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Published by the University of Wisconsin Press

Archibald & Cristina Haller
529 Edward Street
Madison, WI 53711

**Luso-
Brazilian
Review**

Volume 15, Number 2

Winter, 1978

Luso- Brazilian Review

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Subscribing and Advertising Offices:

Journals Department
The University of Wisconsin
Press
P.O. Box 1379
Madison, Wisconsin 53701.

Subscription rates:

Libraries and institutions

\$25.00 per year.

Individuals only:

\$10.00.

Claims for missing numbers honored up to four months after publication.

Published twice a year by The University of Wisconsin Press under the sponsorship of the Ibero-American Studies Program of the University of Wisconsin and made possible in part by a grant from the Cyril W. Nave Fund of the University of Wisconsin Foundation.

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Socioeconomic Change in Brazil

Edited by Archibald O. Haller

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Preface

Archibald O. Haller

University of Wisconsin, Madison

It could be argued that the serious disputes of our time arise from disagreements over the answers to three central questions: From whence will come the goods and services to meet our needs? By what principle shall we divide up what we obtain? Who is to decide?

The further questions and options can be specified easily enough, even though the answers people give are in conflict. How, if at all, should we try to extract more from nature; or should we limit our collective needs by restricting our numbers? Should each be encouraged to strive for his own gain, regardless of inequalities in the resulting distribution of benefits; or should we all share the benefits and costs equally, regardless of possible inequalities of contribution? Should rulers be elected or imposed? By what methods? For whose benefit?

Though the options seem simple, they manifest themselves in immensely complex ways when seen in their varying world contexts. The present crisis is far from the first experienced by a civilization. But it has new facets. The most obvious are the numbers and proportions of people caught up in it, the weapons available to be used in it, and the tempo of the events which express it. Less apparent, but surely important, is the sheer amount of secure knowledge regarding the parties to the crisis, their resources, their strategies, and their changing objectives.

On the world scene and internally, too, Brazil illustrates the three dilemmas well, as the Symposium papers will show. Within Brazil, they could be called production, distribution, and control. Brazil's internal problems are deep and enduring, and its many external ties contribute to both the problems and their solutions. Through ties to foreign markets, corporations, and governments, it is a fully committed participant in the world community. It is rich in some essential resources but poor in others. Its population is estimated at well over 100 million and appears to be growing at nearly three percent per year. Territorially vast and varied, its manufacturing and export agricultural industries boom. Yet its individual and regional extremes in wealth and poverty are legendary. It is currently governed by an authoritarian government led by the military and dedicated to increasing the nation's productivity through both state and private enterprises. It is not surprising that sharp disagreements exist among those Brazilians

who are well enough off even to consider its options.

Yet Brazil not only illustrates some of the more extreme dilemmas of our era but also its new information parameters. The nation is devoted to understanding itself in much the same way that is true of the richer Western democracies. In this it builds upon a wealth of effective new concepts, upon recent theoretical advances, and upon data collection mechanisms which have been worked out only within the last generation or two. It encourages many of its most promising young thinkers to steep themselves in the more complex fields of knowledge, and it has opened up opportunities for them and for their colleagues abroad to attempt to synthesize and reflect to the rest of the world the life patterns that make up Brazil today and which condition its future. Quite clearly, this springs from a belief that precise social and economic data are essential to the formulation of realistic development policies and programs.

It was the problematic state of Brazil itself coupled with the high quality of the available information about it that led a small committee of research workers at the University of Wisconsin to think it feasible to try to arrange a symposium through which to gain a broad but precise perspective on the deep socioeconomic changes the nation is experiencing. To some, it may seem optimistic seriously to try to grasp such a large set of considerations. But Brazil is rich in information, and the disciplined talent needed to employ it well is available, both there and elsewhere. Recognizing that though dramatic changes might occur at any time, the Committee felt that many of the facts of Brazil's socioeconomic life would endure to structure the options available to any type of government that might hold power during the next generation or so. The Symposium on Socioeconomic Change in Brazil was planned to encourage Brazilianists to reflect upon these deeper aspects of the nation's life.

Besides Drs. Robert T. Aubey (Professor of Business) and William M. Denevan (Professor of Geography) who as Directors of the Ibero-American Studies Program were members *ex officio*, the Committee consisted of Dr. John J. Nitti (Editor of the *Luso-Brazilian Review*), Dr. Thomas E. Skidmore (Professor of History), Dr. Eugene A. Wilkening (Professor of Rural Sociology), Mr. Eduardo Ramos (Representative of the University's Brazilian Students' Association), and Archibald O. Haller (Professor of Rural Sociology and of Sociology and Chairman of the Luso-Brazilian Faculty Group).

