Peasantry and national integration

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Published by El Colegio de México

Aguero Doná, Celma.
Peasantry and national integration.
El Colegio de México, 1981.
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Peasants and National Integration in the Maghreb: Why Does Agrarian Reform not Mobilize the Peasants of Maghreb?

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Why does agrarian reform not mobilize the peasants of the Maghreb?

The starting point of this paper is an empirical observation that is baffling at first sight. It concerns the phenomenon of the "abstention" of the landless peasants of Algeria when summoned to 'profit' from the agrarian reform decided on by the state, after ten years of independence and without the pressure of a peasant movement for agrarian reform.

In fact, the greater part of the Algerian peasantry which mobilized for the war of national liberation has not expressed what might be called the "thirst for land" through attempts to occupy the land of the large national property owners, or even through simple demonstration with agrarian reform as the order of the day. The occupation, at the moment of independence, of the farms of French colonials which were declared vacant property, is a phenomenon limited merely to the permanent workers of the farms. The poor landless peasants who lived around these farms did not attempt to profit from the French colonials' 'holiday' to invade and occupy their farms.

It took ten years for the Algerian state, in power after a long armed struggle by the peasants, to decide, finally, to issue an official decree concerning the limitation of the private property of natives of the country. Neither the government of Ben Bella, nor that of Boumedien had to undergo the pressure of a peasant movement through the limitation of the large private property in the country. The promulgation by the Algerian state of the decree of November 8, 1971, entitled "Agrarian Reform", reflects much more the evolution, at a given moment, of the balance of forces at the heart of the Algerian ruling classes, than a positive reply to demands clearly expressed by the poor peasantry. Nor was this decision a judicial regulation brought about by a spontaneous movement of society as was, for example, the phenom-
enon of autogestation in the former colonial farm. The poor peasantry which should have been, in principle, the main beneficiary, showed little enthusiasm after the promulgation of this decree. Five years after the launching of the first phase of the agrarian reform the peasant union, created by the state to facilitate peasant participation in the application of this reform, gives the impression of being much more a new and high institutional body dominated by bureaucracy than a peasant organization. The most serious aspect is that several poor peasants preferred to "abstain" rather than take part in this so-called agrarian "revolution". The scale of this phenomenon of abstention seems to have attained disquieting proportions in certain regions. An inquiry in the commune of Wilaya de Tlemcen revealed that a quarter of the beneficiaries of the first phase abstained. The author of this inquiry concluded his study with the statement that "the phenomenon of abstention well and truly exists and it is no use hiding it from oneself or from others. Sometimes it attains disquieting proportions: 50°/o at Cheraga and 75°/o at Mahelma." ¹ In order to discourage this phenomenon of abstention, it seems there has been no hesitation in "the use of constraint to maintain the interested parties in their place." ²

Comparison with the situation in the Moroccan and Tunisian countryside gives the impression that this lack of enthusiasm shown by the Algerian peasantry for agrarian reform is a specific trait of the peasantry of the Maghreb in general, and not only of the Algerian peasantry. In Tunisia, in 1969, after the failure of the project for the generalization of the cooperative system in the countryside, the peasants celebrated this failure with the same relief as the large property owners. ³ In Morocco, where the concentration of land in the hands of national property owners is greater than in Algeria and Tunisia, the battle cry of agrarian reform seems to mobilize much more certain radical city elements than the poor peasantry. ⁴

¹ Abdelkarim EL AIDI: "A propos du désistement dans le secteur de la révolution agraire. Le cas de la commune de Maghnia; Wilaya de Tlemcen", Bulletin du Centre de recherche et de documentation, Université d'Oran (4), 1974, p. 94


³ Later on, many former cooperator regretted this failure but that is another story.

⁴ This is not intended to mean that the peasantry accepts its living condi-
This phenomenon poses two questions directly linked to the general problem of the conditions of national integration: 

1. The first question concerns the possibilities and the limits of a system of alliance between the poor peasants and the "élite property-holding citizens at the center of power."

2. The second question raises the controversial problem of the nature of the political behaviour of the peasantry.

These two questions are obviously linked and it is impossible to avoid cross checking and repetitions in treating them separately. But I prefer, for the sake of clarity in this account, and for the progression of my argument, to separate them on the analytical level. It is only after having developed the first and second questions (which will form the first and second parts of this paper) that I will attempt (in the third part) to present the organic relationship between these two questions, using the gramscian notions of the historical block and civil society, and evaluating the strategic position of ideological formations and the role of the intellectual in the development and expression of current ideologies.

