

# LAND REFORM IN LATIN AMERICA: Some Current Literature

*William C. Thiesenhusen*  
*University of Wisconsin—Madison*

*LAND REFORM IN BRAZIL: THE MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL CHANGE.* By MARTA CEHELSKY. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1979. Pp. 261. \$18.75.)

*AGRARIAN REFORM IN CHILE: AN ECONOMIC STUDY.* By JEANNINE SWIFT. (Lexington, Mass.: Heath Lexington, 1979. Pp. 125. \$12.50.)

*AGRARIAN REFORM UNDER ALLENDE: PEASANT REVOLT IN THE SOUTH.* By KYLE STEENLAND. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1977. Pp. 241. \$5.95.)

*AGRARIAN REFORM AND PEASANT ORGANIZATION ON THE ECUADORIAN COAST.* By MICHAEL R. REDCLIFT. (London: University of London, Athlone Press, 1978. Pp. 186. \$20.59.)

*PEASANTS OF COSTA RICA AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRARIAN CAPITALISM.* By MITCHELL A. SELIGSON. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980. Pp. 220. \$21.50.)

As Pope John Paul II ended his first week in Brazil in July 1980, he hit a surprisingly pragmatic note in Salvador by saying, "Anyone who sees the reality of Latin America, the way it looks today, must agree that the realization of justice faces a clear dilemma. It will either evolve through bold and sweeping reforms, . . . or it will come about . . . through violence." He decried the latter alternative as did John F. Kennedy who used almost the same words about Latin America nearly two decades ago.<sup>1</sup>

One wonders whether if by 2000 we will still be listening to the same idea, more finely honed and from new and unexpected quarters, or whether we are at the brink of new policies to benefit the rural poor. Two decades hence we will be able to analyze and draw on the lessons of the land reforms in Nicaragua and El Salvador as the wealthy and intransigent past met the mobilized and hungry present. We may also have more data on pre-1973 Chile and post-1969 Peru. But if we wait until then, millions more will join those who are already suffering.

Of one thing there is virtual certainty: land reform as an issue is not forgotten. After Allende's death authors began to mourn the passing of agrarian reforms in Latin America. This was partly due to in-

creased militarism and, hence, more repression; increased rural-to-urban migration, which caused the countryside population to be a voting minority; the “death of the Alliance for Progress”; the transparency of Cuba’s economic problems; the renewal of Cold War mentality; and indifference of international agencies toward land reform and their taking up the cudgels instead for the “lower 40%” and “consolidation.” Grindle cites a former minister of the Colombian government who proclaimed agrarian reform in his country as “an anachronism.” She also notes that “officials at the Agrarian Reform Institute acknowledged that the initiative to change land tenure relationships was dead.”<sup>2</sup>

I feel this does not apply to all of Latin America, maybe not even to Colombia—even though some policymakers wish it were so. Yet, we can be as sure as we were in the early 1960s that elites who still keep a foothold in agriculture, despite its declining importance as a percentage of the work force and of the GNP, continue to be as intransigent as ever, taking every opportunity to stop reform. After all, Nicaragua was successful only because the Sandinistas could hit out at one person (and his henchmen) whom nearly everyone opposed; even then the struggle cost thousands of lives. El Salvador has an entire class to displace, and Guatemala’s heterogeneous lower class makes organization at the grass roots even more difficult.

Now, with Somoza out of Nicaragua, a new opposition elite is emerging—a group which still owns the lion’s share of the wealth. Minister of Agriculture Jaime Wheelock made this clear upon the first anniversary of the revolution:

As you know, we began a rather particular kind of agrarian reform with the confiscation of all the land that *Somocismo* had usurped from the Nicaraguan people. . . . At first we thought that *Somocismo* had more than 60 percent of the cultivated land in Nicaragua, but really . . . there was only 20 to 30 percent which was confiscated . . . about . . . a million hectares.<sup>3</sup>

With a majority of the economy (70 percent, according to Wheelock<sup>4</sup>) in the hands of the private sector and the only reforms of existing lands proposed being those of properties owned by absentees over 400 ha. or “underexploited” latifundia, both *causales* that are exceedingly difficult to prove, a new opposition oligarchy is sure to emerge.<sup>5</sup>

Together with Nicaragua, however, there is El Salvador, an example of land reform “twenty years too late.” It is pushed, in the summer of 1980 as this is written, by a centrist government without much popular backing but with the support of the United States. It tries to impose a land reform at the same time as it engages in severe repression. Unfortunately, we have probably not seen the end of this double-edged strategy consisting of keeping some peasants satisfied with land, together with killing, jailing, or severely intimidating others.

