour rent to sharecropping rent and from that to cash rent can be seen as shifts in *forms* of feudal rent, the implications for economic growth are quite different, as they are for the growth of class differentiation.

The change from service tenancy to share tenancy may be an effective way of increasing the landlords' revenue in so far as it induces increased production. In Chile, for example, such a change was accompanied by a deliberate policy on the part of some landlords to provide irrigated land to those peasants who seemed most likely to be commercially successful.² But above all, the change to money rent stimulates the development of forces of production in the peasant economy, for the surplus taken in that form tends to be a certain limited amount of money based on

¹ R.H. Hilton (ed.): The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism (London, New Left Books, 1976). This reproduces a series of articles stemming from Dobb's Studies. See also R.H. Hilton: Bond Men Made Free (London, Temple Smith, 1973).

² Pearse, 1975, op. cit., pp. 90-1. Note that this is an example of a change in the social relations of production being the antecedent of the further development of productive forces.

some notion of productivity of an average peasant. The peasant workers are less likely to make investments when, say, half the additional output would go to landlords than when they could expect to retain all or most of the additional output. The change in rental form thus encourages three related developments - an attempt by all peasants in a position to do so to increase output on the land they occupy, the growth of commodity production and exchange, and the growth in the class differentiation of the peasantry, as some are able to take advantage of the new situation at the expense of others.

The importance of growing class differentiation of the peasantry lies in the fact that the process of differentiation itself creates a domestic market for commodities, which is a necessary condition for the extensive growth of capitalist relations of production, and which shows clearly how the development of forces of production follows changes in the social relations of production. Where the feudal oligarchy prevents class differentiation of the peasantry, the development of capitalist relations will be slowed and stagnation and revolutionary situations made more likely.

Feudal societies have rested most firmly on the basis of an essentially undifferentiated middle peasantry, neither too affluent that they can assert their independence and become capitalist farmers in competition with the feudal estates for labour power and markets nor so impoverished that they cease to be able to provide a viable surplus, or to work as anything other than wage labourers, or to retain ties of obligations to the landlords extracting surplus from them.¹ But as the feudal controls are relaxed, possibly in the wake of violent upheaval or in the face of the fear of such an upheaval, class differentiation proceeds by polarising the peasantry into two distinctive groups, both of which tend to purchase more goods than the middle peasantry.² The wealthier peasants purchase increasing amounts of consumer goods (means of subsistence) and means of production, which are thereby commoditised rather than being produced within peasant households. They also exploit the weaker peasants by renting them equipment, leasing out plots of land, lending them cash or even food, as well as hiring them as wage workers.³

¹ In a recently published article, Hilton has argued that there was differentiation of the peasantry at the height of medieval feudalism, but he presents no evidence that that was class differentiation, only that some peasants had considerably more land and assets than others. R.H. Hilton: "Reasons for inequality among medieval peasants", Journal of Peasant Studies, Vol. 5, No.3, April 1978, pp. 271-84. It is the role of groups in the production process that is crucial.

² This of course is the major theme of Lenin's remarkable work on the transition to capitalism in nineteenth century Russia. V.I. Lenin: The Development of Capitalism in Russia (Moscow, International Publishers, 1960).

³ Note that the ownership of land may be a poor guide to such differentiation, as Lenin clearly demonstrated. For one controversial but penetrating analysis of an agrarian transition which uses such measures of stratification, see M. Abdel-Fadil: Development, Income Distribution and Social Change in Rural Egypt (1952-1970): A Study in the Political Economy of Agrarian Transition (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975). The conceptual difficulty is that such measures are inadequate proxies for stratifying peasants according to their role in the transition to capitalism.

Conversely, the poor peasants are converted into semi-proletarianised workers, often alienating their land to moneylenders and no longer able to survive without wage employment. As such they change from being a hindrance to the development of production, through not being commodity consumers, to being both purchasers and sellers of commodities. No longer able to produce their own means of subsistence, they have to purchase them and thus become a source of profit to the emerging class of capitalist farmers and industrialists. To enable them to purchase consumer goods they have to sell the only commodity they possess, their labour power. Thus the differentiation of the peasantry acts as a powerful stimulus to commodity circulation and production.

Some observers have been misled by the apparent growth in the number of peasant farmers in a phase of transition into arguing that the peasantry has not been differentiated in the class sense. The signal is misleading. The process of differentiation often involves an expansion in the number of those for whom peasant agriculture is an auxiliary occupation.¹ This is merely a transitional phase in the process of proletarianisation, since the growing impoverishment of a segment of the population forces them to diversify their activities, attempt small-scale subsistence 'gardening', work longer hours, and so on. That is surely a sign of growing pressures leading to class differentiation, where class is defined by relation to the group's role in the production process. In this case it signifies the typically agonising growth of a rural proletariat. And a rural proletariat is nothing if not mobile.

Forms of transition

Yet while the class differentiation process has been a major aspect of transitional situations, it is clear that the dissolution of feudalism and the development of capitalist relations of production in agriculture can take several forms. In fact three distinctive routes have been identified, although in practice many transitions have involved elements of each pattern. The first of these is the classic model, associated with the English transition to capitalism, in which the landlord class with the support of the state displaces quasi-independent peasants and replaces them with tenant farmers - a small number of capitalist farmers alongside a growing body of landless or impoverished labourers.² In this model the landlord class gradually withdraws, having been instrumental in securing the transition.³ In short, rent becomes capitalist ground rent, and tenant farmers become the nucleus of the agrarian capitalist class.

¹ V.I. Lenin: The Agrarian Question and the "Critics of Marx" (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1976), p. 134.

² K. Marx: Capital (New York, International Publishers, 1967), Vol. I, Part VIII, pp. 713-64.

³ As such the English transition has been described as "an agrarian revolution from above". T. Kemp: Industrialisation in Nineteenth Century Europe (London, Longmans, 1969), p. 43.

The other main forms were most clearly identified by Lenin, and coincided with the essential distinction which formed the basis of Moore's analysis of the conditions leading from feudalism to parliamentary democracy, fascism, or communism.¹ Lenin saw the transition to agrarian capitalism taking one of two routes, either evolving into what he described as the "Junker" economy, in which capitalism retained feudal features, or taking a more "revolutionary" character, closer to the classic model, but different to the extent that it is much more a case of a "revolution from below", in which relics of feudalism are largely destroyed and where the growth of small-scale capitalist agriculture leads to relatively rapid capital accumulation.² Elsewhere, referring to the development of capitalist production in agriculture, Lenin summed up the two forms most clearly:

"The survivals of serfdom may fall away either as a result of the transformation of landlord economy or as a result of the abolition of the landlord latifundia, i.e., either by reform or by revolution. Bourgeois development may proceed by having big landlord economies at the head, which will gradually become more and more bourgeois and gradually substitute bourgeois for feudal methods of exploitation. It may also proceed by having small peasant economies at the head, which in a revolutionary way, will remove the "excrescence" of the feudal latifundia from the social organism and then freely develop without them along the path of capitalist economy

Those two paths of objectively possible bourgeois development we would call the Prussian path and the American path, respectively. In the first case feudal landlord economy slowly evolves into bourgeois Junker landlord economy, which condemns the peasants to decades of most harrowing expropriations and bondage, while a small minority of "big peasants" arises. In the second case there is no landlord economy, or else it is broken up by revolution, which confiscates and splits up the feudal estates. In that case the peasant predominates, becomes the sole agent of agriculture and evolves into a capitalist farmer. In the first case the main content of the evolution is transformation of feudal bondage into servitude and capitalist exploitation on the land of the feudal landlords - Junkers. In the second case the main background is transformation of the patriarchal peasant into a bourgeois farmer."³

¹ Moore, 1967, op. cit. It is perhaps regrettable that in his internationally acclaimed work Moore chose to mention neither Lenin nor, except in an extremely peripheral manner, Marx. In many respects Moore's schema was foreshadowed by Lenin, in particular. It is perhaps as regrettable that he also neglected the seminal work of Dobb, along with the various contributions that Dobb's work stimulated. However, this criticism should not detract from the importance of Moore's work. The fact that by not mentioning the origins of his thesis, Moore's work was likely to be more influential only attests to the pervasive impact of ideology in social science.

² Lenin traced the two forms in the preface to the second (1908) edition of his Development of Capitalism in Russia, 1960, op. cit., pp. 32-3.

³ V.I. Lenin: The Agrarian Programme of Social Democracy in the First Russian Revolution (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1954), Collected Works, Vol. 13, p. 239.