I. National integration and systems of alliance

The idea of national integration (or construction) does not escape the usual ambiguity of concepts designed to define the complex social phenomena which include traits of a structural order and others of a cultural order. But we shall retain the concept because it has, at least, the merit of clarifying the idealistic and statistical interpretation of the concept of 'nation' developed by the first European nationalist ideologists at the beginning of the nineteenth century. For these ideologists the nations is a natural, unchangeable entity fixed once and for all as the embodiment of a 'spiritual principle' (Fichte), or of a 'soul' (Renan). The idea of national integration has the advantage of stressing the fact that national reality is not only an historical phenomenon, determined by precise socio-economic conditions, but also a dynamic reality, a process that evolves and changes within itself. This process is the result of the interaction of two sets of facts, one of a structural order, and the other of a cultural order. The first is the development, during the first phase
of industrialization, of an economic market going beyond the tradition­
al frontiers (tribal, feudal and others) that characterize the precapitalist means of production. Parallel to the establishment of this national economic market a cultural base is formed which tends to dominate the local traditions bound to the precapitalist means of production. In each social development the traits which characterize the process of national integration (national economic market and common cultural base) are conditioned largely by the kind of relationship that exists between the center and the periphery of social development in the precapitalist phase. 5

The object of this paper is to study these post-colonial conditions in the Maghreb, with regard to social development. But perhaps it would be useful, before expounding the facts relative to these relationships, to put forward a preliminary statement of a theoretical nature. We have, in the preceding lines, used the concept of means of production which is one of the classical notions of Marxist theory, and we have, also, adopted the Marxist interpretation of the national entity, which links the development of nations in the process of domination by capitalist means of production. Nevertheless, we have to admit, with Rey, 6 that if Marx effectively expounded the theory of capitalism means of production, that of the enumeration of means of production was only half developed. We are also in agreement with that other man who said that "the historical studies of Marx, on France in particular, whether written before or after 'Das Capital', do not constitute a scientific theory of class struggle in a concrete social structure. The concepts which are used there, for example, 'the sack of potatoes' of the divided peasentry or, in a more serious vein, that of 'Bonapartism' are very approximate and unworkable." 7 The interpretation by Rey of this lapse by the author of 'Das Kapital' personally seems both plausible and acceptable. According to Rey the cause of his inability to create a theory on the enumeration of means of production is Marx's lack of any real contact with the peasantry. 8 In view of these conditions it is hardly surprising that it is


7 Ibid., p. 173.

8 Ibid., p. 212.
finally in the minority tendency of American sociology, in opposition to the dominant functionalist theory, that we find the greatest effort to study the different types of alliance between the urban elite and the peasantry, in concrete social developments and well defined social situations. We are thinking in particular of the stimulating work of Barrington Moore on “the social origins of dictatorship and democracy”. In this study Moore has attempted to show the direct benefit caused by the different conditions of the town-dwelling bourgeoisie and the landowning aristocracy at the beginning of industrialization, and the forms of national integration expressed by the particular structures of the states (democracy, fascism, communism). Yet our course will not be completely similar to that of Moore, for two reasons: the first is of a theoretical nature: Barrington Moore, despite the few pertinent comments of his conclusion, did not give to ideology (above all to that of the city-dwelling elite) the place which it deserves in the selection and practice of alliances. The second reason is of an historical nature: Moore studied the interaction of the commercial and manufacturing bourgeoisie and the land owning aristocracy during the first phase of industrialization. We are studying, on the other hand, the relationship between the new governing class (in which bureaucracy plays a fundamental role) and the poor peasants. In the third world the countries are becoming more and more scarce where the bourgeoisie still plays the role of privileged partner of the new governing class. Moreover, socialism and agrarian reform are the order of the day in the great majority of the countries of the third world, even if actions often contradict the words of those who stand up for socialism and agrarian reform.

It is obviously in Algeria where the poor peasantry is officially portrayed as being the privileged ally of the new ruling class. “We have made our own choice”, affirmed the Boumedian President, “Algeria should, above all, heed the fate of the landless. The land owners, for their part, uphold us only in order to safeguard their considerable privileges... Our natural allies are the hard working and deprived masses. And as for those who earn twenty times, and even fifty times the wage of an agricultural laborer you can imagine that they are far from satisfied with our politics”.


