

A THEORETICAL NOTE ON THE CAUSES OF REVOLUTIONARY PEASANT MOVEMENTS

"Hypotheses and Propositions"

Dr. Doğu ERGİL

Definition of the peasantry:

The general definition of the peasant is that he is mainly a subsistence cultivator and is relatively autonomous regarding the process of cultivation¹. His social relationships are restricted mainly to the sustenance of his family rather than taking part in the greater market mechanism, although he is involved in it occasionally. It is the institutional context (traditional kinship ties, family production) and the mode of production (subsistence and individual) that separate the peasant from other social strata. It is the tension that arise from the disruption of these accustomed social and cultural patterns, and the vacuum created before the emergence of new institutional alternatives, that make peasantry a revolutionary force.

The Place of the Peasantry in the Political and Socio-economic Hierarchy:

1- Political Status.

The predominant social characteristic of the peasant is his subordinate position in the overall political hierarchy. Peasantry as a class is either *de facto* or *de jure* excluded from the political process. His economic isolation and dependence, the exploitative land tenure arrangements that are imposed on him, and the 'culture of repression' (in political terms) that has reinforced his low socio-economic status over time has created a timid, suspicious, apathetical and politically passive class².

This state of mind, and/or static political disposition, which becomes manifest in the form of resistance to abrupt changes, is referred as the 'Image of Limited Good'³; 'Encogido Syndrome'⁴; or 'Amoral Familism'⁵. But neither of these theses have paid proper attention to the rural repression and the wider political structure which have been instrumental in the creation of these psycho-political syndromes.

2- Economic Status.

Caught in a world of growing large scale markets, production schemes, and rapid capitalization, the peasant remains as a relic of a former mode of production (and social organization) hence a creature to disappear. In previous periods, the peasant has been a direct target of exploitation as the main bearer of cultivation. This process has rendered him a marginal socio-economic agent at the national level. In the present age of neo-colonialism -an economic era dominated by the metropolises-, and the supremacy of giant corporate structures, he has now become a marginal figure in the universal social hierarchy.

In this world of rapid transformation and monopolization, the peasant feels more alienated and anachronistic. It is his quest for economic security, ecological balance between his needs and socio-physical environment, and most of all a new social identity (or at least his 'good old', secure ways) that makes him an insurgent force. So, a peasant movement is a protest against low social and economic status, and a collective struggle of the rural cultivator for survival in a changing world, in which he is no more needed-not even in the old exploitative terms that he had accepted for centuries.

Peasantry as a class

Like any other social class, definition of the peasantry as a homogeneous class is erroneous due to its sub-units, complex institutionality (polyvalance) *vis a vis* the means of production⁶. Divided into factions, the pattern of political behavior of the peasantry is based on these factions which are basically vertically integrated segments of the rural society, dominated by landlords and rich peasants at the top, and poor peasants and landless laborers who are economically dependent on

them, at the bottom. However, our survey of numerous research findings on the peasants throughout the world to a great extent substantiated the fact that there is little solidarity amongst the exploited sections of the peasantry⁷. They stand divided by their allegiance to their factions, often dominated by the rich peasants. "Political initiative thus rests with faction leaders, who are owners of land and have power and prestige in the village society"⁸. Many factors affect the factional divisions; kinship and neighborhood ties (and conflicts of course) and in some cases, the cast allegiances. But the predominant character of the overall rural picture is that, factions are in turn divided between the ones composed of the rich peasants and their dependants on the one hand, and those of the independent small land-holders (middle peasants) on the other. For any social movement which seeks the support of the poor peasant and the landless laborer, it must direct its effort to break the pattern of rural allegiances. Because the allegiance of the poor stratum and the farm laborers to the richer peasants or farmers is not due to the subjective factors expounded by Banfield and Erasmus, but it is primarily based on the objective conditions of their economic dependence. Then, the question that needs to be asked is not whether the peasants are, or not revolutionary but, rather, under what circumstances do they become revolutionary and what roles do different sections of the peasantry play in (revolutionary) social movements.

The division of the peasantry into rich peasants, middle peasants and poor peasants suggest an array of the peasantry with different strata arranged one over the other in a single order. This is misleading. The middle peasants for instance, do not stand between the rich peasants and the poor peasants; they belong to a different sector of the rural (and market) economy.