Variants of these forms of agrarian development have been characteristic of many countries throughout the world. Very crudely and schematically the so-called revolutionary way (or what is sometimes called the "American" route, or, more recently, the *via campesino*) seems to have been followed in those two bastions of recent capitalist development, Taiwan and South Korea. Although there have been important regional variations, it also seems closer to the experience of Bolivia, Venezuela, Peru, and Mexico, despite supposedly "pro-peasant" reforms in each case, modified in the case of Mexico by ejido and in Venezuela by the role of peasant unions. There have been signs of this type of transition in some African countries as well. An interesting case is Rwanda. When it was a colony, the authority of the Tutsi overlords was preserved by the Belgians, but the Tutsi were overthrown by their Hutu serfs after Belgian withdrawal.¹ This established a system of petty commodity production and the basis for the growth of class differentiation and primary accumulation.

The Junker way is much more akin to the types of change that have occurred in, for instance, the Philippines, Indonesia, Brazil, Chile, and much of India.² But these judgements need to be temporised and are presented merely as broad hypotheses.

The evolutionary Junker route has had several variants, many countries experiencing more than one. The essence has always been manipulation of the relations of production, or modes of exploitation, in pursuit of higher levels of surplus appropriation. One variant has been some form of enclosure movement, involving the mass eviction of tenants. Often this has been done under the guise of land reform, a convenient device for accelerating the transition to capitalist relations of production.³ Another variant has been the incremental process of conversion of labour rent to wage labour; Kay's recent analysis of that process in Chile provides a good example.⁴ A third variant has been the extension of land

¹ R. le Marchand: Rwanda and Burundi (New York, Praeger, 1970), pp. 170-71.

² On the Philippines, see S.A. Resnick: "The second path to capitalism: A model of international development", Journal of Contemporary Asia, Vol. 3, No.1, 1973, pp. 133-48; on Brazil, despite its romanticist and reactionary prognosis, see S. Forman: The Brazilian Peasantry (New York, Columbia University Press, 1975); on India, see Moore, 1967, op. cit.; and the fine essay by Byres in which, *inter alia*, he noted crucial differences between India and Japan. T.J. Byres: "Land reform, industrialisation and the marketed surplus in India: An essay on the power of rural bias", in D. Lehmann (ed.): Agrarian Reform and Agrarian Reformism: Studies of Peru, Chile, China and India (London, Faber and Faber, 1974), pp. 221-61.

³ Peek and Standing, 1979, op. cit.; R. Stavenhagen (ed.): Agrarian Problems and Peasant Movements in Latin America (Garden City, New York, Anchor Books, 1970), especially the paper by Barraclough and Domike.

⁴ C. Kay: "The development of the Chilean hacienda system, 1850-1973", in Duncan and Rutledge, 1977, op. cit., pp. 103-39.

control by estates or landlords - or the state representing their interests - thereby drawing a larger proportion of the population into the estate-dominated zone. This was done in parts of the Andean countries with highland peasant communities and was done through Crown Land regulations in a number of British colonies.

A fourth mechanism by which a surplus population has been created, and by which a process of proletarianisation has been stimulated, has been by means of the simple expedient of taxation. In short, in the interests of nascent capitalist farmers or growing estates, additional taxes have been imposed on the peasant population. Notably in British, French, and Portuguese colonies in Africa, hut or head taxes forced young adult natives to offer to work as wage workers, and thereby contributed to the process of capital accumulation in the 'modern' sector while weakening the viability of the 'traditional' peasantry.

Finally, a proletariat has sometimes been created by the device of forced or voluntary mass immigration, as in the case of mainly European *colonos* in Brazil.¹ In such cases, as noted in an earlier section, semi-feudal characteristics have typically persisted, while the pre-existing peasantry was slowly squeezed onto more marginal land or driven into previously unsettled regions of the country.

No doubt, to many analysts the heterogeneity of the evolutionary transition path is more striking than any sense of homogeneity. But the Junker-type transition has typically allowed the persistence of semi-feudal controls, and thus the retention of some feudal ties to the land - and indeed feudal modes of exploitation and labour control generally.

That in turn implies that in such cases of transition attempts to restrict migration out of rural areas are likely to have persisted to a greater extent than in countries where the transition to capitalism has taken the form of either the classic or 'revolutionary' routes. This too must remain as a general hypothesis, which may be affected by other factors that would make cross-national empirical comparisons extremely difficult. But the basic thesis seems eminently reasonable. For it is surely valid that, while the transition to capitalist relations of production is associated with relatively high levels of migration compared with the situation in feudal societies (except when the latter are in crisis), the *form* that transition takes will determine the extent and function of migration. And, as argued later, the extent of migration will influence both the pace and nature of the transition. But before turning to the question of the specific functions of migration in the transition process, some comments are required on what could be loosely described as the 'urban' role in that process.

¹ T.H. Holloway: "The coffee *colono* of São Paulo, Brazil: Migration and mobility, 1880-1930", in Duncan and Rutledge, 1977, op. cit., pp. 301-21.

The two routes to 'urban' capitalism: Some lacunae and blind alleys

So far, very schematically, the emphasis has been on rural developments contributing to the dissolution of feudal relations of production and on necessary conditions for the transition to capitalist production. However, the process of industrial capital accumulation has usually been depicted in terms of the transfer of surplus from agriculture to urban industrial capital. In this section three issues arising from that seemingly crucial aspect of the transition will be discussed, necessarily in a cursory manner and only in so far as they relate to migration themes that will be considered in the subsequent section. The first issue is the role of trade or commercial capital, the second the role of urban areas in the transition to capitalism, and the third the two ways by which industrial capitalism has evolved. Clearly these three issues are intrinsically inter-related.

A great many social scientists have depicted the transition to capitalism as originating in the cities and the growth of commerce and trade. Indeed some analysts, such as Weber, Pirenne, and Sweezy, have seen the growth of trade as little less than the "prime mover" in the transition of feudalism to capitalism, and have been taken to task for doing so.¹ The subject was resurrected in a modified form in the work of Frank and Wallerstein.² Both emphasised the role of international trade in creating 'dependent' satellite economies, Frank claiming that as a result Latin America is and always was capitalist.³ There are several major difficulties with that line of argument. The first is that the growth of trade, while a feature of capitalist development, is compatible with other modes of production and, as noted earlier, in colonial or neo-colonial (or 'dependent') economies has actually encouraged a tightening of feudal relations of production rather than the reverse.⁴ Commodity circulation by itself does not define capitalist relations of production. Analogously the role of merchant capital is at best only a lubricant for the transition to industrial capitalism and can exist without either fostering or needing capitalist relations of production. Indeed usury by traders has often bolstered feudal relations of production.

¹ The celebrated debate between Sweezy and Dobb et al is reproduced in Hilton, 1976, op. cit.

² A.G. Frank: Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1969); I. Wallerstein: The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century (New York, Academic Press, 1974).

³ For a devastating attack on Frank's thesis, see E. Laclau: "Feudalism and capitalism in Latin America", New Left Review, Vol. 67, May-June 1971, pp. 19-38; see also G. Palma: "Dependency: A formal theory of underdevelopment, or a methodology for the analysis of concrete situations of underdevelopment", World Development, Vol. 6, No.7/8, November 1978, pp. 881-924.

⁴ It is instructive too that historians have correlated the rising opportunities for the export of wheat from Eastern to Western Europe in the late middle ages with the onset of the second serfdom in Eastern Europe.

The point that needs to be made most forcefully is that in many feudal-type societies merchant capital has helped create a widely dispersed category of rural outworkers, often in the form of peasant artisans placed in a position of chronic indebtedness and dependence. And having produced such a situation merchants have taken care to preserve that relationship. Moreover, merchant capital by siphoning off surplus and undermining traditional village handicrafts may well reduce peasant communities to generalised poverty, in the process preventing class differentiation and capital accumulation.

Nevertheless, merchant capital can play a progressive role where other conditions are encouraging a capitalist transition. Its function can be seen in the context of what have been identified as the two paths to industrial capitalism. In the first the original merchant turns producer, typically by 'putting out' work and by stages cutting off small producers from the market. The merchants themselves may emerge from the local (rural) community or from outside areas. But in any event the major change is that merchant intervention in the production process places workers in a dependent status, cut off from the market for their goods and induced to purchase raw materials and other means of production from the merchants. As the small producers' position is weakened by indebtedness and dependence they have to respond to an increasing level of exploitation by such actions as lowering the quality of their product, increasing turnover, using lower-quality materials, leaving repairs undone, and then being forced to sell off their remaining assets. This 'informal sector' dies in its birth. Sooner or later the small producers are forced to give up production, leaving wage labour force participation as the only option. And that in itself may well mean migration to the area in which the merchant capitalist has set up a factory with the proceeds of their surplus labour.