10 Speech April 13, 1971.
This declaration of policy brings us to the following question: how, in practice, has the new governing class of Algeria acted in order to make concrete this clear choice of alliance with the landless who, in the case of Algerian society, are, for the most part, the poor peasants? As the ‘agrarian revolution’ of Algeria is still in its initial stages and empirical enquiries are few and far between, one should start with the study of a more stable experiment: that of the use of the inherited land left by the colonists as an available resource in the hands of the ruling class as a means of consolidating its system of alliance with the poor peasantry. The study of Algerian self-management realized by the same ruling class that brought about the ‘agrarian revolution’, will help to throw light on the meaning of the ‘abstentions’ of the poor peasants, called to ‘profit’ from this ‘agrarian reform’. The comparison of the actions of the Algerian ruling class in its relations with the poor peasantry with that of Tunisia and Morocco will bring out the meaning and significance of the likenesses and differences of the three experiments.

1. The new Algerian ruling class and the landless peasants

Algeria’s declaration of independence and the hasty departure of a part of the French colony deprived the Algerian ruling class, in its crisis, of the initiative in the achievement of the first phase of the agrarian reform. The principles of this reform were accepted by the F.L.N. at the Souman Congress (August 20, 1956): “The conquest of national independence means at the same time agrarian reform”. The Tripoli program (June 1962) confirmed these principles, but the conditions of its application remained ambiguous. This program in fact anticipates a limitation of private property and “a free assignment of recovered land to landless peasants or those insufficiently provided for.” The expression ‘free assignment’ is to be understood as a distribution of land to the poor peasant. But, without explicitly rejecting the idea of distribution, the authors of the program proposed that, in the case of the well mechanized lands of the colonists and the large Algerian land owners, the land should be shared without being divided into pieces, and that these

properties should be exploited collectively. The ambiguity of the project comes to light in the formulation and in the coexistence of the notion of sharing out and that of collective exploitation. In any case, one finds the idea of self-management in neither the Souman Congress, nor in those held at Tripoli. It was the permanent workers of the colonial farms, who were the least affected by the war of national liberation, who decided to occupy the 'vacant' farms. By this act the permanent workers of these farms demonstrated their opposition to all attempts at the recuperation of these farms, as much by the Algerian bourgeoisie as by the great mass of landless peasants and those without permanent employment. The idea of self-management was first tried out in the farms near Algiers, probably under the influence of trade unionists with knowledge of Yugoslavian practice.

The reaction of the first Algerian government to these occupations was positive. It made legal the accomplished fact and set in motion its new-born bureaucracy to consolidate the functioning of these farms. A new institution, the National Office for Agrarian Reform, was created to take charge, in some ways, of the technical, financial and administrative problems of the self governing farms. Faced with this 'aid' the farm workers had but one prerogative:

The administration of daily tasks by a committee and a president elected by all the permanent workers. All the rest, such as for example, the regrouping of farms in one single unit of a good size, cultivation plans, the number of workers and the criteria for payment, were decided without the institutional participation of the workers. But, in reality, the new-born bureaucracy of the Algerian state did not have the means to see through its policy. The technical and administrative personnel qualified for the centralized management of the colonial farms simply does not exist. The solution that was found to bypass these objective (limits of the bureaucracy was an increase in centralization) by two 'technical' means:

- The regrouping of farms of an average 130 ha. in the colonial farms; 12.000 ha. for the self governing units.
- Priority given to mechanization, simplification of tasks and the reduction of initiative by peasants.

On the level of exploitation the workers find themselves practically in their former position as wage earners, but this time with the inconvenience of having as employer a distant bureaucracy which pays their salaries irregularly (sometimes a few months late). The representative of this bureaucracy in the heart of the enterprise, the Director, appointed and paid by the national office for agrarian reform, is often a young
city dweller without any technical or administrative education, incapable of assuming the role of the former manager. In practice the role of this bureaucrat is limited to that of link-man between the peasants and the central bureaucracy.

The conclusion to be drawn from all these facts is that the workers on self-governing farms, who are basically the natural allies of the Algerian ruling class, often find themselves, in their daily lives in situations which put them in conflict with this class. Nevertheless, reality may be distorted if one focuses on nothing but the conflicting aspects of their relationship. The experiment with agricultural self government, with all its limits due, in the main part, to bureaucratic hyper-centralization, is an experiment just as much for the Algerian ruling as for the workers on the self-governing farms. This experiment has its own dynamics which, while suffering the often hostile actions of its environment, act at the same time on this environment. Several critics of this experiment have not realized the importance of these dynamics. 12