Arrangements were made with and through a number of agencies to hold the Symposium at the University during May 10-13, 1978. Serious scholars of all disciplinary perspectives were invited to submit papers or otherwise to participate. Experienced research workers and university students from all over the United States and Brazil, and from elsewhere, were in attendance. Papers were presented on a wide variety of special topics. Especially important among these are the papers commissioned for the Symposium. They are presented in this special issue of the *Review*.

Except for the last chapter, written later in an attempt to obtain an overview, the papers are presented here in the same order

in which they were arranged for presentation in the Symposium. Let us now introduce the authors of the papers, following the same order.

Dr. Thomas E. Skidmore teaches Brazilian and Latin American history at the University of Wisconsin. He studied at Oxford and Denison Universities before receiving his doctorate from Harvard in 1961 and has been a Professor of History at Wisconsin for well over a decade. His publications include many articles in historical journals and two books on Brazilian history, each of which appeared in both English and Portuguese. Dr. Werner Baer is Professor of Economics at the University of Illinois. He attended Queens College and Harvard University, completing the doctorate in economics at Harvard in 1958. He is well known for his many technical writings on the Brazilian economy. His discussant, Dr. Paulo Haddad, is a Director of the João Pinheiro Foundation, a development planning agency for the State of Minas Gerais. He also serves as Professor of Economics at the Federal University of Minas Gerais in Belo Horizonte. He is perhaps best known for his research in demography and regional development. Dr. Fernando Homem de Melo teaches agricultural economics at the University of São Paulo and also is a research leader in agricultural policy at the University's Institute of Economic Research. He received his Ph.D. in economics at North Carolina State University, writing a dissertation on Brazilian trade policy. Dr. G. Edward Schuh, who discussed Dr. de Melo's paper, is a Professor of Agricultural Economics at Purdue University and is now serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Agriculture in Washington, D.C. He studied at Purdue University, Michigan State University, and the University of Chicago, completing his doctorate at Chicago in 1961. He is the author of three books and other publications on Brazil. Dr. Speridião Faissol is Superintendent of Geographical and Socioeconomic Studies at the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE: Brazil's national statistical service). One of the persons responsible for IBGE's rise to excellence, he completed the Ph.D. degree at Syracuse University in the mid-50's. His discussant, Dr. William H. Sewell, is Vilas Professor of Sociology at the University of Wisconsin and past Chancellor of the University. An authority on social stratification, education, and social research policy, he is a prolific contributor to the research literature in the field of sociology. He received his early education at Michigan State University and completed the doctorate in sociology at the University of Minnesota in 1939. Dr. Samuel A. Morley now serves as Professor of Economics at Vanderbilt University, after having taught for some years at the University of Wisconsin and Rice University. He is an expert on various problems that are especially important in Brazil--inflation, foreign investment, import substitution, and the distribution of income--topics on which he has written extensively. He studied economics at Yale University and completed his Ph.D. in the same field at the University of California at Berkeley in 1965. Dr. Edmar Bacha, Professor Titular and past Chairman of the Department of Economics of the University of Brasília, has an abiding concern with the question of income distribution in Brazil as well

as with the related problem of the nation's economic cycles. His undergraduate studies were conducted at the Federal University of Minas Gerais in Belo Horizonte, and he did his doctoral studies in the same field at Yale University where he was awarded the Ph.D. degree in 1968. Dr. *Glaucio Ary Dillon Soares* is a political sociologist who has studied and taught in various universities and programs throughout the hemisphere. He took the Ph.D. in Sociology at Washington University in 1965. Writer of a great many technical articles on relationships between the polity, the economy, and the system of stratification, especially in Brazil, he alternates as Professor of Sociology at the University of Florida and Professor Titular of Social Science at the University of Brasília. Dr. *Alejandro Portes*, a political sociologist, is a specialist in Latin American development who is well known for his research on political behavior in that region of the world. He received his early education in Cuba and Argentina before graduating from Creighton University in 1965. His graduate studies in sociology were conducted at the University of Wisconsin, where he completed the doctorate in 1970. After this he taught at the Universities of Illinois and Texas before joining the faculty of Duke University as Professor of Sociology in 1975. The editor of this issue of the *Review* is Dr. *Archibald O. Haller*, to whom we have already referred. His early university studies were in sociology at Hamline University and the University of Minnesota. He completed the Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin in 1954 and taught at Michigan State University before returning to Wisconsin in 1965. His research writings concern social stratification, mostly in the United States and Brazil.