Whether reforms will occur without violent confrontation in the

future is an open question, but there are several developments that argue that reform cannot be avoided. One is the enormous farm-to-city migration that was documented anew in August 1980 by the United Nations. There is one assertion stemming from this trend that since the rural population is shrinking, the pressure it can exert for reform is also diminishing. A second school of thought suggests that the rural sectors are not holding and providing adequate economic and social support to their people (until urban sectors are able to employ them) and that this would be more likely if there were to be an agrarian reform. I believe the latter will be more compelling over the long run because, if present trends continue, five of the twenty-three largest population centers in the world will be in Latin America by the year 2000. And Mexico City, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Bogotá will nearly double in the next twenty years.<sup>6</sup> Given these astounding figures, it is not unreasonable to expect that considerable urban pressure for agrarian reform may develop in expectation of increasing urban decay, especially when it becomes more widely understood by urban policymakers that land reform need not lead to production declines (and higher city food prices).

Furthermore, while international agencies seemed for a time to feel agrarian reform passé, the late 1970s saw a perceptible change. Reform policies and reaching the "poorest of the poor" were not inconsistent; indeed, the former may be absolutely necessary to accomplish adequately the latter. The FAO World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, held in July 1979, concluded that ". . . agrarian reform is a critical component of rural development and that the sustained improvement of rural areas . . . requires fuller and more equitable access to land, water and other natural resources; widespread sharing of economic and political power; increasing and more productive employment . . . and mobilization of internal resources."<sup>7</sup> Of the 145 country delegations who attended, only Chile, Brazil, and Argentina expressed their reservations on the importance that paragraph gives to agrarian reform.<sup>8</sup>

Be that as it may, Brazil in the pre-1964 and early military era, and Chile under the Frei and Allende regimes—representing reforms that were frustrated for different reasons and at different points—are the subject of three of the books under review. The negative WCARRD vote lies in the wake of the backlash from these reforms.

Cehelsky's book is "a study of the struggle over land reform policy in Brazil during the 1960s. Its primary purpose is to provide insight into the workings of the Brazilian political system in general and the policy purpose in particular at a time when Brazil was undergoing a major crisis of regime" (p. 1). She shows the system to be complex indeed and analyzes the process of policymaking, not the socioeconomic conditions that it presumably reflects. Thus she concludes that

the land reform controversy contributed importantly to the overthrow of President João Goulart and the establishment of the military regime which has been in power ever since (p. 10).

The stage was set by Vargas in that, while he subordinated the rural sector and drew his support from urban, commercial, and professional groups for the *Estado Novo*, he centralized government and stripped the states of the autonomy they had enjoyed. In order to use agricultural and particularly coffee profits for industrialization, he needed the cooperation of the *fazendeiros*, which he bought by ensuring continuity of the landed elite in the countryside (pp. 26–27). Modernization of traditional agriculture to a degree was needed to increase the agricultural surplus. However, during his elected term (1951–54), Vargas also had to concern himself with the exigencies of popular participation—no mean trick since he had to attempt this without endangering the security and stability of the traditional political order. Kubitschek and he were able to gloss over any confrontation with the popular sector, but things came unstuck with Quadros and Goulart (p. 33).

By the late 1950s there were frequent land invasions and outbreaks of violence between *fazendeiros* and *camponeses*, especially in the Northeast and Minas Gerais. The Cuban revolution and the Alliance for Progress brought some outside pressure to bear to strain the internal body politic (p. 39). In the early 1960s a number of political actors competed for control of rural labor: the landlords, the Goulart government, the Church, several individual political leaders. As is the case in so many revolutionary or potentially revolutionary situations, Cehelsky states, "It is doubtful that the *camponeses* themselves ever figured as serious contenders for the control of their own destiny" (p. 47). The military rule which immediately followed Goulart shared the perception that land reform was a principal issue of the time. "Although they differed sharply in style, personality, and the general tenor of their administration, . . . both recognized that the old Brazilian agricultural order was doomed" (p. 67).