The loosening, in 1969, of the bureaucracy’s troublesome and ineffective control is an indication of these internal dynamics which self-government possesses. The agrarian reform undertaken in 1971 follows logically the maintenance of the self-governing sector. In 1964 this sector, which monopolized a quarter of agricultural land and 60% of agricultural products, contributed only 10% to the effective agricultural total of the national economic market. It was necessary, sooner or later, either to generalize agrarian reform over all the country, or to break up the self-governing sector. In 1971 the Algerian ruling class opted for the first hypothesis by proclaiming its desire to make concrete the principle of “the land for he who work it”. 13 On the level of the intentions affirmed in the charter of the agrarian revolution, the property of absentee landlords should be wholly nationalized and the greater part of peasant property should be returned to individual family exploitation, the excess being entrusted to the National Fund for Agrarian Reform. But the most significant point is that private property, even


when reduced to the lowest possible level, no longer has all its former prerogatives. Private property owners are asked to respect the system of culture of each zone, worked out by the technicians of the state. Without saying so explicitly, the state is attempting to act as the principal owner of all the national inherited land, in the traditional Islamic way.  

In practice, absentee landlords (often living in the city) who should have been totally eliminated have been able to keep a part of their inheritance by naming a member of their family as direct exploiter. The greater part of peasant property seems to have been affected in a more radical way.

The final result of the operation is that “the state sector, along with the self-governing sector, which cover over half the agricultural and pastoral lands —and the best— will employ a total of only one fifth of the active male population”.

In view of these facts, how can the battle cry of agrarian reform be expected to mobilize the landless Algerian peasants?

The comparison of these facts with the Tunisian and Moroccan experiments shows that beyond the differences between the three experiments, it is the constant factors that could help us to understand better the lack of motivation of the Maghreb peasants when it comes to agrarian reform.

2. Traits common to the three reforms

The differences between projects of agrarian reform in the three countries are quite well known. They have to do, primarily, with the

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16 For the Tunisian experiment consult the publication of CERES Université d’Tunis and more particularly the Studies of:


importance of areas mobilized to the profits of the poor peasantry. In Morocco, out of a million hectares of colonial lands, a little more than half has been handed over to the funds of agrarian reform, due to purchases effected by the rural and town-dwelling bourgeoisie. In Tunisia, the transfer of colonial lands to the bourgeoisie has been much more limited. Since 1961 the Tunisian State has decided to use the former colonial farms as the nuclei around which to form the small peasant exploitations, in cooperative units of production. This project was, in one sense, more favorable to the poor peasantry than Algerian self-government, in that it did not limit the advantages of private property to the former workers of the colonial farms, integrating in the agricultural cooperatives not only these former workers, but also a part of the small exploiters and the landless peasants.

Basically this project did not compromise the status of the average large private property. Nevertheless, the very dynamics of this reform, combined with political instability, presented the Tunisian state, in 1969, with the same alternative as that of self government in 1971: either to compromise the first achievements of the reform, or to rely solely upon the private inheritance of land. On August 28, 1969, an article of law was submitted for authorization to the President of the Republic which stipulated that: “agricultural exploitation . . . can be expressed only by the cooperative units of production (Article 1), and that the landowners who do not wish to comply with the cooperative units of production are to sell their lands and the means of production appertaining to them . . . . according to prices that will be set by decree” (Article 5). It was, in a sense, a project of nationalization of the whole of private property much more radical than that contained in the Algerian “Charter of Agrarian Revolution” of 1971. But the balance of

About the limited Moroccan experience see:

forces at the heart of the ruling class made sure, finally, that it was the option that compromised the first cooperatives that were adopted.\footnote{J.L. Simmons, “The political economy of land use: Tunisian private farms”, \textit{Rural politics and Social change in the Middle East}. Edited by R. Antoun and I. Harik, India University Press, 1972, p. 432-452. A. Zghal: “The reactivation of tradition in a post traditional society”, \textit{DAEDALUS}, winter 1973, p. 225-252.}

In remains to say that beyond the political failure of Tunisian agrarian reform one can find points common to both in the very limited experiment of Moroccan agrarian reform, the more important one in Tunisia between 1961 and 1969 and finally in that of Algeria. What they have in common is often underestimated.

Nevertheless, if one puts oneself in the place of those affected by these reforms, one can ascertain that these projects are prompted by two complementary principles:

1. The refusal by the ruling class and its central bureaucracy to leave the initiative in the hands of the peasantry as regards the effective management of the lands given to the peasants.
2. And the recourse, consequently, to excessive mechanization for carrying out the most important tasks, in place of peasants.