Special thanks are due to various persons and agencies who have helped to underwrite the Symposium and to prepare this volume. Funds were provided by the Edward Laroque Tinker Foundation and by several groups within the University of Wisconsin at Madison; the Ibero-American Studies Program (through National Defense Education Act grant funds), the Nave Bequest Committee of the College of Letters and Science, the Department of Rural Sociology, and the Graduate School. The academic sponsors were the University's Ibero-American Studies Program and Departments of Rural Sociology and Sociology. The Chancellor's Office, the Office of International Programs, the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, and the Wisconsin Center also provided invaluable support, as did the Brazilian Students' Association. Among the many other individuals whose patient, cheerful efforts were of great value we must single out Clara Porto-Caskey, Jean Gilkison, Judy Gunn, Rochelle Reimer, Gustavo Silva, Barbara Forrest, Rolando Dresel, and Manoel Tourinho. To these and many others whose contributions are known only to the Committee and themselves we extend our thanks.

Responsibility for inaccuracies of fact and interpretation rests with the editor of this special issue of the *Review*.

Postscript

Archibald O. Haller

University of Wisconsin, Madison

Perhaps it is to be expected in discussions of momentous subjects such as the socioeconomic structure of a nation that the special topics commanding the greatest attention would be those obviously touching the deep fears and hopes of its citizens. Then too a socioeconomic structure is not an isolated entity. It affects political events and to some extent is affected by them. The deeper structure changes slowly and stubbornly limits the range of options. Other elements appear to many people to be more tractable. These include the political facts of life and the array of stances taken toward them by the various classes, fractions, parties, and factions. In the Preface to this volume we hazarded that the uppermost questions of our time, not only in Brazil, seem to be those of production, distribution, and control. The papers respond to all three problems, with the greatest attention probably being devoted to distribution and control, and these with a tint of immediacy at times obscuring deeper and even more obstinate facts. Brazil's authoritarian government assigns priority to production, quite clearly convinced that this goal will be sought most actively if the military remains in strict control. It is not surprising that those who value equality--whether in its economic or legal-political sense--see the government and its goals as obstacles.

The production situation is discussed most directly in the papers by Skidmore, Baer, de Mello and Schuh. On the whole they present a rather straightforward picture of the production goals that are sought and the options that have been selected. The overall impression is that the choices are severely limited. Professor Skidmore's paper argues that the basic stance of Brazil's government was set when the military took over in 1964, and that its economic policies have wavered but little since then. He sees them as an attempt to raise capital and increase production by whatever means possible--within, of course, a market economy. So among other actions, the wages of the bulk of the workers were held down and their bargaining power was tightly controlled. Mechanisms to encourage savings were introduced. Serious attempts were made to encourage the inflow of new industries and of more productive technology. To a large extent these were aimed at increasing the purchasing power of the affluent sector in order to stimulate manufacturing for domestic consumption. Professors Baer and de Mello both note that expansion of the export sector of the economy is strongly

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encouraged, a move which appears to be technology intensive. There seems to be little doubt but that this will decrease the job opportunities for the illiterate and unskilled, while increasing them for the literate, skilled personnel. In turn this seems bound to ramify into further income inequalities at both the regional and individual levels, as Schuh and others suggest. Thus to the poorest, the costs in jobs and wages may be heavy. Those who have been living with their families in the one- or two-room shanties scattered over the farms and who have been working as sharecroppers or wage laborers are perhaps the most vulnerable. At least they have had small gardens from which to eke out a bare living even if they have been penniless. But farm workers are not protected under the social welfare and social security laws (Spindel, 1978). And they are the least skilled, least literate people in the nation. Other than hiring themselves out as day laborers in seasonal farm activities which cannot yet be mechanized profitably, there is little or no employment available to them when they lose their positions as resident farm workers. The number of agricultural day laborers--the *volantes* or *boias frias*, as they are called (Spindel, 1978)--is already large and apparently on the increase. The growth rate of large scale mechanized crop production must still be accelerating. Whether or not this is so, a great many more of the rural poor may yet find their rudimentary skills to be obsolete and they themselves to be superfluous in an increasingly productive economy.