The sticky point was Article 147 of the 1946 Constitution which provided that the use of property was subject to public welfare and that while the state had the power to redistribute property, such expropriation was possible only on the basis of full payment in cash prior to expropriation (p. 73), an old story in Latin America. As Cehelsky demonstrates, a first step for any leader advocating land reform within the existing rules would be modification of this article to provide payment over the long term by the state, at least partially in bonds that are not readjusted for the full rise in the price index. Taking advantage of the international climate, poor harvests predicted for 1962, the fact that some states had already proceeded on their mildly reformist legislation,

and some generalized social unrest and rural unionization, Goulart launched a land reform on 1 May 1962 (pp. 82–83).

The fazendeiros began their oblique counterattack as soon as the earlier land reform law was passed in São Paulo by transferring power to tax from the state to the municipal government. This made discussion of land reform at the state level academic, and Goulart saw that if there were to be reform it would have to come from the federal government (p. 84). Goulart called a plebiscite early in 1963 in which seven million votes were cast in favor of a return to the presidential system. He interpreted this as a personal mandate and, going one step beyond Celso Furtado's recommendations, called for a constitutional amendment making it possible to pay for land expropriated by bonds and proposed forced leasing of unused lands together with complementary packages of inputs and colonization (p. 88).

While maneuvering in Congress, his position moderated. Later, his strategy of parliamentary dealings was superseded by his attempt at mass mobilization. That is, his tactic changed from accommodation and conciliation to confrontation. In doing so he "raised the stakes of conflict without adequate power to prevail against the corporate elite." Once he opened the contest to extra-constitutional means of resolving the existing impasse with Congress, he virtually set into motion the machinery that would pave the way for military takeover and the return to authoritarian rule (pp. 154–55).

Goulart fell to the military only to have Castelo Branco, his military successor, succeed in passing a law on agrarian reform within seven months. Castelo was aware of the obstacles posed by reform: he was a native of Ceará; he knew Freyre, Arrais, Julião, and Fathers Melo and Crespo. But he perceived reform as a way of stabilizing and pacifying the country so that it could get on with growth (pp. 102–03). At important variance with earlier proposals, Castelo's measure insured a correction for inflation up to the full value of the bond and the value for expropriated property would be that claimed for taxation purposes. Progressive taxation, reasoned Castelo, could later become his most important policy instrument. He didn't object to large fazendas, only to large unused properties. He was concerned much more with increasing agricultural production than with revamping the social structure. The feelings of the rentier class were assuaged by inviting them to submit amendments; none of those accepted significantly changed the intent of the legislation. Thus co-opted, anti-Goulart groups felt fairly secure that land reform in Castelo's hands wouldn't mean much. As fate would have it, Castelo's attention soon became wholly absorbed by problems of economic stabilization and the "niceties of social reform and democracy were pushed aside." Why Castelo genuflected toward agrarian re-

form at all, Cehelsky says, was easily apparent: radicalizing tendencies by the *ligas camponeses*, the Church, and certain states could be contained (p. 134).

Cehelsky concludes that the viability of a sweeping redistributive policy in Brazil and in other Latin American countries would have required one of two preconditions, either (1) the power of the established elites would have to be significantly weakened or that of new reformist leadership proportionally enhanced, or (2) a reforming military acting in opposition to established social and economic interests would have to appear (pp. 197–98). Neither was the case in Brazil, and efforts at reform were snuffed out.

Swift and Steenland, taken together, give quite a different picture of reform as they go through the Chilean case. Both spend little time on the political constellations that brought the reform into being as they sink their teeth into the matter of “what happened.”

On the *asentamientos* that Swift studied, she concludes there had been little or no change in production, that is, little change in land use and production for the last year under the *fundo* system and the first as an *asentamiento*. She concluded that there was no change in land use, but her sample was very small and her time period short, difficulties she recognizes (pp. 53–60). This conclusion is matched by another: land expropriated in the Frei period under the 1962 agrarian reform law is less intensively used than that expropriated in the Frei period under the 1967 law. One table (5–9, p. 61) shows that expropriation under the new law meant (statistically) significantly more improved pasture, less land in natural pasture, and more cultivable land in crops. But how the two samples are drawn (other than they “were drawn from the universe”) is completely unclear. Another way that “productivity” was measured was to check the output per hectare on land in use for the seventeen farms in the sample. Again, the same observation: “We are left with the conclusion that it is possible but not at all certain that the *asentamiento* organization has led to some increase in overall productivity on the farms involved” (p. 63). Swift’s attempt to show that land redistribution might be a means to redistribute income and stimulate the demand for domestic industry was likewise inconclusive.