This study will make a distinction broadly between three sections of the rural economy and strata. The first sector is composed of those, whose essential distinguishing feature is that they are landlords, who are personally not engaged in the cultivation of their lands. Their land is cultivated by landless tenants, mostly share-croppers, who are classified as poor peasants. The second sector is composed of independent small holders (middle peasants), who own the land which they cultivate

themselves (often with their families). They do not exploit the labor of others except in exceptional crop years and infrequent occasions. The third sector is composed of the capitalist farmers who own substantial amounts of land. They are described as rich peasants and/or farmers. Their distinguishing characteristic is that their farming is based primarily on the exploitation of wage labor: although they often participate in farm work themselves. Unlike landlords, they undertake the business of farming on their own account and employ capital in their endeavor. The farm laborers, who are paid a contractual wage, are referred to as the agricultural proletariat and sometimes are included among other sections of the exploited peasantry, (viz. sharecroppers, etc.) and sometimes under the term 'poor peasants'. In this sense, the definition of the 'peasantry' in this study is somewhat more expanded than its use by most anthropologists like E. Wolf and Foster to name a few.⁹

The majority of the wide array of cross-cultural data we have studied lend support to the fact that, the poor peasants are, *initially*, the least militant class of the peasantry. The main underlying causes in the delay of their political response to social dislocations and movements can be summed up in two points:

1) The dependent character of the poor peasant-most often the biggest sector of the rural population-on the landlord. This dependence severely reduces the tactical mobility of the peasant, but also creates-if the traditional ties between the landlord and the peasant still maintain a protective function for the latter-a peasant consciousness that sees the landlord (patron) as indispensable¹⁰. In such a relationship the personal security of the peasant is confused with his political and economic possibilities.

2) Absence of political consciousness (which is a function of the peasant's economic dependence and the 'culture of repression' prevalent in the countryside) that can otherwise induce him to rectify things to his own interests. The emergence of this necessary form of political consciousness generally follows a historical sequence that resembles the below pattern:

to

PATERNALISM —————> ORGANIZATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS
(e.g. trade-unionism)*

to
 CIOUSNESS" —————→ POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS
 (encompassing class interests)

This last stage denotes a state when the peasant's consciousness opens up to broader concepts and national-political problems to which his problems are directly linked. The influence of the outside stimuli (national and international) especially in the transition period from the second to the third stage is of crucial importance.

On the nature of peasant movements

A general distinction can be made between peasant movements (rebellions and/or risings) in precapitalist and capitalist societies. The first category then, following Hobsbawm¹² can be named 'primitive rebellions' and the latter, 'revolutionary movements'. The history of the former extends from the beginning of class societies to the 20th century; and the latter takes off from where the first has reached to its limits.

The 'primitive' peasant rebellions are pre-political, in that they lack a specific political vocabulary, and are basically 'groping'*** mass actions, although, "they are neither unimportant nor marginal"¹³. As the economic relations take more capitalistic forms that disrupt the traditional societal forms (of kinship and communal ties) and eventually lead to class conflicts, the forms and targets of peasants (and all social) movements start to change. Blood feuds and banditry take on other functions like "protest against oppression and poverty"¹⁴. Peasant movements that are slowly transformed into distinct class struggles, gain an ideology or is incorporated into a wider ideology or movement. Tomas and jacqueries that are initially iso-

*James Petras and Hugo Zemelman refer (note no. 2) to "trade union (ism) consciousness" as a stage in the evolution of peasant consciousness. We believe that 'trade unionism' is not a 'stage' in political consciousness, but rather a form (among many other possible forms) of political organization. Hence we call the second stage 'organizational consciousness' which embodies more possibilities of organizational varieties.

**In the sense that large groups of rural populations are searching for a new identity and future because 'the old ways' and traditional socio-economic patterns are already undermined by the market economy.

lated and disorganized, gain organization and (relatively) permanent goals as organizational consciousness rise to a political level¹⁵.

Peasant movements of the modern (capitalist) world are "endemic" to the contradictions of the socio-economic world-system they are born in. Hence they are liable to be (and often are) incorporated into the wider modern social movements.

Contrary to the a-political character of the primitive peasant movements, which basically seek to ameliorate the inadequacies and injustices of the old (prevailing) order, the modern movements often have a vision of a new social order (or an 'after-culture'). They owe this 'new vision' to the coterie of leadership that consist of dissident intellectuals and petty bureaucrats /professionals up in arms against the existing system. Thus, the basic political orientation of the 'modern movement' is revolutionary and class oriented, hence, 'universalistic' in scope and scale.

The universal character of peasant movements emanate from the overriding socio-economic transformation of the world community under the impact of capitalism. This overwhelming transformation, caused by the spread of market relations, has dissolved existing cultural and societal forms; made commodities out of land and human endeavor; and, dumped them on the marketplace. It is in this major disarray that the peasant is searching for his lost identity, historical place, but most importantly his future-if it ever exists in the new world-order.