That process of proletarianisation is one of the two classic methods by which capitalist industrialisation has penetrated and absorbed 'peasant' production. The other path is what Marx called "the really revolutionising way" and entails the producer evolving into a merchant as well.¹ Industrial capital grows in the course of primary accumulation, class differentiation, and the growth of domestic markets, and urban industrial areas emerge with the growing concentration and division of labour.

It is in that context that the role of urban areas in the transition to industrial capitalism must be seen in a proper perspective. Anderson has attributed a decisive role in the dissolution of serfdom in Western Europe to "the urban sector, structurally sheltered by the parcellisation of sovereignty in the medieval polity".²

¹ Historically, the merchant class eventually becomes "an obstacle to the real capitalist mode of production and goes under with its development", which is what is implied in the claim that the other route is non-revolutionising. K. Marx: Capital (New York, International Publishers, 1967), Vol. III, p. 334.

² Anderson: Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism, 1974, op. cit., p. 205. Many historians have noted that when market opportunities opened up for landlords the existence in Western Europe of large urban areas precluded heightened feudal exploitation, whereas the absence of such areas in Eastern Europe allowed the second serfdom.

Then and in subsequent cases of transition, the growth of urban areas presents a condition for the dissolution of the most static form of feudal exploitation, serfdom, to the extent that towns are relatively "free oases in an unfree society", as Dobb described them, acting as magnets to help peasants escape the worst oppressions of feudal exploitation.¹ The fact remains that feudal growth has traditionally coincided with the control of urban areas by landed oligarchies, for whom the town provides a useful source of additional revenue.² Despite that, it seems likely that in urban areas the transition to capitalist relations of production proceeds with less difficulty than in rural areas, despite mercantile and guild-like restrictions associated with pre-capitalist urban employment.³ There are also reasons for accepting that large urban areas have contributed to relaxation of feudal relations in areas that are quite remote and have relatively low population density. Historically, cities have provided areas of potential flight from serfdom, and on occasion urban workers have provided support for peasant revolts. Urban manufacturers have been unlikely to hinder either phenomenon; they have in some cases been prominent in fomenting peasant insurrections and have scarcely been likely to hinder the rural exodus, in so far as runaway serfs or debt peons have provided a source of labour power made all the cheaper by their precarious position.

Similarly, the existence of market towns with an array of goods and services is likely to make rural landlords want to realise more of their total income in monetary form.⁴ That and the fear that peasants would be driven into migration perhaps encouraged the feudal class in medieval Western Europe, as in other areas since that time, to commute labour services, rely more on money rents, and lease out more of the feudal demesne. To that extent peasant migration would be made easier, and conditions created for the growth of rural class differentiation.

¹ Dobb, 1963, op. cit., p. 70.

² Ibid, p. 79. See also J. Merrington: "Town and country in the transition to capitalism", New Left Review, No. 93, September-October 1974, pp. 71-92.

³ In the European case the master-servant relationship in urban crafts and the customary hierarchical features of craft guilds, which dominated established towns and cities, were initially circumvented through the establishment of new urban communities which grew, in part, because they were not subject to such traditional relations of production. Marx: Grundrisse, 1973, op. cit., pp. 855-6. The modification of the social relations of production in the urban-industrial production process in more recent transitions has not received the attention it deserves, and when it has much of the research has been in the largely American 'institutional' industrial relations tradition. The implications for the mobility of labour are considerable.

⁴ It is likely to lead to a substitution of what Veblen called a lifestyle of "vicarious consumption" for one of "vicarious leisure". T. Veblen: The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions (New York, 1899).

Nevertheless it would surely be wrong to attribute the dissolution of feudalism in agriculture to the expansion of towns per se; one might more realistically argue that the growth of towns reflects the dissolution of feudal relations of production. It is when stagnation and related crises have shown the limits of those relations of production that feudal control and authority will be undermined, and it is then that the role of urban areas can be important in accelerating the transition to capitalist relations of production. Once feudal controls have been relaxed, industrial capitalism will penetrate rural areas, dissolving petty commodity exchange and increasing the need for money, while reducing the peasants' opportunity to produce either for personal use or exchange. Thus the introduction of manufactured substitutes at lower costs and/or of higher 'quality' (maybe merely having a greater prestige value) tends to dissolve primitive or other reciprocal systems of exchange. As such, the destruction of peasants' supplementary activities extends the internal market for industrial and commercial capital, and allows a growing concentration of production and commerce in urban areas.

Clearly urban growth is a correlate of capitalist industrialisation. It is a correlate because the concentration of labour power is a necessary condition for the growth of the detailed division of labour on which the development of productive forces rests. But the transition to industrial capitalism can only occur on the basis of the prior creation of a cheap and mobile supply of labour. That means that feudal relations of production must be transformed, so that a surplus population is available to move into industry. It also means that the development of agriculture must be sufficiently advanced to ensure a surplus of food for urban workers to keep down the industrial wage rate, i.e., the cost of reproducing labour power. In sum, urban industrial growth relies on the creation of an economic surplus in agriculture - a surplus for urban investment (normally) and a surplus of food for urban consumption - and it relies on the creation of a surplus population for absorption in urban employment at sufficiently low wage rates to permit capital accumulation.

V. The Roles of Migration in the Transition to Capitalism

"What does "attach importance" to migration mean? If we take these words in their literal sense, can there be a single economist of sound mind and good memory *who does not attach importance* to the annual migrations?"¹

What then is the role of migration in the transition to a capitalist society? The short answer is that it is crucial. In a general sense the necessity for migration, and rural-urban migration in particular, lies in the fact that for industrial capitalism to develop workers must be made "free" in the classic double sense,

¹ V. Lenin: "Uncritical criticism", reprinted in Collected Works, Vol. III, 1960, op. cit., p. 625. Emphasis in the original.

being free of the means of production and free to hire themselves out as wage workers (free of the means of subsistence).¹ The first 'freedom' has implied the creation of a relative surplus population, and capitalist development has only been able to proceed on the basis of the prior creation of that surplus population.² To fully satisfy the second 'freedom' workers have had to be mobile, to be able and willing to accept opportunities to migrate and in effect constitute "an unlimited supply of labour". As Dobb noted with respect to the transition to industrial capitalism in Western Europe:

"The commodity labour power had not merely to exist: it had to be available in adequate quantities in the places where it was most needed; and here mobility of the labouring population was an essential condition."³

Thus in periods of capitalist development there has always been a demand for an unfettered labour market "free from the unwarranted interference of legislators or charity mongers". All bourgeois revolutions have made a point of translating that demand into effective practice.

More specifically, migration and in particular rural-urban migration has seven major roles in the transition from a feudal society to one based predominantly on capitalist relations of production. Most of these are closely inter-related, making it convenient to depict them as one set of functions, although it is apparent that some of these functions have been more important in particular cases than have others. What is clear is that taken as a whole migration is a necessary contributory factor to the development of a capitalist economy and is thus a stimulus to economic growth.

However, first of all, it has to be recognised that peasant migration has sometimes been a means of preserving feudal modes of exploitation. Thus increasing population pressure on the available land, for instance, and the inability to fully meet the demands of landlords have on occasion induced short-term migration

¹ A third sense of the term 'free labour' has been used, and is most associated with Max Weber. That is freedom from 'extra-economic' coercion to labour. This implies that workers respond as desired by employers because of wage and income considerations. However, for many groups of workers it is undoubtedly the case that various forms of coercion and control persist and may be intensified during the period in which capitalist relations of production are established. With alienated labour, they can never disappear. I have tried to discuss this elsewhere in the context of the analysis of the notion of proletarianisation.

² For instance, although the acceleration of the transition to capitalism in parts of Latin America in the 1930's is often attributed to the crisis in the 'metropolitan' economies of Europe and North America, it was the availability of a surplus population in Latin America at that time which made such development possible.

³ Dobb, 1963, op. cit., p. 274.

by one or more members of peasant families in order to secure the supplementary income needed to relieve temporary or permanent stress.¹ In India chronic indebtedness has led some debtors to send wives or daughters to urban areas to earn money through prostitution.² Landlords may welcome that form of migration and use it as a means of augmenting the surplus they could extract. Thus migration need not be directly corrosive of feudal relations of production. Nevertheless, migration is one reflection of feudal decay, an index of a social formation under stress.