Swift’s book may best be read for her description of the Frei law of 1967 and its comparison with the 1962 Alessandri law, the description of the *asentamiento*, and the more or less idiosyncratic critique she makes both of the land reform agency and of the process of reform itself. The methodology she employs cries out for better data but that does not leave the work without merit. Scholars were collecting more data before Allende’s death and a few have done so during the current military government. They would not be wasting their time in going through Swift’s methodology for ideas.

One wishes that Steenland, with all the time he spent in the South during the Allende reform, had employed more analytic techniques. But while descriptive and geographically limited, he does provide some valuable insights. He is, I believe, correct in one of his most important major premises that "Allende furthered a land reform that did not basically differ from the traditional pattern of reformist parties in Latin America" (p. 22), among which he includes that of Frei.

Steenland's best work is in his retelling of how the UP operated in Lautaro (in Cautín) and its constant battle with the MIR, the radical left. While Allende operated his entire reform with Frei's law, "[t]he MIR hoped to push the existing reform law to its limits, or better yet, replace it with a new one" (p. 82). The MIR provided Allende with his first test case of agrarian reform by invading fundos in Lautaro. "Rather than wait for the state *perhaps* [emphasis in original] to expropriate the land legally, the MIR encouraged the peasants to take over the land themselves. Rather than pile up debts for the state and ultimately for the peasants by paying compensation to the old owner of the farm, the MIR called for no compensation and a new agrarian reform law" (pp. 82–83). Then followed visits of Allende himself, who explained that he knew the peasants had legitimate grievances but wished that they would await the normal reform procedure. The illegal occupation, he explained, only created a climate of instability that would offer political advantages to the right (p. 91).

The answer to the impasse that developed between the MIR and the UP government, Steenland points out, was intervention. The Frei government intended that the government could use an *intervenor* (state-appointed administrator) against the agricultural workers who went on strike at harvest time. Allende was to use it to favor the peasants, especially in cases of an illegal occupation where expropriation appeared difficult. For the peasants, Steenland explains, intervention was also a good solution in that it meant that they would be paid salaries (p. 96).

The right-wing backlash wasn't slow in coming and its forces concentrated in Cautín when MIR activity was at its apogee. The headquarters of the National Federation of Agricultural Employees was transferred to the provincial capital, Temuco. A MIR and campesino congress was held in late 1970 which called for a program to the left of the law which Allende inherited and pledged to uphold. Its principal points were: (1) expropriation of all farms over forty basic irrigated hectares; (2) expropriation of animals and machinery as well; (3) no reserves for the owners; (4) no payment for land; and (5) support for newly founded peasant councils (p. 110).

When Minister of Agriculture Jacques Chonchol went to Cautín as Allende's liaison, it was no accident that he chose to begin setting up

provincial peasant councils which would, Allende supposed, support the government (p. 116). One can only remember how PRI organized peasants for its purposes in Mexico and how the MNR in Bolivia did the same after the 1953 land reform law. In Cautin, however, the provincial peasant councils soon fell apart because they had been organized from the top down.

The MIR remained as much of a thorn in Allende's side as the right throughout his administration. At the beginning of his term the MIR was his most vocal opposition.

Steenland also details the problems at the level of the CERA (Centro de Reforma Agraria, Allende's version of Frei's *asentamiento* and scarcely distinguishable from it in organization). He observes that: (1) It is difficult to foster collective crops when advances tended not to be repaid and came more or less automatically. Peasants, in this case, tend to turn to their individual plots. This was modified, of course, by threatened government sanctions: decreasing collective production might lead to a cutoff of credit by the Banco del Estado, an action the UP threatened. Also, decreased production of CERAs might weaken the government and if the government fell they might well lose their land. (2) Some peasants sold not to the government but in the black market, pocketed the profits, and then told CERA that the crop had been worse than expected. Steenland adds, incorrectly, "Such behavior was the exception, not the rule. Most peasants . . . understood that it was their duty to work collectively and to sell the cooperative produce to the government, so that it would in turn be sold to the workers in the city at low official prices" (p. 128). (3) The Indians "were militant when it came time to take land away from those who had exploited them. They were conservative, however, when it came to their own land on the reservations. . . . Generations of poverty had bred revolutionaries, but the dependence on scarce land for subsistence had bred conservatives—within the same people" (p. 139). As Allende's regime waned and eventually collapsed, Steenland documents the local effects of the strengthened right wing at the local level (pp. 151, 154–205).