The result of this option is two-pronged:

1. The devaluation in the process of production of the private land owning factor with respect to imported agricultural machinery.
2. The transformation of the beneficiaries of the agrarian reform into semi wage-earners without the regularity of salaries and the job security of the former permanent workers on the colonial farms.

In these conditions it is not surprising that, despite certain differences due to local traditions and the political conjuncture of the three countries of the Maghreb, the reactions of the poor peasantry called to ‘profit’ from these agrarian reforms are quite similar. Their reactions can be summed up in the formula: “sure, but....!”

II. The poor peasants and agrarian reform in Maghreb

To grasp the significance of the reactions of the landless peasants of Maghreb to the projects for agrarian reform it is necessary for us, first of all, to clarify our position on two theoretical questions which continue to be a subject of debate between specialists in rural studies. The first is the definition of the idea of the peasant and the categories of
peasants. The second poses the question of the revolutionary possibilities of the peasantry.

To tell the truth these two questions are basically perverted by the ethnocentrist (occidental) heritage of the social services and by the quite frequent tendency of occidental specialists in just the same way, moreover, as many of those brought up in their schools, to question non-European societies from the point of view of the historical experience of Europe. This tendency risks the creation of definitions which seem to be universal propositions but which, in reality, are nothing but systematic interpretation of certain empirical facts in European society. Thus the definition of the peasantry most often quoted (that of Wolf) is merely the systematic interpretation of the European agricultural condition in the nineteenth century, which fits in nicely with the four criteria selected by Wolf as being the characteristic traits of the peasantry. 19

These four criteria are: 1) to be a rural cultivator, 2) to manage one's exploitation not only for the market but also for family consumption, 3) to belong to a local community which goes beyond the framework of the family, even when enlarged, 4) and to have an inferior economic and political position and to have to give away a part of one's production in the form of rent or taxes.

This picture of the peasantry is established essentially to be contrasted with that of primitive and tribal societies which escape the domination of a central power. It makes 'analytically marginal' every peasant category that does not correspond to its criteria. 20 This definition of the peasantry is thus inoperable for the type of problems which concern us in this paper. We should, however, refuse 'to pin the peasants down to one single definition' 21 and affirm with Mintz that for the study of the present problems of the rural world in non-occidental societies it is more important to develop the typologies of rural socio-economic groupings than to work out some abstract definition of the peas-


21 S. Ortiz, "Reflexions on the concept of Peasant culture", in T. Shanin, op. cit., p. 322-335.

antry.\textsuperscript{22} We retain Post's hypothesis for whom "African reality reveals two types of closely interwoven processes.

The first is a process in which the model changes from 'communal cultivator' to that of 'peasant'. The second is the process of incorporation of communal and peasant societies into the worldwide capitalist system".\textsuperscript{23} We also consider as worthy the proposition of Hobsbawn who states "that beyond a certain point in the socio-economic differentiation of the agrarian population, the term 'peasantry' is no longer applicable".\textsuperscript{24}

The debate on the revolutionary possibilities of the peasantry is also often perverted by the 'fixation' of specialists on the political behaviour of the European peasantry in the nineteenth century, and the reactions of European intellectuals to this behaviour. Mao Tse Tung needed a great deal of courage and willpower in his thought not to be contaminated by the prejudices of the founding father of the maxims and of his second-rate European followers against the peasantry. Marx's famous definition of the peasantry, more insulting than scientific, is well known - the barbarity at the heart of civilization - and the one in the same style concerning the French peasants - the sack of potatoes.\textsuperscript{25}

These prejudices, coming from one of the most lucid thinkers of the modern world, are the expression of the positivist ideology that dominated the Europe of the nineteenth century, with its illusions on the idea of civilization and progress linked to the development of technology. By some kind of primary reaction to these prejudices, Fanon thought he had to defend the opposite hypothesis by affirming that "in the colonies only the peasantry is revolutionary."\textsuperscript{26} But science is not built up by playing one prejudice against another. The debate of this


\textsuperscript{26} F. Fanon, \textit{Les damnés de la terre}, Maspéro, 1975, p. 25.
question is, therefore, far from being closed. To tell the truth, in the way that it is often presented—"is the peasantry revolutionary?"—the question is badly phrased and consequently inoperative.