The role of the peasantry in the Contemporary World and World Revolution

Today's 'world political economy' has multiplied the number of the peasant's (and other oppressed classes') enemies as well as his allies. To his oldest foe, the ruling class (es) of his own society, now, its business partner (or new master-or both), the international bourgeoisie is added. Lucrative interests in the age of monopoly and neocolonialism have removed the former barriers of nationality, religion, and color among the ruling classes, and have brought them closer to the oppressed. So close that, with one blow (a long and painful blow as we

have witnessed in Russia, China, Vietnam and Cuba) both can be eliminated. However in this decisive emancipation process, the peasantry has never been alone. Depending on the historical and specific conditions of various societies, peasant rebels had close allies from the following national classes: 1) The urban working-class; 2) dissident sections of the middle class, whose economic basis had been waning, and largely excluded from the political decision making process; 3) in some cases the petty commodity producer fallen victim to the competition of more efficient foreign economies. To these national allies we can add an international dimension, that of the supporting revolutionary forces in the exploiting metropolitan country. These revolutionary allies are composed basically of the working-classes and sometimes of insurgent middle-class groups, such as the lower army command, demonstrated by the recent Portuguese case which liberated Angola and Mozambique.

Why the Peasantry?

As a social phenomenon, the realization of the revolution or a revolutionary movement depends on the fulfillment of certain prerequisites -one of which is the leading role of a social class (or classes) in the act of rebellion. The identity of this insurgent class or the composition of the revolutionary classes depends on the level of development of the productive forces in the particular society under scrutiny.

In the Third World countries where large peasant populations persist (and the reason why they persist is that) the level of socio-economic development is rather low. This retardation generally has negative effects on the growth of a modern industrial labor-force composed merely of wage-earners who are freed from traditional and paternalistic ties to the propertied class (es). This relative freedom (for the modern worker is never free as long as he has no control over the division of labor which he is a part of, and the fruits of his labor) will render the worker physical and tactical mobility against an unjust and exploitative order.

However, the processes of dependence and underdevelopment, which are the inevitable outcome of neo-colonialism,

do not allow fast growth in the Third World. Slow growth and economic domination on the other hand, have three basic negative influences on social development: 1) It retards the formation of a large industrial proletariat; 2) it leads to the formation of pools of labor aristocracies that divide the expanding-indigenous labor force; 3) it prevents or retards the emergence of a strong national bourgeois class that could reduce foreign exploitation in the internal market.

Similar to the decline of the independent producers in both absolute and relative numbers, and the formation of large pools of unskilled labor in the initial stages of Western development, peasants in underdeveloped countries are increasing to such inordinate numbers that they are no more productive. They barely survive at a minimal subsistence or even sub-subsistence level. Just as the historic transformation of craft workers to factory hands in the (now) developed countries, the small landholders in the underdeveloped countries are being transformed into share-croppers, tenants and agricultural laborers¹⁶.

In the absence of a revolutionary proletariat, and the inhibiting reluctance of the weak and dependent national bourgeoisie to break the vicious circle of dependence and (neo-) colonial exploitation, only one major social class remains to bear the burden of national/social emancipation: the peasantry¹⁷. Because, it is the peasantry which suffers most from poverty, oppression and exploitation. These conditions inevitably radicalize this class, just as they did radicalize the working classes of the core capitalist countries in their initial stage of industrialization¹⁸.

Furthermore, the revolutionary character of the Western industrial proletariat of our day is more and more being questioned by Marxist scholars. For example, Sweezy and Fanon contend that the revolutionarism of the Western proletariat, as characterized by Marx, cannot give an accurate description of the proletariat in the West today¹⁹. As Lenin and Engels have earlier alluded²⁰, imperialism and its boons have 'bribed' the Western working classes into coalition with their dominant

classes*. As a consequence of this coalition, the main burden of the global capitalistic exploitation has been transferred to the underdeveloped countries. Hence, the revolutionary potential now actually lies in the Third World and the peasant, the most exploited, oppressed, and unrewarded class of this world.

Whenever (suitable) conditions have prevailed, the peasants have proved that history does not evolve in 'stages' in which the underdeveloped countries follow the historical path of the developed to reach their present stage of affluence and power. But historical progress is dialectical and is born out of human struggle both at the national and international levels. Now it is the peasant's turn to carry on the struggle.

Conditions and Factors That Contribute to the Realization of Peasant Movements: Propositions to be Tested by Further Research.

It is the aim of this study to highlight the universal (common) factors and conditions under which peasant movements occur. We will posit twelve propositions that are inspired (not exhaustive by any means) by historical and empirical evidence from twelve countries, in all of which some form of peasant movement has taken place. These countries are: Algeria, Bolivia, Brazil, China, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Peru, Venezuela, Vietnam and Russia.

1) Peasant movements are most likely to occur in societies where traditional elites begin losing their power (or control) or where peasant populations are organized by new /alternative elites. This process may generally coincide with periods when the traditional (rural and/or national) institutional system is

*Given the fact that the lucrative coalition between the working classes of the West and their ruling elite is based on imperialism and exploitation of the underdeveloped world, national struggles and social revolutions will one day inevitably halt this pillage. But also due to the cyclical crises of the capitalist system, the disguised and somewhat mitigated exploitation of the national working class may from time to time be intensified and activate the dormant class conflict and break the coalition. We have witnessed this situation in France in 1968, and still observing it in Italy, England and Portugal. If and when this stage is reached, the prophetic Immanuel Wallerstein's *World Socialist State* may become a possibility. ("The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis". Paper presented to Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, New Orleans, Aug. 28-31, 1972)

no longer able to continue to function. The prevailing paternalistic and (simultaneously) repressive socio-economic system starts to wane, and conflict situations arise.