Migration is not merely the outcome of poverty, though that has always been a spur to it. Peasant migration has been caused by the combination of poverty and the decay of the perceived legitimacy of the feudal forms of exploitation. Thus to cite the classic case once more, Dobb argued that as a result of the growing need for revenue the ruling feudal class made additional demands on the peasants and that this led to the mass desertion of feudal demesnes which in turn contributed to the decline of villeinage in England.³ In Egypt, where 'tax farming' was a major feudal mode of exploitation, it has been argued that the optimum rate of taxation was loosely determined by the extent of village emigration.⁴ Officials (the Porte) who exceeded that tax level could expect to witness a mass village emigration and a lower total income than at lower rates of local taxes. This example highlights a general feature of feudal societies which is that the control necessary to ensure feudal exploitation rests on a delicate combination of coercion, the authority of the feudal class based on traditional, common-law arrangements, and compliance to exploitation on the part of the peasantry.⁵

Of course, the notion of exploitation raises conceptual difficulties, but those should not be used to deny the existence of exploitation. In its simplest form it becomes a question of the amount of surplus produced by the workers which the landlord class can appropriate. But in a feudal society there is always an underlying struggle between the landlords, wanting to press the peasants to the limits of bare subsistence, and the peasants, wanting to retain as much of the surplus above that bare limit as possible. For the landlords, to maintain or

¹ Migdal, 1974, op. cit., p. 118.

² One recent study argued that such "trafficking in women" had been growing as the Harijans had little or no more land to alienate. Pande, 1976, op. cit., p. 52.

³ Dobb, 1963, op. cit., p. 46.

⁴ B. Hansen: "An economic model for Ottoman Egypt or the economics of collective tax responsibility" (Berkeley, Institute of International Studies, University of California, December 1973, mimeo), p. 44.

⁵ Ultimately, it also rests on the continued dominance of the state by the feudal class. But for the moment we are interested in the behavioural aspects of the relationship between the exploiters and exploited.

increase exploitation overt coercion is rarely used except in times of crisis; the weapons of coercion have usually existed, but widespread resort to them indicated a feudal society in crisis; to be successful, the feudal class has generally relied on coercion merely as a veiled threat. The more immediately important factor has been the degree of legitimacy afforded by the peasants to certain customary exploitative practices. In the main, that has been a function of the intrinsic reciprocities of feudal society.¹ If the peasant has a set of obligations, it is also understood that he has certain, often well-defined rights; in particular, the right to protection against acts of violence and against the threat of economic insecurity are twin pillars on which the peasants' forbearance of the feudal structure is based. To the extent that the feudal class fails or is unable to provide those protections and related customary rights, peasants will cease to accept the legitimacy of their traditional obligations.² If they cannot modify those obligations within the rural economy because of the inflexibility of the exploitative mechanisms, then the peasants have essentially the two alternatives of rebellion or migration. Quite often they have come together.³ In either case it could be expected that preceding such acts of desperation the peasants would have exhausted other options, such as those described by Geertz in the context of agricultural involution in Indonesia.⁴

Another example of migration reflecting the decay of legitimacy is one drawn from Brazil. There landlords began to forfeit their right to the traditional obligations of the peasants when they began to withdraw traditional rights and forms of protection, including the provision of medical services. Many fazenda (hacienda) owners became absentee landlords and moved to the towns, and in doing so altered the relationship with the peasants, who could no longer rely on the regular, personal assistance which had been part of the reciprocal 'social

¹ The fiction of the passive, stupified peasant fatalistically resigned to a life of degradation has long been exploded, though that vision has continued to influence thinking.

² In more normal times the diverse forms of reciprocal rights and obligations are either hard or impossible to fully identify or cannot readily be matched in terms of the relative 'weights' to be attached to particular elements in the conventional nexus of social relationships. From this epistemological dilemma it seems reasonable to formulate the dialectical proposition that crises afford the most appropriate moments to understand normal behaviour. If that seems far-fetched, consider the contrary practice of attempting to study behavioural phenomena by analysing data collected in times of relative stability of social relationships. As such it is hard to select the principal behavioural springs of change from a mass of possibilities. Clearly inductive research is liable to build castles in the air. I am grateful to Peter Peek and René Wéry for listening while I clarified this point in my own particular castle.

³ To give an example from another of the classic cases which have figured prominently in this analysis, Lenin observed that the widespread emigration of the Russian peasantry in the late nineteenth century followed their ruin and after an unsuccessful "struggle for independence". Lenin: The Agrarian Question and the Critics of Marx, 1976, op. cit., p. 98.

⁴ Geertz, 1966, op. cit.

contract'.¹ It was such abrogations that forced the peasants to actively question the traditionally oppressive forms of exploitation and seek alternatives, the most likely being migration. But it is worth asking what conditions have to exist to make a peasant in a traditionally 'inward-oriented' community become a migrant.

It may seem trite, but the first condition is that the idea of migrating must exist as an acceptable response to adversity or frustrated aspirations.² The second condition is that the peasants would have to identify their oppression as being unjust and not inevitable, which means in practice that some traditional reciprocal relationship must have been violated to cause a sense of deprivation. The third condition is that revolution or revolt must appear to have minimal chance of success, or that the solidarity of the oppressed must have given way to disjointed anomie. And the fourth condition is that, as already emphasised, the potential migrant must have had cause to reject the traditional forms of oppression and exploitation because of some sense of deprivation or inability to satisfy the basic needs of a particular category to which the individual affects to belong.³ It is in the context of these four conditions that the emigration must be explained, not simply in terms of the expected incomes in urban areas which, it hardly needs to be stated, is a necessary fifth condition.

One should ask one further question. Given the landlords' requirements, why do they not take such action as is necessary to prevent widespread emigration? Normally the feudal, or landlord, class could be expected to counter the possibility of mass migration or rebellion by taking due account of the moral limits to its exploitative capacity. As one analyst of Thai society in the nineteenth century noted,

"There was ... a mechanism which tended to restrain the nai (nobles) from making excessive demands on the services of their phrai (commoners). When the phrai could no longer bear such excessive demands from their nai, they could simply run away into the jungle."⁴

¹ B. Galjart: "Class and 'following' in rural Brazil", America Latina, Vol. 7, July-September 1974, pp. 3-23.

² The same condition has always had to exist to make an oppressed peasant or worker into a revolutionary, and in many periods of history such a condition has manifestly not existed. The modern worker in America or Western Europe would find the idea of revolution little short of lunatic, which certainly does not mean he is satisfied with his lot.

³ The migration of the relatively educated peasant can be considered in that vein. As stressed elsewhere, it seems the migrant is most typically the marginal person in any social context. G. Standing: Labour Force Participation and Development (Geneva, ILO, 1978), pp. 207-11.

⁴ A. Rabibhadana: The Organisation of Thai Society in the Early Bangkok Period, 1782-1873 (Ithaca, New York, Cornell University South-East Asia Program, No. 196), quoted in Scott, 1976, op. cit., p.54.

In such circumstances, widespread migration could be taken as a sure sign of an imbalance arising in feudal society due to excessive exploitation, whether that resulted from a constant level of exploitation faced by a decline in the peasants' productivity, or from an increase in the rate of exploitation by a besieged or complacent feudal class. In practice, the limits of exploitation defined by custom are only likely to be overstepped when the landlords' power and authority are threatened, when that group's own standard of living or expectations as customarily defined are impaired. But if the reciprocal relationship of rights and obligations are breached, widespread migration of peasants as a form of protest and rejection can be expected.

Rural emigration will reflect the agrarian transition, growing in the wake of rural proletarianisation, the growth of class differentiation, and the decay of feudal legitimacy. But once migration becomes widespread it plays an important role in accelerating the transition to industrial capitalism.

The first function played by migration is the negative one of accelerating the decay of feudal relations, undermining the legitimacy of traditional peasant obligations and also allowing landlords to withdraw from custom-bound obligations.

There are various ways by which migration undermines a sense of legitimacy in landlord-dominated societies. It is an old adage that for injustice to be acceptable it must resemble justice. In that sense migrants have been agents of change, challenging the 'false consciousness' of their fellow villagers once they have seen that modes of exploitation to which they had grown accustomed were neither just nor inevitable. As Kautsky put it in his increasingly appreciated classic treatise, migrants

"...while they constitute a backward element in the towns, often acting as strikebreakers, or impeding unionisation, they are tremendous agents of progress in their own villages ... It is often these elements who become agitators and instigators of class discontent and class hatred in their home villages."¹

In other words, migration can accelerate the decay of feudal relations through its effect on the aspirations and expectations of the rural poor and through weakening the implicit social contract between landlords and peasants.