What is desperately needed is more documentation of one of the most interesting and instructive land reform efforts of our time: that under Frei and Allende.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, a complete retrospective of the counterreform is yet to be written and, unfortunately, it may never be written. The political history à la Cehelsky's story of the death of agrarian reform in Brazil would be exceedingly valuable.

Redclift is the best written book of the lot. But unlike the Brazilian reform (which came to naught) and the Chilean reform (which was the most dramatic in the last twenty years until its rollback), the reform in Ecuador (though Redclift would not say so) was an exercise in tokenism. De Janvry and Ground are probably nearly correct in classifying this



reform as representing a “transition from precapitalist mode to junker mode.”<sup>10</sup>

The book delivers much more than its title promises: an informative chapter on agrarian development in Ecuador in which activity both in the highlands and on the coast are elaborated;<sup>11</sup> a sound and cogent chapter on the evolution of coastal society; a discussion of the *huasipungero* and *precarista*. On the other hand, the case studies (pp. 99–106) are lean and spare, and one wonders whether the author can rightly draw the conclusions from them that he does. In the course of the abolition of *precaristas* and the establishment of peasant-owned co-ops, a crucial relationship developed when the *precaristas* crossed swords with the landlord. Often the dispute between some coastal landlord and tenants became acute when landlords tried to sell out and the *precaristas* refused to be evicted. For a crucial period, the Agency for International Development stepped in to help the landlords sell to the *precaristas*, thus setting the stage for an incrementalist reform. A funding agency entering the picture at a crucial time was more influential than any campesino organization, Redclift believes.

Redclift argues that oil funds helped this “selling out” process beginning in 1972 after AID’s financing waned, but “[i]n return for the distribution of land titles the state bureaucracy expected to increase their [sic] control over the marketed surplus of rice, on which most of the urban population depended” (p. 162). By supplying inputs and some management skills, it also hoped to increase rice production.<sup>12</sup> In so doing the government wanted to keep down urban wages and stimulate industrial production. Foreign exchange would also be saved as fewer foodstuffs were imported. Thus, “[w]ith the abolition of rice *precarismo* a fillip was given to modern capitalist relations of production which . . . were already in existence in the zone. The changes in agricultural production and marketing within the ‘reformed sector,’ moreover, would have no adverse effect on the private estates which were managed ‘efficiently’ according to the demands of ‘the social functions of property’” (p. 165).

While only a relatively small number of campesinos got their land, Redclift makes a great deal of three major changes in coastal agriculture: (1) the state bureaucracy did intervene in the coast in an unprecedented way, temporarily displacing landlords in much of the rice zone; (2) the “political control” was shifted to a new group of *técnicos* not dependent on landlords; (3) the way reform took place campesinos were still excluded from the power structure—they became dependent on the state rather than on the landlord.

A growing social differentiation within the agrarian structure of the rice zone served to intensify existing divisions. The most technically advanced, state-dependent cooperatives have little in common with the

poor campesinos of the coast who may also be reform beneficiaries but are not cooperative members. Other differences exist between the reform beneficiaries and the nonbeneficiaries. These, whether they be laborers, tenants, or smallholders, are linked to the crops they grow and the exigencies of world demand and policies followed by the multinational companies that buy their crops and shape their marketing policies to that demand. For Redclift, agrarian reform on the Ecuadorian coast has not simply been a lack of distribution of power because of its small scale. The situation is more complex: a kind of "divide and conquer" game that at once has calmed the escalating violence and made government crisis-management easier, all courtesy of international agency help coupled with oil revenues.<sup>13</sup>