2) The goals of peasant movements and/or organizations are likely to create wider repercussions if they coincide with the urgent national (or class oriented) goals expressed by other social strata, organizations, political parties or the State itself.

3) 'The Culture of Repression*' which the peasant has been forced to live in for so long, is likely to inhibit him from developing alternatives to improve his low political and economic status. In this case, the violent nature of the control mechanism prevailing in the countryside (sustained by the landowners, and the government forces on their side) will inevitably invite violence in the overthrow of this system.

4) Radicalization of peasant demands and formulation of organizational goals are likely to occur when:

a) the initial 'milder demands' are refused by the dominant social forces;

b) changes occur in the national politics that allow for the radicalization of overall political goals and socio-economic demands directed to the system.

5) generally the clarity of the goals and ideology of peasant movements are a function of the parochial (and limited) and/or national character of its leadership. Therefore, depending on the specific circumstances, the ability of the peasant leadership may have a limiting or furthering effect on the extent of the movement in terms of its incorporation into the wider national political struggle.**

*The term 'culture' used here, is by no means taken in its anthropological context. It is a true fact that every relationship based on exploitation has a built-in mechanism of repression. No matter how well this (repressive) character of a relationship is disguised by paternalistic or clientele mechanisms, it is always there. The rate of exploitation generally determines the degree and extent (in institutional terms) of repression. The higher is the rate of exploitation, the severer is the extent of repression.

**As we have witnessed in all cases of national-bourgeois revolutions, which may initially bring considerable advantages to the peasant class, the immediate advantages won by the peasantry soon have withered away due to the new social and economic structure built upon (or retained to fit) the ideology and principles of

6) Peasant movements are likely to occur under the following conditions of alienation of peasant economic resources:

- a) cessation of continued access to plowland (even unclaimed), pastures, and forests, public granaries either by commercialization of land or by unfavorable land reforms;
- b) over taxation, (unjust) demands of redemption payments;
- c) disruption of the ecological balance of the earthbound pastoral and/or settled populations;
- d) increasing dependence of the peasants on produced commodities rather than their own produce.

7) Conditions for peasant protest may arise, if there has been some improvement in one area or aspect of rural life to justify the rise of expectations, or a steady, but, institutionalized form of repression and exploitation was suddenly worsened.

8) Among the most strategic factors that may contribute to the revolutionary potential of the peasantry are the following:

- A) As the pattern in the three successful social revolutions of the 20th century (namely Russian, Chinese and Cuban) bears evidence, it is likely that among other peasant strata, it is the "middle peasant" or the "poor but free" peasant who has the highest degree of tactical

the liberal state dominated by the emergent middle class. This has been the case in Bolivia, Mexico, Algeria, and Turkey (after the National Liberation Struggle) in all of which the peasantry has been mobilized to man the armies of (armies of both of the conflicting camps, but mainly) the progressive-nationalist camp; but, were soon demobilized with *some* 'pacifying concessions' to leave the political stage to the now unrivalled middle class (with different compositions in each case, e.g. a militray-bureaucratic class in Bolivia and Turkey).

The theoretical lesson to be derived from these historical cases is that, as long as the social struggle is aimed at or diverted to the accomplishment of immediate material gains, rather than a future (post revolutionary) society in which these external gains are among the natural (institutionalized) rights of the (rural) people, the class society will prevail, and the peasantry will still remain at the bottom of the social hierarchy until the capitalist economy gradually liquidates it as a class. On the other hand, national/social struggles that aim to create (at least by its leadership) a classless society-at a historically possible stage-seem to have been successful in pulling the peasantry out of its low socio-economic status, which until then was determined by an imposed class hierarchy.

mobility*. These strata owe this attribute to their relative economic independence that offer better organizational capacity. But it is equally important that the dialectical nature of their rebellion must set the stage for the activation of the revolutionary potential of the landless or the dependent/poor peasants at a critical stage of the movement, in order to secure the success of the movement. This critical stage is the beginning of the entrenchment and bourgeoisification of the "middle peasantry" as happened in Russia, Mexico, Bolivia and Algeria**.

B.1 Natural or chosen location of the peasantry and the tactical revolutionary groups may have vital importance in the survival and daily operations of the insurgents.

The best of such locations are generally:

- i) peripheral geographic areas;
- ii) mountaneous and/or forested regions.