Each paper in this volume at least touched on the problem of distribution, but those of Morley, Bacha, and Soares attacked it most directly. Morley argues that the real inequality is not between the rich and the poor; it is between young and inexperienced workers who are paid but little and their older more experienced co-workers who are well paid. Measured by the Gini coefficient at $G=61$ (Jain, 1975), Brazil's income inequality is one of the highest in the world. (Yet its upward and downward flux or circulation mobility is also quite high [Pastore, 1978a], about the same level as that of the United States [Haller, Kelley and Pastore, 1977]. This is a little known fact which ultimately may be found to lie behind some of the more perplexing aspects of Brazil's social structure.) Bacha points out that the income of the lower strata is meager by any standard. In 1970 it was five or six dollars per month at the mean of the bottom tenth and not much more in the tenths just above. In Brazil itself a debate about income inequality has been going on in the press since about June of 1978. Bacha, we agree, is quite correct when he argues that not only the differential, but also utter poverty, mark the income question. Reflecting on the papers by Morley and Bacha, it seems clear that much more detailed data are needed in order to provide a satisfactory explanation of the income levels and differentials. 1) In forced development, one generation foregoes benefits so that those who come later will have a better life. Accordingly, Brazil encourages foreign companies to set up plants and other operations, thinking by this to develop a competent, modern work force and a well equipped productive system. And it is willing to go into debt to pay for energy and technology--yielding, in so doing, a current deficit of about \$40 bil-

lion in its balance of payments (Pastore, 1978b). It might be enlightening to run the proper calculations to see whether the consequent outflow of payments and profits contributes significantly to the present low level of individual income. 2) At the individual level, multiple regression analyses of income differences among the nation's households or workers are badly needed. They should employ measures on occupation, education, experience, and social status origins, among other variables at the individual level, as well as aggregate measures of economic conditions yielding scores that can be attributed back to the individual level. If possible, at least some of this type of research should involve successive restudies of cohorts of the same individuals over time.

The papers by Faissol and Sewell make it clear that the nation's national statistical service (IBGE: *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística*) has data collection and recording systems capable of producing evidence needed to answer this and many other key questions about the life of the Brazilian population. Indeed the national data system seems to be about on a par with comparable agencies in the most highly developed societies. Whether the nation has sufficient numbers of trained personnel to make the fullest use of them remains to be seen. Perhaps among the large number of Brazilian doctoral students now studying abroad there might be enough who are preparing themselves in the quantitative behavioral sciences so that in a few years they will be able to fill the present gap. Clearly, analyses like the above will be required if the policies of the nation's leaders are to be realistic.

Some of the harsh facts of life seem evident even without complex data. Soares makes it abundantly clear that the socioeconomic well-being is distributed unequally across the nation. While it is no longer news that millions upon millions of Northeastern (and other) Brazilians are in deepest poverty, Soares illustrates the facts more tellingly than usual: "a billion years of life foregone." He also argues that the Brazilian authoritarian government is not only active but stable, too. Portes, Soares' friendly critic, believes that during the growth decade, successful development provided much of the ideological legitimacy of the regime. Now that the pace of growth has slackened this rationale has lost its force. But Portes also reminds us that power does not rest upon the authority of accepted ideology alone but on other more subtle bases as well.

Papers by Haddad, Bacha, Soares, and Portes all raise the question of who is to rule. Haddad seems to believe that Brazil's development requires the participation of all social classes. Bacha seems to believe that another--unspecified--type of government would have provided economic development and solved the overlapping problems of poverty and inequality if the military had not come into power. Soares, Portes, and Haddad seem to think that a system with wider participation would be more likely to be able to cope with the problems of development and inequality. But they do not seem to think there is much chance that this will happen soon, although Soares and Portes see the possibility of small moves in this direction.

Though these papers look mostly at the present and the recent

past, and only guardedly at the near future, a few aspects of the Brazilian socioeconomic system seem certain enough to allow us to make some educated guesses about the future two or three decades.

1. Short of an almost unimaginable catastrophe, by the year 2000 the nation's population will be more than double its 1970 level of 93 million, going to about 200 million (IBGE, 1977: 159).

2. Vast numbers of new jobs will come into being. During the growth decade, 1965-1975, employment expanded at the rate of about one million jobs per year despite the growth of capital intensive industry.

3. In any case a course of increasing export manufacturing and export agriculture, each capital intensive, has been set. While the policy shifts of coming years may vary in emphasis, one would guess that Brazil is now irrevocably committed to an increasingly diversified export economy based on agriculture and manufacturing.

4. Given the growth in population and in technology-intensive agriculture, continued runaway urban growth seems inevitable for years and years to come. One needs little if any special insight to imagine the range of problems regarding employment, housing, food and water, health, transportation, sewerage, that this has generated and will continue to engender.