The thesis of Fanon has been taken up once more in a subtle fashion by Stavenhagen, who states that in Latin America, "in exchange for certain advantages, many organized workers' movements saw themselves as strictly associated with the governmental structure or with some party in power". On the other hand, "the peasant movements, for their part, have always shown themselves to be more radical than the worker's organizations, apart from a few exceptions". Given the rigid and oppressive political and social structure which is that of the rural sector, every peasant demand, however modest it might be, is a full scale frontal attack on the hegemony of the property owning oligarchy. (It is I who underline this passage). After this statement Stavenhagen goes on to assert that: "according to all probability, peasant agitation in the next few years will become more frequent and intense in the countries which do not put into operation a massive and accelerated program for the redistribution of land".27 But this optimistic expectation (for a revolutionary) does not reply in a satisfactory manner to the question posed by Barrington Moore in the conclusion to his book where he wondered "if the great period of peasant revolutions which have missed the twentieth century up till now, is not now coming to an end". His reply is that "to know whether this is true or not it would be necessary to examine very closely the situation in Africa and Latin America".28 This is indisputably one of the tasks that must be given priority by the specialists of the two continents.

From these remarks one can say that every proposal about the political behaviour of the peasantry in general (Wolf) or even about the peasants of the third world (Fanon), is a premature and unfounded proposal. In the same way the proposals relative to the political behavior of the socio-professional rural category like, for example, the middle peasants 29 or the rural proletariat 30 can only have some relevance if they


28 B. Moore, op. cit., p. 383.


30 S. W. Mintz, "The rural proletariat and the problem of rural proletarian con-
are limited to a social structure and to a well specified historical period or, in the best of cases, if they rely on comparative studies of peasant types having opposite behavior patterns. There is consequently no typology of the peasantry relevant to all the study projects of the rural world.

The pertinence of each typology depends on how one envisages the problem. In this paper we have time and again used the classification of peasants into three categories: poor, middle and large private property owners. This is a useful classification but it obscures the diversity of the concrete situations which proceed from the different conditions of integration in the countryside in the international capitalist market.

In order to understand the reaction to the agrarian reforms of the peasants of the Maghreb placed in the category of poor or landless peasant this category should be broken up into relatively homogenous groups: 1) the permanent worker on former colonial farms, 2) the small farmers (Khammes) who are not integrated into local communities, as on the oases, 3) the landless peasants without permanent employment, 4) the little landowners clinging to their exploitations. The separation of the two latter categories is often arbitrary due to the system of undivided property and matters of kinship between these two categories.

Politically it is absurd to give one of these categories the title revolutionary or conservative. The behavior of each group depends not only on the stakes but also on the circumstances and prospects offered. The permanent workers on colonial farms in Algeria have often been reproached for not having played an active part in the movement of national liberation and in the armed struggle, like the peasants of the dispossessed regions. In his study on agricultural self-government in Algeria, Chaulet clearly shows that the rather weak efforts at fighting of the permanent workers on the colonial farms can be explained mostly by the very harsh system of police control around these farms, and by the type of environment that these workers live in, which makes clandestine action very difficult. But the independence, the political sense and the contention of this rural proletariat were clearly expressed when they had the chance of speaking up during the first congress of


31 On B. Moore's book, see the article of N. Mouzelis: "Greek and Bulgarian peasants: aspects of their sociopolitical situation during the interwar period", Comparative studies in society and history, (1), January 1976, p. 85-105.
the Fellahs (October 1963), and during that of the Federation of Landworkers (December 1964).

Confronted with the projects of agrarian reform proper, that is to say the limitation of private property, only the small farmers (the Khammes) tend to express unreservedly their total support of these projects. This is explained not only by the nature of the antagonistic relationship between small farmers and landed property owners, but also by a lack of blood relationships between these two categories. But the dominant trend of the reactions of the majority of poor peasants is well described by Pascon when considering the experiment of Moroccan agrarian reform which, like that of Algeria and Tunisia, is "marked from the point of view of technocracy. The peasantry, absent at the beginning, nevertheless expressed its wishes ... negatively, through massive surrender. The landless peasants, the tenants, the benefit claimers wanted land and the means to cultivate it, as personal property and with no strings attached . . . the state wanted beneficiaries, wise and modest pupils, who would respect the advice and cultural recommendations of the state and who would be always under their guidance . . . the most fearless and aggressive gave in". In Algeria, over and above the phenomenon of 'absenteeism' which was officially recognized, on the spot enquiries revealed that the beneficiaries of the agrarian reform were not behaving in a passive way, and were measuring their reactions according to the possibilities of local and national conjuncture. The forms of resistance taken by the beneficiaries of the agrarian reform to their semi-salaried status were highly varied. Once called to vote for the management of the cooperative, some used this occasion to demonstrate their discontent, either by a huge proportion handing in blank voting cards, or by entirely eliminating the former management. According to Ait Amara, "the self manager protests in his own way, by reducing his production in proportion to the reduction in his real income (drop in productivity, negligence and waste). The same phenomenon was found in Tunisia and Morocco.