It may also accelerate the demise of landlordism by inducing defensive reactions on the part of landlords. If it induces them to "tighten the screws", then the legitimacy of conventional social relationships will be further eroded as new degrees of exploitation are added without compensating rights; that in itself will only provide greater cause for migration. If it leads to concessions by landlords it will mean that a growing amount of the surplus product will remain in the peasant-artisan economy, which will encourage the growth of class differentiation and permit

¹ Quoted in J. Banaji: "Kautsky on the agrarian question", Economy and Society, Vol. 5, No.1, February 1976, pp. 2-49.

the more adaptive peasant minority to consolidate their position at the expense of the middle and lower strata of the peasantry.¹ Relaxation of feudal forms of exploitation also means that barriers to migration are lowered; whether or not peasants have leapt over them is another matter. Thus in terms of the classic phases of transition, the shift from a system of compulsory labour services to rents in kind (such as sharecropping) and the shift from either to cash rents increases the opportunity for the peasant or some member of the peasant household to become an absentee landholder. For rather than produce the rent through working on the landlord's estate or on his own allotment, the change implies that the peasant is able to acquire the means to pay the rent through migration in search of wage-employment (or indeed any other form of work for cash income), leaving the remainder of the household to produce the family's subsistence. Though it is difficult to cull generalisations from a multitude of historically-specific patterns of change one point is clear: modifications to the traditional feudal modes of exploitation have often been made to defuse a crisis and in doing so have induced peasants to make adaptive responses as best they can. Many have migrated and, as argued below, have thereby contributed to the transition of the rural economy.

Yet before considering those functions of migration it ought to be noted that rural emigration may not only weaken the peasants' willingness to accept traditional controls and obligations but will allow landlords to dispense with others which were effectively impeding their efforts to transform pre-capitalist relations of production. One recent study noted that the shift to the use of wage labour in rural Peru was impeded in the 1950's because of the landlords' fear of turmoil had they displaced Indian peasants and animals on the community lands.² In such situations it is reasonable to pose the question: What changes that situation? Although it is often a case of the impasse being resolved by state intervention, such as land reform, in the absence of such action the answer can be expressed in terms of changes in the relative costs and benefits of such changes, including the fact that the peasants' own reaction to decremental deprivation will depend, in part, on their range of alternatives. In particular their destructive resistance will be inversely related to urban income-earning opportunities.

So, migration may be a means by which the feudal relations of production are undermined. The second function of migration in the transition process is that of contributing to the growth of class differentiation in rural areas. There are various ways by which it does so. Clearly to the extent that the more fortunate

¹ This process has taken place in many countries. It seems to have been a feature of Japanese development, where landlord farmers made concessions to discourage dependent smallholders from migrating to the towns; wage labour was substituted for traditional and onerous labour services, and the concessions were followed by the evolution of capitalist farmers among the peasantry. Moore, 1967, op. cit., pp. 268-69.

² Alier, 1977, op. cit., pp. 145, 160.

migrants supplement 'domestic' production with the income from wage employment such income can provide both the means and incentive to technological change among the larger peasant farmers, while enabling those households to acquire new means of production to expand commodity production. The role of remittances has only recently attracted the attention it deserves; not only do they provide cash to cover investments, as Waters emphasised in an interesting paper, but the possibility of securing cash through migration as well as the actual remittances reduce the risk factor, which traditionally has been a primary factor impeding peasant investment.¹ There is some evidence that the more successful migrants, who are likely to come from the larger peasantry who could afford to raise more educated children, send remittances that accelerate the differentiation process through strengthening the larger peasants and stimulating technological innovations, commodity circulation, and production.² Money is a great polariser.

Migration also increases class differentiation by undermining the viability of small units of production, depleting them of the labour input of family members and forcing them to turn to the market for some items of consumption previously produced in the domestic unit. Though out-migration will not lead to a labour shortage in all households, for very many it will.³ Often it will do so in a scarcely visible way, because the initial consequence will be that poorer households are merely precluded from taking advantage of new productive opportunities or are forced to gradually abandon traditional domestic pursuits.

¹ A.R. Waters: "Migration, remittances and the cash constraint in African smallholder economic development", Oxford Economic Papers, Vol. 25, No.3, November 1973, pp. 435-54. On the investment behaviour of peasants, see M. Lipton: "The theory of the optimising peasant", Journal of Development Studies, Vol. 4, No.3, April 1968, pp. 327-51; among studies which have shown that remittances from migrants have encouraged risk-taking and supplied the necessary credit for the purchase of farm tools, see the Egyptian study, A.M. Abou-Zaid: "Migrant labour and social structure in Kharga Oasis", in J. Pitt-Rivers (ed.): Mediterranean Countrymen: Essays in the Social Anthropology of the Mediterranean (Paris, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1963), pp. 41-53; similar findings were reached in a study in Pakistan: A. Mohammed, W.R. Butcher, and C.H. Gotsch: Temporary Migration of Workers and Return Flow of Remittances in Pakistan (Harvard Center for International Affairs, Economic Development Report No. 234, August 1973).

² For a review of the impact of remittances on technological innovation, a review which does not dwell on the associated impact on class differentiation, see O. Stark: "Rural-to-urban migration and some economic issues: A review utilising findings of surveys and empirical studies covering the 1965-1975 period", Population and Employment Working Paper No. 38 (Geneva, ILO, May 1976), pp. 22-26. This study drew unwarranted conclusions about the effect of migration on the distribution of income. That was largely because it considered only the possible effects on income distribution between rural and urban areas, without taking account of the impact on inequality within rural and urban areas.

³ There is of course no need to assume that this applies to all or even most peasant households; clearly in some households there will be not only seasonal but chronic 'labour surplus'. In low-income households, however, that can only exist on the basis of the prior denial of means of production.

In many households, forced to respond to adversity or intensified exploitation by having one or more members migrate in search of a supplementary, cash income, living standards are likely to decline as a result of the dislocation. The adaptive response may take the form of a greater intensity of work - or self-exploitation as Chayanov put it.¹ The greater intensity of work facilitates a higher rate of exploitation by landlords and others appropriating the surplus product. But the additional work effort is liable to be associated with some inattention to repairs, inadequate land preparation, and related forms of neglect, all of which lead to declining yields and incomes (subsistence). Paradoxically, this may be worsened by the limited forms of labour-saving innovation introduced to offset migration or as a result of small remittances. If the lower-income households cannot afford complementary inputs, the introduction of one input such as a 'modern' plough may disturb the sensitive balance achieved in more traditional forms of cultivation. For example, in parts of Africa where the ecological balance has been particularly sensitive peasant migration of adult men has had disastrous consequences on soil quality because the absence of labour has meant that bush clearance did not occur so often, which has led to the breakdown of the indigenous system of shifting cultivation.² Perhaps less dramatically but elsewhere as well, migration has led to a disarticulation of the petty commodity mode of production. To the extent that enforced adaptation leads to a reduction in household incomes it will mean a corresponding reduction in the ability to cover contingencies without resorting to local moneylenders and thus being caught in the noose of debt. In sum, the precarious lot of the smaller peasant households is typically intensified by migration.

Conversely, the more affluent peasants are able to take advantage of the deterioration of their neighbours, perhaps even with the help of remittances. They may draw them into a web of indebtedness and eventual dispossession; they may take away the smaller peasants' opportunity for commodity exchange through their competitive ability to sell crops at lower prices or because they oblige newly dependent peasants to buy from them. In some cases too, poorer peasants may lease their small landholdings to the larger peasants, perhaps to become migrant workers themselves. An interesting variant of this phenomenon has been a recent feature of the Mexican ejido land tenure system, giving a traditional exploitative relationship an ironical twist; small landholders unable to sell their land or to earn a satisfactory income on it have leased it to sharecroppers and migrated to seek wage employment.³

¹ A.V. Chayanov: The Theory of Peasant Economy (eds., B. Kerblay, D. Thorner, and R.E.F. Smith) (Homewood, American Economic Association, 1966).

² See, for example, L. Cliffe: "Labour migration and peasant differentiation: Zambian experiences", Journal of Peasant Studies, Vol. 5, No.3, April 1978, pp. 332-33; E.P. Skinner: "Labour migration and its relationship to socio-cultural change in Mossi society", Africa, Vol. XXX, October 1960, pp. 373-401.