B.2 Ethnic, religious and linguistic differences may also be precipitating factors in peasant movements. Especially in cases of anti-colonial struggles, nationality and/or ethnic differences may significantly increase the solidarity and symbolic communicativeness of the rebels that contribute to the realization of their common goal of liberation.

*The voting pattern of Chilean and Turkish small protretitors-subsistence farmers—who are not in direct relationship with the market, evince a conservative bias. (For Chile see James Petras and Maurice Zeitlin, "Agrarian Radicalism in Chile" in Rodolfo Stavenhagen (ed), *Agrarian Problems and Peasant Movements in Latin America* (New York: Anchor Books, 1970). For Turkey see N. Abadan Unat, A. Taner Kışlalı and D. Ergil's study of electoral behavior of Ankara voters in *Milliyet* Sept. 29. -Oct. 11, 1975). This may be attributed mainly to the fact that, this social stratum is not significantly affected by moderate conjunctural fluctuations in the political and economic domains.

**The same process was witnessed in the post National Liberation Struggle (1919-1923) in Turkey. The peasantry mobilized during the war by the bureaucracy and the national bourgeoisie was "pacified" by land acquisitions from the large volumes of property left behind by the deporting Ottoman non-Muslim minorities. (For this issue see Doğan Avcıoğlu, *Milli Kurtuluş Tarihi* vol. III (Istanbul: İstanbul Matbaası, 1974) pp. 1369-1371; also, Doğu Ergil, *The Unfinished Revolution: The Social History of the Turkish National Liberation Struggle* (unpublished manuscript).)

9) Individuals and groups most likely to take part in peasant movements are those who have come into contact with 'modernizing' ideas and ideologies. They may also gain experience in 'educating alternatives' by participating in trade /labor unions, political parties, military service or war. Contact with the industrial working class and working conditions, seasonal work in the urban centers, and entry into market economy as part-time laborers are also probable causes of participation in revolutionary movements.

10) Existence of a relatively independent corporate community or community organization from the surrounding populace can provide valuable experience in self-government in times of crises in the form of division of labor and leadership functions. Such organizations may provide clear guidelines for political action like returning back to the old institutional (communal) ways of a 'more just order'! Whether the peasants may be successful or not in turning the clock back, these semi-independent structures definitely serve as potentially explosive social forces in peasant (and national) movements.

11) The success of peasant movements may be measured with the endurance of organizational capacity over time and under pressure. One crucial factor of this durability is the capacity of defending the organization and the cause that it stands for. Hence the formation of an armed or a paramilitary organization in support of the revolutionary leadership or the creation of a "people's army" is a major factor in the success of the movement.

12) Peasant movements are parochial manifestations of local injustices and /or major social dislocations. Bearing this limitation of scope and action, they may be able to reshape the social structure of (or a part of) the countryside, but fail to lay hold of the state machinery. It is the outside (or inside but nationally accepted figure like Mao) and intellectual/national leadership that extends the scope of the movement at the level of national politics. On the other hand, despite its initial revolutionary character, this outside leadership, may in time neutralize the more radical goals of the ongoing peasant movement in corporatist and clientele politics.

Another important factor that affect the outcome of the social movement (in which peasants also participate) besides the character of the leadership is the nature of the revolutionary movement. This is particularly true in the case of national liberation struggles. For example the Algerian and Vietnamese peasant movements (we can include the Turkish case to this coterie with some reservations) were a part of a *national liberation struggle*. A common characteristic of these cases were that, their leadership cadres were mainly drawn from 'higher' social circles rather than the peasantry. This fact is also substantiated by numerous other examples from Asian and African anti-colonial struggles.

Perhaps it may be appropriate to posit an additional hypothesis at this point:

a) "If and when peasant movements are a part of a national movement against an outside aggressor rather than a domestic social struggle, the leaders of the movement are likely to be national figures and are drawn from classes other than the peasantry".

b) Furthermore, historical evidence suggest that, "If this leadership cadre is intent in establishing itself as the new ruling class without altering the rural social structure to a great extent (as in Algeria, Turkey, Bolivia and to a certain extent Iraq); and if the insurgent peasants fail to create an alternative bureaucratic structure (as in Mexico) or fail to join the ranks of a competing leader (like Mao in China), peasant allies of the national liberation movement may soon be demobilized following the final (national) victory.

Peasants probably will no more be humiliated and cajoled in their own country by the foreigners in the post-colonial period. They may even receive some land and much praise, but that is all. There will be new masters, new injustices and new forms of insecurities as long as the existing socio-economic structure remains intact.

Epilogue

The analysis of the wide-ranging comparative data offered by the historical experience of twelve different countries seem to confirm the fact that, no matter how successful peasant mo-

vements are in themselves when they are either led by their own leaders or by national leaders (if they are a part of a wider national movement), their initial gains soon loose their meaning so long as these movements fail to change the format of the bourgeois society and/or the liberal state. In fact, successful peasant movements in bourgeois societies serve as cleansing operations that eliminate traditional social formations (i.e. feudal remnants and relations) and, pre-capitalistic economic institutions although not intended in many cases. Hence peasant movements and rebellions in capitalist societies, in theoretical/historical terms, are self-destructive social (class) actions.