5. The growth of technology-intensive manufacturing and farming will continue to reduce the relative size of the work forces in these two areas which heretofore absorbed the great bulk of the labor force. The service sector, the underemployed, and perhaps even the unemployed, will continue to climb. In the cities, underemployment edged upward even during 1968 to 1972, which were rather good years (Pastore and Haller, 1977). In tighter times the underemployment rate should be even higher.

6. To policy makers, the now thinly populated west and north will seem more and more attractive as an outlet for the growing millions of unskilled people. But without viable infrastructures, the remote regions, especially the rain forest, will probably continue to repel the potential emigrants who will fear the rigors of isolation even more than the harsh life in urban slums.

7. A fast and, by previous standards, very large expansion of agriculture for domestic consumption probably will be noted soon. For the first time the government will soon begin, one guesses, to encourage rational innovation in the technology of domestic food production. At the same time there will be a serious search for ways to provide cheap food for those in the cities. Both sympathy and a concern for internal security may well combine with supply-and-demand economics to speed this along.

8. The energy question is at least as important in Brazil as it is elsewhere, but the mix is different. So far no coal deposits worthy of the name have been reported anywhere in the country. Similarly, only a small proportion of the petroleum consumed each year is taken from Brazilian wells. Yet, most of the nation's carriers run on it. More and more its domestic commerce is carried away from the seacoast; and land transportation has become more essential. Little of this is carried by railroads.

and cars are the main source of transportation, increasingly so as the interior population grows. This requires portable energy. Petroleum has provided the only viable source up to now, but tropical Brazil has biomass potentials less available to other countries, and much attention is now being devoted to the possibility of replacing gasoline with ethyl alcohol from cane or manioc. This may require a large expansion of cane plantations or the formation of manioc plantations or both. (This is likely to ramify into agricultural employment and into food production for the domestic market.) For stationary energy, the best bets seem to be hydroelectric plants and nuclear energy. It would appear that most of the potential dam sites near the industrial core have already been developed. A new large one is under construction farther out, on the Paraná River, and other even more remote sites might be developed in the future. Possibly the potentials these have for meeting future needs at a reasonable price may have already been determined.

9. The demand for skilled and highly specialized workers who will have to be literate and able to calculate effectively will force an expansion of the teacher corps and will encourage serious attempts to improve the education of teachers as well as pupils. Efforts will be made to upgrade advanced education, both to provide scientists, engineers and other innovators who can create technology appropriate to the tropics and to Brazil's present labor force, and to provide teachers knowledgeable enough to improve education at all levels. But will the expansion of education touch all the population, or will it just barely keep pace with the rising educational requirements of the employable labor force needed to tend the machines and the crops?

10. The Brazilian stratification system encompasses a wider effective range than is true of its more developed sister countries of northern Europe and northern America. Those at the top regarding education, income, perquisites, and occupational status are much like their fellows at the top of the British, French, and United States systems. But the percentages who are illiterate and impoverished are much higher in Brazil. Regardless of how it came into being--a topic occupying the energies of many thinkers--the stratification system seems quite durable. It would require huge social changes and large expenditures to change it quickly. This will be as true of regional differences as it is among individuals within regions. Rapid revolutionary changes in stratification systems are usually accomplished in connection with a war--which does not seem likely--and they do not always succeed in the long run even if they are successful in the short (Kelly and Klein, 1977).

The problems of production, distribution, and control that plague Brazil are encountered by other countries at least to some degree. What may be a bit unusual, if not unique, is the convergence of all of them at one time. The reader may identify without too much trouble the Western nations whose people are not much exercised by dilemmas of production or control, even if a vocal sector is worried about the question of distribution. Or one can easily list a number of countries in which production and control are controversial, but distribution is not. Brazil confronts all three problems at once.

Many of those who have a scholar's grasp of the Brazilian situation, one senses, may be mesmerized by the control question, seeing it as the key to the others. The supporters of the current government seem to agree that the production question is paramount and that its solution is to be found by encouraging private industry, supported but not impeded by government, to unleash the powerful productive forces it is believed to contain. To them, the distribution question is really the least important. With the military to protect it and government to help finance it, private enterprise will, it is thought, function as the engine of development which one day will provide enough to go around. The opposition sees the military government, with its support of private enterprise and its emphasis on production, as the obstacle. They seem to believe that if a genuinely popular government were established as a part of a return to civilian rule, the people would force an immediate redistribution of the wealth and income, and that this would unleash the forces of productivity.

The review of Brazil's socioeconomic situation presented in these papers may help scholars think not only about, but also beyond, the control question. Some of the facts of Brazilian life are bound to limit the range of possibilities for decades, if not generations, to come. Recognizing them for what they are may make them easier to treat.

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