³ K. Finkler: "From sharecroppers to entrepreneurs: Peasant household production strategies under the ejido system of Mexico", Economic Development and Cultural Change, Vol. 27, No.1, October 1978, pp. 103-20.

Growing peasant differentiation has also been encouraged to the extent that migration has been greatest among the middle-peasants, which evidence suggests has been the case in many countries.¹ The reasons for this are not altogether clear though it may best be explained by the tendency for this group of peasants to most experience a sense of decremental deprivation. Rather than sink into the rural semi-proletariat they migrate. Unlike them, the low-income peasants seem less likely to aspire to better living standards to the point of taking action to secure them.² Moreover, they are relatively unlikely to be able to afford to migrate and more likely to be tied to rural areas by indebtedness and ignorance.

The third role of migration is that it contributes to the relative and absolute growth of wage employment in rural areas. Migrant workers moving into areas of peasant production, whether as seasonal migrants seeking short-term wage jobs or as quasi-permanent settlers, weaken the position of the middle and lower peasantry, who survive by a judicious combination of wage labour and domestic agriculture. To the extent that they are dispossessed of the means of production these peasants will be driven into the ranks of the rural proletariat. Moreover, if the land and other means of production are transferred to the larger peasants, they will be used in combination with wage labour, simply because the richer peasants would not have been able to utilise the productive resources without such labour. Thus migration is a mechanism which contributes to increasing reliance on wage labour in rural areas.

Fourthly, migration has been a means of increasing the social division of labour. Empirically it is difficult to identify the specific contribution of migration, if only because the development of the social and detailed division of labour was ruled out under systems of production based on bonded labour, labour services, and peasant households. In the latter cases any but the simplest forms of the social division of labour were impractical or impossible to organise, especially as specialisation was practically precluded. Migration within rural areas, by increasing the availability of labour, encourages the extension of cultivation, which in turn is associated with mechanisation, and thus higher wage

¹ M. Lipton: "Migration from rural areas of poor countries: The impact on rural productivity and income distribution", paper prepared for IBRD, February 1976, mimeo; Connell, et al, 1976, op. cit. The hypothesis is scarcely new. Lenin noted that, during the transition to capitalism in nineteenth century Russia, it was "mainly the peasants in medium circumstances who are leaving the areas of emigration and mainly the extreme groups who are remaining at home". Lenin, 1960, op. cit., pp. 182-83.

² One should make a distinction between wishing and hoping. Nineteenth century German peasants wished for a better life (though apparently not much better than their actual life) but, as they held out little hope of it, were remarkably passive in the face of traumatic proletarianisation. B. Moore: Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt (London, Macmillan, 1978). It is the hope which motivates action, the wish is often a distant relative of it.

rates.¹ The use of machinery and other 'modern' inputs by the larger peasants and by capitalist farmers, allied with the availability of (cheap) migrant labour power, further weakens the position of the middle peasantry, who increasingly cannot compete in the production of cash crops and have to resort to other crops and items of production that are either not for exchange or are relatively unprofitable.

In agriculture, as in industry, the existence of a source of migrant workers facilitates technological change if only because local workers used to traditional methods of production have usually proved resistant to changes in routine and skill-use, often responding to such changes by systematic reductions in their "effort bargain". It is also evident that migrant landowners have proved particularly innovative, nowhere more so than in the Indian Punjab where immigrant Sikhs pioneered the Green Revolution. Such migrants have forced other landlords into defensive innovation.

Migration that has contributed to land colonisation, or the establishment of new areas of agricultural production in which there has been no tradition of feudal forms of exploitation, has also contributed to the growth of capitalist relations of production, as well as mechanisation. Such colonisation schemes deserve to be analysed in some detail, as there is some suggestion that some have merely reproduced traditional land tenure systems that were experiencing stress.² However, colonisation of previously unsettled and unutilised land has been widely associated with a growing social division of labour. This is especially so where the settlement of specific areas has only been possible on the basis of the acquisition from elsewhere of key items of consumption or inputs for production. In other words, such colonisation can only take place if there is already extensive commodity circulation, and only if commodity production is able to serve the needs of those areas in which the migrants settle.

Conversely, as long as the mobility of the peasantry is checked the growth of production and consumption will be minimal, as a result of such phenomena as soil erosion, excessive intensity of work effort, deteriorating means of production, and the restricted division of labour. Migration facilitates specialisation of production by transforming consumption in kind into consumption of marketed commodities. But above all migration out of traditional peasant communities is almost certain to increase the social division of labour because it is so undeveloped in such communities, comprised as they are of isolated, household units of production, mainly oriented to domestic requirements.

¹ Incidentally, note a difficulty this causes for simple wage-differential explanations of rural-urban migration. Mechanisation may well lead to higher rural wage rates and even annual incomes, but is also likely to result in much greater seasonality of labour requirements, thus freeing workers for seasonal migration. Such migration introduces rural workers to urban lifestyles and enables them to search for long-term wage jobs in urban areas. The opportunity cost of that search activity would be close to zero.

² S. Barraclough and A. Domike: "Agrarian structure in seven Latin American countries", in Stavenhagen, 1970, op. cit., p. 72.

The fifth function of migration in the transition to capitalism is to concentrate groups of workers with similar skills or part-skills, thus allowing the development of the detailed division of labour. In practice this means shifting an increasing proportion of the population to urban-based industries. For in contrast to pre-capitalist societies capitalist development necessarily involves increasing urbanisation, or an 'urban bias'.¹ There is no need to labour this point. Suffice it to state that capitalist development relies on the increasing concentration of labour power to allow the detailed division of labour to develop. Because of the need for rural-urban migration in the era of capitalist transition, state policies have commonly been introduced to encourage the movement to urban areas. In the period of capitalist transition in Britain, for example, there was a need to increase the mobility of the rural population. In the early nineteenth century that was restricted by the so-called Speenhamland system of poor relief, which maintained a labour reserve of impoverished workers in villages, restraining their movement to the new industrial towns. Consequently, it was replaced by the Poor Law of 1834, which encouraged rural-urban migration by creating a free labour market. It was designed to make life so intolerable for the rural paupers as to force them to migrate to any job on offer; the result was a great increase in rural-urban migration.² In this case, and subsequently in many other countries, migration became the main factor in the growth of urbanisation.

The sixth role of migration would be extremely hard to identify statistically. Migration stimulates the development of capitalism through its effects on the aspirations and habits of workers and their families.³ In various ways migrants have been agents of change, stimulating the "taste" for commodities produced by capitalist industry. As such migration has been a way by which social tastes have

¹ Some developmentalists have tried to trace underdevelopment to 'urban bias' rather than depicting urbanisation as a corollary of capitalist development. The theme of urban bias has been trumpeted with much vigour but with little rigour by Michael Lipton. His magnus opus deploys an interesting methodological technique. It consists of assertion, supported by statements claiming that the assertion will be 'empirically supported later', followed by reiteration, followed by deductions from assertions "that were shown earlier". For the purity of the original, see M. Lipton: Why Poor People Stay Poor: A Study of Urban Bias in World Development (London, Temple Smith, 1977). Lipton's thesis is that the real conflict in low-income countries is between the urban classes and the rural classes rather than between such relatively well-defined class groupings of peasants and landlords, and workers and capitalist employers.

² E.J. Hobsbawm: The Age of Revolution: 1789-1848 (London, Abacus, 1977), p. 188. Anderson considered that the 1834 Poor Law was the benchmark that established free wage labour and thus the dominance of the capitalist mode of production. P. Anderson: Lineages of the Absolutist State (London, New Left Books, 1974). This theme was the core of Polanyi's much earlier study. K. Polanyi: The Great Transformation (Boston, Beacon Press, 1963, originally published in 1944). Interestingly Polanyi concluded that it was the extension of the Speenhamland system to the towns that brought it down (pp. 282-3).

³ This was a theme stressed by Lenin in the context of the development of a home market in Russia. Lenin, 1960, op. cit., pp. 576-78.

been homogenised, and in allowing patterns of consumption to become standardised have benefited the mass-production routines of large-scale industry. Moreover, as long as there is a reasonable chance of realising them, in so far as aspirations for 'modern' commodities are raised workers become more prepared to act as a disciplined proletariat in the quest for the means to satisfy those aspirations and needs.¹ This function of migration should not be stressed unduly, for clearly there are other means by which such "commodity aspirations" are stimulated, notably by the actual creation of a domestic market for commodity exchange. Nevertheless, population mobility has undoubtedly been a contributory factor in that development.