In societies where the peasants have thrown their lot with the bourgeois revolutionaries to bring about an anti-feudal, anti-colonial, national-bourgeois society as in Bolivia, Mexico, Algeria and Turkey, soon new social and economic injustices, new 'kulaks', and new mechanisms of exploitation have emerged.

It is in those societies that have accomplished to transcend the capitalist stage/state that peasants have been able to break the vicious structure of their low social and economic status. Only those societies that have been reorganized along socialist principles are not built upon exploitation and ascriptive status, *-at least ideally-* but rather on the worth of human labor, which is a common richness for all human beings.

Now, in the light of the historical/theoretical propositions stated above, let us briefly analyze the reasons why an independent peasant movement did not develop in Turkey after World War One, or during the National Liberation Struggle (1919-1922), when the traditional center of institutional controls were destroyed with the liquidation of the Ottoman Imperial State.

Why a Peasant Movement did not Develop During the Turkish National Liberation Struggle

In our judgment, there are basically seven reasons why a peasant movement did not develop in Turkey in the early 1920's.

First, is the physical depletion of the peasantry in long years of warfare which brought no benefits to them. The peasants

were the main source of manpower of the Turkish military apparatus in the World War. Nearly 1/5 of the Anatolian population of 12 million had been drafted into the armed forces. Four-fifths of this number disappeared or died in the deserts, seas and mountains of alien lands²². The Anatolian peasantry had been exhausted by continuous armed struggle, most of it adventurist, since 1911. The first thing they wanted was to return home and remain home, and if possible, resist calls to arms for a new struggle that offered them no objective benefits. They refused to be a part of any struggle, which did not promise them immediate social and economic liberation.

Second, the peasants had no institutional autonomy or leadership that could have led them without further impoverization. Although a great majority of the Turkish peasants owned land, these lands were tiny plots and barely enough for subsistence. Like their landless counterparts, the majority of the landed peasantry were dependent on the *ağas* (big land owners) against crises and for immediate necessities. Being landowners themselves in most cases, and simultaneously having personal relations with the dominant figures of the countryside, the Turkish peasants were exposed to pressures and ideas that retarded the development of class consciousness. This social environment did not allow the emergence of indigeneous peasant organizations and leadership.

Third, the industrial working class was very small and concentrated in Istanbul and Izmir. Both of these cities were under enemy occupation. The weak and isolated workers' organizations in these cities had no ties with, or impact upon, the peasant masses.

Fourth, the big landlords wished to preserve the traditional social and economic institutions in the countryside. Their alliance with the Nationalist bureaucracy (led by Mustafa Kemal) left the *status quo* in rural Turkey unchallenged by the new state apparatus. A great majority of the landlords had not abandoned the countryside for city life. There was no 'authority gap' in the Turkish countryside which could be filled with peasant organizations and leadership. The bulk of agriculture was based on rent-capitalism in the unoccupied areas. The landlord-peasant (the term peasant here encompasses rural social strata

such as share-croppers, tenants, and agricultural laborers) relationships were personal and not based on cash-nexus. These primary forms of social relationships discouraged open hostilities between poorer and richer peasants and landlords. Having monopoly over political and economic power, and means of physical mobility, the propertied class was the only link of the peasantry with the outside world. No alien influence could penetrate this thick institutional curtain.

To this picture we must add the presence and conservative influence of the local religious figures. They were staunch defenders of the *status quo*, and respected by the peasantry. But even these institutional barriers might not have been effective if there was a complete breakdown of the central authority, but this did not occur.

Fifth, although local insurrections started in a few places after the Ottoman defeat and enemy occupation, these insurrections were not peasant movements intent on the establishment of a new political or at least a new agrarian order. Most of the leaders of these insurrections were members of the Anatolian local *ulema* or local religious figures such as sheikhs and *hocas* (clericals) who incited the peasants against, the Nationalist Ankara Government. These men of religion feared that the struggle between secularist-nationalist social forces and the theocratic (Ottoman) polity would end with the liquidation of the latter. They feared the loss of their traditional privileges and high status. But, because these sporadic rebellions were neither fully supported by the peasantry nor were part of a wider movement, they were repressed relatively easy.

Sixth, the internal reactionary rebellions did not take the form of an extended civil war. Although the authority of the Istanbul Government was greatly undermined by both the Allied occupation and internal strife between Ankara and Istanbul governments, there was no breakdown of authority either at the national level (even in unoccupied regions) or in the countryside. The threat of permanent foreign occupation quickly rallied the landowning class (among other bourgeois classes) around the Ankara Government.