Seligson explodes some of our popular myths on Costa Rica, noting that it is much nearer the remainder of Latin America than we often think. As Richard N. Adams states perceptively in his foreword: ". . . power in Costa Rica has been concentrated since the original European conquistadors settled there, and . . . much of its 'solitude' is closer to that of García Marquez than to Shangri La" (p. xv). However, since the colony had a small Indian population, almost no gold, and a good supply of virgin land, social distinctions at first were few. And the bulk of the campesinos were yeoman farmers. With the advent of coffee (and later bananas, which developed after coffee money laid the railroad from the sea), the aristocracy had a wealth base for a style of life to complement the social and political power they already possessed. The yeoman farmers, on the other hand, became proletarianized, some finding wage labor on the plantations. Unionization naturally followed, together with radical politics, which were contained. Peasants escaped complete dependence on wage labor on the coast by attempting to conquer the frontier. Later, industry developed to absorb some others. But the frontier is shrinking, industry is growing slowly, and the export crops no longer can adequately absorb labor. Thus, of late, conditions in the countryside are deteriorating, and land invasions and/or squatting are becoming more common and the campesino's mobility is downward. The bulk of the peasantry is now landless, and those who have land own very little.

Land reform, which is the government's response to "agrarian capitalism" in coffee and bananas, has had a very limited effect (pp. 122–69). To the constellation of internal factors that led to reform must be added the usual two "international" ones: Cuba and the Alliance for Progress. By 1961 the Partido Agraria was organized with the slogan "land for the man who tills it." As talk of agrarian reform became louder, peasants were encouraged to invade land, hoping that their squatting might be legalized, while landholders began to pressure the government

to allow them to obtain compensation for their loss. But the law is conservative, reminding us much more of Cehelsky (Article 147 of the law of 1946) and Swift (the Chilean law of 1962) than of the use made of Frei's 1967 law. Cash had to be paid before expropriation and at declared tax values.

Initially the Costa Rican land reform agency's work (to ca. 1966) was colonization marked by extraordinary cost (even though some colonists were given technical assistance and infrastructure and some were not), and a small number of beneficiaries settled in remote areas of the country. The first settlers, allegedly, were those with political influence and those whom the society wanted to exile. Others were, as time would prove, hapless peasants for whom reform meant isolation from the remainder of society and, consequently, extreme lack of motivation.

During the 1970s four basic principles guided the program's expansion: (1) settlements were to be located in a developed region; (2) new projects were to be organized on established farms rather than in virgin territory; (3) projects were to be prestudied to determine their economic viability; and (4) organized (but presumably politically "safe") peasants were to receive land.

Two kinds of projects were being attempted: one involving individual parcels, the other of a communal nature similar to the Chilean asentamientos and CERAs described by Swift and Steenland. Seligson notes this latter is a result of the Río Cañas model and dates in Costa Rica to 1959 (pp. 131–33). Its problems and advantages are also similar to the Chilean case. In interviewing 226 members of communal enterprises, Seligson finds that members are more apt to perceive disagreements among beneficiaries of communal than among individual projects. Interpersonal trust, however, was higher on communal enterprises.

Land titling was part of the program in the 1970s. It proved important because, without a title, borrowing is difficult; indeed, it may have been the most important part of the program to date (p. 152).

Seligson studies a sample of beneficiaries and nonbeneficiaries and finds: (1) average income increases with reform (unlike Swift's tentative conclusion); (2) income is more unequally distributed among beneficiaries than nonbeneficiaries; (3) beneficiaries are more optimistic about the future than nonbeneficiaries; (4) those who receive land are more trusting of government (which they also consider more just) than nonbeneficiaries. The first point suggests that policymakers (like those in Ecuador) who believe that land reform will lead to increased production may be correct. The last point undergirds the findings of others that agrarian reform tends to make lifelong supporters of governments that grant them property.<sup>14</sup>

The land reform program from 1963 to 1973 did not offset the

pattern toward greater land concentration in Costa Rica; whether it has made significant inroads on this indicator after 1973 won't be known until after the next decennial census.

Peasant rebellion has not materialized in Costa Rica; Seligson thinks that is because alternatives, however bad, have existed in the past and the society was more or less racially homogeneous. Alternatives have served as "escape valves," an idea that has been around as long as the writings of Frederick Jackson Turner. One important point that Seligson doesn't mention prominently—there are fewer people who need to escape in Costa Rica than in most LDCs: population growth rate is about 2.5 percent, the lowest in Central America, and down from about 3.5 percent a decade ago. Furthermore, its man/land ratio is among the lowest in Latin America.

The books reviewed here each cut "agrarian reform" in a slightly different manner, depending on the discipline of the author. If the concern is politics, field observations at the beneficiary level tend to be either shallow or missing. If the subject is economics, action seems to take place in a political vacuum. While as additions to the literature of the field all are useful, agrarian reform is best analyzed in an inter- or multi-disciplinary framework. All the authors seem to recognize this but are only able to deliver partially on what really is required.