The seventh role of migration is probably the most important, and is certainly the one most widely discussed. Migrants represent a major component, perhaps *the* most important component, of the industrial labour reserve. The growth of a surplus population is a necessary condition for the development of industrial capitalism and can be considered in the complementary contexts of the short-run and the long-run supply of labour.

In the short-run analysis, the existence of a relative surplus population has three functions - to hold down wage rates, to provide a pool of workers who can be shifted into new occupations and new areas of industrial growth without disruption to over-all production, and to act as a disciplinary element contributing to the growth of proletarianisation. As far as the last function is concerned, the existence of unemployment allows the intensification of labour because of the threat of the unemployed to the job-security of the employed - and thus unemployment could be said to increase labour supply!

In the long-run analysis, the generation of a relative surplus population is in part an outcome of (primary) capital accumulation, to the extent that the accumulation increases the demand for labour which, by raising incomes, tends to stimulate population growth. The consequent increase in the dependent population provides added pressure on the wage labour force to work with greater effort, for longer, and more efficiently. It is this phenomenon which allows the integration

¹ Recognising this phenomenon does not imply any sympathy with such ideologically unsavoury 'modernisation' theories as propounded by Redfield, Parsons, McClelland, Rostow, et al. The gist of those theories is that people and countries are poor because of attitudinal obstacles to modernisation. For those scholars who adhere to such views the movement to an urban environment leads to the substitution of "attitudinal modernity" for traditional, ascriptive, non-achievement-oriented values. To explain poverty in this way on the basis of individual values requires a great stretch of ideological imagination and a liberal dose of condescension. Similar objections can be levelled against the related "cultural contact" explanations of economic change.

of the short-run and long-run analyses of the relationship of the relative surplus population to labour supply.¹

Given these roles in the development of industrial capitalism the labour reserve can be divided into three categories - the "floating", "stagnant", and "latent" components of the surplus population.² The stagnant category encompasses those who are endemically unemployed or discouraged from labour force activity or at most employed in marginal, low-income jobs. They comprise the lumpenproletariat that have featured so prominently in periods of transition; often they have consisted of those unable to come to terms with new social relations, or who have been forced by repeated failure into vagabondage, prostitution, crime, alcoholism, and a chronic state of anomie. In practice many are part of the surplus population but scarcely part of the labour reserve.

The floating surplus consists of those who are irregularly employed in industrial wage employment, experiencing spells of unemployment interspersed with periods of what some observers have described as "occupational multiplicity".³ Typically many are seasonal migrants, but in any case the floating surplus population represents a mass of workers readily available to replace industrial wage workers in employment. The job-seeking unemployed fit directly into this group.

The latent surplus is harder to define, but primarily it consists of those living in rural areas who are potential migrants - part of the reserve army but not part of the active reserve, or those for whom Lewis' perfectly elastic supply of labour would be most likely to apply - and others outside the urban-industrial labour force such as "housewives", who could be induced to enter it if their labour power was required.

Migrants fit into all three categories of surplus labour, but particularly in the latent and floating categories rather than as the major component of the stagnant surplus. Justifiably, Marx described migrants as "the light infantry of industrial capital", since they comprise a labour force which can be flexibly

¹ It is hardly necessary to add that the relationship of incomes, employment, and population is complex, and that we are only concerned with the labour supply aspects. Incidentally, the argument suggested in the text seems consistent with Marx's analysis. Thus in Volume III of Capital he concluded, "Prosperity would have led to more marriages among labourers and reduced the decimation of offspring. While implying a real increase in population, this does not signify an increase in the actual working population. But if affects the relations of the labourer to capital in the same way as an increase of the number of actually working labourers would have affected time." K. Marx: Capital, Vol. III, op. cit., pp. 254-55. It is clear from the context that "prosperity" implied increased employment, while an increase of "actually working labourers" meant an increase in the size of the labour force, where that included the unemployed.

² Ibid., pp. 640-42.

³ This is a classic transitional form of labour. For a brief resumé of the traditional forms in one particular case, see G. Standing: "Labour force participation in historical perspective: Proletarianisation in Jamaica", Population and Employment Working Paper No. 50 (Geneva, ILO, 1976).

deployed, available to be shifted to wherever there is a need for labour power to enable commodity production to expand. Moreover, the existence of a surplus population in rural areas helps reduce urban-industrial wage rates, whether or not those concerned have migrated to the urban areas. But of course not only rural-urban migration is involved; often it is a matter of intra-rural migration in accordance with seasonal fluctuations in labour requirements. In some cases dispossessed peasants have moved to the towns in the wake of changing social relations of production in agriculture, but have remained part of the *rural* labour reserve. Such rural-urban migration could scarcely be explained by reference to relative incomes. An interesting example is the *bóias-frias* in Brazil.¹ These constitute a rural labour force consisting of town-dwellers, highly exploited as seasonal workers on rural estates and combining that work with casual employment in the towns at other times of the year. But above all migrants represent a major source of relatively cheap labour power in urban-industrial areas.

Before discussing the reasons for expecting migrants to be relatively exploitable as an industrial proletariat, it must be stated that this expectation is in stark contrast to the view of some observers who have depicted migrants as a lumpen-proletariat or 'marginal mass'.² Moreover, contrary to the expectations and hopes of observers such as Franz Fanon, migrants to urban areas have generally proved the least revolutionary element of the emerging working class.³ For them the move itself has been in a personal sense revolutionary; typically they have contrasted the exploitation of urban wage labour, with its relative freedoms with escape from a feudal past. Their reference group is the village population they left behind, not the urban middle class. Thus Perlman showed that in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro migrants were politically and economically conservative, marginal only in the sense that they were the most exploitable and exploited segment of the urban labour force.⁴

¹ For an interesting discussion of a number of studies of the *bóias-frias*, see D. Goodman and M. Redclift: "The *bóias-frias*: Rural proletarianisation and urban marginality in Brazil", International Journal of Urban and Regional Research Vol. I, No.2, 1977, pp. 248-64. This type of phenomenon exists in Southern Europe and no doubt in many other countries, but it has been insufficiently considered in analyses of migration.

² A. Quijano: "The marginal pole of the economy and the marginalised labour force", Economy and Society, Vol. 3, No.3, November 1974, pp. 393-428; Frank, 1972, op. cit., inter alia.

³ For Fanon's view, see F. Fanon: The Wretched of the Earth (London, MacGilldoon and Kee, 1965), p. 104. Hobsbawm suggested that rural migrants in Latin American cities were unlikely to identify with working-class politics but were likely to follow a populist leader, demonstrating the pervasive influence of their experience of patronage and personal dependence. E.J. Hobsbawm: "Peasants and rural migrants in politics", in C. Veliz (ed.): The Politics of Conformity in Latin America (London, Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 60-1.

⁴ J. Perlman: The Myth of Marginality: Urban Poverty and Politics in Rio de Janeiro (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976). For a recent global presentation of somewhat similar arguments, see P. Lloyd: Slums of Hope? Shanty Towns of the Third World (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1979).

There are many reasons for expecting migrants to be a highly exploitable and therefore relatively easily absorbed source of wage labour in urban-industrial areas. In many cases the wage that it has been necessary to pay migrants to induce them to work has been below the cost of reproducing labour power, because they have been isolated individual workers or have continued to rely for part of their subsistence on their family's production in the rural area from where they migrated. This pattern has existed in many if not most parts of the world, but nowhere more so than in Southern Africa.¹ To attempt to depict that process as in any way unique to Southern Africa would be the height of absurdity; such patterns of migration have been an integral part of the development of the capitalist mode of production, enabling industrial capital to realise surplus value through 'superexploitation', just as the migration of workers on a temporary basis may originate as a means of realising surplus for the feudal class, as still seems to be the case in parts of Latin America.

Meillassoux was among the first to argue that migrants were 'superexploited', in that not only was surplus value transferred but the migrant workers could be paid less than the cost of reproducing their labour power. The difference Meillassoux regarded as interest ("rente de travail"), the migrant worker being paid just enough to enable him to survive for the period of wage employment.² Some have argued that for this to continue the migration must be seasonal or 'circular'.³ But in practice, as long as the migrant worker is insecure and retains some ties with the rural areas, the actual duration of migration has no limit. Indeed, the superexploitation could be affected through support provided by relatives working in the ubiquitous 'informal sector' (or sectors) in the urban areas.