32 M. Ruissi makes a remark on this phenomenon in his thesis about the oasis in South Tunis, p. 4.

33 P. Pascon, Ph D Thesis (manuscript) on Haouez of Marrakech. p. 251.

From these observations we gather the following two conclusions:

1. In the case of agrarian reforms as they are practiced by the ruling classes of the three countries of Maghreb, the occasions of conflict between landless peasants and the local representatives of these ruling classes are more frequent than those which put the poor peasants up against the large landed owners: which explains why protest movements in a rural setting often take the form of a coalition directed by the middle peasant and manipulated by the landed owners, and that peasant violence against landed owners is exceptional.

2. Contrary to the tradition of revolt of the precolonial peasantry of the Maghreb, the rural world at present gives the impression of being calm in comparison with the towns periodically troubled by the demands of workers and students. Two factors could explain this relative calm in the countryside.

   a) The accelerating depopulation of rural areas caused by the generalization of mechanization and the fixing of a permanent agricultural work force which has a certain job security and some social advantages. For Algeria the process of the depopulation of this rural proletariat is so advanced that one wonders if, really, the term peasant is still adequate to describe this rural population. Enquiries in Morocco give the impression on the other hand that depopulation has not yet reached Algerian proportions. Tunisia is in an intermediary stage.

   b) For the rest of the poor peasantry: absence of perspective for a normal life in the countryside and the search for the possibility of employment in the towns or abroad. The relative calm of the rural population in Algeria can be explained, among other things, by the fact that

35 In Tunis, between 1961 and 1969, this type of coalition emerged violently at least on two occasions; in January of 1965 in Msaken and in 1969 in Ouerdanine, two villages of Sahel.

36 Even in Morocco, the violence of the type of the Glaoui against the tenants are phenomena quite exceptional in the Maghreb and they rather call to mind certain forms of violence against the Indian peasants in Latin America. On the other hand, the counter violence of the tenants after the death of Glaoui is also an exceptional phenomena in the Maghreb. See the description based on his own experience of this counter violence in Gavin Maxwell, Lord, of the Atlas. *The rise and the fall of the House of Glaoua, 1893-1956*, E. P. Dutton Inc, New York 1966, p. 267-68.

37 This calm is only relative. Notwithstanding the total silence of mass communication media, from time to time we learn about violent movements without great significance, especially in Morocco.
20\% of the active population lives in France. The same phenomenon is seen in Morocco and Tunisia, but on a smaller scale.

III. Historical block and civil society

We have, in the first part of this paper, discussed our problems in terms of class alliances, following more or less the path of Barrington Moore, but nevertheless stating a certain reserve on his theoretical leanings, which underestimate the role of ideologies and of ideologies in the fulfilling of projects of alliance. It is well understood that in stressing, in this last part, the weight of ideologies and value systems, we do not deny the fact that the alliances revolve around objective class interests. But we think, at the same time, the certain structures inherited from the past often have a considerable effect on the decisions of politicians—even the most revolutionary. The interest of the Gramscian notion of Historical Block is that it is not “simply conceived of as an alliance between social classes”, but rather as “an entire historical situation . . . with, on the one hand, a social structure—the classes, and, on the other hand, an ideological and political superstructure”. Civil Society, or ideological management and political society or domination (State Apparatus) intellectuals, in the widest sense and not only the great intellectuals, are the managers of the superstructure. In a system of alliance the function of the intellectuals of the ruling class is to impregnate, socialize and integrate the allied forces and above all to integrate their intellectuals with the ruling class. Uncontrollable enemy groups will be neutralized by means of political society (violence) when the action of civil society (ideology) proves ineffective. Which means that “the thoughts of the ruling class are also, trumps at times, the dominant thoughts. In these conditions, given the relative autonomy of the two elements of the superstructure—civil and political society—one should not expect a radical and instant change at the level of political society (revolution or independence) to provoke an immediate and total collapse at the level of civil society. Even when excluded from political society, the intellectuals of the Old Regime continue to act on the new growing society, even after their death. To tell the truth, if one accepts the pro-

\[38\] We follow in this part, the interpretation of H. Portelli *Gramsci et le bloc historique*, P.U.F. Paris, 1972.

position of Marx on the link between ruling class and dominant thoughts, one has consequently to accept that the organic intellectuals of the new historical block cannot escape contamination by the ideology of traditional intellectuals (those of the old regime). It is therefore not enough for people to decide on a system of alliance, on the level of the new political society, in order to reinforce the social base of the new regime, for an ideology favorable to the allied social categories to develop and diffuse immediately at the very beginning of the new political system. The example of the Russian Revolution in its relations with the peasantry confirms the hypothesis of the existence of a relative autonomy in civil society with respect to political society. The ghost of past ideologies is not easily buried with the political disgrace, or even death, of their authors.