#### NOTES

1. *New York Times*, 7 July 1980. He used the same phraseology in São Paulo. See *New York Times*, 4 July 1980.
2. Merilee S. Grindle, "Whatever Happened to Agrarian Reform: The Latin American Experience." Mimeographed. Wellesley, Mass.: Wellesley College.
3. Jaime Wheelock, *Versión estenográfica de la conferencia de prensa* (Managua: Ministerio de Agricultura, 17 de julio de 1980), p. 1 (my translation).
4. *Ibid.*, Part 2, p. 4.
5. *Ibid.*, Part 3, p. 4.
6. Rafael M. Salas, *The State of World Population, 1980* (New York: U.N. Fund for Population Activities, 16 June 1980). See also *U.S. News and World Report*, 18 August 1980.
7. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Report of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development*, WCARRD/Rep. (Rome: FAO, July 1979), p. 1.
8. Food and Agriculture Organization, "Analysis of Changes in the Draft Declaration of Principles and Programme of Action as Reflected in the Final Report." Mimeographed. Rome, August 1979.
9. One excellent but brief example of what is needed is Cristóbal Kay, "The Development of the Chilean Hacienda System, 1850–1973," in *Land and Labour in Latin America*, by Kenneth Duncan and Ian Rutledge (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 103–39.
10. "These reforms induce a transition from precapitalist to capitalist agriculture either by threats of expropriation if land remains underutilized or by making semifeudal social relations illegal. . . . A reform sector is created, and the precapitalist latifundio is thus transformed into a large-scale, capitalist ('junkier') enterprise hiring wage laborers—often semiproletarians. The landed elite retains control of the state and . . .

archaic land tenure is eliminated. The 1964 reform in Ecuador similarly proscribed *huasipungaje* (labor services in exchange for usufruct of land) and titled the plots to occupants." Alain de Janvry and Lynn Ground, "Types and Consequences of Land Reform in Latin America," *Latin American Perspectives* 5:4 (Fall 1978), p. 94. But illustrating the difficulty of such classification, de Janvry and Ground also include, as part of their definition, the proviso that "the internal subsistence economy is eliminated." That did not happen in Ecuador. Indeed it has been argued by others that the *minifundismo* created by the abolition of the *huasipungo* system was as bad or worse than *huasipungaje* itself. And they do not include the issue around which Redcliff organizes his book: the abolition of tenancy relations (*precarismo*) among Ecuadorian coastal rice producers as a result of Decree 1001 in 1970.

11. Colonization in the West as part of the 1964 land reform is not included. For this, see Franz J. Schuurman, "Colonization Policy and Peasant Economy in the Amazon Basin," *Boletín de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe*, no. 27 (diciembre de 1979), pp. 29–41.
12. The yield (in metric tons) of rice in Ecuador was 164 per year from 1961 to 1965; from 1969–71 it was 165. In 1977 it was 328; in 1978, 225; and in 1979 it was estimated at 300. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Production Yearbook*, 1976 (Rome: FAO), p. 94, table 11; and *FAO Monthly Bulletin of Statistics* 3:1 (January 1980), table 6.
13. This primacy of AID over campesino organizations is disputed in the brief review of the book by Luzuriaga C. and Zuvekas: "In commenting on Redcliff's study we may note, first, that AID's involvement in agrarian reform was not based on production considerations alone. Distributional objectives were equally important, if not more so. Second, Redcliff assumes the Ecuadorian state to be more powerful, monolithic, and calculating than we believe is warranted. Third, it is curious that Redcliff is critical of the government's credit and marketing policies—which he views as mechanisms for exercising control over small rice producers, particularly since (1) most observers have regarded these policies as favorable to the small producer and (2) these policies seem inconsistent with a desire to restrict the cost of urban wage goods, which Redcliff argues was part of the government's grand strategy. Fourth, we believe that government agrarian reform efforts in the Guayas Basin were in part a response to campesino pressures." Carlos Luzuriaga C. and Clarence Zuvekas, "Income Distribution and Poverty in Rural Ecuador: A Survey of the Literature 1950–1979," General Working Document no. 2. Mimeographed. Quito, June 1980, pp. 224–25.
14. See especially Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1968). Many case studies corroborate this idea.