In either case, whether superexploitation is done at the expense of the remaining rural population or the urban poor, the process is unstable. In particular, it will prevent the traditional community from fulfilling its traditional role of providing social security for the old and sick.⁴ It is also unstable because it means that the systematic withdrawal of rural surplus will tend to lead to rural stagnation. In that case rural income levels will fall to the point that

¹ H. Wolpe: "Capitalism and cheap labour power in South Africa", Economy and Society, Vol. 1, No.2, 1972, p. 434; M. Legassick and H. Wolpe: "The Bantustans and capital accumulation in South Africa", Review of African Political Economy, No. 7, September-December 1976, pp. 87-102.

² This subsistence wage he called "salaire d'appoint". C. Meillassoux: Femmes, greniers et capitaux (Paris, Maspero, 1975).

³ T.J. Gerold-Scheepers and W.M.J. van Binsbergen: "Marxist and non-Marxist approaches to migration in tropical Africa", in W. van Binsbergen and H.A. Meilink (eds.): Migration and the Transformation of Modern African Society: African Perspectives, 1978, No.1 (Leiden, Afrika-Studiecentrum, 1978), p. 26.

⁴ Wolpe, 1972, op. cit.; D. Clarke: "Social security and aged subsistence: Roots of the predicament in Zimbabwe", South African Labour Bulletin, Vol. 3, No.5, 1977.

mass migration to urban areas can be expected despite a lack of employment opportunities there. Many more of the latent surplus will become part of the active surplus than can be immediately absorbed. The pool of urban unemployed may well grow beyond the point of adequately serving as a labour reserve and pose a threat to the process of capital accumulation. Indeed, arguably that phase in the growth of industrial capitalism provides the greatest potential for revolution. But that does not mean migrants themselves will be at the forefront of social unrest.

Historically, migrants have been a highly exploitable group because of their lack of *formal* integration into urban society. Often they have lacked necessary work permits or social security cards, and in such circumstances have been in a pitifully weak bargaining position. For example, many migrants to Rio de Janeiro in recent years have lacked the social benefits won by urban worker movements in the 1930's because they have had difficulty in securing work cards for which a birth certificate is required. In rural areas birth certificates were usually unknown. Some employers insisted that workers they hired did *not* have an appropriate work permit, so that they could avoid having to pay social security contributions as part of the wage bill.¹

In other cases it has been found that employers have taken advantage of migrants' ignorance and precarious position to hire them as pseudo-apprentices.² They have been paid either a very low wage or no wage at all, and thus for four or five years have been expected to receive a subsistence income from urban relatives and their family in the rural areas.

As many studies have reported, migrants have often been disproportionately concentrated in the poorly-paid, low-status jobs. Some analysts have contended that subsequently migrants' income and occupational mobility is such as to neutralise initial differences.³ Others argue that the nature of a stratified urban labour force and the role of labour market segmentation make upward mobility an unlikely event for members of an urban proletariat.⁴ But whether or not migrants do experience occupational and income mobility the fact is that migrants, at least initially, have taken many of the low-income, low-status jobs.

¹ Perlman, 1976, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

² E. le Bris: "Migration and the decline of a densely populated rural area: The case of Vo Koutime in South-East Togo", in African Perspectives, 1978, No.1, p. 122; for a similar phenomenon in Jamaica, see Standing, 1976, *op. cit.*

³ Y.L. Yap: "The attraction of cities: A review of the migration literature", Journal of Development Economics, Vol. 4, 1977, pp. 253-54; H.L. Browning: "Migrant selectivity and the growth of the large cities in developing societies", in National Academy of Sciences: Rapid Population Growth: Consequences and Policy Implications (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), pp. 291-301.

⁴ G. Standing: "Migration, labour force absorption and mobility: Women in Kingston, Jamaica", Population and Employment Working Paper No. 68 (Geneva, ILO, 1978), especially the appendix.

In general, migrant workers have had relatively low wage aspirations and expectations, being forced or resigned to work for lower wages and more intensely than more 'urbanised' workers. Partly this is attributable to differences in age, schooling, and family dependents. But it is partly due to the fact that their perception of relative deprivation is a reflection of incomes and work intensity in rural areas, whereas urban workers are more inclined to relate their opportunity incomes to those of the urban middle class. Although more is required, there is some evidence that not only have migrants taken low-income jobs but have been able to avoid lengthy urban unemployment because of their low aspirations and expectations.¹ As such, it is highly dubious to assume that the unemployment rate of urban workers is an effective deterrent to rural-urban migration. For many jobs urban workers are virtually excluded.

Thus migrants represent an important labour reserve. Their role in holding down urban wage levels is theoretically strong, even though empirically it is extremely hard to unravel their full impact. To the extent that migrants are resigned to work for relatively low wages their existence must tend to reduce the level of urban wage rates, even making the strong assumption that 'modern sector' wages are institutionally determined by legislation or collective bargaining. The direct effect is through the supply of labour and their willingness to take jobs for low wages. But the indirect effect is harder to assess. The existence of a pool of cheap labour power must have an impact on employers' ability to maintain low wages and on their moral authority in resisting upward pressures on wage rates. Moreover those enterprises and sectors in which cheap migrant workers are employed are likely to grow relative to other sectors to the extent that the low wages mean a higher rate of surplus value and capital accumulation. That effect of migration is hard to assess empirically and it appears that studies have scarcely addressed the question.

VI. Concluding Remarks

There can be little doubt that in one way or another migration is a necessary condition for the national and global extension of capitalism. Without rural out-migration, the class differentiation of the peasantry would be slowed, feudal modes of exploitation would be more likely to persist, the growth of commodity production would be constrained, and thus primitive accumulation impeded. Without migration to urban areas, the necessary source of cheap labour power would be insufficient, traditional "feudal" forms of labour would be prolonged, and the division of labour undeveloped, all of which would mean the corresponding undevelopment of capitalist industrialisation. In short, migration has to be understood in the context of the

¹ G. Standing: "Aspiration wages, migration, and urban unemployment", Journal of Development Studies, Vol. 14, No.2, January 1978, pp. 232-48.

characteristically uneven development of industrial capital. And it is in that context that, according to the dictates of capital, the sedentary existence of the peasantry, once disturbed, is remorselessly swept away. In the process the essential precondition for feudalism is taken away as well.

But if it is true that history is not on the side of either feudal landlords or peasants, it is no less true that feudal élites throughout the world have managed to hold up history for a remarkably long time. Their powers of survival and assimilation to a world dominated by capitalism would have earned the envious admiration of a King Canute. Perhaps the truth is that in more cases than not they have avoided being drowned by moving their chairs back as the waves approached. That most of the landlords themselves have ended up living in towns, benefiting from the forces of production unleashed by their partial defeat, is one of the mild ironies of history.

Selected Publications of the Population and Labour Policies
Research Programme¹

1. General Material on the Research Programme

ILO: *World Employment Programme: Population and Development - A progress report on ILO research with special reference to labour, employment and income distribution* (Geneva, February 1979), 2nd edition, Reference WEP 2-21/PR.5. (*)

This report includes a full bibliography. It will also shortly be available in French and Spanish.

2. Books and Monographs

M.G. Castro, L.M. Fraenkel et al: *Migration in Brazil: Approaches to Analysis and Policy Design* (Brussels, Ordina, 1979). (***)

W.J. House and H. Rempel: *The Kenya Employment Problem* (Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 1978). (***)

A.S. Oberai: *Changes in the Structure of Employment with Economic Development* (Geneva, ILO, 1978). (**)

G. Pyatt and A. Roe: *Social Accounting for Development Planning, with special reference to Sri Lanka* (Cambridge University Press, 1977). (***)

M. Rašević, T. Mulina, Milos Macura: *The Determinants of Labour Force Participation in Yugoslavia* (Geneva, ILO, 1978). (**)

G.B. Rodgers, M.J.D. Hopkins, R. Wéry: *Population, Employment and Inequality: BACHUE-Philippines* (Farnborough, Saxon House, 1978). (***)

G. Standing: *Labour Force Participation and Development* (Geneva, ILO, 1978). (**)

G. Standing and G. Sheehan (eds.): *Labour Force Participation in Low-Income Countries* (Geneva, ILO, 1978). (**)

M. Todaro: *Internal Migration in Developing Countries* (Geneva, ILO, 1976). (**)

¹ Availability code: * available on request from ILO, Population and Labour Policies Branch; ** available for sale from ILO Publications; *** available for sale from a commercial publisher.

3. Recent Working Papers in print (*)

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