This is the meaning of Mao Tse Tung’s ‘thought’ and his evaluation of ideology in the class struggle and, consequently, in class alliance. And it is not pure chance that his split from a part of the positivist inheritance of occidental Marxists has, as starting point, his idea of the role of the peasantry in a revolutionary alliance system. Whilst Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin totally accepted the prejudices of Marx against the peasants, Mao did not hesitate to wholly immerse himself in a peasant movement which is not his own creation or that of townspeople. At one of the difficult moments during the Bolshevik Revolution Lenin proposed ‘linking’ all urban cells to all rural cells so that each worker cell ‘linked’ to a rural cell would keep a constant eye out for all possible occasions to sacrifice such and such a culture need of a co-cell. After the death of Lenin, Stalin resolved the peasant problem through sheer brute force. But it can be said that it was Trotsky who, in 1905, even before the Bolshevik victory, gave the best definition of the standpoint of the Russian Marxists on the role of the peasants: “It is only once the avant-garde of the revolution and the urban proletariat are at the helm of the state that numerous sections of the working masses, notably in the countryside, will be dragged into the revolution and organize themselves politically. After this conquest of power by the urban proletariat the Russian bourgeoisie will abandon their position of


41 M. Lewin, Russian peasants and soviet power, the Norton Library, New York, 1975.
revolutionary hegemony over the peasants". More than half a century later, after the victory of the Bolshevik Revolution, Russia continues to pay the price of the heritage of the occidental Marxist prejudices against the peasantry for its food.

In China, on the contrary, twenty years after his rise to power, Mao was stating "that it cannot be doubted that the struggle of the peasants is developing to such a point as to make them stronger than the workers". In 1959, commenting on a work by Stalin, 'Economic Problems of Socialism in the U.S.S.R.', Mao wrote: "the basic mistake (of Stalin) is due to his lack of confidence in the peasantry". In 1960, on the subject of a sentence from the Manual of Political Economics of the Soviet Union "the lands of the rich peasants are given to the poor and middle peasants" Mao noted that this sentence 'means that the government confiscates the land to give it to the peasants. Here it is a case of feelings of mercy . . . this idea is, in reality, a right wing concept.

This notion is, however, that of the three ruling classes of the Maghreb with, obviously, differences in the intensity and continuity of the action. To take the case of the most advanced ruling class in this field, that of Algeria, we declare that, at the moment when it initiates a radical agrarian reform, it makes a speech to the peasants of the most patronizing kind: "torn away from ignorance and exploitation the peasants nevertheless put to use and to their own profit a land that the revolution has given them," (underlined by me). As a string attached to this gift of the revolution the Algerian peasants have to change their mentality and integrate themselves. "If the Revolution has given the peasants land and the material means to work it, it should now help them to increase their social awareness and to place their action in a


45 Ibid., p. 73.

46 Avant-project the charte Nationale, April 1976, p. 16.
situation which goes beyond the narrow horizons of the unit of production”. In this exercise the peasants are seen as the object of the action of the Revolution (that is to say the ruling class). Let us take as an example this battle cry of the predecessor of the National Charter which could have been printed in any Tunisian or Algerian newspaper: “the Agrarian Revolution would not move forward if it did not manage to change the mentality of the peasant and destroy in him all archaic patterns of thought and action, and also his vision of the world”. 47

The question that remains to be answered is the following: has the process of “depeasantization” of the rural peasantry of the Maghreb really reached such a point that, finally, it is they themselves who ask for the destruction of their vision of the world? This would on the one hand explain, for the most part, the scarcity of violence in the Maghrebian countryside, and, on the other hand, the ambiguous reply of the peasants of the Maghreb to the projects for agrarian reform: their “sure, but . . . !”.

We must draw the conclusion that the violent reaction on the part of the British authorities in their crushing of the peasant movement concealed the fear of these authorities of the probability that the movement might change from a national liberation revolution to a social revolution. This fear was shared by the bourgeoisie, the big landowners and even the Wafd leadership.

47 Ibid., p. 31.