Seventh, although there were armed militia groups composed of peasants among the Nationalist guerilla forces, at a

time when these rural militia bands were the only military power, they lacked the political consciousness and organization necessary to defend peasant rights. These rural militia forces can be divided into two groups:

1) Militia bands composed of peasants who were gathered, equipped and even led by influential local notables before the establishment of the conventional army in 1921. This segment of the armed peasantry had no autonomy.

2) Brigand bands that were manned and led generally by peasants: peasants, legally criminals in the eyes of the old regime. Although these bands supported the Nationalist Forces in the first two years of the National Liberation Struggle, they were not representatives of a wider peasant movement. In the absence of manpower, the Nationalist bureaucracy co-opted most of these band in return for pardon, and (as it turned out) wealth for their leaders. As long as the Nationalist Army was weak, these bands existed and operated in much better conditions than their fellow peasants forcefully conscripted into the conventional (Nationalist) army. They were paid and had the freedom to quit and go back to their villages any time they wished²³

Although they were initially hailed as the core of National Forces (*Kuvayi Milliye*) the brigand bands proved that they:

*"Could not be a lasting form of organization for revolutionary peasants. (They) could at best be a temporary ancillary for otherwise unorganized ones... The future lay with political organization"*²⁴

Lacking political organization and ideology through which they could rally the peasants for their own cause, the schism between the bandit and the peasant widened as the first had to live off the latter while the impoverished Ankara Government could only extend nominal financial aid to its forces. So the bandits' popularity did not extend beyond their own villages which they protected while they attacked the others. The attitude of the local populations rapidly changed against the bandit Nationalists. As Eric Hobsbawm eloquently puts it:

"Bandits who do not take new ways of fighting for peasants' cause, as many of them do as indivi-

duals, cease to be champions of the poor and become mere criminals or retainers of landlords' and merchants' parties. There is no future for them"²⁵.

Both the peoples' continuous complaint, on whom they preyed, and Communist efforts to utilize some of these guerilla groups as the basis of a 'people's militia', turned the Kemalist government against them²⁶. In 1921, when the Nationalist army was much stronger, most of the free-wheeling guerilla bands were incorporated into the nationalist forces as regulars. The bands that resisted, e.g., those led by Çerkes Ethem were forced to join the enemy in order to survive.

Thus, the last independent armed peasant groups that might have represented peasant interests in the Turkish National Liberation Struggle were eliminated. This phenomenon had a crucial effect on the socio-political structure of post-independence Turkey, which because of its hierarchical nature, could do little to increase the freedoms and life standard of the Turkish peasant masses.

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 - 2) **James Petras and Hugo Zemelman Merino**, *Peasants in Revolt* (Austin: U. of Texas Press, 1972); Merle Kling, "Violence and Politics in Latin America" in, *Latin American Radicalism*, ed. Irving Luis Horowitz et al. (N.Y.: Vintage, 1969).
 - 3) **George M. Foster**, "Peasant Society and the Image of Limited Good",
American Anthropologist Vol. LXVII, No. 2 (April 1965) pp. 296 ff; Idem,
Empire's Children; The People of Tzintzuntzam, Smithsonian Institution, Institute of Social Anthropology, Publ. No. 6, 1948.
- Foster derived and introduced the term "Image of Limited Good" in his studies of the Mexican peasantry. He expressed the factors which have an adverse effect on the peasants' economic life as follows:

The kinds of behavior that have been suggested as adversely influencing economic growth are, among many, the 'luck' syndrome, a 'fatalistic' outlook, inter- and intra-familial quarrels, difficulties in co-operation, extra-ordinary ritual expenses by poor people and the problems these expenses pose for capital accumulation, and the apparent lack of what the psychologist McClelland has called 'Need for Achievement'. (Quoted in the first reference, p. 296).

He explained local distrust through the fact that only a scarce and limited amount of good were available to the villagers and that those who tried to take in an inappropriate share of this limited good are scorned and criticized. This image of the limited good was given as a reason why peasants are reluctant to get ahead individually and to show more initiative and entrepreneurial spirit than their neighbors. Foster gave little attention to the fact that the peasants in the areas he has studied have been touched strongly by the Mexican Revolution and particularly by the agrarian struggle and its aftermath. This struggle went on for years at the cost of many lives, but Foster only refers to the efforts of the clergy to intimidate and discourage the peasants from participating in the agrarian movements without giving a description of this struggle or an analysis of its effects on the peasants' attitudes.

- 4) **Charles J. Erasmus**, "Community Development and the Encogido Syndrome", *Human Organization*, Vol. XXVII, No. 1 (1968)

Erasmus used the term *encogido* syndrome to characterize the peasants' submissive attitude. The *encogido* is a personality type which is, according to Erasmus, prominent among the rural lower classes in Latin America. Erasmus derived this term from popular usage in the area he studied. The term was used in conversation by people to classify neighbors or acquaintances. The *encogido* is timid and withdrawn, and avoids persons of higher status except for a few who act as intermediaries between him and the broader society. The opposite personality distinguished by people in the area was the *entron*, a person who pushes himself and is not afraid to interact with higher status

persons for economically advantageous contacts. Erasmus noted that a word used in some parts of Venezuela for the encogido, is *patronizado*, subjugated to the patron. It is the *encogido* personality which holds the image of the limited good, individual sanction or keeping the Joneses down, as Erasmus puts it. Erasmus, more or less like Banfield and Foster, emphasized the fact that the peasants, the Joneses, keep each other down. A further look into this situation and its wider societal implications, shows however that keeping the Joneses down is to a large extent the result of an outside force, the expression of the culture of repression. Erasmus did not see this. From the description by Erasmus, one may get the impression that the encogido syndrom is a more or less pathological state of mind, incompatible with the need for the development and the great obstacle to becoming part of the middle-class mentality of keeping up with the Joneses, the ideal according to Erasmus.

- 5) **Edward C. Banfield**, *The Moral Basis of Backward Society* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1958).

Banfield defined the content of amoral familism as follows: "Maximize the material, short-run advantage of the nuclear family; assume that all others will do likewise." This ethos, predominant among South Italian peasants according to Banfield, leads to what he called political incapacity. He thus saw few chances for success of any cooperative effort: "In a society of amoral familists, no one will further the interest of the group or community except as it is to his private advantage to do so.

But in the light of further research it became clear that amoral familism and political incapacity of the peasants could be overcome once activities were promoted outside the control and domination of the Mafia and the traditional elite. It appeared that unity and cohesion can grow in peasant groups once they oppose the forces that are the cause of peasant distrust.

- 6) **James Petras and Hugo Zemelman Merino**, *op. cit.*, p. 61
- 7) **Doğu Ergil**, "A Comparative Study of Peasant Movements: Findings and Propositions". Paper submitted to a seminar entitled "Comparative Theories of Development". Spring 1974, SUNY Binghamton.

- 8) **Hamza Alavi**, "Peasants and Revolution" *The Socialist Register*, 1965, pp. 241-277
- 9) **Eric Wolf**, *op. cit.*, George M. Foster, *op. cit.*,
- 10) **James Petras and Hugo Zemelman Merion**, *op. cit.*, Merle Kling, *op. cit.*,
- 11) **James Petras and Hugo Zemelman Merion**, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-94
- 12) **Eric J. Hobsbawm**, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement*, (Manchester, 1959)
- 13) *Ibid.*, p. 2
- 14) *Ibid.* p.5
- 15) **Frantz Fanon**, *A Dying Colonialism*, (N.Y.: Grove Press),
- 16) **Maurice Dobb**, *Economic Growth and Underdeveloped Countries*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1958)
- 17) **Malcolm Cadwell**, "The Role of the Peasantry in the Revolution", *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. I, (1970) pp. 50-64
- 18) **P.M. Sweezy**, "The Proletariat in Today's World", *Tricontinental* 9, 1968 pp. 23-33; *Idem.*, "Imperialism" in *The Theory of Capitalist Development* (N.Y.: MR, 1942)
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- 20) **Lenin**, *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1970)
- 21) **Che Guevara**, *Guerilla Warfare* (N.Y.: Vintage, 1969); Régis Debray, *Revolution In the Revolution* (N.Y.: Grove Press, 1967)
- 22) **Doğan Avcioğlu**, *Milli Kurtuluş Tarihi* (İstanbul: İstanbul Matbaası, 1974) Vol. III p. 929; *Idem.*, Vol. II p. 71; S.S. Aydemir, *Enver Paşa* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1972) Vol. III pp. 185-187
- 23) **Sabahattin Selek**, *Anadolu İhtilâli* (İstanbul, 1973) p. 180 ff.
- 24) **E. Hobsbawm**, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28

- 25) *Ibid*, p. 28; In this respect Selek writes that, after the repression of the reactionary uprisings, it became a problem to send the *Kuvayi Milliye* under the bandit leaders back to the front. Realizing that they were the strongest armed group in the country, the ex-bandits wanted to take their revenge on towns like Simav, Tavşanlı and Demirci, the people of which did not want the *Kuvayi Milliye* in their territories.

"The *Kuvayi Milliye* which came to Eskişehir from Ankara evacuated the best houses of the town... and settled in them to rest.. before they left for the battle-front. Here they spent the gold, banknotes, and women's jewelry that they had stolen, got their whips gilded with silver, filled their purses..." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 370-371)

- 26) Edward Hallet Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923*, Vol. III (N.Y.: The Macmillan Co., 1961) p. 299; Aclan Sayilgan, *Türkiye'de Sol Hareketler* (Istanbul, 1972), p. 161.